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COME LET US BEGIN

I feel as Francis felt
Who said to his brothers, "Come."
Let us begin our work
For we have nothing done.

I never knew what he meant before
His life so full, so varied,
Pulsing, alive with purpose.

Indeed let me begin.
The time runs out on me.
My inner clock grows weary.
I pass from joy to sorrow.
Today shall I begin,
Or wait until; tomorrow?
My pendulum swings on steady wings.
It's hard to keep the pace.
I wind and oil my run down springs
And polish up my face.

Is there an end to the journey?
Am I really worth all this trouble?
Shall I take up my spade and dig?
Clear away all this rubble?

Then, like Francis, I took the stones
That had lain there for many years.
Tired, tumbled heaps
Of visions, hopes and fears.

I polished each treasured stone,
Placed it with loving care.
And began to rebuild the church,
Christ had asked me to repair.

Maureen Maguire, EMSJ

A Lonergan View of Francis of Assisi On Consciousness, Conversion and Communication

Richard L. Boileau, SFO

Introduction

The radical decision that Francis of Assisi took with regards to the meaning of the Christian Gospel during the opening moments of the thirteenth century created a whole school of spirituality that has transcended the centuries as "the richest of all, incontestably one of the most beautiful, and one which has most decisively left its stamp on the history of the Church."¹ Few within the Christian tradition, other than Jesus himself, have been the subject of as much speculation as Francis of Assisi; more books and articles have been published about him than any other figure in Christian history.² No one has been more closely associated with Jesus: "It seems . . . that there was never anyone . . . who resembled more the image of Jesus Christ and the evangelical form of life than Francis."³ No one has had a larger spiritual family: grouped as Friars Minor, Poor Clares and Secular Franciscans and Third Order Regular religious, they have made up the largest religious movement in the history of Christianity.

For those of us who are so inclined, appropriating this tradition and allowing it to change our lives is important, but it is not enough. We are invited to "Repent, and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1:15), but also we are called to spread the good news of salvation (cf. Rm. 10:14). Francis gave us the foundation and the tools for doing so efficiently and effectively: "Already at an early date, Pope Honorius III pays tribute to the Friars Minor in that 'everywhere, after the example of the Apostles, they spread abroad the seed of the word of God.'"⁴ I believe that Francis's legacy still has much to teach us about the communication of gospel values. Whereas the monastic tradition had focused on seeking God, the mendicant movement had as its prime intuition the need to propose to the wider world the Good News of Jesus Christ.

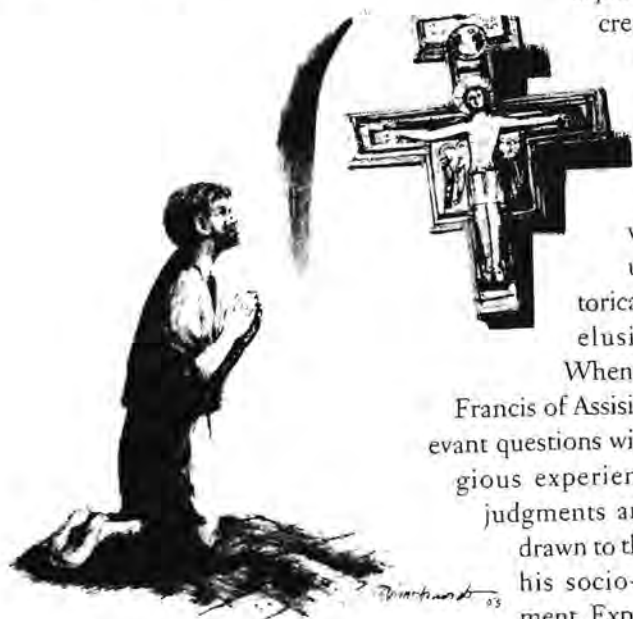
To understand the effects of this movement requires familiarity with the culture in which Francis operated. He lived in changing times, as we do today, and his genius was to interpret the traditional elements in his surroundings in a new way.

The word "new" recurs frequently in the comments of early observers of the Franciscan movement. Francis himself seemed to many in his day a new kind of Christian, one that did not fit easily within the categories of his day . . . creating a new "form of life," as he called it, different from the prevailing monastic and canonical forms then in favor.⁵

Vernon Gregson, a Lonergan scholar, has highlighted the ways in which great teachers, such as Buddha, Jesus, Confucius and Mohamed introduce newness (to which I would add the name of Francis despite the fact that the *poverello* would surely protest).

First, these great teachers were originators of meaning and values [and] the past became "new" to their visions. They did not give new answers. They raised new questions. . . . Second, most of what they taught was in the form of stories or parables, which are particularly effective and striking ways to reveal values, their principle concern. Their interest, then, was not primarily discursive truth. . . . Third, their own lives were the best narratives, the best stories to reveal the depth of their own characters and to give evidence of the goodness, the beauty, and the rightness of what they stood for.⁶

As I have come to know him better for who he must really have been—historically, stripped of devotional clichés—my respect for Francis has grown exponentially. Most of the credit for this belongs to the eminent Jesuit theologian, Bernard Lonergan, whose method exposes the need, as well as the tools, for understanding historically even something as elusive as spirituality. When looking at the life of Francis of Assisi, in asking all the relevant questions with regards to his religious experience, understanding, judgments and decisions, we are drawn to the changing aspects of his socio-economic environment. Exploring what Lonergan



meant by intellectual, moral and religious conversion, one relates this progressive process to Francis's manifest commitment to continuous conversion as the *sine qua non* of religious life. Finally, when one asks questions about his spirituality in relation to the functional specialties proposed by Lonergan, it is a relatively simple matter to attribute insightful moments of Francis's life to the operation of each specialty running from his unique experience of religious life and teaching; to his resolution of conflicts and contradictions, and the subsequent change in his foundational convictions; to his communication of this experience and understanding by word and action.

Lonergan's "Transcendental" Method

The term "transcendental" is applied because of the progressive nature of this process: a system of striving for higher levels of consciousness, "a mounting from a fixation with the world of immediacy to the world filled with meaning and permeated with value. It has to do with the struggle toward the authentic human functioning identified with knowledge and choice."⁷ Of particular importance in understanding Lonergan's method is how he perceived consciousness or intentionality. It is to this that Lonergan related the eight functional specialties that he saw as comprising the work not only of theology but of other disciplines as well.

Lonergan thought of human beings as coming to know through progressive levels of consciousness. The first level is experience to which he urged us to be attentive. Upon this basic human activity rests the entire process leading to real self-actualization. On this level are situated the sensory operations as well as remembering and imagining. The second level is understanding, which requires us to be intelligent in the operation of inquiring, imagining, understanding, conceiving and formulating.⁸ The third level is judging for which being reasonable is the operative precept as one reflects and determines the sufficiency of evidence: "reflecting, marshalling and weighing the evidence, judging."⁹ The fourth level of consciousness is deciding, which demands that we be responsible in the choices we make and in the actions we undertake to breathe life into our decisions: "deliberating, evaluating, deciding, speaking, writing."¹⁰ The apex of this ascent is mystery, the state of being in love: "We fall in love. And it need not always be preceded by knowledge, especially when our falling in love is initiated by, and has as its term, a Transcendent Mystery that we do not and cannot apprehend."¹¹

The following table illustrates the relationship between the eight functional specialties and the four levels of consciousness or intentionality, and previews the manner in which these can be applied to Francis of Assisi's religious insights.

Loneragan's Cognitive Process Applied to Francis of Assisi <i>(To be read from bottom left, up and across, then down to bottom right)</i>		
Functional Specialties	Levels of Consciousness or Intentionality	Functional Specialties
<i>Appropriating a Tradition (Meaning of the Gospel)</i>		<i>Mediating between Tradition and Contemporary Culture</i>
4. Dialectics → <i>Conflict leading to conversion</i>	<i>Fourth:</i> Deciding Responsibly	5. Foundations ↓ <i>Development of form of life</i>
3. History <i>Discernment within church</i>	<i>Third:</i> Judging Rationally	6. Doctrine <i>His new priorities</i>
2. Interpretation <i>Culture affecting his knowing</i>	<i>Second:</i> Understanding Reasonably	7. Systematics <i>His early rule and admonitions</i>
1. Research <i>His experience of religion</i> ↑	<i>First:</i> Experiencing Attentively	8. Communication <i>His Testament</i>

Loneragan's method is not so much a cognitional theory but a concrete charting of the data of consciousness itself. It is "concerned with objectifying the human subject's actual cognitional process."¹² Being alert to one's own cognitional process is what Lonergan called "self-appropriation"¹³ and it is not the same as looking at oneself as one would a specimen in a laboratory but must be done in context of a living experience. Consequently, objectivity for Lonergan was in effect critical and transparent subjectivity.

Finally, a few words about "intersubjectivity," the understanding of which reveals how truly gifted a communicator Francis was: "Meaning is embodied or carried in human intersubjectivity, in art, in symbols, in language, and in the lives and deeds of persons. . . . Prior to the 'we' that results from the mutual love of an 'I' and a 'thou', there is the earlier 'we'"¹⁴ From it wells up a deep desire to break free of self-preoccupation and to find meaning in a broader reality or higher level of consciousness. Thomas Farrell has suggested, "advanced writing is intersubjective, because writers draw on meanings, and values they have received from others."¹⁵ By acting attentively, intelligently, reasonably, responsibly, and in love, therefore, the communicator of religious value assists in the progress and development of society because within him intersubjectivity collaborates with authenticity to create new horizons of understanding and new categories of meaning.

The genesis of common meaning is an ongoing process of communication, of people coming to share the same cognitive, constitutive, and effective meanings. On the elementary level this process has been described as arising between the self and the other when, on the basis of already existing intersubjectivity, the self makes a gesture, the other makes an interpretive response, and the self discovers in the response the effective meaning of his gesture. So from intersubjectivity through gesture and interpretations there arises common understanding. On that spontaneous basis there can be built a common language, the transmission of acquired knowledge and of social patterns through education, the diffusion of information, and the common will to community that seeks to replace misunderstanding with mutual comprehension and to change occasions of disagreement into occasions of non-agreement and eventually agreement.¹⁶

What Lonergan implied is that all good theology goes through these stages of consciousness and the functional steps or specialties that rest upon them—whatever we chose to call these levels and steps. Any endeavor, therefore, that is either inauthentic (e.g., interpretation of data without adequate consideration of biases) or incomplete (e.g., skipping from doctrine to communication) must be regarded as inherently flawed. It is my belief that any investigation of Franciscan spirituality or, in particular, of the communication of Franciscan spirituality, must take this process into account.

Francis's Experience of Religion

According to Lonergan, research is the awareness of experience and the unavoidable first step in a rigorous pursuit of meaning. It is the most basic level of knowing and the conscious or intentional state of being attentive to what is occurring around and within us. Not only are sensory details important, so also is the thoughtful consideration of how our own mind works. This is the only way to counter bias and other distortions that creep into our attempts to know and understand. Awareness of how we process data is just as vital as our consideration of the data being processed: "It is central to Lonergan's thought that the data of consciousness, or how the human mind works, be part of the theologian's "data" as he or she goes about theological research in the data available to the senses through reading and personal experience."¹⁷

In his Testament, Francis would clearly identify the Gospel as the inspiration for his form of life, so it is fair to assume that his experience of it had a significant affect on him. There is no way of knowing what its influence was prior to his commitment to follow Christ in strict fidelity to what he found in the Gospel, but it is evident from his various writings that he was deeply marked by numerous passages that convey the words and actions of Jesus. This is all

the more remarkable when we consider that it is unlikely he ever read or even consulted the Gospel the way we do today, with the whole Bible or New Testament in one bound edition. What he spoke from was probably his recollection of pericopes proclaimed in the liturgies that he attended. It was only in churches that he would have had access to full biblical texts. Manselli, for instance, echoed the popular belief that it was in a church that Francis and his first companions used the officially proscribed practice to discern the will of God for the nascent order by randomly opening the Gospel three times, each time revealing a verse about the nature of discipleship and the call to evangelical poverty. But it was his keen observation and his near-perfect memory regarding the details of incidents and quotations recounted in Gospel narratives that seems so awesome to us today. His citation of them was extensive and his insight into their meaning was many times innovative. For reasons that are not entirely clear, Francis's attention focused explicitly upon the Gospel. Perhaps he did have access to books but that these contained only the four Gospel accounts, or perhaps it was his intuition to resolve the confusion created by different styles of religious behavior prevalent in his time. For whatever reason, he would eventually choose to follow the example of Jesus rather than that of the apostles, a decision that would have surprisingly dramatic consequences.

Another experience that would change the course of Francis's life was the fact that he charismatically attracted others to join him in the hope of sharing his new form of life. First there were few, among them the wealthy Bernard of Quintavalle, the priest Peter Catani, and later Clare, born in nobility. Soon there would be many: "Not only were men converted to the Order; but also many virgins and widows, struck by their preaching, on their advice, secluded themselves in cities and towns in monasteries established for doing penance."¹⁸ From every indication, recruiting others to join him and providing leadership to hundreds and then thousands of followers was certainly not part of his original plan. It figuratively sent him back to the drawing board. For this reason, there are few landmark moments in Francis's experience of the Gospel as weighty as his hearing of Christ's call to preaching in the Gospel of Matthew:

Go and preach, "The Kingdom of Heaven is near!" Heal the sick, bring the dead back to life, heal those who suffer from dreaded skin-diseases, and drive out demons. You have received without paying, so give without being paid. Do not carry any gold, silver or copper money in your pockets; do not carry a beggar's bag for the journey or an extra shirt of a stick. A worker should be given what he needs (Mt 10: 7-10).

Even as Francis lived and preached the Gospel, his own communication of its central events became experiences that precipitated further developments

in his spirituality. Perhaps the best example of this is his re-enactment of the Nativity scene at Greccio, cradled in the Rieti valley south of Assisi. The year 1223 was a difficult year for Francis. There were considerable tensions within the brotherhood, principally between those who would live according to the precepts of evangelical poverty as Francis explained them and those who would adopt a style of living more consistent with the prevalent monastic model of the times. As he returned from Rome, where he had met Church officials to consider the revisions recommended by the curia (an event some would agree weighed heavily upon his spirit), he stopped to visit an old friend, John, a man of good reputation and means. He asked his friend to organize a Christmas liturgy to illustrate the poverty and simplicity of the Incarnation. What he caused, almost certainly without intending to do so, was the beginning of the now-familiar tradition of constructing nativity scenes in our homes and churches around the world. What he observed was a concrete manifestation of what it meant for Christ to enter human history, and that experience filled him with inexpressible joy and consolation. Christmas at Greccio was a living out of Francis's fixation on the humanity and divinity of Jesus in the context of his relations with Mary and Joseph as evidenced in the Gospel, which he viewed as more fundamental than the life of the apostles after the death of Christ as recounted in the Acts of the Apostles. If the reenactment of Christ's birth was a key milestone experience in the completion of his spirituality, the stigmata which recalled his beloved Lord's passion and death, and which occurred on Mount La Verna, in Tuscany, not quite a year later, was an event of corresponding magnitude: "On September 14, 1224, while Francis was immersed in a long period of prayer, he received the stigmata, which he carried until his death."¹⁹

In the course of shaping his spirituality into a final rule of life that could be shared by his brotherhood, Francis was also greatly influenced by his experience of the Gospel as interpreted in the wide-sweeping ecclesial reform of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and subsequent papal bulls. The magnitude of this event, which addressed burning concerns such as "various heresies, growing disrespect for the church and its leaders and minister, the reform of the church's episcopacy and priests, the reform of Eucharistic practice, and the initiation of a new crusade to the Near East,"²⁰ calls to our minds Vatican II, which in turn allows us to imagine how deeply Francis must have been moved by this watershed event.

Often portrayed as a romantic dreamer, Francis was actually a pragmatic man who never ventured very far from the need to find concrete answers to life's primordial questions by using the materials found in his immediate environment. His spirituality was not spawned by highly evolved theological principles; rather he "felt that the starting point of his conversion and reversal of

values was his realization of the existential fact of the human condition as common to each person, and that over each person loomed the possibility of an identical fate."²¹

Evidence suggests that he was extremely observant and attentive to the minutest details of his surroundings. He was a person who based much of his understanding about the central issues of life as well as his judgments about their relative importance and his decisions about how to integrate these into his own life on the most basic of materials: his own observations and experiences, his own data of sense and of consciousness. Ironically, the man who tradition would receive as an eccentric dreamer was in effect a practical man, bold and perseverant, but with a poet's sensibility for deriving meaning from data that others would overlook and an idealist's audacity for daring to live authentically according to the insights that these would yield, no matter the cost.

Francis's careful attention to his own experience of religion can be regarded as consciousness at the most basic level, in regards to the categories elucidated by Lonergan. He would then interpret this awareness as understanding that would later open onto new and exciting possibilities and serve as the solid ground upon which would be constructed a form of life to which others would soon be drawn.

Francis as Communicator

Lonergan's method is an invaluable tool to appreciate the manner and content of the poverello's communications of his religious experience. Anyone wishing to communicate the spiritual insights of this thirteenth-century Italian penitent would benefit from a process similar to one proposed by Lonergan to avoid misleading biases and unhelpful superficialities; to reveal the richness of who he was and what he did; and to do so in a manner that will have a positive impact on our culture and the development of spiritual theology.

Following are a few conclusions about the communication of Franciscan spirituality, both in Francis's time and in our own.

1. Though this is indeed an extreme case of stating the obvious, I think it is important to begin with the observation that Francis was a sincere, intelligent and successful communicator. The evidence we have for this is quite simply the durability of its form and content, and the constantly renewed and reinvigorated interest it has elicited for the past 800 years.

2. Without distracting from the previous point, I think it is equally obvious that there is an urgent need to clarify, redirect or amplify—perhaps a combination of all three—the signal that we have received in order that it be made fully relevant and useful for our times. Mindless imitation of his life

would be unwise, unsatisfying and unhelpful to others. Consequently, there is a need to demythologize it, not to lay it bare and render it barren, but in order to re-mythologize it in exciting and contemporary ways so that its vital truths may echo across our culture and continue to convey meaning and value well into the future.

3. The essence of his legacy is still fertile ground for the development of spiritual theology that bears fruit needed to nourish people of the 21st century. It also serves as a solid and splendid foundation upon which we can ground reasonable decisions about how our own lives can be evidence of Gospel values transcending the limits of time and space to save us from devastating effects of these barriers to conversion.

4. It would seem to be appropriate to apply to the communication of Franciscan spirituality the best practices of secular communications, provided these were consistent with the charism of the poverello, particularly in his openness to what is from God, gift or desire, even as these are often times unplanned and unexpected. Today, we have a broader array of media available to us as well as a deeper understanding than Francis had of how even traditional communication operates. In thirty years of journalism, corporate communications and the study of communication theory, I have become aware of numerous principles and practices that enable people to achieve increased levels of authenticity and efficacy in reaching disparate audiences with key and vital messages. I have no doubt that the learning I have achieved in the secular arena can now be harnessed at the service of a particularly Franciscan understanding of spirituality for the benefit of those for whom it would have resonance. It would be appropriate, therefore, if not imperative, to apply to Franciscan communication aimed at the highly secularized citizens of this new millennium Lonergan's insights in communication, these being very consistent with those of Francis, as I have suggested in previous units. The outcome promises, I believe, to support the church's hopes for a new era of evangelization.

5. Perhaps the most compelling aspects of Francis's religious reality, one that echoes in our own, is the balance he struck between being authentically faithful to the meaning of the Gospel, as he understood it, and fidelity to the official teachings of the church, as witnessed by his wholesale inclusion of council decrees and canons in his own writings. I am reminded of the parallels that exist between this simple and sincere post-conciliar person who prayed and preached in the shadows of both heretical and church-led reform movements and us, who dwell, worship and act in the shadow of individualism, pluralism and various church reforms.

6. Returning to Lonergan as the lens through which we have formed a fuller appreciation of how Francis communicated his spirituality, we can also

get a glimpse of how we can more effectively communicate the tradition of Franciscan spirituality available to us today by drawing certain opportunities for further development. Three areas are particularly promising: writing, preaching and the use of symbols.

7. Lonergan rested much of his presentation of communication on the principle of intersubjectivity, which is a very elemental reality about how human beings related to one another: "Subjects are mutually and reciprocally aware."²² Writing must be regarded as intersubjectivity because "the image of writing as intersubjectivity clearly suggests that the writer needs to appropriate commonly known ideas from within the various textual communities . . . in order to be able to write effectively."²³ Farrell suggested that "advanced writing is inter-subjectivity, because writers draw on meanings and values they have received from others."²⁴ The conclusion for us is that good writing on any subject, including the communication of spirituality, requires that the writer apply to rigorously selected source material Lonergan's due diligence tests of good research, interpretation, judgment and decision with attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility: "According to Lonergan, meanings and values 'are authentic in the measure that cumulatively they are the result of transcendental precepts.'"²⁵

8. To be effective, preaching about spiritual matters must be regarded as a form, albeit distinct, of theological communication and not just a disincarnated inventory of doctrinal statements: "It is an articulation not only of the meaning to be conveyed, but of the value of that meaning for changing both the preacher and those who might hear the preaching."²⁶ When a person religiously in love engages in the distinct form of communication known as preaching, we have an example of an oral evaluative hermeneutic in action. A text is being interpreted not only as to its meaning, but also to its value to transform human life. . . . As a form of theological communication, preaching can bring a good word that not only calls for compassion but for justice. In hope, the religions and cultures of our world wait."²⁷

9. Finally, to be efficacious, our plan to communicate must make judicious use of symbols to faithfully convey rather than distort meaning. Too often traditional symbols are misrepresented, misused or misunderstood, particularly when they have long-since lost their capacity to bear meaning in cultural circumstances remote from those in which they were first conceived. Clearly, this problem is ubiquitous, insidious and intractable simply because "the communication of the Christian vision resides most centrally in its symbols as expressed in its sacred texts. Yet these symbols are not transparent. They require both the critical examination of their meaning in the first century and the critical understanding of them in the 20th century."²⁸

Catholic theology in particular has begun a thorough examination of itself in relation to culture: past, present, and especially the future. At the same time, theology has recognized that it cannot concern itself exclusively with ecclesial problems, especially those embedded in cultural contexts of the limiting past, at the expense of the rest of the world. Theology has a wider, inclusive reasonability for cultural problems as a new challenge.²⁹

The aim of the study that I conducted was to search in the writings of Francis of Assisi and those of biographers and historians for the best indicators of how Franciscan spirituality was communicated in the first years of the movement. This investigation employed Lonergan's transcendental method to interpret evidence found in early documents and contemporary academic literature in order to make reasonable judgments about how we are to receive this rich tradition in a manner that allows us to communicate Franciscan spirituality authentically in our own culture. Our point of departure must, of course, be with Jesus, just as it was for Francis: "For Jesus, the disposition of genuine repentance was only possible when one took on the attitude of a child (Mt 18:3) and turned away from the dispositions of self-righteousness and presumption (Lk 18:10-14). The repentance that Jesus preached was good news to be received with joy."³⁰ If continuous conversion, therefore, was at the heart of the spiritual life of Saint Francis, it must be so for anyone wishing to communicate his spirituality in our own culture. Indeed, conversion, as understood in the method of Lonergan, is by definition something to which we must remain disposed at all times, and it must be an authentic expression of decisions to change and progress, a transformation which begins with a religious experience, to which we are attentive, understood by being intelligent, judged by being reasonable, and acted upon by being responsible.

There are numerous parallels between the age in which Francis operated and our own. Not the least of these is the need to make a clear and deliberate choice between the secular forces of hedonism or humanism and the spiritual need to live according to tenets of the faith we profess.³¹ In our time as well as that in which Francis consciously sought to reconcile paradoxes and to find meaning in the midst of contradictory signs, we are called to respond to God's love through penance: "Francis and Clare experienced different events in their lives which led them into this practice, but they agreed upon the core values of penance: following Jesus in humility, poverty, simplicity, and community."³² Indeed, all Christians are called to make sober judgments and coherent decisions about the meaning of the Gospel, and to take responsible and loving action that is suited to our own particular circumstances. We all are called to consciousness in faith, to conversion in hope, and to self-transcendence in Love.

“Let Us Begin . . .”

Evidently, Francis's communication of his spirituality has been a resounding success. Eight hundred years after he walked the dusty roads of Italy and neighboring countries, roughly clad and lacking in all things save for the virtues of faith, hope, love, and the qualities of peace, joy and compassion, we still speak of this fun-loving romantic who would become a self-effacing man of God, thrust onto the world stage by a series of disturbing insights and the conflicted circumstances that surrounded them. His charisma has been celebrated and condemned. He himself has been imitated and ridiculed. Still, his communication of meaning endures.

We can learn something about what is lasting about his legacy by examining what people say and write about it today. Warner recalled our traditional association of Francis with peacemaking, preaching by example, the brotherhood of creation and the balance between prayer and action. Short pointed to the continuing relevance of these insights: the “down-to-earthness” of the experience of God; the real meaning of evangelical poverty; the spirituality of creation; and the spirituality of reconciliation. And Brunette posited that Francis's “state of spiritual itinerancy”³³ serves as a powerful inspiration or compass if not an actual road map for our own life's journey of conversion.

Anyone undertaking the task of communicating these spiritual insights must first grapple with two questions. The first is whether or not it is important to do so. It is my conviction that it is. In part, this conviction is based upon the following appreciation of the similarities that exist between his age and our own, notwithstanding the vast differences in our respective social, political and ecclesial environments. The second is this: Was Francis's way of looking at things compatible with our own?

In order to answer the first question, it is helpful to recall these similarities.

	Francis's Times	Our Times
Cry for peace	War with neighboring cities War between church and state War between Islam and Christianity	Strife between rich and poor countries Conflict between church and state Tension between Islam and Christianity

	Francis's Times	Our Times
Relationship to creation	Disregard for welfare of vassals Unawareness of ecology People and nature were mere resources	Disregard for welfare of employees Neglect and abuse of ecosystems Devaluation of human and natural capital
Quest for simplicity	Struggle to survive Constant fear of disease and violence People locked into social structures	Rampant and growing stress at work Growing fear of brutal economic forces Social alienation of individuals
Church reform	Ubiquitous heretical groups Monumental impact of Lateran IV Concern about control of <i>magisterium</i>	Growing concerns about orthodoxy Monumental impact of Vatican II Concern about control of <i>magisterium</i>

Relationship with Creation

When Pope John Paul II declared Francis of Assisi to be the patron saint of ecology, I doubt that anyone was surprised. His *Canticle of Creation* alone would have earned him that accolade. On the surface, it appears rustic and naïve, but “when it is seen in terms of Francis's other works and the motivation behind its composition, the poem in fact acquires indisputable claim to originality and complexity.”³⁴

Creatures, each having autonomous worth and beauty, are yet brothers and sisters to each other, aiding each other, gladly performing their divinely allotted functions. . . . By giving creatures their due praise, people overcome their customary callous ingratitude to creatures and to God—another step toward the reconciliation and redemption of humanity envisioned by the end of the poem.³⁵

Francis tied all things together into a single integrated worldview, which encompassed God, humankind and all things great and small created by God's

own hand. He understood the intended connectedness, so it would not be surprising to find a prominent liberation theologian eight centuries later writing a book linking the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. As Boff has written:

The world and its creatures are within the human being in the form of the archetypes, symbols, and images that inhabit our interiority and with which we must dialog and that we must integrate. If violence persists in the relationships of human beings with nature, it is because aggressive impulses emerge from within human beings. These impulses indicate the lack of an inner ecology and a failure to integrate the three main directions of ecology . . . : environmental ecology, social ecology, and mental ecology.³⁶

Cry for Peace

Scarcely anyone feels immune from conflict. As anxiety grows about the nature and frequency of distrust and disputes, as aggressive behavior and armed struggles intensify, people dream of peace. Sadly, some have already lost the ability to even dream of such a possibility, so the need for peacemakers is as manifest today as it was in Francis's time: people who bring reconciliation and healing to individuals, families, nations and the world. Peace was for him a subject of capital importance. His rule bade brothers to say upon entering someone's home, "Peace be to this house" and on his deathbed he said to them, "Go dearest brothers, two by two into all the country, and preach to men peace and penance unto the remission of their sins."³⁷ His method was predicated on a profound understanding of brotherhood and sisterhood, which implies true love of all created things, and respect for the inherent dignity of all of God's children. It implied a willingness to see all things as gift from a benevolent and providential God and to let go of the fear that causes us to hoard as though these possessions had the power to protect us from the real dangers in life. And, it implied the dismantling of barriers that block out the light more than they do the enemy.

Today, the charism of peacemaker is understood to take on three important forms. The first is to facilitate genuine dialogue. History would suggest that this is more difficult than it seems. Perhaps Francis would have observed that this is so because to engage in meaningful dialogue, one must pre-suppose that the dialogue partner is a brother or sister, equal in the eyes of God, with the capacity to be an instrument of his will and the capability of acting with divine grace. This is why Francis's notion of brotherhood is so fundamental to the building up of a world order crowned by peace: the kingdom of God on earth. The second modern strategy for peace is the promotion of justice. Francis

understood that to achieve peace, certain conditions had to be met. While the so-called *Prayer of Saint Francis* was not actually written by the *poverello*, it is generally regarded as being aptly steeped in his spirituality: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon. . . . For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned. . . ."³⁸ Reflecting on the tradition surrounding that prayer, Boff recalled a principle that "comes from Saint Augustine: peace is the work of justice. . . . [P]eace cannot be sought by itself without first achieving justice Justice is giving to each one his or her due."³⁹

Today social justice represents one of the most serious challenges to the conscience of the world. The abyss between those who are within the world "order" and those who are excluded is widening day by day [W]e are living in times of grave disequilibrium, of real war declared against the Earth, against ecosystems which are plundered, against people who are shunted aside because world capital is no longer interested in exploring them, against whole classes of workers who are made expendable and excluded; war against two-thirds of humankind who do not have the basic goods they need to live in peace.⁴⁰

Finally, the third enabler of peace is social and economic development, a role that Francis actively assumed, particularly privileging the poor.

On one hand, Francis can be offered as the exemplar of all three strategies. He showed by example what it means to enter into meaningful dialogue with a Moslem sultan; he advocated on behalf of those who were exploited and oppressed; and he worked alongside the poor in order that their situation might be improved, if only modestly. Clearly tradition has caused us to receive Francis not only as a lover of peace but also as a maker of peace. Cook recalled that various episodes in his life point to that fact: Francis and Masseo stressing that friars must see the importance of peace while on the road to Siena in the *Fioretti*; driving out demons in Arezzo in accounts by Celano and Bonaventure as well as the Legend of Perugia; restoring peace in Bologna as in the writings of Thomas, archdeacon of Spoleto; and, at the end of his life, reconciling the *podesta* and the bishop in Assisi itself,⁴¹ [and] according to the Legend of Perugia: "Francis is not only a lover of peace—he was a maker of peace. He did not concern himself only with preaching the peace which should penetrate the hearts of all men; he set out to create an end to war without which his goal of bringing salvation would have been largely unachieved."⁴² On the other hand, we must be cautious in our portrayal of Francis as an ideal peacemaker, particularly as we look for lessons relevant to our own circumstances. Joseph P. Chinnici has presented a persuasive argument to suggest that this misrepresents historic facts about what Francis did and the spirit in which he did things:

"Inasmuch as we make of Francis an ideal and the peace he incarnated an ideal peace, we rob him of his history and ourselves of our freedom to act."⁴³ Rather, Francis offered peace as bread "to a war-torn, hungry world,"⁴⁴ showing many ways to witness to peace:

Martyrdom is a central motif in early Franciscan writing: Some are martyred in Morocco; some, like Giles, embrace what he calls the "martyrdom of contemplation"; some, like Francis and Bonaventure, are martyred in community; some like Clare receive the martyrdom of illness and struggle within the Church; others, by creative word in the world. All are martyred in the cause of peace, searching dominantly for the presence of Christ and a way to make that presence effective.⁴⁵

Quest for Simplicity

Despite growing public interest in matters of religion and spirituality, a phenomenon often heralded under the banner of post-modern values, it must be recognized that we live in a very materialistic world. The acquisitive and clinging tendency that seems to fuel an insatiable appetite for power and possessions creates remarkable anxiety in our lives and provokes us to assume roles and adopt behaviors that sink us into ever-increasing depths of stress. This was also true in Francis's day, albeit manifest in different forms. His spirituality, however, provided relief from the anguish of unnatural ambitions: evangelical poverty was the antidote that he prescribed. While the challenge that this spirituality poses is daunting, for which reason we are often inclined to dismiss it, it is as relevant to us today as it was to him in his day. He would have been no more eager to part with property than we would be. But it was the price that he was prepared to pay for the freedom to follow Christ rather than the ways of the world.

Following this example, living *sine proprio*, without anything of one's own, today implies the refusal to arrogate to one's self what belongs to all, because all belongs to the Creator. Everything is gift; nothing is "property." The gospel mandate to "sell all and give to the poor," which Francis and Clare followed, far from being meaningless, is as urgent in our own day as it was in theirs.⁴⁶

But evangelical poverty was for the *poverello* and must be for us today understood to be the means and not the end of a courageous spiritual journey focused on union with Jesus Crucified: "Poverty is never lived for its own sake, but always for the . . . life of the Spirit, that it brings to the world. . . . The viable reforms always made specific expressions of poverty secondary to re-

newal of gospel service to the poor and union with Jesus in contemplative prayer."⁴⁷ It is for this reason that we are more inclined to shift our attention from evangelical poverty, which is a value too easily misunderstood and misrepresented, to humility and simplicity.

Church Reform

We live, as Francis did, in an age when divergent opinions regarding the way in which we are called to witness to gospel values in our daily lives are confronted to one another as soldiers pitted against one another on a battlefield. It seems that at such a time, his response to this tendency is becoming increasingly worthy of our attention. Francis saw in his day those who would imitate Jesus concretely as well as those who would adapt his ways, perhaps more symbolically. Francis saw those who chose a direct route to God as well as those who would place more emphasis on structures and intermediaries as the road to salvation. He witnessed trends that encouraged heterogeneity and others than stressed the need for orthodoxy and orthopraxies.

These trends are still with us today and the divisions between people and communities continue to widen. Perhaps it is no wonder that we are so attracted to a gentle figure that manifestly sought the presence of the Holy Spirit in otherness; who held deep-seated convictions but, in a genuine sense of spiritual poverty, sought to humbly apply them to his own life rather than bitterly reproach those with whom he would not agree. He truly regarded himself as the greatest sinner of all, yet a brother to all. This attitude saved him from spiritual pride and others from the toxic words and behavior that self-righteousness inevitably spews.

The second question facing us before deciding on a course of action to communicate Francis's spiritual insights to our own culture in the manner that Lonergan would appreciate is this one: Was Francis's way of looking at things compatible with our own? Certainly he was not a critical realist in the fullest sense of that expression—nor could he have been. But relative to the context in which we must situate him, it may be said that he was naturally disposed to such an outlook. His struggle with religious questions was chiefly caused by his determination to be authentic. Can we today authentically appropriate and effectively communicate his spirituality without such an attitude? I suggest that we cannot. It would be folly to simplistically imitate someone from so foreign a culture. Yet it would be equally foolish to disregard his insights and the stunning parallels that exist between his socio-political and ecclesial environment and our own. It would be, I think, regrettable to set aside a tradition that carries with it a unique capacity to help us understand the desire that dwells within each of us, namely to find ultimate meaning and to fall in love.

The challenge is to communicate these insights with language that resonates for people today, particularly those who are unfamiliar with the expressions and even the categories of traditional religious discourse and the rituals of its celebration and worship. It is also to use the stories of Francis's life in new ways to engender passion in faith and compassion in love. It is finally to leverage genuine conversion, as Lonergan understood the term, in the hearts, minds and souls of God's people. These challenges call us to be creative in the way we present Francis, always mindful of the adaptations required, and always recalling that Francis communicated by his life more than by his words . . . as Jesus had done. While Francis's form of theology can be described as "archaic," his spirituality is timeless because it continues to "elicit our wonder and to inspire our feeble attempts to follow (him) in his dedication to the '*vita evangelii Jesu Christi*.'"⁴⁸

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Photo by C. Fischer

The Cord, 56.1 (2006)

Lessons Learned in Franciscan Spirituality As First-Year College Faculty

Mary B. Schreiner

A little over a year ago, I had the life-altering experience of becoming employed as a professor in a college founded in the Franciscan tradition of values. The contrast with my twenty years as a public school educator first surfaced when I realized I could not answer my interviewer's question: "Just what do Franciscan values mean to you?" Startled, I silently prayed that if I were offered the position, I would dedicate myself to learning the answer to that question. Now, in humble service to new Franciscan college faculty who may come after me, I offer the spiritual fruit of this quest during my infant year at Alvernia College.

Early in my first semester, I decided to approach this question using a traditional academic attack. First, I would memorize what the values were. Next, I would read about Saint Francis to see how he exemplified the values attributed to him. Third, I would ask other Catholics or veteran staff who have worked in our Franciscan college setting what they knew about Franciscan values. Finally, to comprehend Franciscan values, I would engage in prayerful study of any examples of these values in my daily life. The first three tacks were partially successful. In the end, however, observing the evidence of Franciscan values throughout my workdays was the approach that produced the most understanding for me.

I found the memorization of a list of Franciscan values more difficult than I originally thought. Our college mission statement described five: *collegiality, contemplation, humility, peacemaking, and service*. However, many other important values are discussed in literature about Saint Francis, including poverty, joy, respect for nature, compassion, and empathy for the less fortunate. I decided to start with learning the five mentioned in the mission statement, at least for my initial year.

My second strategy for understanding Franciscan values led me to several books about Saint Francis, and these books became my "non-professional" reading time indulgence. Prior to my employment, I had the stereotypical

understanding of Francis as the man who loved nature and founded a religious order of brothers and priests, but knew not much more. Consuming biographies and interpretive works helped me better see how this one man truly "lived the Gospel life," and has endured as a model for Christian servants for almost 800 years. I began tucking examples of events in Francis's life into stories I would share with my students at the outset of classes, and found my classes eager to hear more. Reminding my students that we had chosen a Franciscan college because of what made it different from other colleges was welcomed by all of us as we gradually learned more about our Francis's approach to life. Beyond my reading about Saint Francis, I focused my scriptural reading on the Gospels, deriving from them daily connections with how I was supposed to live, teach, and touch others' lives.

My third attempt to understand Franciscan values led me to ask other Catholics who embrace Franciscan values what these values meant, yet this tack ironically proved the most frustrating. It quickly appeared to me that the longer one had lived in a Franciscan lifestyle, the harder it was to explain to others what it was that makes one different. My sister, a Capuchin Franciscan Affiliate for several years, tried valiantly to educate me on the matter, but could only conclude "After you've been Franciscan, the best way to understand who Franciscans are is to be around people who are *not*." A fellow faculty member and expert theologian could only say "I can't explain it. You just have to live it," and then, after additional conversation, muddled me further by saying "You *already* get it." I left that talk feeling only somewhat reassured that I really did "get it."

So, after all the memorizing, reading, and conversation, I returned to the study of my experiences, rather than the words of others, to clarify what Franciscan values meant on a college campus. I had kept a journal since the start of my employment, and before the examples fade in my memory or become such second skin I can't isolate them, I offer a few of my experiences to my brothers and sisters in Franciscan college life.

Collegiality

My first experience with Franciscan collegiality occurred the morning of my interview. The dean, a nurse by profession, was effusive in her pleasure at being connected to our Education Department faculty, and was quick to note the parallels in our service professions. Later, taking a tour of campus with our department secretary, I sensed her equality and pride in being a key team member. Our department's faculty, nicknamed "The Dream Team," is informal, positive, and genuine; each actively seeks ways to build up the others, and especially to make new staff feel welcomed and appreciated as a colleague.

As the semester progressed, I saw collegiality across campus, from professors eating with students and secretaries in the cafeteria, to administrators present in the smallest of campus events, to commuters offered access to faculty during what some might describe as "impossible" office hours! Students have served me at Mass, the Fitness Center, and in offices, always with gentle respect. The Franciscan value of collegiality became clarified to me as *respect-filled connectedness*.

Humility

When the honeymoon of hire faded into the end of the first semester, student evaluations of my teaching brought the Franciscan value of humility to the fore. Behind the veil of anonymity, some questioned the fairness of my grading or the sincerity of my regard for them, two areas in which pride had clearly blocked my awareness. As I left for Christmas break, my co-workers were preoccupied and scattered, and I felt a vivid impression of the humility Christ experienced in His manger birth.

After Christmas, a second humbling came through a surprise request from our President when he asked that I represent Alvernia College on a conference-planning team with the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities. I was flying high with the flattery of this request when I was brought back to earth by a colleague. He suggested that perhaps I was chosen for this role not because I deserved recognition for my keen Franciscan knowledge. Instead, my friend suggested that because our president is a gentle insightful mentor, he was giving me this opportunity for huge personal and spiritual growth. The Franciscan value of *humility* became clearer to me as awakening to how much one has yet to learn!

Contemplation

Contemplation has become a daily hunger for me, filled first in quiet time at home when my family goes off to work, when I can read and pray to start my day. Later, time to contemplate is available to me in the hour drive I have going to work, when I think of the day ahead, pray the Rosary, or listen to spiritual music, and again on the hour drive home, when I think of the ways God revealed Himself to me in the day just past. During the workday, I frequently take advantage of one of our peaceful chapels, as I await daily Mass, or merely sit in God's presence for a few minutes.

Perhaps the most powerful product of contemplation has come through my selection of a "Mission Moment" to start each class I teach. The Mission Moment might be a shared prayer, a meaningful piece of prose or poetry, a connection between the Gospels and the class I am teaching about children

with disabilities, or something I've learned about Saint Francis. More recently, students have stepped forward with Mission Moments of their own. In evaluations given to me, students have been overwhelmingly grateful for the time I have taken to "put things in proper perspective," and "take a breath of fresh Spirit-filled air" for a few minutes. In fact, it hadn't occurred to me how powerfully different life on a Franciscan campus was until I shared my enthusiasm for these Mission Moments with a colleague. She helped define the Franciscan value of *contemplation* for me when she said that we have "*the privilege to pray all day!*"

Peacemaking

The making of peace has become clear to me only recently. As an example of peacemaking, I have lightened the load of an anxious or burdened student, by occasionally excusing an assignment or postponing a deadline. Many of our students work real-world jobs and have active families while trying to juggle the demands of college. When possible, I have inserted a little peace in their stressful lives with some small act of kindness.

An unexpected occasion of peacemaking presented itself to me this spring. I had spent a full class period purposely simulating a very poor teacher while I had my students simulate students with various types of disabilities. The frustration and anxiety erupted on both sides of the podium, a very uncomfortable and unnatural contrast to our usual student-professor relationship. In processing the simulations during our next class, relief and laughter accompanied the learning as my future teachers now understood how *not* to make their future students feel. To merely "keep" peace is passive and unproductive. Instead, the Franciscan value of *peacemaking* means instead *an active, purposeful resolution of conflict and stress*.

Service

Service is the "middle name" of every act, decision and plan at Alvernia College, and opportunities for service are continuous. A few services I happily offered included finding readings on a research topic for another professor's student, helping a co-worker with her own post-graduate coursework, and making community connections with families who have disabled children. On a daily basis I try to pay attention to those who surround me with very quiet human needs waiting to be heard.

So embedded is the attitude of service, I taught myself and my students a three-step strategy for recognizing a service opportunity. These steps were based on our faculty opening day speaker, Brother Edward Coughlin, OFM, who described Saint Francis as one who knew how to "pay attention to the

world, be compassionate, and be ready to step down in order to meet the needs of others." So, the Franciscan value of *service* occurs when I employ the strategy of "*Attendo. Compassio. Condescendo.*"

The final blessing of my initial year brought all five of these Franciscan values together for me. I was asked to give the "Mission Moment" for our closing faculty luncheon. In humble service, I shared with my brothers and sisters my contemplative reflections on the collegiality and personal peace I'd experienced during my first year. I have no doubt that the Spirit of God will continue to bless me with understanding and joy in my work at a Franciscan college, as I continue my journey where Gospel values have come alive!

Sheets in the Wind

Sheets sun-soaked white,
wind-whirled,
Shamelessly forgetful of
passerby.

I too, hang my wash out
for all to see,
It's half way between white
and black,
a dingy gray.

I'm tossed, lost, bossed.
Come, shake me up.
Lift me high.
Sparkle me white.

Florence Vales, OSC

Elements of Franciscan Unity: An Ecumenical Perspective

The Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity

The Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity was founded in 2004 by members of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans; the Third Order, Province of the Americas, Society of St. Francis; and the Secular Franciscan Order. The Orders represent Protestant, Anglican, Roman Catholic and Eastern Catholic secular Franciscans. Taking a prophetic stance, "that all may be one," the committee works towards healing among our various traditions. The Mission Statement states: "For the sake of all Creation, we are called to bear witness to the essential unity of the church, the body of Christ, by working towards Franciscan unity in all of its expressions. We will achieve this through dialogue and collaboration among the Orders which follow Christ in the tradition of Francis and Clare."

In attempting to elucidate the basics of our common Franciscan charisms, the 2005 meeting of the Joint Committee focused its efforts on study and dialogue regarding several key components of each Order's Rule, Constitutions, and other Official Documents. It is hoped that by sharing and celebrating our common ground of spirituality that we may together "rebuild" the Church. It is shared here in hopes that others may continue the dialogue. The result of this process was the formulation of the following statement: Elements of Franciscan Unity.

Elements of Franciscan Unity

Baptism and Vocation

We recognize that all of our Orders understand that our Franciscan vocation proceeds from our relationship with God through Holy Baptism in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The call to vocation implies being conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ by means of that radical interior change that the Gospel calls conversion, taking up our cross daily to follow Christ. Our particular vocation is to observe the Gospel by following

the examples of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi. As members of Franciscan orders, we pledge ourselves, with lifelong intent, to live out our Franciscan vocation in community with our brothers and sisters.

Charism

As Franciscans, we see in the life of St. Francis of Assisi particular gifts of the Holy Spirit of Holy Poverty (humility), love and joy.

Christocentric Dimension

Franciscan spirituality is Christocentric to the extent that Francis fell in love with Jesus and his life was transformed. All that he did was shaped by what he saw in the Incarnation, and in the ministry and passion of Jesus.

Likewise, Franciscan spirituality is a way of life centered on the person of Jesus. It is our mission to make Jesus known to all and to pray and work for the reconciliation of all creation.

Prophetic Voice

We agree that fundamental to Franciscan spirituality is a commitment to strive for justice and peace among all people. We are called to courageous initiatives in the field of human development and justice and to make definite choices in harmony with our faith whenever human dignity is attacked by any form of oppression and indifference.

In the spirit of Francis who understood the interrelationship of all creation, we are also committed to the integrity of creation and therefore to its protection and restoration.

Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity Members:

The Reverend J. Frederick Ball, OEF
Marcella A. Bina, SFO; Jean A. D'Onofrio, SFO;
The Reverend Masud Ibn Syedullah, TSSF

August 11, 2005

Feast of St. Clare at St. Francis House – New London, Connecticut

For Further Information:

Order of Ecumenical Franciscans: www.franciscans.com

Third Order, Society of St. Francis, Province of the Americas: www.tssf.org

National Secular Franciscan Order: www.nafra-sfo.org

The Hermeneutic of Projection: Jews as *Exempla* in Bonaventure's Sunday Sermons

Timothy M. Powers

Introduction

In Bonaventure's Sunday Sermons,¹ the literary device of the Jews is a projection of unacceptable and repressed attitudes in the Christian community and is used as an *exemplum*² for moral instruction. These "hermeneutical" Jews³ were condemned for their beliefs or behaviors concerning perfidy and ignorance, insanity, fraternal hatred and lack of redeemed affectivity, beliefs and behaviors that were present in Christians but that were projected onto Jews. The Jews mentioned in Bonaventure's Sunday Sermons were not people with whom Bonaventure had regular interaction, but were figures he used to condemn attitudes and behaviors that were repressed in medieval society.

How the outsider, the stranger, the alien, the Other is treated is a measure of how well a Christian community follows its call to imitate God, who is love. The human cycle of oppression and liberation bears the marks of sin, so that often those who were oppressed become oppressors themselves. Historical examples abound, none more poignant than the Christian Church, itself persecuted at its beginnings, becoming the oppressor of those who were considered Other. The relationship between the Jewish and Christian communities has been complex. At times relations between the two communities were cordial; often, the attitudes and actions of individual Christians and the Church through the ages toward people who are Jewish have been hateful and harmful. While contemporary anti-Semitism finds its roots in many different places, Christian attitudes and practices dating from the Middle Ages certainly influenced modern biases. Contemporary attitudes concerning those who are marginalized by society can be reformed and redeemed by learning from the mistakes of the past. If the richness of the Christian tradition is to influence contemporary life, the sinful parts of the Christian tradition must be faced.

Bonaventure and the Jews

In the introduction to the second volume of Bonaventure's Commentary on Luke, Robert Karris analyzes the treatment of the Jews in Bonaventure's writings. Karris notes that Bonaventure stood in the Augustinian interpretive tradition of the eleventh chapter of the Letter to the Romans.⁴ In Romans 11, Paul describes the hardening of hearts against Jesus in Israel which will last until the conversion of the Gentiles at the end of time. Paul writes that "the gift and the call of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:29). Bonaventure, following Augustine, understood that the existence of the Jews was a sign of the mercy of God and that the Jews had a part to play in the divine plan.⁵

Karris also writes that Bonaventure does not concern himself with real or contemporary Jews, but is concerned with the hermeneutical Jew.⁶ Karris borrows the term "hermeneutical Jew" from Jeremy Cohen, who writes that Jews served the purpose of bolstering the Christian understanding of scripture in the Middle Ages. So strong was this hermeneutical purpose of Jews in Christian theology that the very nature and existence of the Jews was dependant on it. When Jews in the Middle Ages did not fit the Christian concept of their hermeneutical purpose, their very lives were at risk. This instrumental use of people who are Jewish in the Middle Ages played a role in the developing history of the mistreatment of Jewish people in the history of Western Europe.

If in the Sunday Sermons the Jews mentioned are hermeneutical Jews, the question remains: what is the hermeneutic? While faithful to the tradition of Romans 11 as interpreted by Augustine, Bonaventure lived at a time when Jews were often perceived as a threat to Christianity.⁷ Ivan Marcus claims that "as the Christian Middle Ages were getting 'made' . . . the Jewish Middle Ages were getting 'unmade.'"⁸ The instrumental use of idealized Jews in the Middle Ages made them targets of bigotry and violence when they were encountered not as ideas but as living persons. The polemic against the Jews in much of Christian discourse gave false justification to their mistreatment in medieval society.

Exempla in Medieval Sermons

Joan Young Gregg's work on the use of *exempla* in medieval sermons can shed some light on Bonaventure's use of the hermeneutical Jew in the Sunday Sermons. *Exempla* were stories used by medieval preachers to illustrate a point made in a sermon. These stories interpreted for the hearers of the sermons an ideological system which emphasized human weakness and the need for constant correction and instruction. *Exempla* were rhetorical techniques meant to

emphasize the need for confession and conversion. The stories were pointed and often gruesome, playing on fears based on stereotypes. Any "ambiguity would cloud the life and death issue at hand."⁹ *Exempla* were meant to be quick and effective ways of making people understand moral issues.

Gregg notes that in the revitalization of preaching in the Middle Ages, sermons played a role in bringing about social conformity. Clear and simple distinctions were made between the Christian and the Other, who was to be condemned.¹⁰ These clear distinctions guided Christians away from the condemnable behaviors (real or imagined) of the Other.

The evil attributed to Jews was necessary so that the path of good might be more clearly delineated for Christians. The Catholic doctrine of free will meant that salvation had to be worked-out, and part of working for salvation was the struggle with sin and evil. Sin and evil were within God's plan, and the threat posed by Jews and other outsiders was part of God's will that Christians might struggle and obtain the good.¹¹

Gregg writes that *exempla* can be understood as illustrations of the modern psychological notion of the mechanism of projection. Part of the division between medieval and modern mentality is modernity's understanding of the workings of the unconscious, and the discovery of the Other within.¹² Projection means that personal fears and the fears of a community are not recognized as such, but are rather projected onto those who are different. The development of modern psychology at the end the Nineteenth Century recognized that the characteristics attributed to the Other were truly located (suppressed) within one's own psyche.¹³

Exempla threw "a harsh spotlight on human transgressions in order to promote a salutary course of conduct."¹⁴ Faith doubts were repressed and projected onto Jews, inevitably resulting in exclusion, vilification and ultimately, death. Jews were seen as imperfect versions of dominant Christianity, and the blame for their exclusion was placed on the Jews themselves, since they refused to submit to the rational guidance of the Church. Stories and other mention of Jews were ways of expressing the otherwise inexpressible, of giving voice to expressions of doubting the Christian faith. Rather than admitting that doubts about the faith could be entertained by otherwise good Christians, these doubts were projected onto the Jews, who were subsequently ridiculed and abused for their impiety and perfidy. The *exemplum* "both mirrored and shaped the cultural notions of its audience."¹⁵

Jews as *Exempla* and the Sunday Sermons

Gregg's definition of *exempla* describes Bonaventure's use of the Jews in the Sunday Sermons. Although Bonaventure does not tell stories about the Jews in the Sunday Sermons, the Jews of which he writes are not living per-

sons, but are historical figures from the time of Jesus or are characters used to express a moral purpose. The things which Bonaventure accuses the Jews of believing or doing are ideas and actions which good Christians should not entertain or do. Bonaventure's purpose in speaking of Jews is to give expression to repressed attitudes and behaviors in Christianity and to tell his audience what to avoid doing.

The majority of the forty references to the Jews in the Sunday Sermons can be placed into one of four categories: Bonaventure holds up the Jews as examples of unfaith, impiety, fraternal hatred and unredeemed affect. Rather than name these things as attitudes and behaviors of Christians, Bonaventure projects them onto "hermeneutical" Jews. The hermeneutic is repression and projection: unfaith, impiety, fraternal hatred and unredeemed affect are unacceptable for Christians and must therefore be imputed to the Other.

Bonaventure accuses the Jews of being perfidious, that is of making a calculated breach of faith. His desire was to inspire faith, and so Bonaventure uses the Jews as examples of lack of faith. In Sermon 43, Bonaventure writes that Jesus countered the pride of the Jews with humility, and their perfidy with liberality. He warns in Sermon 21, quoting Augustine, that those who do not believe are "blinder than the blindness of the Jews." In Sermon 46, he makes the connection between evil Christians and the Jews explicit by quoting Bede: "the one who was struck down by the blows of the Jews, is now struck down by the blasphemies of false Christians." In Sermon 46, Bonaventure blames the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus on the perfidy of the Jews. Bonaventure praises the Maccabees in Sermon 31 for their willingness to die for truth, and notes in Sermon 3 that the Jews were close to the coming of Christ because of the Law. These words in praise of historical Jews, however, strengthen the invective against Bonaventure's hermeneutical Jews, who are faulted for their unwillingness to believe in the truth even though the truth came close to them.

In Sermons 6 and 7, Bonaventure faults the Jews for their impiety and insanity in refusing the medicine of the sacraments. Bonaventure's word-play on insanity and medicine highlights his desire to encourage participation in the sacraments. In Sermon 44 he writes that the Lord, like a good doctor, wished to communicate himself to those who were most sick, just as goodness wishes to communicate itself to those who are most evil. Bonaventure uses the metaphor of medicine for the sacraments, calling his audience to avoid the evil and sickness of the Jews by participation in the sacraments.

In Sermon 16, Bonaventure compares the Jews to Cain, for in killing Christ they were killing one of their own, their brother. He lists the abuses of Christ and accuses the Jews of murder and violence. Through their malevolence, he writes, the Jews displayed God's nobility and the bitterness of Christ's suffering. The fratricide of which Bonaventure accused the Jews stressed the need for mutual love in community. In Sermon 32, he makes an explicit connection

between the need for mutual love in fraternity and the fraternal hatred of the Jews; the Jews crucified Christ with poisonous words, Bonaventure writes, and those reading his words must be vigilant against crucifying their own brothers with the poison of reproach. The Jews, he writes in Sermon 38, hated their neighbors so much that they agreed to take on themselves the yoke of the devil by taking Christ's blood on their heads and on the heads of their children. Bonaventure uses the example of Jewish fraternal hatred to warn his audience not to hate those in their own community.

Finally, Bonaventure criticizes the Jews for their unredeemed affectivity. In Sermon 49, he encourages his audience not to be shocked if they find truth coming from Jewish sources, since they acknowledge truth in words while lacking love in their hearts. He calls them wicked and despoiled because of disordered love and pride. In Sermon 39, he refers to the Jews as coarse, sensual and irrational, and writes that Jesus wanted to lead them to an invisible reality, but they refused and will be cut down. In Sermons 35 and 46, the Jews are referred to as blasphemous, carnal and gluttonous in desiring the flesh pots of Egypt over the freedom of the Exodus. Bonaventure sees the Jews' unredeemed affectivity as the model for what Christians are not to do.

Although the invective directed against the Jews in the Sunday Sermons is at times fierce, there are relatively few references to the Jews given the sheer magnitude of the work. Bonaventure did not devote much space to condemning the Jews, and does so with a hortatory purpose. He does not refer to contemporary Jews, although Sermon 23 might be interpreted as providing an insight to Bonaventure's attitude toward his contemporaries who did not believe in Christ. In Sermon 23, he writes that the Good Shepherd is sent not to "other" sheep (those already damned), but only to his own (those who have the beginnings of faith and can be saved by repentance). There seems to be no concern in the Sunday Sermons for converting Muslims and Jews, an odd omission given that Bonaventure was writing during the time of the Crusades. Sermon 23 may be Bonaventure's way of telling pastors to avoid concerning themselves with contemporary non-Christians and to focus on exhorting those who already believe in Christ to continuing conversion of life.

Other works that Bonaventure wrote or edited at the same time as the Sunday Sermons (1267-1268) include the Collations on the Ten Commandments and the Collations on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Both works make scant reference to the Jews. In the Collations on the Holy Spirit, there are only two references, one of which is of significance. Bonaventure writes "however much a Jew glories in the Law, from which one is without grace, he is nothing."¹⁶ This attitude is consistent with Bonaventure's criticism of the Jews in the Sunday Sermons for their faithlessness and impiety. Similarly in the Collations on the Ten Commandments, Bonaventure makes explicit his use of

the Jews as an example for Christians not to follow, writing "I say that we as Christians should see more than the Jewish people."¹⁷ Bonaventure is more concerned in the Collations on the Ten Commandments with countering Jewish arguments than he is in the Sunday Sermons,¹⁸ but his technique of using the Jews as *exempla* continues.

Bonaventure finds unfaith, impiety, fraternal hatred and unredeemed affect in his own community. In writing the Sunday Sermons, Bonaventure uses the Jews as a way of exhorting people to faith, sacraments, mutuality in community and a purification of affectivity and sensuality. In this way, Bonaventure uses the Jews as *exempla*: characters who are used for short, pointed moral instruction to incite the reader or listener to faith and conversion.

Contemporary Implications

In attempting to retrieve the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition,¹⁹ it is important that lessons be learned from those things that are sinful in the tradition. If Franciscans are unaware of the evil contained in the tradition, it can find the inheritors of the tradition unprepared, and thus undo the good that can be culled from the riches of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. The Franciscan tradition has much to offer the Church and the world; if Franciscans are unaware of its entirety, both good and bad, neither the Church nor the world will be well served.

David Nirenberg writes that "the most dangerous attitudes toward minorities, or at least toward Jews, do not draw their strength from the interactions of individuals and groups within a society, but from collective beliefs, beliefs formed in the Middle Ages and transmitted to the present day."²⁰ Bonaventure used people who were Jewish as instruments to make a case for faith. Faith, if it is to be genuine, must make its appeal to what is best in human beings. As Christian faith has journeyed for two millennia, it has learned the harsh lessons of a faith that attempts to intimidate by fear and to encourage by disparaging others. Whenever persons who are different, who are Other, are condemned the condemnation must be examined for the hermeneutic of projection. Examining Christian condemnations for signs of projection would certainly call into question current ecclesial, political and social condemnations of women, homosexuals, Muslims and others.

Among potential areas where projection may be at play, current Vatican politics concerning the admission of gay men to seminary studies is of contemporary concern. John Allen, writing for the New York Times, notes that in the Roman conception of law the ideal is described with the understanding that exceptions will be made.²¹ While Allen is attempting to promote an understanding of Vatican thought, his thinking and the thinking of the Vatican

officials he describes follows a hermeneutic of projection similar to the hermeneutic found concerning people who are Jewish in the Sunday Sermons: unacceptable attitudes and behaviors are projected onto the Other in order to promote a supposedly salutary course of action. Projection becomes dangerous, as history has taught, because it can eventually lead to violence against the Other. Current Vatican policy is headed down this dangerous and sinful path, a path which can be avoided.

A contemporary crafter of sermons, Barbara Brown Taylor, gives an example of how to avoid the pitfalls of projection. She writes about Jewish-Christian relations in a sermon on Matthew 5: 17-20, in which Jesus calls his disciples to surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. This passage can be problematic for interfaith relations between Christianity and Judaism. Brown writes, however, that the exceeding righteousness for both followers of Christianity and Judaism consists in the love of neighbor. This type of righteousness can provide fertile ground for interfaith dialogue, and certainly precludes condemnations of the type found in the Sunday Sermons.²²

The seeds of violence against the Other are planted early. Contemporary anti-Semitism can trace its roots to medieval Europe and beyond. Trying to understand some of the manifold ways in which humanity came to build places like Auschwitz can help to keep humanity from building them again. The ability to understand the mechanism of projection will help us avoid the violence inherent in vilifying and condemning those who are Other.

Endnotes

¹Bonaventure, *Sunday Sermons*, trans. Timothy J. Johnson (NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, unpublished manuscript, 2005). This paper was submitted as part of the course requirements for "Readings in Franciscan Theology," taught by Professor Johnson during the summer session of the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University. The author is gratefully indebted to Dr. Johnson for his scholarship and encouragement, as well as to the Franciscan Institute for the opportunity to engage in Franciscan studies.

²This analysis is dependent on and will be developed using the work of Joan Young Gregg, *Devils, Women and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997).

³Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jews in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 2.

⁴Robert J. Karris, *Introduction to St. Bonaventure's Commentary on the Gospel of Luke Chapters 9-16*, ed. Robert J. Karris (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003), vii-lvii. See particularly xiv ff. on Romans.

⁵Karris, xv.

⁶Karris, i.

⁷R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe 950-1250* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1987), 152.

⁸Ivan G. Marcus, "The Dynamics of Jewish Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century," in *Jews and Christians in Twelfth Century Europe*, ed. Michael A. Signer and

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⁹Gregg, 13.

¹⁰Gregg, 16.

¹¹Gregg, 18.

¹²Gregg, 19-20.

¹³Morton Hunt, *The Story of Psychology* (New York: Anchor Books, 1993), 201-03.

¹⁴Gregg, 20.

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¹⁶Bonaventure, *Conferences on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Alexis Bugnolo (Mansfield, MA: The Franciscan Archive, 2005). <<http://www.franciscan-archive.org/bonaventura>> (27 July 2005).

¹⁷Bonaventure, *Collations on the Ten Commandments*, Works of Saint Bonaventure VI, trans. Paul J. Spaeth (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1995), 38.

¹⁸Paul J. Spaeth, Introduction to the above work, 9-10.

¹⁹Joseph P. Chinnici, Introduction to Kenan B. Osborne, *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition: Tracing Its Origins and Identifying Its Central Components*, The Franciscan Heritage Series, vol. 1, ed. Joseph P. Chinnici and Elise Saggau (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003), vi-viii.

²⁰David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 4.

²¹John L. Allen, Jr., "At the Vatican, Exceptions Make the Rule," *New York Times*, 27 September 2005, A25.

²²Barbara Brown Taylor, *The Seeds of Heaven: Sermons on the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 1-7.

About Our Contributors

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Timothy Powers holds a masters degree in counseling from the University of Scranton, and has studied at the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University. He recently completed a certificate of advanced graduate studies at the Washington Theological Union.

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Florence Vales, OSC, is a member of the Poor Clare community at Chesterfield, NJ. She has written poetry for many years.

BOOK REVIEW

Three Heroes of Assisi in World War II: Bishop Giuseppe Nicolini, Colonel Valentin Müller, Don Aldo Brunacci.
Edited and written by Josef Raischl and André Cirino, OFM.
Editrice Minerva - Assisi, 2005. 148 pp.

Among the targeted initiatives of the Minerva Press—which for some time has been gradually and thoughtfully increasing its output with a number of works by authors who are eminent members of the Academy of Subasio, we have a worthy production in this most recent work that was presented to the public on October 4, 2005, during a solemn ceremony organized by St. Bonaventure University.

The text was prepared by two authors who have a special bond with Assisi and its saints—Francis and Clare—to whom they have dedicated their studies and their widespread and somewhat complementary interests. The first author is Josef Raischl SFO, who lives in Dachau, Germany, after having completed his formation in Rome at the Historical Institute of the Friars Minor Capuchin and in England at the Franciscan International Study Centre in Canterbury. The second author, André Cirino, OFM, teaches at the above-mentioned Canterbury center and for more than twenty years has been leading pilgrimages to this Franciscan city, deeply inhaling its spiritual atmosphere and historical memory. From this meeting of their interests has come this new book, whose goal is to let the whole world know about the three heroes of Assisi: Bishop Giuseppe Placido Nicolini, Colonel Valentin Müller, M.D. and Assisi Canon, Don Aldo Brunacci.

The first forty pages present, in the impeccable translation by Nancy Celaschi, OSF, some studies by Francesco Santucci taken from the significant bibliography of local history which he has dedicated for some time to the study of these three protagonists of the city's silent era that, during the terrible conflict of the Second World War, made the city a beacon of hope by saving so many human lives.

This material is followed by some of the accounts of Don Aldo Brunacci, the only survivor of the “three heroes,” who as early as 1946 wrote an account that is found on pages 98 to 101 of the book. This provides a fitting anthological key and combines with other accounts by the elderly priest taken from his letters and interviews over the years, including his most recent interview which the National Public Radio broadcast on March 31, 2004, several days after the

solemn conferral of the *Gaudete* Medal Award and his reception as an honored guest at the US Holocaust Museum.

It would be remiss if the authors had failed to conclude this work with that most beautiful of the prayers of Brother Francis which asks God for that most precious gift of peace. *Give us peace of mind and heart, that peace which comes from You. Grant peace to our families, to our Nation, and to the whole world.* Indeed, the world still is in great need of this gift!

Pio De Giuli
Editor of *Subasio*, published by the
ACCADEMIA PROPERZIANA DEL
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Editor's Note: Copies of this title can be purchased through the St. Bonaventure University Bookstore. Contact Annette McGraw for information. (Ph: 716-375-2229 or Fax: 716-375-2667)



Gregorian prayer book at La Verna museum
Photo by C. Fischer during SBU pilgrimage (May, 2005)

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Abbreviations

Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	The Admonitions
BIL	A Blessing for Brother Leo
Cte	The Canticle of the Creatures
CrExh	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
OffP	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
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
IMP	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

Now the presence of truth and grace, which are manifest under the law of grace, could not be fittingly expressed in just one sign by reason of the loftiness and variety of their effects and powers. It therefore follows that in every age and under every law many sacraments were given, in order to express this truth and grace. . . . This variety was intended to express in manifold ways the grace of Christ. . . .

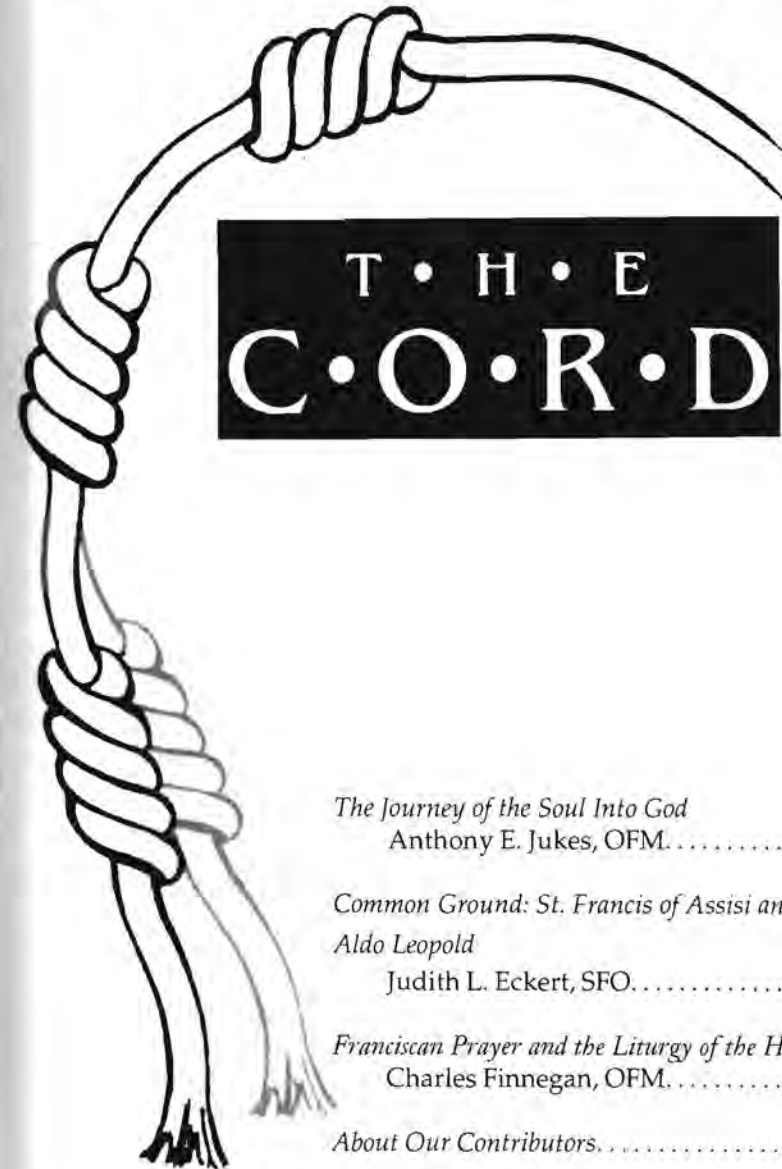
St. Bonaventure's *Breviloquium*
Part IV, Chap. 2.3

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**T • H • E
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THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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

1. MSS should be submitted on disk (or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced).
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 14th ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.
Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or italicized.
4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:
(1Cor. 13:6). (2Cel 5:8).
(RegNB 23:2). (4LAg 2:13).

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

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The Cord, 56.2 (2006)

Editorial

Lent is upon us once again, and Easter is not that far away, either. Although this issue is not "dedicated" to a specific topic or branch of the Franciscan family, nor to the liturgical season itself, the selected articles call us to self-examination, or at least to meditation upon some very important themes: the journey of my soul, the value of *every part* of God's creation, the importance of our common prayer times, and the earthquake that most religious communities have experienced (at least once) in the last thirty years. Fitting subjects for Lent, indeed!

Anthony Jukes has planned a seven-week retreat program for a group of novices and postulants based upon St. Bonaventure's work, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*; it occurs to me that the exercises he proposes fit fairly well into the time frame of Lent/Holy Week. If you are looking for something a bit different than standard Lenten fare, why not use this piece? The article by Judith Eckert that recounts a moment of conversion that changed the life of Aldo Leopold forever is stunningly simple and powerfully moving. All interested in ecological spirituality will appreciate the story Eckert tells. And, praise God, I have been blessed to receive another gem from the hand and heart of Fr. Charles Finnegan, whose writing always challenges us to be better and do better in living our vocations to the full! The last article is by Margaret Carney, OSF, and is the fruit of her labor in giving a presentation to the Religious Formation Conference last year. Margaret had invited me to proofread it before her event took place, and I hid it my computer for future use. Well, that "future use" is now! And, yes, I have permission to print her text. As always Margaret is unafraid to name the earthquakes that shake up the status quo or, perhaps, preconceptions about what it means to be Franciscan and evangelical in 2006.

May we be gentle but firm with ourselves as we traverse the paths God shows us in the time that we call Lent. May the grace of salvation be received gratefully by each of us, and may we strive to live out the Gospel in ever deeper ways!

Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF

The Journey of the Soul Into God¹

Antony E. Jukes, OFM

Introduction

As part of the oral examination² for the course on Saint Bonaventure's work, *The Journey of the Human Person into God*, those taking the course for credit were invited to present a summary of the structure and a plan that could be used to teach the journey to a certain group of people chosen from a list. I decided to plan a seven week retreat program for a group of novices and postulants as they are relatively free from external commitments, though the program could be adapted for various other groups.

It struck me that though Bonaventure's work *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* is usually translated as "The Journey of the Soul into God," the course was titled "The Journey of the Human Person into God." There is a difference between the two. The term "human person" implies not just the soul but the body, soul and spirit, in other words the whole person. The idea of the whole human person entering fully into God was far more attractive as it speaks of the goodness of not just the soul but also our bodies that God has gifted us with. Therefore, I intended to plan a retreat that would involve the whole human person; the full being, body, soul and spirit. Such a retreat would involve the heart, mind and gut, the thoughts, feelings and emotions, using all the bodily senses to give a sensation of the whole human person journeying into God.

Daily Prayer and Mass

Daily community prayer will take place in the oratory at 7:00 a.m., 12:00 noon and 6:00 p.m., unless otherwise stated. Daily Mass will follow midday prayer. The exception will be Sunday morning when the novices and postulants will attend a Mass with the local community in the friary church. This is to maintain a sense of the wider community. For though we step away from the world during a retreat to spend time with God, the Sunday Mass will help serve as a reminder that we are journeying not just as individuals but as a

people, a community of believers, towards God. We need God but we also need each other, just as we are called not only to love God, but also to love our neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39).

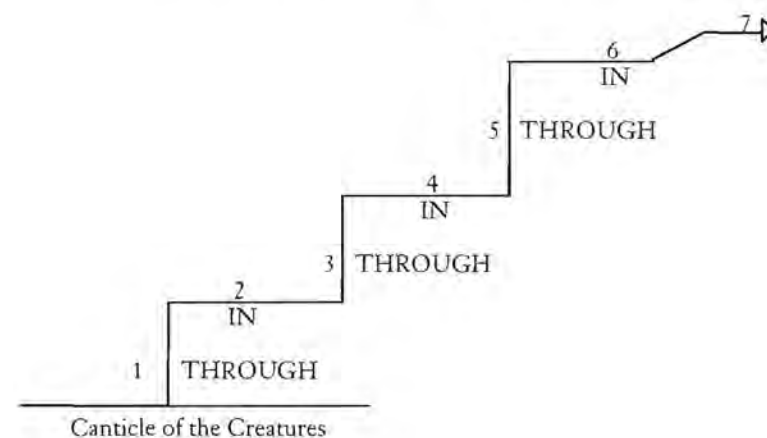
The Preparation Week

There will be a week of preparation before the retreat. This will include a brief history of the life of Saint Bonaventure. The Prologue of the Journey will be read, followed by open discussion on our desire for God and the cleansing of our interior mirror so that we may become clearer mirror images of the Holy Trinity, remembering how we were once made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27). There will be discussion on the use of the eyes, the window to the soul, and on how the contemplation of God leads to an interior peace which surpasses all our understanding; "a peace the world cannot give" (John 14:27).

Finally, on the day before the retreat is due to begin, there will be a reading of *The Canticle of the Creatures*, followed by reflection and discussion on how Saint Francis of Assisi calls on all of creation to join in the song of praise to our Lord and God.

Throughout the week of preparation chart 1 will be on display. Though it shows the seven stages of the journey, the rest of the chart is left blank. This will hopefully arouse a curiosity in the novices and postulants; after all, the journey to God is in many ways an unknown, full of surprises. Thoughts, concerns, words or reflections, even fears may be added to the chart throughout the week.

Chart 1: To be put on display during the week of preparation



The Seven Week Journey

The retreatants will receive the appropriate chapter at the start of each week.

Weeks 1 and 2

During these two weeks, Evening Prayer will take place outside at dusk to watch the sunset and the light fading. This is to help visualize that the footprints of God as seen in nature mysticism are sometimes unclear, perhaps only dim shadows.

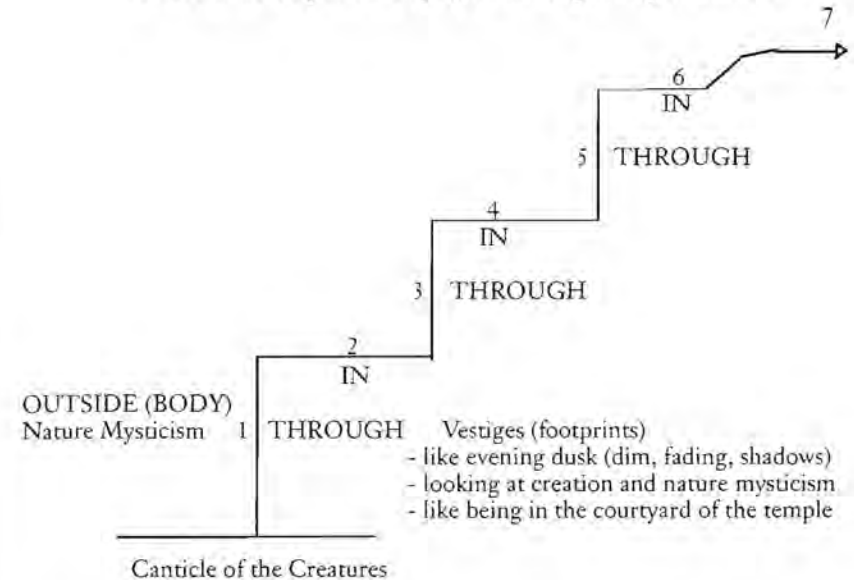
The focus for these two weeks is on nature mysticism, that which is outside and external, the material world and the body; hence the daytrips and the greater use of the external senses.

Chart 2 will be on display. Thoughts, words or reflections may be added to the chart throughout the two weeks.

Week 1: Chapter One – The steps of the ascent into God and the reflection on God through the vestiges in the universe

- Sun. READING CHAPTER, REFLECTION ON CHAPTER, DISCUSSION ON CHAPTER
- Mon. Contemplation of a flower.
- Tue. Discussion on whether the flower is opaque or transparent; in other words, though the flower is not God, are we able to see through the flower to the beauty of God? Are we able to look beyond the created to the creator; are we able to see God's reflection or footprint in the flower? (Matthew 6:25-34 on Trust in Providence may be of use).
- Wed. Day trip to a place of natural beauty, perhaps an ocean view or mountain scenery.
- Thu. Discussion on the beautiful scenery and whether it is opaque or transparent. Is it just a beautiful view or does it tell us something about God's power, magnificence and splendor?
- Fri. Daytrip to a zoo.
- Sat. Discussion on the variety and uniqueness of the animals and wildlife; again are they opaque or transparent? Are we able to look through creation to our creator God?

Chart 2: To be put on display at the beginning of week 1



Week 2: Chapter Two – The reflection on God in the vestiges in this sensible world

- Sun. READING CHAPTER, REFLECTION ON CHAPTER, DISCUSSION ON CHAPTER
During the previous week we tried to look through creation. Now we look at creation as it enters in our senses.
- Mon. Sight. Draw or paint a picture of the place of natural beauty visited last week. This may be compared to photographs to show how memory may be flawed and how we are unable to fully absorb an awesome sight in the same way we are unable to fully absorb and comprehend the full depth of God
- Tue. Hearing. Listen to a piece of classical music in the morning, enjoying its peaceful harmony. Attempt to hum it back in the evening. This may demonstrate how imperfect memories are formed through imperfect senses.
- Wed. Smell. Smelling and reflection on various fragrances, demonstrating how we make a judgment, either taking delight or not taking delight from creation entering our senses.

- Thu. Taste. Eat something quickly and eat something slowly, whilst using or not using the sense of smell. This will demonstrate how the senses may need time to allow creation to enter in and it will show how the senses are often dependent on one another.
- Fri. Touch. Try to identify different objects using only touch, and then gradually introducing the other four senses to identify the different objects. This will demonstrate the interdependency of the senses, showing how all five senses are needed to gain a more complete picture.
- Sat. DAY OF REST

Weeks 3 and 4

During these two weeks, Morning Prayer will take place outside at dawn to watch the sunrise and the light increasing. This is to help visualize that the contemplation of God through the soul and soul mysticism gives a clearer and brighter image than the contemplation of God through nature mysticism. This is because in all of nature, it is the human person that is created in the image and likeness of God and therefore the human soul is capable of giving a clearer reflection of our God.

The focus for these two weeks is on soul mysticism, that which is within and internal, the human soul; hence meeting people and reflection on Grace.

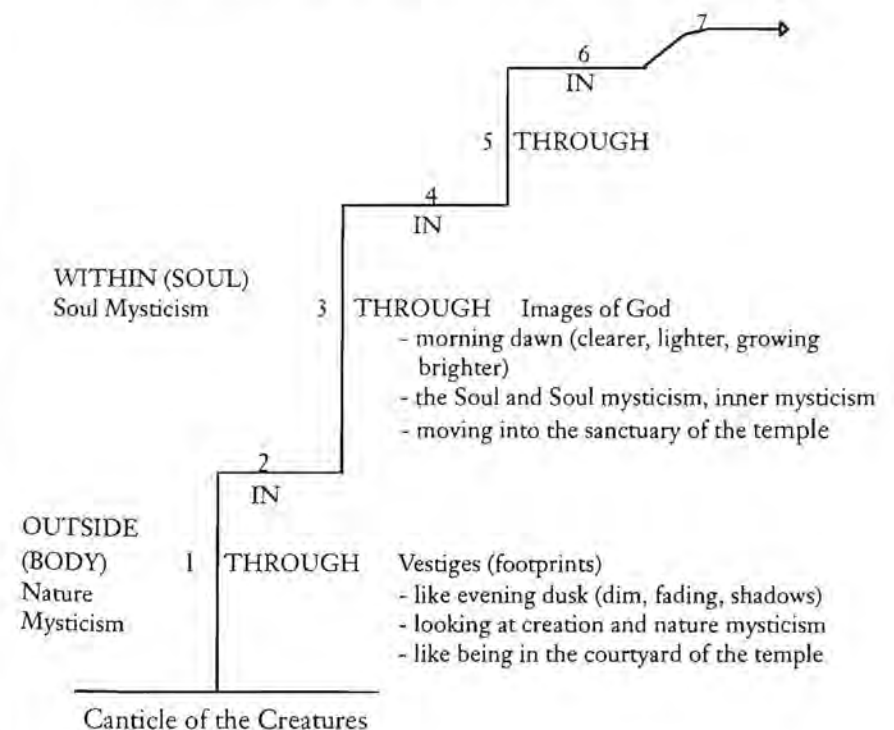
Chart 3 will be on display. Thoughts, words or reflections may be added to the chart throughout the two weeks. The charts from previous weeks will be left on display so that retreatants may look back over the journey so far. The journey is not necessarily continuous and linear. There may be movement towards later stages or movement towards previous stages of the journey already passed through. It is important to be flexible and to allow the Spirit to lead us.

Week 3: Chapter Three – The reflection on God through the image imprinted on our natural powers

- Sun. READING CHAPTER, REFLECTION ON CHAPTER, DISCUSSION ON CHAPTER
- Mon. Memory to Eternity (Father). Visit a home for the elderly and listen to childhood memories.
- Tue. Reflection and discussion on the previous day's experience, including how the memory retains the past, present and future. It remembers changeless truths and goes on and on and on, becoming eternal. We reflect on how we are eternally in the memory of God (Jeremiah 1:5).

- Wed. Intellect to Truth (Word / Son). Listen to lectures from adult teachers on Christian truths.
- Thu. Reflection and discussion on the previous day's experience, including how the intellect understands the meaning of terms and words, how it comprehends the meaning of propositions and is able to grasp conclusions and the Truth. We reflect on how the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ is "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).
- Fri. Will to Highest Good (Holy Spirit). Entertain a group of free spirited primary school children.
- Sat. Reflection and discussion on the previous day's experience, including how we are able to use the will to carefully deliberate before making a judgement that leads to a desire for the Highest Good. And how the Higher Good, the Spirit of love, the Spirit of truth "will lead you to the complete truth" (John 16:13), and how the "truth will make you free" (John 8:32). And how Memory, Intellect and Will when used together help to build up an image of God.

Chart 3: To be put on display at the beginning of week 3



Week 4: Chapter Four – The reflection on God in the image reformed by the gifts of grace

- Sun. READING CHAPTER, REFLECTION ON CHAPTER, DISCUSSION ON CHAPTER
- Mon. A reminder of our Baptismal Vows and the Graces we receive.
- Tue. Faith. Reflection and discussion on the strength of faith and on the doubts and struggles often associated with faith (Hebrews 11:1-40). We discuss how faith is often blind for “no one has ever seen God” (John 1:18). We remember how previously we used the physical senses of sight and hearing to see and hear beauty and harmony. And now we build upon these physical senses with the eyes and ears of faith to help reach the perfection of the spiritual senses, so that we may gaze with admiration on the beauty and harmony of our God.
- Wed. Hope. Reflection and discussion on hope and on the patience it brings during times of trial and suffering (Romans 5:3-5). We remember how the physical sense of smell was used to experience soothing fragrances that may calm us during times of stress. And now we build upon the physical sense of smell, using the scent of hope to restore the perfection of the spiritual sense, so that we may experience with devotion the soothing fragrance of our God.
- Thu. Love. Reflection and discussion on love and the commitment and work it requires, and how love is eternal (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). We remember how taste and touch were used to experience sweetness and delight. And now we build upon these physical senses with sweet and delightful love to help perfect our spiritual senses, so that we may rejoice with exultation in the sweetness and delight of our God. The film “The Phantom of the Opera” may be shown to help demonstrate the importance of touch and the damage done to a person when they are deprived of touch and love.
- Fri. A presentation on Mary, she is “Full of Grace.” Mary is what God would be in all of us. She carried the Word of God in her womb; we are called to carry the Word of God in the womb of our hearts. She gave birth to the Word of God in the stable in Bethlehem; we are called to give birth to the Word of God in our good works. And how, when all humanity is full of Grace, “God may be all in all.” (1 Corinthians 15:28).
- Sat. DAY OF REST

Weeks 5 and 6

During these two weeks, Midday Prayer will take place outside at noon when the sun is at its highest and its light is brightest. This is to help visualize the blinding light of God that we see as we contemplate the Divine Names of the Holy Trinity.

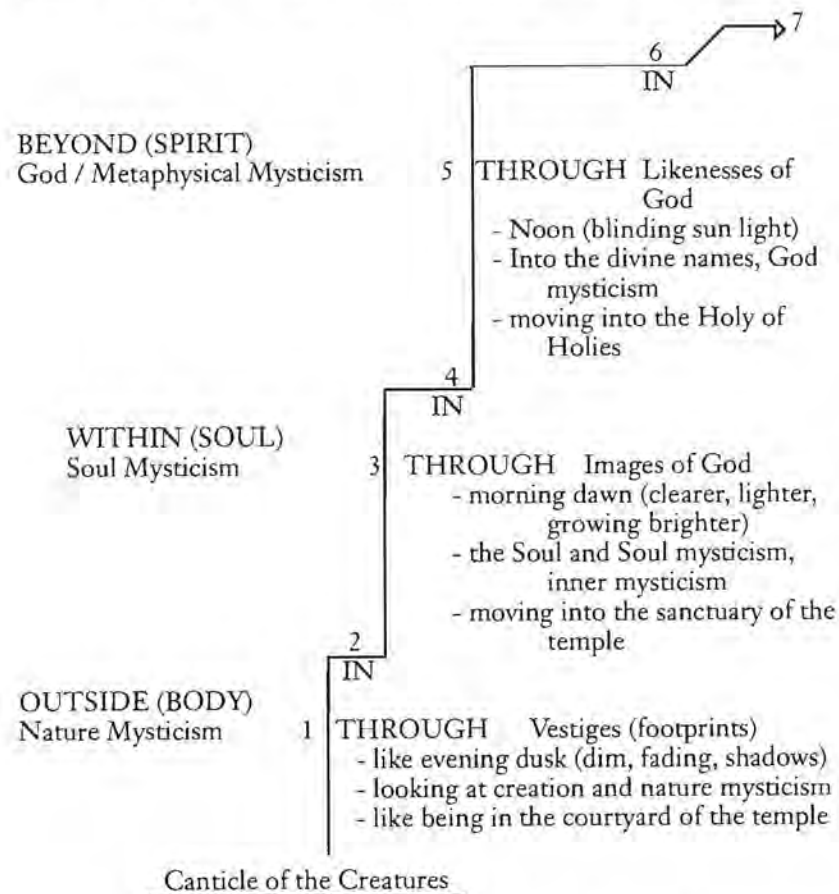
The focus for these two weeks is on God mysticism, the spiritual and that which is beyond; hence more quiet time for meditation and contemplation.

Chart 4 will be on display. Thoughts, words or reflections may be added to the chart throughout the two weeks.

Week 5: Chapter Five – The reflection on the divine unity through God’s primary name, which is Being

- Sun. READING CHAPTER, REFLECTION ON CHAPTER, DISCUSSION ON CHAPTER
Saint Francis of Assisi prayed “Who are you, Lord my God, and who am I?” This is the prayer that we will focus on throughout the week. For the first five days we pray “who are you Lord?” as we meditate on various passages from scripture.
- Mon. You are Being. “I Am who I Am” (Exodus 3:14).
- Tue. You are Good. “No one is good but God alone” (Luke 18:19).
- Wed. You are Truth. “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14:6).
- Thu. You are Unity. “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). We meditate on the unity of the Holy Trinity.
- Fri. You are Beauty. “A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). We meditate on the beauty of Jesus’ love for us, and how the beauty of this spiritual love on the Cross is in contrast to the bitterness and ugliness of the physical suffering on the Cross.
- Sat. We pray “Who am I Lord?” Not what I do, but who am I. It is only by knowing God that we come to know our own true self and the full dignity of the human person. I am made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Before God formed me in the womb God knew me; before I came to birth God consecrated me (Jeremiah 1:5). “Yahweh called me before I was born, from my mother’s womb he pronounced my name” (Isaiah 49:1).

Chart 4: To be put on display at the beginning of week 5



Week 6: Chapter Six – The reflection on the Most Blessed Trinity in its name, which is the Good

- Sun. READING CHAPTER, REFLECTION ON CHAPTER, DISCUSSION ON CHAPTER
- Mon. The God of Love. Reflection and discussion on Saint Augustine's image of the Holy Trinity as Love; where God the Father is the Lover, God the Son is the Beloved and God the Holy Spirit is Love itself flowing between the Father and Son.
- Tue. God the Father. Contemplate God the Father, the "creator of heaven and earth" (The Apostles' Creed), the "Fountain Fullness" and infinite source of all goodness who is freely self-giving.

- Wed. God the Son. Contemplate God the Son, the "Divine Exemplar," the full expression of the Father, the Word through whom "all things were created" (Colossians 1:16).
- Thu. God the Holy Spirit. Contemplate God the Holy Spirit, the "Breath of God," the "breath of life" (Genesis 2:7), and the free gift of God's love to creation and humanity.
- Fri. Reflection on how the perfect unselfish love and goodness of the Holy Trinity flows out into creation and is freely shared with humanity. And how God the Son, the Word became flesh in Jesus Christ to fully return all the love and goodness in creation perfectly back to the Father. And we are drawn to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit; bringing us into the unity of the Holy Trinity.

Sat. DAY OF REST

Week 7

Surrender of the whole human person, body, soul and spirit, to God; silence leading to solitude.

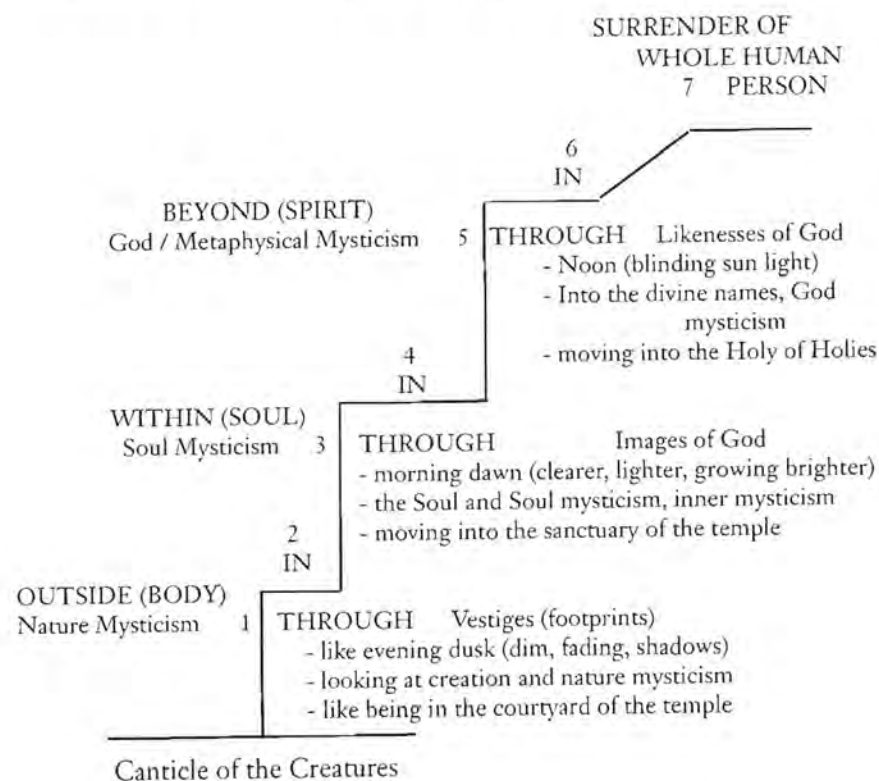
Chart 5 will be on display. Thoughts, words or reflections may be added to the chart, but not during the three days of silence. This is to prevent any distractions as we surrender ourselves wholly to God.

Week 7: Chapter Seven – The mental and mystical transport in which rest is given to our understanding and through ecstasy our affection passes over totally into God

- Sun. READING CHAPTER, REFLECTION ON CHAPTER, DISCUSSION ON CHAPTER
Words and knowledge can only take us so far, but the time will come when these will fail (1 Corinthians 13:8-12) and then we must surrender ourselves to God.
- Mon. Daytrip to climb a mountain. We begin at the foot of the mountain with our desire to reach the top. We use all our senses as we climb the mountain, contemplating the ascent into God. At the top we rest before surrendering ourselves to God. (For those unable to climb they may contemplate the ascent into God from the foot of the mountain, slowly raising their gaze from the base of the mountain along the route they would take to its peak, mirroring their own journey into God.)

- Tue. Visit a swimming pool with three diving boards at different heights representing the three steps of the journey as shown on the charts. As we climb the steps we reflect on the journey before taking the plunge. If we jump from the diving board it is a leap into the unknown, a passing over, surrendering to God as we fall into the silence and peace and darkness of the water below.
- Wed. SURRENDER – SILENCE LEADING TO SOLITUDE
- Thu. SURRENDER – SILENCE LEADING TO SOLITUDE
- Fri. SURRENDER – SILENCE LEADING TO SOLITUDE
- Sat. Final discussion on *The Journey of the Human Person into God*.

Chart 5: To be put on display at the beginning of week 7



Endnotes

¹Copyright © 2005, Antony E. Jukes, OFM, English Province of the Immaculate Conception.

²For André Cirino, OFM (Franciscan International Study Centre, Canterbury). The version of *The Journey of the Human Person into God* is a recent translation by Zachary Hayes, OFM included in *The Journey Into God – a Forty Day Retreat with Bonaventure, Francis and Clare*. Josef Raischl, SFO and André Cirino, OFM (Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2002).



Image of St. Bonaventure by Tiberio d'Assisi; a detail from the "Madonna with Saints" found in the Church of St. Francis in Montefalco. (See *S. Bonaventura da Bagnoregio* (Rome: Ed. Antonianum, n.d.), 23.

Common Ground: St. Francis of Assisi and Aldo Leopold

Judith L. Eckert, SFO

In early March, 2004, a newspaper article caught my attention. It stated that in 2004 "the Wisconsin Legislature designated the first full weekend in March each year as Aldo Leopold weekend."¹ The inaugural celebration took place in 2005. Many of you are probably familiar with Leopold. He is "widely considered the father of wildlife conservation in the United States"² and is "best known for his *A Sand County Almanac*."³ I had often thought of reading this book. Reading the newspaper article gave me the impetus I needed to finally read it. What a wonderful book! It's as relevant today as when it was published in 1949. After finishing the book, I wanted to learn more about Leopold and checked out a biography written by Marybeth Lorbiecki.⁴ As I read the *Almanac* and the biography I couldn't help but notice similarities between the lives and thinking of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology, and Aldo Leopold, the "Father of wildlife ecology."

Aldo was born in 1887 in Burlington, Iowa on the banks of the Mississippi River. His maternal grandfather was an amateur naturalist who loved gardening and landscape design. He convinced the city to establish a park featuring native plants and natural contours. Aldo's father was an avid outdoorsman who taught him to hunt. At a time when there were few hunting laws, his father stressed a code of ethics which included taking only what one could consume and avoiding springtime hunting when young were being raised. Aldo's mother Clara encouraged him in the areas of literature and writing. At an early age Aldo went on nature outings, keeping a journal of observations about birds and plants. Aldo's father Carl was a furniture dealer. Near the turn of the century his father observed that the number of log-filled rafts coming down the river was dwindling. He sought out information about forest management and introduced his son to this topic. "When Aldo heard of Yale's new forestry training program and the new Forest Service"⁵ he decided that his place was in the woods.

As a Yale student, Aldo became distracted from his dream by sports and social events. He dressed in the latest fashions, attended parties and spent less time on nature outings. Things got so bad that he was put on probation. Fortunately a reprimand from his mother induced him to get back to his studies. Doesn't this sound a lot like Francis who Celano describes in this way: "He . . . endeavored to surpass others in his flamboyant display of vain accomplishments: wit, curiosity, practical jokes and foolish talk, songs, and soft and flowing garments" (1C 1:2).

Leopold entered the Forest Service in 1909 and was assigned to the Apache National Forest in Arizona Territory. ". . . Leopold and the rest of the rangers kept up a steady war against wolves, mountain lions, and grizzlies—the predators that ate the game species the foresters wanted to protect. The foresters shot, trapped, or poisoned these 'varmints,' earning bounties for their successes."⁶ There is a particularly important anecdote that reveals how Leopold may have begun what we can call a conversion:

One particular afternoon, Leopold and another crew member spotted a wolf and her pups crossing the river. They shot into the pack and then scrambled down the rocks to see what they had done. One pup was crippled and trying to crawl away. The old mother wolf lay snapping and growling. Aldo baited her with his rifle, and the wolf lunged at him, snatching it in her teeth. The men backed away, but kept their eyes on her, watching her die.⁷

Many years later, Leopold himself wrote about that day:

We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes—something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view.⁸

Francis of Assisi also had an encounter with a wolf that terrorized the people of Gubbio. He acknowledged the wolf's right to live. He understood the needs of the wolf and the people. He brought peace between the people of Gubbio and the wolf who had terrorized them. But it would be years before Leopold changed his mind about wolves and the role of predators in the natural world.

Since then I have lived to see state after state extirpate its wolves. I have watched the face of many a newly wolf-less mountain, and seen the south-facing slopes wrinkle with a maze of new deer trails. I have

seen every edible bush and seedling browsed, first to anemic desuetude, and then to death. I have seen every edible tree defoliated to the height of a saddlehorn. . . . In the end the starved bones of the hoped-for deer herd, dead of its own too-much, bleach with the bones of the dead sage, or molder under the high-lined junipers. I now suspect that just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer. And perhaps with better cause, for while a buck pulled down by wolves can be replaced in two or three years, a range pulled down by too many deer may fail of replacement in as many decades.⁹

In the spring of 1913 Aldo's work took him to the Jicarilla Mountains. He became very ill and was taken to Santa Fe where he was diagnosed with nephritis, a serious kidney ailment, from which he nearly died. The only treatment was rest. The lengthy recuperation period gave Leopold time to read, write, and reflect. He determined that his mission was game management. Francis also experienced serious illness and a long recuperation after being imprisoned during the war against Perugia. Celano wrote that "he went outside and began to gaze upon the surrounding countryside" (1C 1:3). The experience eventually helped Francis to discern his mission in life.

Leopold saw the numbers of game species dwindling and wanted to reverse that trend so that future generations could enjoy the same experience he had while hunting with his father. He proposed to the Forest Service that game animals be considered forest "products" just as trees were, that game refuges be established, and hunting permits sold to support rangers enforcing game laws. The Forest Service rejected his idea and he turned to the private sector, namely, game protective associations. In an address to the Albuquerque Rotarians he said:

It is our task to educate the moral nature of each and every one of New Mexico's half million citizens to look upon our beneficial birds and animals, not as so much gun fodder to satisfy his instinctive love of killing, but as irreplaceable works of art, done in life by the Great Artist.¹⁰

The Leopolds moved to Madison, Wisconsin in 1924 where Aldo took a job at the Forest Products Laboratory. Five days after he left, the Forest Service approved Leopold's working plan for the Gila Wilderness area—"the first official wilderness area in a national forest."¹¹ In 1933 the University of Wisconsin hired Leopold to teach the nation's first graduate program in game management. In 1935 the Leopolds purchased an abandoned farm on the Wisconsin River near Baraboo. His goal was to restore the land to its pioneer state. This land was to be the inspiration for *A Sand County Almanac*.

Just as with Francis of Assisi, Aldo Leopold's life took many turns before he found his ultimate mission, namely, to articulate an American land ethic. The book jacket of Lorbiecki's biography describes this ethic very simply, quoting Leopold as saying: "How can we live on the land without spoiling it?"

In 1936, Leopold had a profound shift in the focus of his life, namely, from sick land to healthy land. He had visited Germany where he saw "wilderness" managed out of the forest. Afterwards he visited an unspoiled wilderness in Mexico. From that time on, his focus was on protecting existing wilderness areas.

In the article "Why a Wilderness Society?" he wrote:

The long and short of the matter is that . . . we do not yet understand and cannot yet control the long-time interrelations of animals, plants, and mother earth. . . . The Wilderness Society is, philosophically, a disclaimer of the biotic arrogance of *Homo americanus*. It is one of the focal points of a new attitude—an intelligent humility toward man's place in nature.¹²

Note the key word "humility"—one of the primary Franciscan virtues.

In the Foreword to *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold stated: "Conservation is getting nowhere because it is incompatible with our Abrahamic concept of land. We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land (soil, water, plants, animals) as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics."¹³ Leopold continued: "It is a century now since Darwin gave us the first glimpse of the origin of species. We know now what was unknown to all preceding caravans of generations; that men are only fellow-voyagers with other creatures in the odyssey of evolution. This new knowledge should have given us, by this time, a sense of kinship with fellow-creatures; a wish to live and let live; a sense of wonder over the magnitude and duration of the biotic enterprise."¹⁴ Note that Leopold used the phrase "kinship with fellow-creatures," so similar to the Secular Franciscan Rule, Article 18, which states: ". . . they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship."

Later, his son wrote: "One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on the land is quite invisible to laymen . . . in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise."¹⁵ Such an attitude requires a new ethic: ". . . a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such."¹⁶

Francis of Assisi addressed his fellow creatures as “brothers” and “sisters.” In his *Salutation of the Virtues*, he spoke of obedience, not only to people but to animals as well. What better way to show respect than to allow them to live as God intended.

In closing, there is much “common ground” between Francis and Aldo. Above all, they both showed great love and tenderness towards God’s creation. It enabled them to go beyond mere preaching and teaching to charismatic leadership. They both affected generations that came after them. Aldo Leopold was not a Catholic but his writings certainly have a spiritual aspect, including Scripture quotations. Like Francis, Leopold experienced God’s presence in nature. His beloved wife, Estella, was Catholic and they married at the Cathedral of St. Francis in Santa Fe. What a coincidence!

Endnotes

¹Heather LaRoi, “State Marks Contributions of Conservationist Aldo Leopold,” *The Post-Crescent* (Appleton, Wisconsin, no date, no page).

²LaRoi.

³LaRoi.

⁴Marybeth Lorbiecki, *A Fierce Green Fire* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁵Lorbiecki, 24.

⁶Lorbiecki, 43.

⁷Lorbiecki, 43.

⁸Aldo Leopold, “Thinking Like a Mountain,” *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Oxford University Press, [1949], 1987), 130.

⁹Leopold, 130.

¹⁰July, 1917, speech to Albuquerque Rotarians.

¹¹Lorbiecki, 96.

¹²Draft of essay published in *Living Wilderness*, vol. 1 (Sept., 1935); Aldo Leopold Papers.

¹³Leopold, Foreword, *A Sand County Almanac*, viii.

¹⁴Leopold, “On a Monument to the Pigeon,” *A Sand County Almanac*, 109.

¹⁵*Round River*, Luna B. Leopold, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, [1953], 1972), 197.

¹⁶L. Leopold, 204.

“Conservation is getting nowhere because it is incompatible with our Abrahamic concept of land. We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land (soil, water, plants, animals) as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics.” Aldo Leopold, 1949

Franciscan Prayer and Liturgy of the Hours

Charles Finnegan, OFM

As we prepare to celebrate the eighth centennial of the foundation of our Franciscan family in 2009, we rightly recall “the grace of our origins,”¹ reflecting with gratitude on St. Francis’s original inspiration and life of radical gospel living, to live that vision today creatively and with renewed enthusiasm.

The text “The Grace of Our Origins” could well have used the plural, Graces, since there are so many. One might think, for example, of the “Five Priorities,” every one of them a grace, named by the OFM general chapter of 2003:

The Spirit of Prayer and Devotion
Communion of Life in Fraternity
Life in Minority, Poverty and Solidarity
Evangelization and Mission
Formation

All branches of our Franciscan family agree in their documents that the life of deep prayer and worship of God is the first of our Franciscan priorities; it is indeed the priority of all our priorities. St. Francis considered work to be a grace, but always with the understanding that it “not extinguish the Spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all other things of our earthly existence must contribute” (LR 5:2). Francis wanted those of his brothers called to preach to be competent, and so approved of study, but again with the proviso that study “not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion” (LtAnt). He was convinced that the malice of our adversary consists precisely in this: he wants to impede us from living “with our hearts turned to the Lord” (RegNB, XXII,19).

Hearts Turned To the Lord

If anything is clear in the life of St. Francis, after his conversion, it is the absolute primacy of God.

"Now that we have left the world, the only thing we have to do is follow the will of the Lord, and please God" (RegNB XXII:9). The only thing! "Let us desire nothing else, let us wish for nothing else, let nothing else please us and cause us delight, except our Creator and Redeemer and Savior, the one true God" (ER 23:9). Convinced of the absolute primacy of God in our life, Francis draws the obvious conclusion:

Therefore let nothing hinder us, nothing separate us [from God], nothing come between us. Let all of us, wherever we are, in every place, at every hour, at every time of day, everyday and all day, believe truly and humbly, and keep in [our] heart, and love, honor, adore, serve and bless . . . the most high and supreme eternal God, Trinity and Unity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (ER 23:10 ff).

Francis's first biographer is surely justified in making the claim that "his whole soul thirsted after Christ. He did not just say prayers; he himself became a prayer" (2C 94f). Francis is continually fascinated by the sheer goodness of God, and contemplating the divine mysteries he pours out his soul in a crescendo of praise and thanksgiving to God, "the fullness of good, all good, every good, the true and supreme good, who alone is good, and totally desirable above all else forever" (ER 23:11). Francis therefore rejoiced at the thought of his family as "pilgrims and strangers in this world," contemplative-evangelists, "the Lord's minstrels . . . going through the world preaching and praising God."² "The servants of God need to know how to dedicate themselves always to prayer and to some good work" (ER 7:11) wrote Francis, and the Divine Office, today usually called the Liturgy of the Hours, provided him and his family with an excellent means of doing that.

The "Hours" In St. Francis's Writings

In the first two chapters of both Rules Francis treats of the vows and the reception of new friars. In chapter 3 he begins to deal with the life and work of the friars, and in that context he mentions in the first place the Divine Office. It is as if in thinking of how he and his brothers would live the gospel together the first thing that comes to his mind – the first work he thinks of – is the Liturgy of the Hours.

All the brothers, whether clerical or lay, should celebrate the Divine Office, the praises and prayers, as is required of them. The clerical [brothers] should celebrate the office and say it for the living and the dead according to the custom of the clergy. And for the failings and negligence of the brothers let them say the *De profundis* (Psalm 129) with the Our Father. And the lay brothers who know how to read the

psalter may have it. The [other] lay brothers should say the I believe in God and twenty-four Our Fathers with the Glory to the Father for Matins; for Lauds they should say five; for Prime, the I believe in God and seven Our Father's with the Glory to the Father; for each of the hours of Terce, Sext and None, seven; for Vespers, twelve; for Compline, the I believe in God and seven Our Father's with the Glory to the Father; for the deceased, seven Our Father's with the Eternal rest; and for the failings and negligence of the brothers, three Our Father's every day (RegNB 3:3ff).

Those instructions were shortened in the approved rule:

The clerical [brothers] shall celebrate the Divine Office according to the rite of the holy Roman Church, except for the Psalter, for which reason they may have breviaries. The lay [brothers] shall pray twenty-four Our Father's for Matins, five for Lauds, seven for each of the hours of Prime, Terce, Sext and None, twelve for Vespers, and seven for Compline. And let them pray for the dead (RegB 3:3ff).

St. Clare follows the same pattern in her Rule. Chapters I and II recall how the "Form of Life of the Poor Sisters" was established by St. Francis and the obligations of obedience (to the Pope, to the successors of St. Francis, to Clare and to the abbesses who would succeed her), and provide norms for the reception and training of new Sisters. Chapter III begins to treat the life of the Poor Sisters, and the first activity Clare mentions—the first thing that comes to her mind—is the Divine Office:

The Sisters who can read shall celebrate the Divine Office according to the custom of the Friars Minor; for this they may have breviaries, but they are to read it without singing. And those who, for some reasonable cause, sometimes are not able to read and pray the Hours, may, like the other Sisters, say the Our Father's (RCI 3:1).

That St. Francis considered the Divine Office to be of great importance in his own life can be gathered from the surprising and public confession he makes in the most liturgical of his writings, A Letter To the Entire Order:

I confess all my sins to the Lord God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, to the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, and to all the Saints in heaven and on earth, to Brother H., the Minister General of our Order, and to the priests of our Order and to all my other blessed brothers. I have offended God in many ways through my grievous fault especially in not having kept the Rule which I promised the Lord nor in having said the Office as the Rule prescribes, either out of negli-

gence or on account of my sickness, or because I am ignorant and unlearned (38ff).

Francis considered the Divine Office to be of the greatest importance also in the life of his brothers, and in that same Letter reserves the harshest words found anywhere in his writings for friars who neglected to pray the Office: "I do not consider them to be Catholics nor my brothers, and I do not wish to see them or speak with them, until they have done penance" (44). He then instructed the friars about the importance of praying the Office, not out of routine or mechanically, but "with devotion before God, not concentrating on the melody of the voice but on the harmony of the mind, so that the voice may blend with the mind, and the mind be in harmony with God. [Let them do this] in such a way that they may please God through purity of heart and not charm the ears of the people with sweetness of voice" (41f).

Example of St. Francis

Our Franciscan Sources reveal the importance Francis gave in his own life to the devout praying of the Office. His first biographer noted that "He celebrated the canonical hours with no less awe than devotion," and even when ill would not lean against a wall or partition, but chanted the psalms standing upright (2C 96). Another early source recalls how once, while returning from Rome Francis traveled on horseback because he was very ill. In spite of a downpour, Francis dismounted when it was time to pray the Hours, "standing on the roadside despite the rain which completely soaked him" (AC 120). His main concern was to pray the Hours devoutly. Brother Leo, a close companion of St. Francis, testified that when Francis was too ill to recite the Office, he wanted at least to listen to it.³ When close to death, Francis wrote: "Although I may be simple and infirm I wish nonetheless to have a cleric who will celebrate the Office for me as contained in the Rule" (Test 29).

When Francis's first followers, led by his example, came to him with the question: "What should we do?" he answered: "Let us go to church tomorrow and consult the holy gospel." On the following morning they went to church, and Francis opened the Book of the Gospels, discovering three foundational texts for his brotherhood. One of the texts read: "Take nothing for your journey" (L3C 29, found in Lk 9:3). Ever since that revelation, Francis loved to think of his family as "pilgrims and strangers in this world" (Test 28) – itinerant evangelists, "going through the world preaching and praising God, as God's minstrels" (AC 83) – "taking nothing for their journey *except the books in which they could say their Hours*" (L3C 59). Interesting: Francis added those italicized words to what he had found in the gospel. When thinking of traveling essentials, the one thing Francis reminds us not to forget is the Office book!

According to an early Franciscan source, something similar happened that prompted Francis and his brothers to leave Rivo Torto. The usual explanation⁴ attributes their sudden departure to the rude action of a man who drove his donkey into the friars' hut, intending to take possession of it. Francis advised the friars that they had not been called to "entertain a donkey," so they left. The Assisi Compilation (56) offers an additional explanation: as the numbers of Francis's followers increased, he thought it well "to ask the bishop or the canons of St. Rufino or the abbot of the Monastery of St. Benedict, for a small and poor church where the brothers may recite their Hours." The difficulty he had with Rivo Torto was that "the house is too small since it pleases the Lord to multiply our numbers, and above all, we have no church where the brothers may recite their Hours." Above all! Neither the bishop nor the canons were able to help him, so the Benedictine abbot of the monastery of Mount Subasio, after consulting his brothers, gave Francis "the poorest church they owned," the church of St. Mary of the Portiuncula. That became the dearest place on earth to him, as St. Bonaventure noted: "He loved this place above all others in the world" (LMj 2:8). It was at Portiuncula that Francis had earlier discovered his vocation with clarity, exclaiming after hearing the mission discourse in the gospel: "This is what I want; this is what I am looking for; this is what I long to do with all my heart" (1C 22).

To assemble the friars in chapter, including the famous Chapter of Mats, he would call them to the Portiuncula, and from there send them out on mission. It was there he received St. Clare into his family, beginning with her the Second Order.⁵ In all probability the Third Order also (the Brothers and Sisters of Penance), known today as Secular Franciscans, from whom the Third Order Regular would develop, can trace their origins to the Portiuncula.⁶ From the Portiuncula Francis set out on his missionary journeys to France, Spain and the Middle East, and from there returned to the Portiuncula. When he knew that he was soon to die, he asked to be taken to the Portiuncula, where he welcomed Sister Death. Francis did not have a home on earth, but the closest thing he had to one was surely the Portiuncula. According to the above-mentioned Compilation, the reason Francis acquired the use of that sacred place was, "above all else," his desire that he and his brothers might have a suitable place to pray the Office.

Why Is the Divine Office Important?

Neither St. Francis nor St. Clare develop a "theology" of the Liturgy of the Hours⁷ – led by the Holy Spirit, they sensed its importance by a kind of "holy intuition" – but they would surely rejoice at the inspiring teaching of Vatican II on the Office, especially in nn. 83-85 of the Liturgy Constitution, *Sacrosanctum concilium*:

83. Jesus Christ, High Priest of the New and Eternal Covenant, taking human nature, introduced into this earthly exile that hymn which is sung throughout all ages in the halls of heaven. He attaches to Himself the entire community of humankind and has them join him in singing his divine song of praise. He continues his priestly work through his church which, by celebrating the Eucharist and by other means, especially the celebration of the divine office, is ceaselessly engaged in praising the Lord and interceding for the salvation of the entire world.

84. The divine office . . . is so devised that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praise of God. Therefore when this wonderful song of praise is correctly celebrated . . . it is truly the voice of the Bride herself addressed to her Bridegroom. It is the very prayer which Christ himself together with his Body addresses to the Father.

85. Hence all who take part in the divine office are not only performing a duty for the Church, they are also sharing in what is the greatest honor for Christ's bride; for by offering these praises to God they are standing before God's throne in the name of the Church, their Mother.

Reflecting on the conciliar teaching, some points are deserving of special attention:

1. Before the coming of Jesus Christ, no human being ever offered God a perfect prayer. That changed when the Eternal Word of God became flesh: He introduced that hymn of perfect praise to God that is sung "in the halls of heaven." He introduced it because it was not here before His coming.

Indeed the Incarnate Word is that song of perfect praise, being "the exact representation of the Father's being" (Heb 1:3). On leaving this world and returning to His Father, Christ did not take His prayer away with Him: He entrusted it to us, commissioning us to continue His prayer on earth. More than that: He invited us into His prayer, so that His prayer would be our prayer also—what St. Augustine calls the prayer of "the whole Christ"—Christ the Head, together with us, the members of His body.

While on earth Jesus was, as the gospels make clear, a man of prayer: "He often went off to deserted places where he could be alone and pray" (Lk 5:16). Alone! That's the difference: He is no longer alone: the prayer is the same, for it is His, but it is also ours: He and we together, the "whole Christ," giving God worship, praise and thanksgiving, and interceding for the whole world. (We might think of it this way: when Jesus was on earth and went to deserted places to pray, what the Father heard was the lone voice of His Son; when we pray the Hours, what the Father hears is still the loving voice of His Son—the prayer is His—but He is no longer alone; the Father also hears our voice in perfect unison with that of His Son, praying His prayer which is now also

ours. As Augustine said: When the body of the Son comes together to pray, we do not separate ourselves from Christ our Head, therefore "Let us hear our voices in His voice, and His voice in ours."⁸

The Liturgy of the Hours "is the very prayer which Christ himself together with his Body addresses to the Father." That conciliar teaching is the single most important thing we need to know about the Liturgy of the Hours. To be caught up into the very prayer of Christ is indeed an awesome privilege and responsibility. Christ has entrusted us with the mission of continuing on earth something that was very dear to Him—His prayer to His Abba. To neglect that duty would be to say, "this doesn't interest me; I'm not interested in being part of that prayer." St. Francis's reply to that is to say, as his harsh words quoted above imply, "then you are not interested in being part of my family."

2. The specific purpose of the Liturgy of the Hours is, as its name implies, the consecration of time: "the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praise of God." Time is God's creation; it is God's gift to us—we journey through time to reach eternal life. St. Francis understood life as that journey: "may we make our way to you, Most High, following the footprints of your beloved Son, inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit" (LtOrd).

An important element in that journey of "making our way" to the Father, is "following the footprints of [His] beloved Son" in prayer, being drawn into His very own prayer. Every day we give back to God with gratitude the time God gives us—indeed the gift of time is consecrated by the Holy Spirit—as we pray the Liturgy of the Hours. In this context we recall the "special times" of the Liturgical Year (Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter seasons) when the Liturgy of the Hours, and especially the Office of Readings, provides us with a valuable means of entering into the spirit of the season.

3. There is a close connection between the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours. The Eucharist perpetuates the Sacrifice of the Cross, so that Christ's sacrifice might be our sacrifice also, and the Liturgy of the Hours perpetuates His prayer, so that His prayer might be our prayer too.

Both Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours are the work of the "whole Christ." In addition, while we profess that the Eucharist is the "memorial of Christ's death and resurrection" (making present again the great saving event—"God's absolute masterpiece," as St. Augustine said), the purpose of the Liturgy of the Hours is to bring the praise and blessings of the Eucharist to all the hours of the day.⁹

No wonder St. Francis and St. Clare attached so much importance to it! The question for us is: how much importance do I attach to it? How much importance do we as a community attach to it? How careful are we to pray the Office "with devotion before God," as St. Francis wanted.

Conclusion

Giving witness to a life of deep prayer, and specifically the Liturgy of the Hours, can be a great service to the church. We find an early example of this in the prayerful Franciscan presence at the poor friary in Greccio. The friars there sang the Lord's praises each evening, "as was the custom in many places" (AC 74). The people of the city would come out of their homes, and standing on the roadside by the friary, would alternate with the friars, chanting in a loud voice, "Blessed be the Lord God!" The example of the friars at prayer called the people to prayer.

Today too we are encouraged to invite others to join us in praying the Hours. In the Apostolic Constitution promulgating the Office, Paul VI noted: "[The Office] has been arranged so that not only the clergy but also religious and laity may participate in it, since it is the prayer of the whole people of God." To facilitate that, certain psalms (for example, three imprecatory psalms [58, 83 and 109] have been omitted from the Hours, since they create psychological difficulties when prayed by Christians. The General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours, especially Chapter I, is a valuable tool helping us to grow in our appreciation of this "prayer of the whole Christ."

Endnotes

¹The title of a document approved by the OFM general definitory on November 4, 2004, and promulgated by the Minister General, Jose Carballo OFM, on December 8, 2004.

²AC 83.

³The "Breviary of St. Francis" was donated by Br. Leo to the Poor Clare protomonastery of Assisi and still preserved there. In the Inscription found at the book's beginning Leo wrote: "Brother Francis acquired this breviary for his companions Brother Angelo and Brother Leo, and when he was well he wished always to say the Office, as is stated by the Rule. At the time when he was sick and not able to recite it, he wished to listen to it. And he continued to do this for as long as he lived."

⁴Found in IC 44 and L3C 55.

⁵Cf. Legend of St. Clare 8.

⁶Cf. L. Canonici, in "Problemi sulle origini del TOF" (n.p., n.d.), 34-37.

⁷Nonetheless, in the ensemble of prayers that Francis put together in his Office of the Passion, and in The Praises To Be Said At All The Hours, it is obvious that he sees the Office as celebrating all the mysteries of our redemption. Those mysteries are "in some way made present" (Vatican II in Liturgy Constitution, 102) in the celebrations of the liturgical year, including the Office, so that celebrating these mysteries in faith, we might be drawn into them and experience their saving power. Hence the crescendo of praise and thanksgiving that we find in The Praises, compiled by Francis and intended by him to be used before praying the Hours.

⁸Cf. Discourse on Psalm 85, 1.

⁹Cf. General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours (found at the beginning of volume I of the four-volume Office book), 12.

All branches of our Franciscan family agree in their documents that the life of deep prayer and worship of God is the first of our Franciscan priorities; it is indeed the priority of all our priorities. St. Francis considered work to be a grace, but always with the understanding that it "not extinguish the Spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all other things of our earthly existence must contribute" (LR 5:2). Francis wanted those of his brothers called to preach to be competent, and so approved of study, but again with the proviso that study "not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion" (LtAnt).

About Our Contributors

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Naming the Earthquake: Franciscans and the Evangelical Life

Margaret Carney, OSF

Introduction

On September 26, 1997 a devastating earthquake shook central Italy. While loss of life was relatively small, properties throughout Umbria and Tuscany were toppled. What made the world take note (and hold its breath) was the fact that among the ravaged buildings was the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi. In the months following the quake, I had many opportunities to hear about the experience from those who were in the city on that day and in the weeks to follow. I visited Assisi just three months later—at Christmas—with a delegation of Franciscan pilgrimage leaders. We saw the ruins on every street. We stared at the video of the Basilica's exploding ceilings evaporating into a thick amber cloud as it played endlessly in the visitors' center. We noted the weary faces of friends whose businesses had been shuttered and whose nerves were still raw. We heard the scientific explanations of seismologists and the folkloric assertions of the locals: "St. Francis is warning us. . . ." (The quake occurred on the day associated with the birth of Francis.)

In the years that have passed, near-miraculous restorations of frescoes and other artifacts have been unveiled. After a painfully long delay, the emergency "container" housing has disappeared. A visitor today might visit the town and its sanctuaries and be blissfully unaware of the devastation of six years ago. With the passage of time, and in repeated visits to this city, the earthquake and its lessons have given me much to ponder.

In this assembly we honor the fifty years of the Religious Formation Conference in the United States. In this context the earthquake experience offers me the metaphor I need to grapple with the challenge of describing the new dialogue of the Franciscan tradition with the questions of our era. We have many ways of describing the transition we are making from *pre-modern* to *modern* to *post-modern* awareness. We understand, though not well enough, that the collision of these various mindsets can be found at the dinner table or

chapter room of almost any community we know. This collision, like the moving of the earth's tectonic plates, creates, at times, the ferocious geological chaos we call an earthquake. Can we study this tectonic plate activity of our own religious identity-crisis and come to understand why the upheavals have been both costly and unnerving?¹

Four Objectives

How shall we proceed? My role in this conference is to offer as a type of "case study" the experience of Franciscans in constructing a new basis for formation during this same half-century. I will present important aspects of the refounding work of the Franciscan order/s that will serve to demonstrate the major themes of our keynote speakers. Allow me to propose four points that will guide this short presentation:

1. I want to examine the forces that have shaped the contemporary conversation among Franciscans about the nature of the "form of life" enshrined by Francis and Clare in their rules. This includes the hermeneutic, which now interprets those rules by all three branches of the Franciscan family.

2. I want to demonstrate that the post conciliar call of renewal and reform would not have generated such sustained effort without the establishment of university-level educational centers and the expansion of access to specialized knowledge of Franciscan theology, sources and history.

3. I want to explore some of the serious problems that contemporary North American Franciscans encounter in their attempt at living this "difficult inheritance." This will take the form of comparing pre-conciliar formation regarding material poverty with a new pedagogy of evangelical poverty.

4. Finally, I will try to describe the emergence of a consciousness that we Franciscans claim unique place within the forms of religious life recognized by ecclesial tradition—and formally by *Vita Consecrata*. Franciscans in the U.S. have christened this, "Franciscan Evangelical Life."

Part One: The "Double Helix" of Franciscan Identity

When Franciscans are required to "return to their sources," their origins, the task is always two-fold. All Franciscans share a common ancestry of rule and tradition that stretches back to mid-13th century Italy and the inimitable personages of saints Francis and Clare of Assisi. Over time the branches of the Franciscan family/order have diversified and differentiated to an extraordinary degree. To the uninitiated, the Franciscan family tree looks more like a rampage of kudzu than a stately diagram of identifiable branches. A briefly sketched description of the major entities of the Franciscan order/s may be helpful.

The First Order: The Friars Minor

The Franciscan friars trace their formal ecclesiastical approval to 1223 when Pope Honorius III approved their Rule text.² In the next three centuries the brotherhood was divided into three distinct branches by divisions over such issues as the observance of poverty and the place of pastoral, thus institutional, service in their lives. Today we have three distinct entities within the Order, each with its own Minister General and Constitutions. These are: the Friars Minor (OFM), the Friars Minor Conventual (OFM Conv.), the Friars Minor Capuchin (OFM Cap.). Each of these entities preserves the 1223 Rule as the base of profession. Each of these is divided into provinces, each of which is responsible for government and formation of members. Until the 20th century, the vast majority of scholars (theologians, historians, philosophers) were ordained clerics of a branch of the Order of Friars Minor. This fact has major implications for the manner in which Franciscan spiritual theology and formation developed.

The Second Order: The "Poor Clares"

In 1253, Pope Innocent IV approved the Rule of Clare of Assisi, thus bringing to a remarkable close the struggle of a small group of Franciscan women with the limits of medieval episcopal imagination.³ Again, the early movement of small beguine-like households of dedicated sisters in various locales yielded to autonomous monasteries with strict enclosure. Over the centuries, reforms have generated constitutional variations in the second Order. Today its members belong to federations of monasteries, linked to one or another branch of the First Order, but lacking a centralized authority or single profile of observance. A recent formation development among North American Clares was the Clarian Theology Project which resulted in a publication in 2000 of a compendium of theological reflections "from the base" of the participating monasteries. This collaborative work, guided by Franciscan theologian Margaret Eletta Guider, is indicative of new forms of shared identity in this branch of the family.

The Third Order Regular and Secular Franciscan Order⁴

The Third Order Regular renewed its Rule text in 1982. However, the TOR branch of the Franciscan Order can trace its origins to the time of Francis's public ministry. The first organized groups of Franciscan "tertiaries" emerge shortly after his death. Over the centuries many such institutes have been founded, flourished and disappeared. Founded at local, regional or national levels, they enjoy governmental autonomy within the Franciscan family. This allows for an enormous diversity of Franciscan religious congregations. The TOR branch contains a number of contemplative monasteries of women. How-

ever, the vast majority is dedicated to some form of the apostolic ministry. Voluntary national federations link these 400 institutes of sister or brothers and priests. A new International Franciscan Conference founded in 1985 provides the first global linkages of this most variegated branch of the Franciscan family.

The Secular Franciscan Order, which also traces its origins to the medieval penitents, renewed its rule text in 1978.⁵ The lay "Third Order" is made up of a vast network of local fraternities grouped into regions and national entities. An international chapter elects its Minister General and each nation elects its national leadership as well. Its members make a public and life-long profession of their form of life. Their current challenge is the restoration of the radical appropriation of Franciscan secular commitment. Following centuries in which only ordained friars were charged with leadership and formation of the secular Franciscans, new constitutions call for lay administrators and formators to take up leadership in the secular branch. The transition from clerical oversight to a fully realized lay governance progresses by slow degrees.

The Franciscan "*E Pluribus Unum*"

In these small sketches, we see how pluriform the Franciscan vocation is. At the same time, any Franciscan entity in the United States has a specific historic point of origin that plays an important role in the self-consciousness of the members. Most North American Franciscan provinces or institutes date their beginnings in the mid 19th to early 20th centuries. These modern beginnings are being explored by historians and archivists and have figured prominently in the attempts by the various provinces or institutes to name their place and their mission within the overall Franciscan order. Thus, when asked to speak of the founder/foundress many an American Franciscan will answer by describing the 19th and 20th century origins with a specific founding person or group. Francis may be seen as a founder, but in a more symbolic sense.

This "double helix" of identity poses interesting challenges. While the actual foundation may be the work of a 19th or 20th century pioneers, the group's spiritual and theological heritage may be highly influenced by the medieval writings of Francis and Clare and the vast literature that exists from centuries of reinterpretation of the original inspiration. But the opposite is just as likely. A group that belongs by canonically to the Franciscan family may pay scant attention to the medieval sources, and construct identity by recourse to a modern founding vision. Some groups clearly embrace one of the varieties of ministerial/apostolic spirituality that feature prominently among contemporary institutes of simple vows while claiming the patronage of Francis and Clare.

Additionally, involvement in the formal organizations for religious in this country (LCWR and CMSM to name the most prominent examples) has added important elements to the Franciscan North American profile. These organizations aided in the quest for our proper identity and cultural autonomy in the living out of public religious profession. At critical moments in the last 40 years, these groups created certain imperatives for their members aimed at protecting our unique gift as U.S. citizens and members of a global church. Participation in some of the critical developments of religious life in relationship to the Holy See or our own episcopal conference impacted the evolution of our identity in profound ways.

Franciscan religious institutes in this country do not operate in a vacuum. They participate for the most part in the national and international networks that have much to say—especially to leaders—about how identity is achieved and protected. Only gradually, however, did U.S. Franciscans come to understand how Eurocentric were our versions of Franciscan spirituality. We came to see that we were dependent upon scholarship and interpretations that were bound by a classic mentality which did not fit well with the turbulent and searching '60s and '70s. Only when a new generation of North American Franciscanists began to write and teach on their own soil did this change. The mediation between an "old world" sense of obligation to the past and a "new world" spirit of creative adaptation became the new task of Franciscan formation.

Even more gradually did American Franciscans come to see the need to develop a particular formational response to our cultural framework. In the years immediately following the Council, renewal was dominated by the break with anachronistic customs, including many which were strong outward symbols of Franciscan identity. This initial phase of removing outmoded customs had a deconstructionist tone and impact. At the time, the heady experiences of casting off these stultifying practices became synonymous with renewal. But, unknown to us, the many forays into "woods . . . lovely, dark and deep," had only begun.

American Franciscan formators gradually recognized the necessity of mastering the primary sources, history and pastoral applications of a more precise Franciscan theory of religious life.⁷ There was a lot of new wine to be had. So much of it was consumed that we failed to realize that we were carrying it around in old wineskins! A new and engaging argument would emerge to energize our trek towards another level of reform and renewal. This new level of conversation could not have happened without some important preliminary actions which created resources needed to achieve this sophistication and depth.

Part Two: The Resourcement of the Franciscan Charism

While most of us think of the work of the renewal of formation as taking place in earnest only after Vatican II, the very nature of the history of this conference reminds us that important forces were in play years before that white-robed column of bishops filed into St. Peter's on October 11, 1962. Franciscan formation practitioners can also look back to a long process of remote preparation for the first waves of the earthquake.

While the Sister Formation Conference dates from 1953, we would not be exaggerating to place the beginnings of the re-formation of Franciscan life at the turn of the 20th century. One example of this precocious attention is the program of Bernardine of Portogruaro. Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor from 1869-89, Bernardino led the work of unification of a badly splintered Order. Small fractious groups with their own governmental privileges dotted the map of Europe and exported their differences to missions in the Americas and Middle East. Bernardino intuited that a reunification of this branch of the Order required a common base of understanding the Franciscan source materials. To that end he founded the research center at Quarrachi (Florence) and the "Antoniano"—the Franciscan university—in Rome.⁸ The faculties of both institutions exerted influence on Franciscan scholarship worldwide.

The Franciscan friars of the United States created a very different structural approach in the establishment of the Franciscan Education Conference in 1919. Formed by the rectors and professors of provincial seminaries, this Conference would exercise a wide and salutary influence until its demise in the wake of the formation of the major theological consortia (Washington Theological Union, Chicago's Catholic Theological Union and the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley) shortly after the Council.

Spurred no doubt by the impetus of the nascent Sister Formation Movement, the Franciscan sisters established their own Franciscan Sisters' Education Conference in 1952. The 1953 meeting at the newly dedicated Alverno College in Milwaukee brought one thousand Franciscan sisters together. (One of the conference proposals was the request that the works of St. Bonaventure be translated into English—a very avant-garde request for the times!) With the founding of the Franciscan Federation in 1968, the Sisters' Education Conference lost stature and soon dissolved. It is important to note that the FSEC focused on education as a ministry and its leaders were part of an elite corps of Franciscan women who served on faculties of the many sisters' colleges. The Federation, on the other hand, focused its agenda on internal education/formation in light of the demands of the conciliar program of "*aggiornamento*."⁹ Since, at that time few women had a specific expertise in Franciscan studies,

Federation leaders created partnerships with friar "*periti*" such as David Flood, OFM, Thaddeus Horgan, SA, and Roland Faley, TOR. In a parallel arrangement, many western European sisterhoods engaged the scholars of their own countries. Often this expertise made its way to the States via the provincial leaders and general chapters of these international congregations.

This was also the period of the foundation of several study centers, which continue to exercise enormous influence in the Franciscan Order/s, The Franciscan School of Theology at Berkeley's GTU, and the Franciscan Centre at Canterbury, England and the Franciscan Chair at WTU. St. Bonaventure's Franciscan Institute dates to 1939. In 1970 Conrad Harkins, OFM, then director of the Institute, developed Master of Arts degree in Franciscan Studies. This allowed friars of every branch to become credentialed as teachers of the tradition. The program was intended to meet formators' needs but rigorous enough to prepare its graduates for doctoral work. Even more dramatic was the fact that this program was opened from its inception to Franciscan sisters and lay members. For the first time all branches of the Franciscan Order had equal access to professional training in the specialized disciplines of Franciscan studies.

Part Three: Franciscan Formation Revisited

A recent publication introduces the felicitous term, "a difficult inheritance" to describe the Franciscan tradition. This expression conveys the constant struggle to achieve an adequate hermeneutic for the baffling extremism attributed to Francis and Clare. Franciscan formators have always struggled to provide novices with a safe passage through the romantic fascination of the founders to the rough reality of the Order here and now. Instead of describing this formative process of retrieval and re-translation in the abstract, let us look at the manner in which the availability of scholarly research impacted one cardinal aspect of Franciscan identity and the means by which directors of formation might approach it. That cardinal aspect is poverty.

The identification of Franciscans with a strict interpretation of the obligations of the vow of poverty is so universal that we have all heard at least one joke that plays on this image or seen more than one cartoon that caricatures it.

Several elements influenced the formation of the vow and virtue of poverty in the novitiates of yesteryear:

- The strength of hagiographical tradition that still had not been submitted to historical/critical analysis;
- The actual economic milieu of immigrant (and even 2nd and 3rd generation) Catholic families in which most religious were raised;
- The "common life" customs engendered by Tridentine reforms and continued by the Code of 1917;

- The Counter-reformation ascetical spirituality imported from European manuals that guided earlier generations of novice directors.¹⁰

The weight of these influences had become burdensome in the extreme for religious trying to address life in the United States. As American religious moved toward renewal, the first moonwalk and Woodstock, the Peace Corps of JFK and the iconoclastic art of Sr. Corita Kent, a spirituality focused on denial of human desire and fear of worldly contamination became insupportable. It is for this reason that the first experimental chapters after the promulgation of *Ecclesiae sanctae* seemed, at times, to be consumed by decisions we now regard as trivial. They were, in fact, trying to prevent the collapse of a whole system of outmoded norms by eliminating the most obvious hindrances to living in the complexities of this culture, which was itself in the midst of massive transformation.¹¹

An intricate legislative system was the container for the poverty practiced by most Franciscans prior to 1966. Customs books added intricate detail to the strictures of constitutions. Permission for any exception was required. Personal discretion or choice about material goods was very limited. Business transactions were the task of the elected superiors and their appointees. The period of dispensation from these strictures brought a heady sense of liberation. Gone were the stultifying rules that governed everything from the number of one's handkerchiefs to the inheritance of a family's fortune. However, as a tidal wave swept away anachronistic practices, the evolution of a more critically developed stance would take its own time to mature.

Scholarship Linked to Life

While many Franciscanists have added to a new wisdom in dealing with this issue, we cannot think of our reformed horizons without crediting David Flood, OFM, with some of the most important contributions to this end. David's preoccupation with the economic aspects of the early Franciscan movement found a ready audience in the first generation of Federation leaders. His thought was widely disseminated. While it often provoked as much heat as light, his work became a lightning rod for discerning Franciscans. Two examples will suffice to illustrate this point.¹²

1. *The Use of Money*: Francis forbids the use and possession of money. The prohibition is unequivocal. The only exception appears to be in cases of emergency care for the sick. For centuries, Franciscans have struggled with the burden of being involved in economic transactions feeling all the while the judgment of the founder hovering over their worried heads. Study of the economic situation of medieval Assisi revealed that the commune's powerful classes

created a debased currency with which to pay the migrant or day laborer. The currency of true worth was reserved to the classes in charge of the commune's economic project. Thus, the prohibition can be read as a refusal to participate in a structural situation of injustice. The brother worker asked instead to be paid in kind: wood for the fire, clothing, food, and medicine. With these real transactions a small fraternal group could live and live without fear of starvation or total ruin in hard times. Such a reading of early history freed modern Franciscans from a fundamentalist position regarding monetary resources and opened a path to develop contemporary equivalents of the early movement's choices.¹³

2. *Holding Offices*: Another difficult area for Franciscans involved the belief that holding any sort of official position or administrative role was somehow a proximate occasion of sin given *Il Poverello's* insistence on being the "lesser" of all. The roots were, once more, in too literal a reading of the 13th century rule. It forbade assuming offices of stewardship or administration in the houses/businesses of employers (read nobles). Once more we have a prohibition that has left many a Franciscan administrator feeling unfaithful to the Franciscan vision. An appreciation of how the early brothers were separating themselves from the feudal arrangements that were already in decline in the commune enlightens this point. Again David argues that the brothers gave evidence of being good and honest laborers. The wealthy were happy to employ them and felt that by advancing them to higher responsibility they could both benefit as administrators and, perhaps, control the religious enthusiasm sweeping the area. Francis and the others saw the danger. To accept such advancement was to return "to the world" where a hereditary "lord" had the power to command one's actions in peace and in war. Only the "Most High Lord" is the sovereign of the brotherhood. There can be no serving of two masters. Thus the insistence on choosing "lower places" as an act of humility had to give way to realizing that the position itself was not the problem. The difficulty for the first Franciscans lay in the temptation to support a feudal philosophy of natural superiority of certain persons.¹⁴

With just these two examples it becomes clear that today the Franciscan family has an array of tools to arrive at a renewed commitment to poverty and its twin, minority.

Poverty's Profile for Contemporary Franciscans

For some years now, many Franciscans have publicly expressed hope for a more publicly compelling and personally integrating formation in evangelical poverty. It is my view that in this period the major shift in the "practice of poverty" has been apostolic in nature. In other words, the meaning of fidelity to the poverty of the Franciscan calling migrated to the ways and means of our ministries and away from a scrupulous attention to personal possessions and

corporate lifestyles. There are a number of new "models" by which poverty is espoused and inculcated among us. I would characterize them as follows:

- Ministerial: Poverty is expressed through an insertion among the poor or activity in solidarity with the poor and in activity to alleviate poverty.
- Stewardship: Poverty is expressed through the use of resources to benefit the poor and to protect or increase an institute's wealth so as to provide for those with no means. Socially responsible investments, participation in economic projects through use of money, land, buildings, are some instances of this.
- Educational: The work of conscientization through education in all of its forms for the purpose of creating a more just social order is another mode of living poverty.
- Theological / Spiritual: A better comprehension of the writings of Francis and Clare and more study of the early Franciscan theology texts provide a clearer grasp of a Christological vision of poverty that is seen in "vernacular" form in Francis and drawn out into a systematic approach in Bonaventure. Franciscan mystical literature also gives evidence of poverty seen as apophatic experience of the absence of God
- Ecological: With increasing awareness of the manner in which our personal and communal decisions impact the environment, new policies and practices that mirror many traditional restrictions in the use of goods are promoted in Franciscan communities. However, the motive and often the means are quite unique to this environmental perspective. The degree to which this new mentality/spirituality is shared and become normative varies from group to group. It does, nonetheless, present a new opportunity for integration of personal and corporate renunciative practices.

Corporate Witness and Personal Asceticism

What remains is to reconnect the two aspects of poverty that became dissociated in the early decades of renewal. If today's "practice" has shifted to a public stance of advocacy, protest, and participation in work for justice and development, where is the personal commitment to simplicity, frugality, and—dare we say it?—real restriction in the use of a consumer society's affluence? While there have been brave attempts to rejoin the two sides of the equation, a kind of allergic reaction to any curb on personal options prevents new thinking and new strategies on this level. (This may be the reason that in many groups the ecological choices become identified with a "green party" minority. They are something to be tolerated or avoided, but certainly not embraced.)

We would not advocate a return to the controlling customs of years ago. However, should we also forbid honest conversation about our compromises

with the “perks” of the upward mobility of the Catholic population of this country? Is there any room in the new century’s custom books for hard questions and a searching examen about the daily details of lifestyle choices? Are we just as “gifted in ‘mall skills’” as any other citizen, and do we dare see that as incongruous? Is our use of scarce planetary resources exemplary? The way forward so worrisome to the survivors of previous eras of authoritarian discipline that there is little likelihood that these issues will be joined any time soon.¹⁵

Part Four (A): Naming the Earthquake: Franciscan Evangelical Life

For the last twenty years, the Franciscans of North America have engaged in a vital discussion of a new methodology to link the medieval wisdom of our founders to the modern questions that face us and that rise from within our own cultural matrix. The name that this conversational project goes by is “Franciscan Evangelical Life.” The term has come to signify an insight about the nature of the vocation of Franciscans that does not always fit easily with the categories of ecclesiastical tradition or with the received formation that most Franciscans over fifty years of age share.

Little of this has been published beyond Franciscan circles. Part of our reluctance has been the fear of creating the illusion of a successful definition of a new typology of Franciscan life. The ideas and questions generated in assemblies, chapters, classrooms, community conversations have been deliberately allowed to gain a quiet momentum and maturity. The conversation, however, has grown in importance over a twenty year period. Once again the Franciscan Federation provided multiple opportunities through national and regional programs. As friar David Flood functioned as arbiter of research at an earlier period, so Joseph Chinnici, OFM, has served as the principal architect of this conversation.¹⁶

A respectful attention to clarification of terminology is proper, especially in addressing an audience of religious of many traditions. Let me be clear about what Franciscans are NOT saying when we call our vocation a call to “evangelical life”:

- We are NOT pretending to be the only religious whose primary inspiration comes from the Gospels. The term has some of the unfortunate overtones of a kind of exclusive claim of purity of inspiration when it is clear that the Gospels are the starting point for all religious life charisms.
- We are NOT aligning ourselves with the electronic purveyors of evangelical holiness. This needs to be stressed since one of the most powerful forces in the electronic church (EWTN) is dominated

by Franciscan religious whose use of Franciscan symbols seems to give such concerns legitimacy. In fact, this situation has caused more than one thoughtful member of the Franciscan family to wish for some other vocabulary choices.

- We are NOT renouncing a commitment to strong ministerial involvements when we speak of an evangelical life that calls for consistent dedication to the forms of communal life and day-to-day relationships.

Then what are we saying? We are making the bold—and for many, confusing—claim that Franciscans belong neither to the “monastic” nor the “apostolic” forms of religious life that dominate ecclesiastical documents and discussions.

As I indicated earlier, more than one hundred years have passed since Franciscans began to subject their primary sources to the historical-critical methods and offer sophisticated tools to an increasingly wide audience of formators and leaders in the Order. As we mature in our use of the intellectual tools at our disposal, we U.S. Franciscans have come to see that the original Franciscan movement generated a historical/theological framework that has never been fully appreciated or accepted either internally or externally.¹⁷ Externally, Church formation through seminary curricula insisted on a Thomistic base for theological training. Only a tiny percentage of Franciscan teachers were formed in the theological tradition of the Order as giants such as Philotheus Boehner, Allan Wolter, Zachary Hayes, and Kenan Osborne mediated it. Significant themes of theological concern, significant dogmatic positions articulated by Franciscan masters never played a part in defining the horizons of orthodox inquiry. The fact that these voices were minimized by the imposition of a unitary Thomistic curriculum means that for the entire Church, not just for Franciscan scholastics, our theological inheritance has been consistently reduced to what Sandra Schnieders has called “the one right answer.”

As Franciscans begin to literally recover and rehabilitate an alternative theological/pastoral tradition we find ourselves walking in a new landscape. It includes:

- A vision of a Trinitarian God—not centered on the Father/Patriarch as dominant figure—but God understood as a “Fountain-fullness” of pure Goodness poured out in the act of Creation.
- A vision of the Incarnation whose primary cause is the very love of the creature/s and the will of their ultimate good, not the necessity of saving them from the folly of their sin. Christ comes then, in the words of the Christmas carol as “Love, the Guest” in the world created for his delight. He does not come only as one bound to undertake the onerous task of appeasement of the Patriarch’s anger.

- A vision of the cosmos as inter-related, with all creation springing from the same Source and destined to return to it. Thus our ecological concerns are grounded in a pro-found theological conviction about the nature and destiny of all beings.

- A vision of the human family as destined to fulfillment in relationships of brotherhood/sisterhood by the formation of the "commune"—the communion of hearts and hopes and horizons is itself our mission. The intersection of the lived experience of fraternitas-sororitas with our mission in and for the world is the axis of Franciscan existence.

Let me say a few words about this final point since it is the one that seems most open to misinterpretation in theory and practice at this point in the journey. The IUSG, USG, CMSM and LCWR have provided important direction in recent decades for creating an authentic apostolic spirituality. The stress of this work has led to a heightened commitment to a ministry of promotion of human development, just social structures, and peace building. The engagement with the world opens us to profound possibilities and characterizes the shape of religious formation for service, for prophetic denunciation, for new experiences of martyrdom. At the same time, the types of social and educational ministry that characterized earlier generations of religious apostolate continue to function in the promotion of human life and rights.

In an earlier time, these "apostolic" works emanated from communities that were tied to a monastic model that insisted on a stable and restricted environment of scheduled prayer and action and separation from secular social and business relationships. The insertion into the world was mitigated by a thousand details of discipline and an ironclad attitude of renunciation. With the dissolution of this monastic "container" for apostolic work, the focus on ministry, work, and apostolic availability became so dominant that the communal setting seems (still seems) in danger of being relegated to a mere sociological construct held over from a pre-modern culture. The resulting breakdown in commitment to and capacity for living in communal groups is the topic of many studies of the present moment.

One of the vivid questions that holds center stage in most discussions of Franciscan evangelical life is that of the relationship between living in an actual brotherhood/sisterhood vs. the necessity of living wherever and however the ministry of the individual dictates. What is the role of a primary "nuclear" community of residence or a primary "networked" community of relationships and accountability? Has the desire to live in an actual community declined beyond repair? What answer do we make to new members for whom such real "twenty-four/seven" sisterhoods/brotherhoods are the very thing they seek in choosing life with us?

Part Four (B): The Truth of the Matter

In recent years, my multiple engagements with the national and international Franciscan order have helped me to realize how very demanding the transition from a traditional monastic-apostolic life-style is to the brave new world of a Franciscan evangelical lifestyle and spirituality. I am gradually resigning myself to the possibility that its full blossoming will not occur for several more generations. We are probably naïve to imagine that a way of living as religious women and men that has been so powerfully promoted and so internalized for the last four centuries can be completely reinvented in the space of two decades! I have come to appreciate the necessity of reframing both expectations and questions about the future form and function of Franciscan life among publicly vowed religious.

In recent years, gatherings of religious of many traditions invariable involves at least one intervention at the "open mike" part of the agenda in which a plucky Franciscan participant reminds the group that "All of this talk of refounding apostolic religious life is fine, but some of us consider ourselves to belong not to that category, but to the Franciscan evangelical lifestyle." Heads nod appreciatively. Furtive questions are whispered. (What are they talking about?) The Franciscans go home happy that they have made a claim for their new niche. But, are we living a new model of religious life? It appears that the honest response would be "yes" and "no" in roughly equal parts.

The initial reflections on the evangelical life were circulated in the mid-1980s. It was a time of serious apprehension for many religious congregations. As we came to the final stretch of constitutional revision, we needed reinforcement for our intuition of being hemmed in anew as the Code of Canon Law was promulgated and Paul VI's patient formulation of pastoral questions gave way to a new assertion of "essential elements" for authentic religious life. We wanted to find "wiggle room" in the dialogue, and this new formulation rooted in careful analysis and historical research provided it. Is it, in fact, possible that at least some of our enthusiasm for the evangelical life debate was related to its role as a valid argument against the attempts of the Congregations in Rome to put a period on the era of experimentation?

In spite of enthusiastic adoption of the evangelical ideal and serious hard work on discussion and study involving many institutes in the USA, it appears that we continue to experience a schizophrenia of intent and actuality. We state verbally and in many of our written documents that we are committed to the evangelical life. However, the actual state of our personal understanding, and our corporate structures and processes, show that we continue embrace the primacy of apostolic effectiveness as our identity. Rather than see this as a terrible lack of integrity and a failure to understand our true destiny, let us try a little realism about our present prospects. It might be more honest and more

helpful to our refounding efforts if we acknowledge (without guilt or anxiety) all the ways in which we Franciscans—especially of the TOR branch—continue to function as apostolic institutes of religious life under the various Franciscan Rules. The actuality of this identity has a three-fold basis:

1. In the first place, we were founded for apostolic purposes. While it is true that the theological/spiritual goal of religious life has always been personal sanctity, it has been inextricably linked with service to others. Reading the masterful compilation of Sr. Margaret Slowick, OSF, on the foundation of the TOR congregations of this country, it is hard to miss the central role that meeting a need played in every instance: care of orphans, plague victims, immigrant communities, nursing care, teaching religion, and on and on.

2. In the second place, we have been formed for apostolic effectiveness. The powerful combination of real need and the American penchant for effective pragmatic action has created a mindset among us that is really a “second nature”—a powerful “habitus” that orients us to programs that work. We even speak of our communal relationships as “building community,” “working at our goals.” Even the vaunted rhetoric of “being” over “doing” does not minimize the fact that our capitalistic milieu disposes us to identify with our work and our function. Baptized with the motivation of zeal for justice, for the salvation of others in the temporal or spiritual order, our desire to be effective producers of apostolic services and goods *has* created an enviable record of achievement.

3. In the third place, our personal and corporate sense of purpose is closely connected to our role in the world of work or service. We continue to build congregational Chapter agendas on themes of mission and to explain our *raison d'être* in terms of services we provide. Our letters to donors, our vocational materials, our celebrations of anniversaries demonstrate this over and over. And is there any reason not to do this?

The dilemma, as I see it, is that given the option to choose a way of being that demands a strict balance of functions for both work and communal and personal life, the choice is almost invariably in favor of being effective in our work. This continues to be true even when it is apparent that the work in question militates against a healthy personal or communal lifestyle. I do not believe that this continues to happen because our members, now for the most part women of “mature years,” do not know that they are making these concessions constantly. I believe that it continues because we actually prefer this mode of living. It is what we believe to be our purpose for existence and it is what provides us with the antidote against the growing depression of seeing our numbers decline, our quality of life diminish and our public face be eclipsed.

We are goaded by the need to work harder because we are fewer or because more are leaving the ministry due to health or age. We continue to press

on being available to those in need, often beyond reason and sometimes to the actual detriment of the work or institution. Having been formed to dedicate ourselves with total generosity to a larger entity (the community, parish, school, hospital, etc.), we cannot restrict ourselves in the absence of the boundaries that community regulations once imposed. What suffers is the project of creating solid voluntary communities of adults who choose new primary relationships in lieu of marriage. Once the product of the superior's will and the rule book's prescriptions, the community is now an aggregate of persons who may not understand the dedication needed to engage one another in the absence of such formal structures and their formidable sanctions. And even if the group understands the need, the skills needed to develop the new communities required in the 21st century may be in limited supply. Invitations to acquire these skills involve no reward, such as continuing certification or licensure does in the professional realm. The eclectic nature of personal development modalities may also produce such pluriformity in the group that a common language or strategy may be unavailable. The gradual loss of roles of effective leadership at local congregational levels has also resulted in the dearth of means to engage and motivate a group to undertake this work and stay the course. It has become too easy to “opt out” when things become uncomfortable or conflict has no ready resolution. Thus, the local group becomes victimized by the instability of this “revolving door” approach to solving incompatibilities.

I do believe that the future form for Franciscan living will be different. But I also believe that the formation needed to generalize this possibility will take many more years to develop and institutionalize. In the meantime, the willingness and humor will be important. However, this statement betrays a certain disposition that also needs criticism. Is there any way to prove that the preferred future is one of a unitary approach to a Franciscan evangelical *forma vitae*? In other words, much of our speech indicates an assumption that we are moving in a linear progression from one model (apostolic) to a new model (evangelical) which all will embrace in existential harmony. Is it not possible that the evangelical life vision is intended to permeate a variety of forms of religious life? The post-synodal exhortation named six distinct forms of religious life: monastic life; the order of virgins, widows and hermits; contemplative institutes; apostolic religious life; secular institutes; and, societies of apostolic life. Then it provided a seventh category: new expressions of religious life. Why not assume that the evangelical model can subsist in any of the forms indicated by the synod? There might then be institutes that focus fully on the apostolate as well as those called to provide a new synthesis of communal living and forms of ministry and contemplation. The Franciscan movement has given rise to an incredible variety of expressions over eight centuries. Are we cheating ourselves by imagining that there is a single new “model” for

living evangelical life—one that we can “photograph” and “pin down” like a laboratory specimen?

In all of this I am conscious that I speak precisely from the Third Order Regular perspective where variety of type and experiment have always had prominence. The First Order's classic Rule is a document that does not commit the friars to a *particular* form of apostolic work but calls them to live the form of the Holy Gospel. (Note, however, that preaching “by word and example” is the real and symbolic form for all works undertaken by the friars.) It may therefore be more appropriate for the Franciscan friars to assert that no *apostolic* purpose explains their existence. I would simply note that for many TOR Franciscans the historical reality is quite the opposite. In that light, a desire to transform our apostolic institutes to institutes of evangelical life is a source of great inspiration. It has already demonstrated its power of persuasion. Let us be aware that we may do a great disservice to present and future congregations to insist that there is no room for the venerable tradition of institutes whose attachment to their apostolic calling is a primary hallmark.

These cautionary remarks should not dampen the enthusiasm of all who earnestly promote this transformation, whose attraction has been validated in numerous ways in the past twenty years. Rather, it is hoped that tempering this enthusiasm with a concern for the actual capacity of individual brothers and sisters and of congregations as a whole for the radical re-formation required will serve the spiritual health of all in the long run.

Conclusion

During the visits to Assisi following the great earthquake, one of the discoveries that remains with me was the ingenious ways that the traditional Christmas *presepio* was built in the churches and piazzas that year. In spite of the difficulties they endured that season, the “Assisani” lovingly created Christmas crèche scenes everywhere. In the *pensione* where we stayed the minimalist ceramic figures were huddled in a white tent, just like the emergency tents that dotted the landscape. In the plaza in front of the Basilica of St. Clare, the Holy Family sheltered in a multi-colored Land's End tent. Facing the Basilica of St. Francis, life size statues formed the Bethlehem scene. However, firemen arriving with ladders and emergency gear replaced the traditional wise men and shepherds. Perhaps the most touching was a small set of figurines in rough peasant garb located between the ancient church of St. Mary Major and the parsonage. There they stood, surrounded by elements of debris, rocks, and splintered wood. In front of the display was a crudely painted sign: “Jesus is with his earthquake people.”

Let this be our consolation as we continue to find our way through the uncertain present of rebuilding amidst the tremors of constant change, and

the future that holds its own unnamed dangers. Jesus is *always* with his earthquake people.

Endnotes

¹I am indebted to Thomas Grady, OSF, for originating this metaphor for religious life's post-conciliar upheavals.

²For a helpful summary of the complex history of the Franciscan family consult: William Short, OFM, *The Franciscans*, Religious Order Series, 2 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1982).

³Further study of this event can be found in my book, *The First Franciscan Woman: Clare of Assisi and Her Form of Life* (Quincy, Ill: The Franciscan Press, 1993).

⁴Resources for the history of the Third Order Regular exist in a variety of publications. Short's book provides a helpful introduction. The most extensive study currently available is: Raphael Pazzelli, TOR, *The Franciscan Sisters: Outlines of History and Spirituality* (Steubenville, OH: Franciscan University Press, 1989). The Third Order Regular publishes its annual *Analecta TOR* from its generalate in Rome. The *Analecta* is a very useful source for tracing historical studies of TOR masculine congregations. It includes many excellent articles on TOR women's communities and the Secular Franciscan Order as well.

⁵*From Gospel to Life: The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order* (Chicago, Ill: Franciscan Herald Press, 1979).

⁶Margaret Slowick, OSF, *The Franciscan Third Order Regular in the United States: Origins, Early Years and Recent Developments* (Tiffin, OH: 1999). (This study—an MA thesis—was printed by Sr. Slowick's congregation and can be obtained from the Sisters of St. Francis, 200 St. Francis Ave, Tiffin, OH 44883.)

⁷Franciscan studies involves a “quest” for the historical Francis (and Clare) comparable to the quest for the historical Jesus that is such a prominent theme in New Testament studies. Generations of Franciscans never actually read the complete corpus of Francis's writings. Few had the skill to navigate the complex interpretive tasks of the hagiographical sources left in abundance by his earliest biographers.

⁸Maurice Carmody, OFM, *The Leonine Union of the Order of Friars Minor, 1897*, Daniel McLellan, OFM, ed., History Series 8 (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1994).

⁹More extensive treatment of the foundations of U.S. educational conferences can be found in my article, “Women in Franciscan Studies: The State of the Question,” *Spirit and Life* 8 (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1999).

¹⁰My own novice directress based her conferences on the Belgian master Adolphe Tanquary's *The Spiritual Life: A Treatise of Ascetical and Mystical Theology*, published in the USA in 1930. Each of us received a copy to enable us to study the material following in her classes.

¹¹*Ecclesiae sanctae* was the *motu proprio* of Paul VI, published August 6, 1966, that gave the specific directives for the special general chapters that were to implement the conciliar decrees.

¹²A complete bibliography of David Flood's contributions can be accessed on St. Bonaventure's Friedsam Library's website: <http://franinst.sbu.edu/filib>.

¹³David Flood, OFM *Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan Movement* (Quezon City, Philippines: FIA Contact Publications, 1989), 23-28.

¹⁴David Flood, OFM, *Work for Everyone: Francis of Assisi and the Ethic of Service* (Quezon City, Philippines: CCFMC Office for Asia/Oceania, 1997).

¹⁵There are other areas of Franciscan identity that might be studied in the same way: relationship to the church, the place of fraternity/sorority among us, peace-making, the relationship to creation, to name a few.

¹⁶In 1994, a keynote address to the annual Franciscan Federation assembly became the centerpiece of this small body of literature. The address, *The Prophetic Heart: The Evangelical Form of Religious Life in the Contemporary United States*, was published in *The Cord*, (Nov/Dec 1994). The same issue carried the *Response to the Lineamenta* of the Synod on Religious Life that summarized the Federation's appeal to the Synod participants to recognize the results of Franciscan theologizing in their deliberations.

¹⁷In 2000 the English Speaking Conference of the Order of Friars Minor created a Commission on the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. The commission's charge is to implement an ambitious program of promotion of Franciscan research and study in service to the pastoral task of the contemporary church. Training of formators is a key element of the program. The commission is eager to encourage new generations of Franciscan scholars and to link their ministry to that of the missionary and pastoral agents within the family. Materials documenting symposia and handbooks on various study themes (postmodernism, creation, theological foundations, etc.) can be obtained from the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University.

"Having been formed to dedicate ourselves with total generosity to a larger entity (the community, parish, school, hospital, etc.), we cannot restrict ourselves in the absence of the boundaries that community regulations once imposed. What suffers is the project of creating solid voluntary communities of adults who choose new primary relationships in lieu of marriage. Once the product of the superior's will and the rule book's prescriptions, the community is now an aggregate of persons who may not understand the dedication needed to engage one another in the absence of such formal structures and their formidable sanctions. And even if the group understands the need, the skills needed to develop the new communities required in the 21st century may be in limited supply."

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WTU Ninth Annual Symposium. "Let Us Praise, Adore, and Give Thanks: Franciscans and Liturgical Life." May 26-28, 2006. At WTU, in Washington, DC. See ad, p. 100.

Guided Retreat on Mystics. June 11-18, 2006. Director: Pauline Wittry, FSPA. At Marywood Spirituality Center, Arbor Vitae, Wisconsin. See ad, p. 107.

Workshop for Franciscan Spiritual Directors. June 16-18, 2006. "Franciscan Spirituality via the Letters of Clare." Joan Mueller, OSF. At Stella Maris Retreat Center, Skaneateles, NY. See ad, p. 98.

Vacation with a Purpose: Watercolor Workshop. June 25-30, 2006. Director: Karen Kappell, FSPA. At Marywood Spirituality Center, Arbor Vitae, Wisconsin. See ad, p. 107.

"Praying With the Little Flower." June 4-19, 2006. At Holy Spirit Retreat Center, Janesville, MN. With Br. Joseph F. Schmidt, FSC. See ad, p. 106.

5-Day Silent Contemplative Retreat: "Teach Us To Pray." July 23-28, 2006. With Fr. Rusty Shaughnessy at San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville, CA. For more information call Lorraine Steele at 925.837.9141 or visit our website: www.sandamiano.org.

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The 40 Day Franciscan Hermitage Retreat. November 4- December 14, 2006. At the Portiuncula Center For Prayer, Frankfort, IL. See ad, p. 97.

Abbreviations

Writings of Saint Francis

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

Writings of Saint Clare

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

Franciscan Sources

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

His zeal for fraternal salvation, which emerged from the furnace of love, pierced the inmost parts of this man [Francis] like a sharp and flaming sword. Aflame with the ardor of imitation and stricken with the sorrow of compassion, this man seemed to be completely consumed . . . he struggled to pray, was active in preaching, and outstanding in giving good example.

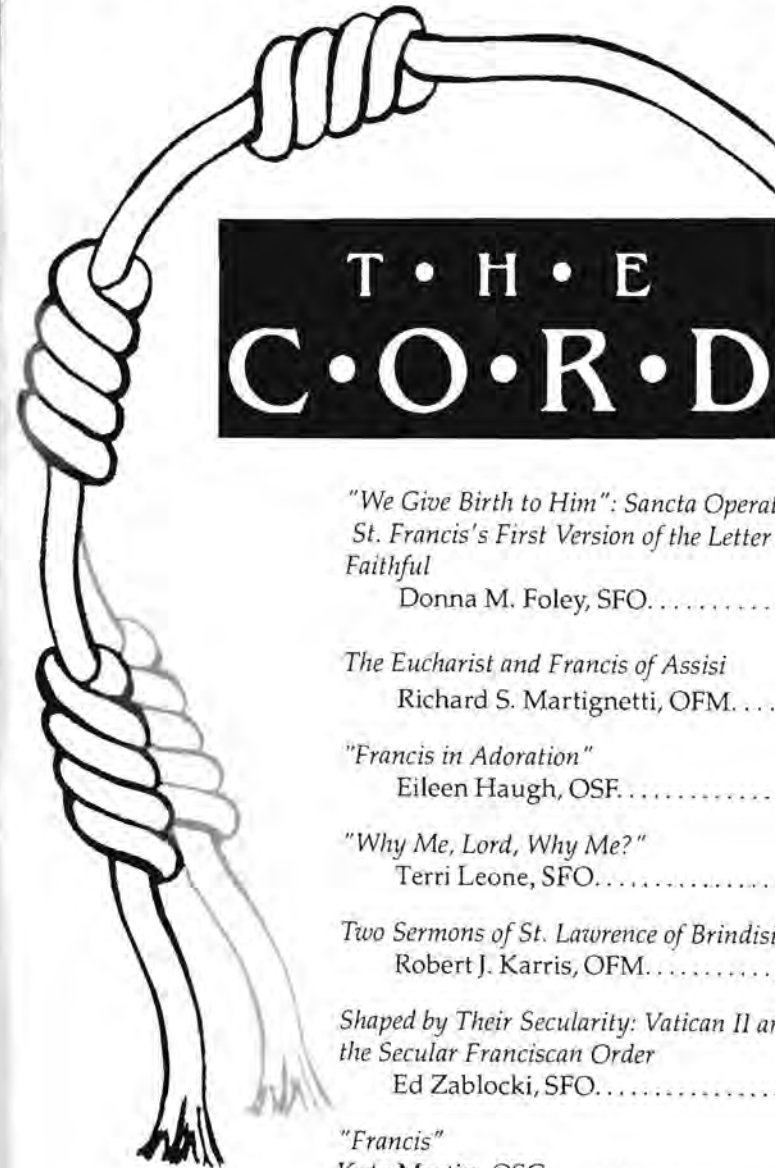
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THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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

1. MSS should be submitted on disk (or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced).
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 14th ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined. Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or italicized.
4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:

(1Cor. 13:6). (2Cel 5:8).

(RegNB 23:2). (4Lag 2:13).

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

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The Cord, 56.3 (2006)



Editorial

Once again we come to the issue that is dedicated the life and spirit of the Secular Franciscans in our family. Our goal is to provide resource material primarily for SFO members and secondarily for those of us who interact with the Seculars/laity in any way. To the fullest extent possible, I rely on authors who make their good journey as professed members of the Secular Franciscan Order, and supplement when necessary with the writings of others whose work integrates well into this issue. So it is with the material presented in the following pages.

The authors selected for this *Cord* all touch real-world concepts and problems. They acknowledge the many challenges of living Gospel values in everyday situations, naming ways in which we fail to embody the Jesus who is the incarnation of God's mercy and compassion. But they also offer personal witness to the holy ground on which they stand, whether they count SFO, OSF, OSC or OFM as part of their identity.

We open with Donna Foley's reflection on "*sancta operatio*"—a term which resonates with every Franciscan heart since we all strive for holiness of life. She leads us into the First Letter to the Faithful with a very specific focus and draws us into a reflection on how the branches of the Franciscan family rely on the same roots: the search for holiness. Fr. Rick Martignetti states that "love for the Eucharist taught Francis how to live and act in daily life." His article calls each of us to remember Francis's devotion to the Eucharist and reminds us of its impact not just on clerics. Eileen Haugh's poem shares with us a piece of holy ground, the wonder of adoration, while Terri Leone invites us into her reflection on the difficulty of faithful trust in God in some of the dark times of life. Ed Zablocki writes of the "uplifting understanding of the role of the Catholic layperson in the Church and the world." Is it true, as he says, that "This understanding is, for the most part, unknown or underappreciated among Catholic laypersons"? If so, what can *I* do about it? And, lastly, Fr. Bob Karris has translated two sermons that allow us to place ourselves once again within the Gospel itself to be embraced by the fullness of God's mercy. I am grateful to all the authors for the contribution they have made to *our* journey!

May the season of longer light and lesser darkness that we call "summer" be filled with new life for all of us and for our world.

Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF

"We Give Birth to Him"
***Sancta Operatio* in St. Francis's First Version**
of the Letter to The Faithful

Donna M. Foley, SFO

We are mothers, when we carry him in our heart and body (cf. 1 Cor 6:20) through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience; we give birth to him through a holy life [emphasis added] which must give light to others by example (cf. Mt 5:16).¹

Why would a contemporary Catholic become a Secular Franciscan? If it is an affinity for the saint, profession is not necessary. If it is a desire to take part in Franciscan apostolic ministry, there are arguably more dynamic outlets for this than a Franciscan fraternity. Yet some individuals are still called to profession and commitment to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. Perhaps what is sought is really, as Thaddée Matura suggests, "a matter of being"² that can still be found in this life.

If a Secular wanted to find a connection between her/his own profession and the charism of Saint Francis, she/he would naturally look to the document that serves as a prologue to her/his Rule, the so-called First Version of the Letter to the Faithful. If she/he wished further to discover what she/he has in common with her/his brothers and sisters in the first two orders, she/he might study a theme found early on in the spirituality of all three families.

Reflecting an understanding that profession is at least partly a "matter of being," I want to explore the phrase *sancta operatio*, which is found in the First Version of the Letter to the Faithful (hereafter referred to as First Letter) 1:10, and in the same document in 2:21. It appears again in the Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful (verses 49-53). Particular attention will be paid to this expression's use in the context of motherhood to Christ. The phrase will also be studied as it occurs in the Later Rule of the Friars Minor, chapter 10, and in Francis's Testament, v. 39. And though the phrase *sancta operatio* itself does not appear in Clare's writing, because we find it to be linked to a sense of maternity to Christ, we will examine that theme in the First and Third Letters to Agnes.

It is especially important for Seculars to understand Francis's own words with regard to the norm of life they've received, and to seek out what that life has in common with other parts of our Franciscan families. Secular Franciscans have a Rule consigned to them which has undergone a great deal of development through the centuries. At the same time, they are expected to return "to the origins and to the spiritual experience of Francis of Assisi."³ The phrase *sancta operatio* has meaning for all Franciscans, yet we will read it with a particular concern for the Secular Order.

The passage being considered appears in the Rule of the Secular Franciscans under the following heading:

Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order

Prologue

Exhortation of Saint Francis to the Brothers and Sisters in Penance

In the name of the Lord!

Chapter One

Concerning Those Who Do Penance

Here is what Francis says in the Letter about those who "produce worthy fruits of penance":

⁵Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, "because "the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them" (cf. Is 11:2) and he will make "his home and dwelling among them" (cf. Jn 14:23), and they are the "sons of the heavenly father" (cf. Mt 5:45), whose works they do, and they are the spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Mt 12:50).⁸We are spouses, when by the Holy Spirit the faithful soul is united with our Lord Jesus Christ, "we are brothers to him when we fulfill "the will of the Father who is in heaven" (Mt 12:50).¹⁰We are mothers, when we carry him in our heart and body (cf. 1 Cor 6:20) 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 (cf. Mt 5:16).

For Seculars, the expression *sancta operatio* (translated by Habig as "through a holy life") and the connected idea of motherhood to Christ were a last-minute gift to the Order in the form of the First Letter's attachment to their Rule of 1978. In describing the process by which this current Rule was written, Robert Stewart, OFM, explained that the study most critical to the development of the new Rule was Esser's analysis of the Volterra document, a study that first appeared in German only in 1975. Esser's conclusion—that the Volterra text could well represent the "norm of life" given by Francis to the penitents as

described by Thomas of Celano—undoubtedly influenced the decision of the Ministers General to insert the text as a Prologue to the Rule. But, unfortunately, the widespread popular recognition of the centrality of that text for the Secular Franciscan Order emerged too late for the text itself to have influenced or directed the entire Rule Project.⁴

Happily, though, with the First Letter, Seculars have Francis's own words to serve as a lens through which to read their Rule, even if the document's power is not always readily detected in the Rule itself. And by taking for themselves the meaning of *sancta operatio* in particular, they obtain something significant to the other two Franciscan families as well.

Before examining the phrase as it appears in the Secular Franciscan Rule, other interpretations of it will be considered. In his study of the phrase *sancta operatio*, which he translates as "with holy activity," Optatus van Asseldonk allows the word "activity" to allude both to the action of the human individual and to the inspiration of the Spirit of the Lord. He states, "In the concrete it refers to our holy activity under the activity of the Spirit of the Lord." Of the adjective "holy," van Asseldonk writes that the word "reveals one of Francis's special loves, so much so that it is the adjective most used in his writings."⁵ In the work of Armstrong and Brady, the phrase is given as follows: ". . . we give birth to Him through [His] holy manner of working. . . ." For these editors, "Saint Francis underscores the dynamic principle of the spiritual life, the Holy Spirit, which must be operative in the life of every Christian."⁶ In contrast, Stewart asserts that given the context of the phrase, "the sense indicates that we give birth to Him by *our holy manner of living*."⁷ This translation seems closer to Habig's than the other two. While it may be important to keep in mind the different translations, most English-speaking Secular Franciscans will be reading the phrase, "through a holy life." A discussion of the different implications in "Its/His/our holy activity/manner of working/manner of living" might indeed be productive for Secular Franciscans. Perhaps reflection on the different renderings of *sancta operatio* would lead us to a sensitive search for the places where the Holy Spirit's activity and our own diverge or harmonize. However, Seculars are given "through a holy life," so it seems most worthwhile to accept Habig's translation and move on to the context in which the phrase appears. The designation of verses will follow that of Armstrong and Brady.

Writing in the third person plural, Francis says that those who do penance "are the sons of the heavenly Father whose works they do, and they are the spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ." If we compare Francis's use of "sons of the heavenly Father" with the scripture passage cited by editors (Mt 5:45), we may get a sense of what Francis means by the "works they do." Being a son to the Father here is a matter of loving and praying for one's enemies and persecutors. Between this and the next set of relational terms

he gives, Francis adds that of spouse. Though not noted by editors, we may compare verse 8 of *The First Letter* with 1 Corinthians 6:17, "But whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him."⁸ And when Jesus stretches out his hand to his disciples, naming them brother and sister and mother when they do his Father's will (cf. Mt 12:50), Francis responds joyfully. After these layers of relationship are introduced, their meaning is explained by Francis and a change occurs in the language of the letter. Following the phrase, "mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ" the text shifts to the first person plural: "We are spouses . . . we are brothers . . . We are mothers. . . ." Francis, who began by addressing other lay men and women, now unites his voice with theirs. It is almost as if by speaking of this closeness with our Lord Jesus Christ, the saint is moved to something more personal in his language. Here, in three strokes, Francis introduces the Christian reader (or listener) to the possibility of the most intimate connections with the Father, Holy Spirit and Son. When he speaks of how "We are mothers, when we carry him in our heart and body," Francis may be drawing on 1 Corinthians 6:20, "For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body." However, where Paul has taken the text of Genesis 2:24, "The two . . . will become one flesh" and turned it into a warning against sexual immorality, Francis turns it round again and applies it positively to the penitent's heart and body. We can be a temple, a vessel, a womb for our Lord Jesus Christ when we carry him "through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience." If there are any doubts about this, we have the words of Jesus himself: "For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Here again, the image of motherhood to Christ seems to move the speech of the text to a new level of expression. After "we give birth to him through a holy life," the language of perseverance, unity and gestation gives way to crying out:

¹¹Oh, how glorious it is to have a great and holy Father in heaven!

¹²Oh how glorious it is to have such a beautiful and admirable Spouse, the holy Paraclete!⁹

¹³Oh, how glorious it is to have such a Son, loved, beloved, humble, peaceful, sweet, lovable, and desirable above all: Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . [Armstrong/Brady, p. 63]

Matura writes, "This is the only place where Francis gives free reign to his unbounded joy by using the frequent exclamation, 'Oh!' and the many adjectives which express his keen delight." He goes on to note, "It is true that, when speaking elsewhere about the Father, he also uses an abundance of similar adjectives . . . but he does so with a kind of reverent restraint, whereas here we can sense a freer, more personal reaction of joy and pleasure."¹⁰

The expressions and ideas in this letter may have existed prior to Francis, but we can try to imagine the impact of this exhortation on the lay people who first read it, or more likely, had it read to them. It addressed what was then still a fairly new conception of a "mixed life of service and contemplation,"¹¹ and did so with images both dramatic and familiar.

The phrase *sancta operatio*, which Francis uses twice in the First Letter, also appears for the Friars Minor in verse 8 of Chapter 10 in The Later Rule:

⁷At the same time I admonish and exhort the brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ that they beware of *all* pride, vainglory, envy, avarice (cf. Lk 12:15), cares and worries of this world (cf. Mt 13:22), detraction and complaint. And those who are illiterate should not be eager to learn. ⁸Instead let them pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working, ⁹to pray always to Him with a pure heart and to have humility, patience in persecution and weakness, ¹⁰And to love those who persecute us, find fault with us, or rebuke us, because the Lord says: *Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute and slander you* (Mt 5:44).¹² [Armstrong/Brady, pp. 143-44]

Once more that "holy life" or "holy activity" is connected to purity, humility and patience. We read in the First Letter that "We are mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through divine love and pure and sincere conscience. . . ." Here, to have the Spirit of the Lord and His *sancta operatio* is "to pray always to Him with a pure heart and to have humility." As in verses 1 through 5 of the First Letter, there is a strong sense of the single-mindedness, or rather, single-heartedness that Francis sees as absolutely necessary in order



to "have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working." Even education may, without humility, become a distraction. Here, as in 7:3 of the Later Rule, the brothers are counseled to avoid those inner disturbances that impede holy activity. In 7:3 we read, "They must take care not to become angry or disturbed because of the sin of another, since anger and disturbance hinder charity in themselves and others." If our understanding of *sancta operatio* in the

writing of Francis is connected to the image of giving birth to Christ, then we may sense how cares, worries, anger, and impatience can "hinder" the process. Any midwife who's sat with a laboring woman knows that these are the very types of "disturbance" that can make the whole birthing process longer and more painful. And although motherhood is not directly linked to *sancta operatio* in this passage, elsewhere Francis does turn to motherhood as a model for the love brothers should show to one another. In 6:8 of the Later Rule we read, "And let each one confidently make known his need to another, for, if a mother has such care and love for her son born according to the flesh (cf. 1 Thess 2:7), should not someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit even more diligently?" If Francis admonishes the brothers to beware of "pride, vainglory, envy and avarice" in their pursuit of "what they must desire above all things," then here we see the opposite of those hindrances. In the act of providing a mother's care for one another, with its attendant qualities of humility and patience, the brothers will have the Spirit of the Lord.

Francis uses *sancta operatio* in another of his writings to the brothers. In a manner somewhat similar to his closing in the First Letter, Francis brings the Testament to a conclusion:

³⁹But as the Lord has granted me to speak and to write the Rule and these words simply and purely, so shall you understand them simply and without gloss, and observe them with [their] holy manner of working until the end. ⁴⁰And whoever shall have observed these [things], may he be filled in heaven with the blessing of the most high Father and on earth with the blessing of His beloved Son with the most Holy Spirit the Paraclete and with all the powers of heaven and all the saints. ⁴¹And I, little brother Francis, your servant, inasmuch as I can, confirm for you this most holy blessing within and without. [Armstrong/Brady, p. 156]

Here *sancta operatio* is taken by Armstrong and Brady to refer to the activity of Francis's *words*, granted by the Lord, and understood "simply and without gloss." Van Asseldonk reads the text to mean, "he [Francis] recalls that the Rule and Testament, 'given' or 'inspired' by the Lord, must be observed as such until the end . . . with holy activity."¹³ The Secular Franciscan who wishes to explore what themes his life may have in common with that of the friars might compare the above passage with the following from The First Letter. Again, because it is the one available to Seculars, Habig's English translation will be used here:

¹⁹All those into whose hands this letter shall have come we ask in the charity that is God (cf. 1 Jn 4:17) to accept kindly and with divine love the fragrant words of our Lord Jesus Christ quoted above. ²⁰And let

those who do not know how to read have them read to them.²¹ And may they keep them in their mind and carry them out, in a holy manner to the end, because they are "spirit and life" (Jn 6:64).²² And those who will not do this will have to render "an account on the day of judgement" (cf. Mt 12:36) before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 14:10).

The position of the phrase *sancta operatio* near the end of these two texts seems to make understanding its use vitally important for us. The differences in interpretation are quite real, but whichever is followed, the reader or listener might still reasonably arrive at a couple of conclusions. He could come to understand that these words, given to Francis by the Spirit of the Lord and by Francis in love, are expected to generate real, holy activity in the listener's life. Furthermore, this *sancta operatio* of the Spirit of the Lord should come to refer to the Secular's very life itself. There can be no mistaking this "holy manner" for something optional, or reserved for religious life. It is not.

If Chapter 1 of the First Letter uses vibrant, exalted language to describe a life of relationship with the Trinity, the language of Chapter 2 is no less vivid in its description of death. Under the heading, "Concerning Those Who Do Not Do Penance" we read:

¹But all those men and women who are not doing penance ²and do not receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ ³and live in vices and sin and yield to evil concupiscence and to the wicked desires of the flesh, ⁴and do not observe what they have promised to the Lord, ⁵and are slaves to the world, in their bodies, by carnal desires and the anxieties and cares of this life (cf. Jn 8:41)...¹⁴

⁷These are blind, because they do not see the true light, our Lord Jesus Christ; ⁸They do not have spiritual wisdom because they do not have the Son of God who is the true wisdom of the Father.

We "have the Son of God" when "[w]e are mothers, when we carry him in our heart and body" (1:10). We do not have him when the "carnal desires and the anxieties and cares of this life" work against any *sancta operatio*. There will be no giving birth to Christ where these are present. This question of motherhood versus barrenness, or spiritual infertility, seems quite clearly for Francis a matter of eternal life or death. While this theme is communicated to the penitents and friars by Francis through his writing, it is also differently and beautifully expressed in the writing of Saint Clare.

In order to reflect more fully on the idea of motherhood to Christ, we would very naturally turn to the writings of Saint Clare for help—beginning with the First Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague. The person being addressed

and Clare's own voice make this document unique. However, Clare uses a language of relationship strikingly similar to that of Francis:

¹²Therefore, most beloved sister, or should I say, Lady, worthy of great respect: because You are the spouse and the mother and the sister of my Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor 11:2; Mt 12:50), ¹³and have been adorned resplendently with the sign of inviolable virginity and most holy poverty: Be strengthened in the holy service which You have undertaken out of an ardent desire for the Poor Crucified. . . . [Armstrong/Brady, p. 191]

To the "spouse" which might be expected in a letter to a woman about to enter religious life, Clare adds "mother" and "sister." These relationships are described as *already* in place, along with the "holy service" already undertaken.

In the Third Letter to the Blessed Agnes of Prague, Clare moves from a consideration of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the life of Agnes:

²²For the heavens with the rest of creation cannot contain their Creator. Only the faithful soul is His dwelling place and [His] throne, and this [is possible] only through the charity which the wicked do not have. . . .²⁴Therefore, as the glorious Virgin of virgins carried [Christ] materially in her body, ²⁵you, too, by *following in His footprints* (cf. 1 Pet 2:21), especially those of poverty and humility, can, without any doubt, always carry Him spiritually in your chaste and virginal body. [Armstrong/Brady, p. 201]

Here Agnes is invited to be mother to Christ "through" charity and "by" following: holy activity. In his study of Clare's spirituality, Heribert Roggen reflects on Clare's confidence in "the person who surrenders himself sincerely to God's action. . . . Despite the medieval mentality which was not yet ripe for such an attitude, we find many surprising points in Clare's rule that bear witness to this confidence in the person of others and to a great respect for the activity of God in men."¹⁵

This confidence in a life that is both holy and fertile does not seem to include the possibility that, once Christ is chosen, it can be one without the other. What Roggen observes about the Poor Clares resonates with what we have come to understand of *sancta operatio* in the life of the Secular Franciscans as well:

For Clare the apostolate of the Poor Clares consists precisely in the *manner of being*, in the very existence of the religious. She does not speak of *exercising the apostolate* but of *being apostolic*; life itself is the apostolate. All her life was apostolic precisely through her union with Christ. Thus frequent expressions, such as, "spouse, sister, daughter,

mother, and helper of the Lord" serve no other purpose than to express in a concrete way *union with God*. The profound value of motherhood flows from that adhesion to the Lord. The sisters become "mother of the Lord Jesus Christ," "mother to the Son of the Most High Father. . . ."

It is a spiritual birth of the Lord, the source of the development and growth of his Mystical Body, a life of fruitfulness in the Spirit of God.¹⁶

We might add that this birthing of Christ in the Spirit of the Lord is what constitutes the very existence, not just of the religious, but of all committed Christians.

Contemporary Catholics may take for granted so much of what is remarkable about the message of Francis. There are many other avenues of spiritual formation and nurture open to the layperson seeking one, and no shortage of ministries in need. Yet for some who consider life with and for Christ a "matter of being" nothing short of birthing Him is possible. It may have been the voice of Francis that first called them to Christ, but the saint never interferes with the relationship that comes next. For Secular Franciscans today, it is possible to understand *sancta operatio* (the Lord's and ours) as generative, life-giving and *essential*. It is a theme common to the life of all Franciscans. This understanding may yet help to fulfill that "hope of renewal" which the Ministers General saw in 1978 as hinging "upon returning to the origins and to the spiritual experience of Francis of Assisi."

Endnotes

¹This text of the Secular Franciscan Rule is based on the *Epistola ad Fideles I* in Kajetan Esser, OFM, *Die Opuscula des hl. Franziskus von Assisi*, Nuova Edizione, Critica (Grottaferrata: Col. S. Bonaventura, 1976). It was translated by Marion A. Habig, OFM in *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order* (USA: The National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, 1997). Some excerpts used in this article are from that translation.

²Thaddée Matura, OFM, *Gospel Living: Francis of Assisi Yesterday and Today* (NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994), 288.

³Constantine Koser, OFM, "Letter of the Four Ministers General of the Franciscan Family (Excerpts)," forward to *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order*.

⁴Robert M. Stewart, OFM, "De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam" *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation* (Rome: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1991), 319.

⁵Optatus van Asseldonk, OFM Cap., "The Spirit of the Lord and Its Holy Activity in the Writings of Francis," trans. Edward Hagman, OFM Cap., *Greyfriars Review* 5.1 (1991): 117.

⁶*Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap. and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M. (NY: Paulist Press, 1982), 63, n 3.

⁷Stewart, "De Illis," 153.

⁸Scriptural references are from the New American Bible.

⁹The Habig translation does not include the adjectives "consoling" and "wondrous" found in Armstrong-Brady.

¹⁰Thaddée Matura, OFM, *Francis of Assisi: The Message in His Writings*, trans. Paul Barrett, OFM Cap., rev. ed. (New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2004), 78.

¹¹Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Docere Verbo et Exemplo: An Aspect of Twelfth-Century Spirituality* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979), 91.

¹²Armstrong-Brady, 144. Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent quotes from the writings of Francis and Clare are taken from this work.

¹³Van Asseldonk, "The Spirit of the Lord," 117.

¹⁴The Habig translation in the Secular Franciscan Rule does not include references to Colossians, Galatians or 1 Peter for this passage. Verse 6 ("They are held fast by the devil, whose children they are and whose works they perform") is not included—though the scriptural reference is!

¹⁵Heribert Roggen, OFM, *The Spirit of St. Clare*, trans. Paul Joseph Oligny (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971), 30.

¹⁶Roggen, 40.

It is especially important for Seculars to understand Francis's own words with regard to the norm of life they've received, and to seek out what that life has in common with the other two Franciscan families. Secular Franciscans have a Rule consigned to them which has undergone a great deal of development through the centuries. At the same time, they are expected to return "to the origins and to the spiritual experience of Francis of Assisi."

The Eucharist and Francis of Assisi

Richard S. Martignetti, OFM

At a time in history when the practice of receiving Holy Communion had significantly tapered off, Saint Francis of Assisi came onto the scene and used his grace-filled imagination to call the people of God back to a fuller participation in the celebration of Eucharist. In the *Dizionario Francese* (p. 519-47), Rinaldo Falsini tells us that by the end of the twelfth century, a fracture had occurred within the Eucharistic theology of the common believer. Generally, among the faithful, there was an increased sense of the True Presence of the Body and Blood of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and yet this existed alongside a poor understanding of what it meant to be believers joined together by the Lord in "holy communion". Thus, though devotion to the continual Eucharistic presence of the Lord was reaching a peak, especially among mystics, a sense of personal unworthiness was also at its height, relegating the faithful solely to the role of "occasional observer" of the great mystery unfolding before them during the celebration of the Mass.

Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), however, did not share this common hesitation to partake of Christ's Body and Blood. The Eucharist beckoned him. His first biographer, Thomas of Celano, tells us that Francis "considered it disrespectful not to hear, if time allowed, at least one Mass a day" and that he "received Communion frequently and so devoutly that he made others devout" (2 Cel 201). Saint Bonaventure, who had the benefit of even more years of theological reflection on the life of Francis, would elaborate: "[Francis's] burning love for the Sacrament of our Lord's Body seemed to consume the very marrow of his bones. . . . He communicated often . . . and was often, as it were, spiritually inebriated, frequently rapt in ecstasy" (LM 9:2).

Besides being something that flowed from the depths of his heart, Francis's Eucharistic devotion was also rooted in his respect for the Roman Church. By the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Church hierarchy had also shown itself concerned about infrequent reception of Holy Communion among the people of God. Responding to this growing trend, the Fourth Lateran Coun-

cil of 1215 attempted to rouse the faithful with regard to their participation in the Eucharist by official decrees which, among other things, made mandatory the reception of Holy Communion by all believers at least once a year (cf. canon 21). Priests too were challenged to re-embrace the mystery of the Eucharist since apparently by the time of the Council some were celebrating Eucharist as little as four times a year (cf. canon 17).

Francis of Assisi must have been overjoyed by the Council's desire to promote Eucharistic devotion since he himself had already been nourishing and deepening his own love for the Body and Blood of the Lord since the advent of his conversion some ten years earlier. The Lord had already given Francis a great faith in the Eucharist which was celebrated by the holy Roman Church (cf. Test 6-10) and now the Council would become the impetus for this poor little man from Assisi to pass on his faith to the world. Since Francis saw himself as a man of the Church, it was quite natural for him to become a great promoter of the decrees of the Council, doing his part to awaken in the faithful their perhaps dormant desire to meet Christ in this sacramental way.

Francis's writings show him to be passionate about the True Presence of the Son of God in the Blessed Sacrament. Unlike the great theologians of the universities, which were just beginning to become popular in places like Paris or Bologna, Francis did not engage in lengthy debates, using refined theological terms such as "transubstantiation" in order to argue for the reality of the True Presence. He was not a professor lecturing to theology students according to the rules of the well-organized scholastic method. Instead, Francis spoke simply and from the heart, to anyone who would listen, basing his arguments about the importance of the Eucharist on faith and captivating his audience by his passion and his descriptive, often poetic, use of metaphor.

Though eight hundred years old now, Francis's metaphors still have the power to touch the heart today, inviting us to ponder the great gift which we call Eucharist. His first admonition, for example, invites us to relate our own situation today to that of the apostles. In Jesus of Nazareth, the apostles literally had God walking among them in a simple, humble, and hidden way. The greatest temptation they must have faced was that of looking at Jesus of Nazareth solely with their physical eyes and missing the great miracle that unfolded daily in their presence.

To overcome such a temptation, Francis muses that the apostles must have been men of prayer who learned to look upon Jesus with the eyes of the spirit. They had to use their spiritual senses to see that which the physical senses could never comprehend, the fullness of God, present in their daily lives in profound humility. Drawing an analogy from this, Francis calls his followers to approach the Blessed Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood with a faith similar to that of the apostles. He writes:

Behold, each day He humbles Himself as when He came from the royal throne into the Virgin's womb; each day He Himself comes to us, appearing humbly; each day He comes down from the bosom of the Father upon the altar in the hands of a priest. As He revealed Himself to the holy apostles in true flesh, so He reveals Himself to us now in sacred bread. And as they saw only His flesh by an insight of their flesh, yet believed that He was God as they contemplated Him with their spiritual eyes, let us, as we see bread and wine with our bodily eyes, see and firmly believe that they are His most holy Body and Blood living and true (Adm 1:16-21).

Having the eyes of faith and viewing the Blessed Sacrament in this way was no small concern for Francis. In fact, he saw it as one on which would hang our very salvation. In that same admonition, he makes the rather bold and harsh sounding claim: "[those] who do not see and believe according to the Spirit and the Divinity that it is truly the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ [in the Eucharist], are condemned" (Adm 1:8). He goes on to reinforce this troubling statement with words of Jesus from Sacred Scripture: "This is affirmed by the Most High Himself Who says: *This is my Body and the Blood of my new covenant and whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life*" (Adm 1: 10-11).

When it came to the Eucharist, Francis was not one to restrain his words. Since he saw it as something absolutely necessary for entry into God's kingdom, he was passionate in calling everyone within earshot to approach and receive the Body and Blood of the Lord *worthily*. Above all else "eating worthily", for Francis, meant believing firmly that it truly is the Lord's Body and Blood (cf. 2 LtF23-24). Not only did he call the Friars Minor, the Poor Ladies of San Damiano and the multitude of the faithful to avail themselves of the Blessed Sacrament, but also civil authorities, such as mayors and governors, who may not have even been believers. In his Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples, he writes to these individuals with the words: "I strongly advise you, my Lords, to put aside all care and preoccupation and receive the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with fervor in holy remembrance of Him" (LtR 6).

What seems to have fascinated Francis most about the Holy Eucharist was undoubtedly that which fascinated him most about the Lord Jesus in general, namely, His humility. The Son of God could have chosen to be with us in many ways, but the fact that He chose to be present in "an ordinary piece of bread" (LtOrd 27) filled the *poverello* with a sense of awe. Francis, with a vivid imagination enlightened by grace, saw the Lord's humble presence in the Eucharist as a call to himself to embrace the virtue of humility.

Let everyone be struck with fear, let the whole world tremble, and let the heavens exult when Christ, the Son of the living God, is present on the altar in the hands of a priest! O wonderful loftiness and stupendous dignity! O sublime humility! O humble sublimity! The Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humbles Himself that for our salvation He hides Himself under an ordinary piece of bread! Brothers, look at the humility of God and pour out your hearts before Him! Humble yourselves that you may be exalted by Him! Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that He Who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally (LtOrd 26-29).

Though having the eyes of faith was of the utmost importance, Francis's challenging words "hold back nothing of yourselves" unfold in a call to purity and chastity for the one who would approach the Blessed Sacrament. There is a subtle yet powerful statement in the second version of the Letter to the Faithful which ties these two virtues to the Eucharist. Francis writes:

His Father's will was such that His blessed and glorious Son, Whom He gave to us and Who was born for us, should offer Himself through His own blood as a sacrifice and oblation on the altar of the cross. . . . And [Christ] wishes all of us to be saved through Him and receive Him with our heart *pure* and our body *chaste*" (2 LtF 11, 14) [emphasis mine].

This is yet another subtle argument through metaphor. As Christ freely offered His Body for us on the cross, we who are invited to "receive Him" in the Holy Eucharist must freely offer our bodies back to Him through the virtues of purity and chastity.

This single statement clues us into that which the biographies confirm, namely, that love for the Eucharist taught Francis how to live and act in daily life. Not only would this continual invitation to the heavenly banquet call him to something as sublimely beautiful as chastity, it would also inspire him and his companions to clean up as they traveled around Italy. According to his biographers, Francis was known to sweep out dirty churches, wash altar linens by hand, and show a special reverent devotion to priests he encountered, all because of their closeness to the Eucharist.

And I desire to respect, love and honor [impoverished priests] and all others as my lords . . . because I discern the Son of God in them . . . [and] because in this world, I see nothing corporally of the most high Son of God except His most holy Body and Blood which they receive and they alone administer to others" (Test 8-10).

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Francis's concern about cleanliness and respect for that which was closest to the Eucharistic celebration, just like the call to return to reception of the Body and Blood itself, was something in line with the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council. The saint was simply doing his best to promote that which the Council had made binding:

We command also that churches, vessels, corporals, and vestments be kept clean and bright. For it is absurd to tolerate in sacred things a filthiness that is unbecoming even in profane things (canon 19).

Since Francis had such a special concern for churches or linens because of their proximity to the table of the Lord's Body and Blood, it follows that his love for the Word of God, that which made the Eucharist possible, would be even greater. Since it was through the Word of God, spoken by the priest, that the Eucharist was conformed (cf. 1LtCus 2), Francis demanded great respect for Scriptural or liturgical words and for any scrap of parchment upon which they may have been written. To the custodians of the Order, he passionately writes:

With all that is in me and more I beg you that, when it is fitting and you judge it expedient, you humbly beg the clergy to revere above all else the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and His holy names and the written words that sanctify His Body. . . . Let the names and written words of the Lord, whenever they are found in dirty places, be also gathered up and kept in a becoming place (1LtCus 2,5).

Francis's relationship with the clergy was somewhat paradoxical in that it was one of respectful, humble obedience as well as one of powerful words of exhortation and challenge. In the same letter to the Order, for example, priests are both hailed as men of great dignity whom "God has honored above all others" (LtOrd 23-24) and also warned that they will be held to a higher standard of judgment which could very well lead to their condemnation (cf. LtOrd 17-20). Basically Francis's main concern was that all those called to the heavenly banquet, but especially priests, appreciate the magnificent gift being offered to them and respond to God's generosity by striving for holiness. Among a series of poetic metaphors from the Letter to the Order, Francis compares the role of the priest to that of the Blessed Virgin in an imaginative comparison which would have certainly called his brothers to be holy. Though originally written with friar priests in mind, these words of Francis apply to any and all of us as we heed the call to approach the table of the Lord, partake of His Body and Blood, and marvel at His sublime humility. Francis's love for the Eucharist and his graced imagination speak as loudly as ever even today:

If the Blessed Virgin is so honored, as is becoming, because she carried Him in her most holy womb; if the Baptist trembled and did not dare to touch the holy head of God; if the tomb in which He lay for some time is held in veneration, how holy, just and fitting must be he who touches with his hands, receives in his heart and mouth, and offers to be received the One Who is not about to die but Who is to conquer and be glorified, upon Whom the angels longed to gaze. See your dignity, my priest brothers, and be holy because He is holy (LtOrd 21-23).

[All quotes and abbreviations of the Franciscan sources are taken from *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (New City Press, New York), vols. I (1999) and II (2002)].

FRANCIS IN ADORATION

My God and my All!
You are in the circle
The never-ending of Yourself
Which constantly moves and
Yet is always the same.

You gaze on me,
who have become caught
in the immensity
of Your delight
but cannot move

save to go around,
constantly around,
in Your eternal circle of embrace,
My God and my All!

Sr. Eileen Haugh, OSF

"Why Me, Lord, Why Me?"

Terri Leone, SFO

*I'm not sure exactly "where I'm going with this" but I am trusting
in the Holy Spirit's guidance and your openness to His guidance.*

During meditation today, Holy Thursday in 2005, the importance of "carrying our crosses" became very urgent. As I dwelt on this, the Holy Spirit kept "flashing lights on and off" on various concepts without giving me a chance to really develop them. The concepts, as I recall them, were:

"Carry your cross"
"God can/will produce good from any event"
"Rebuild My Church which is falling into ruin"
"Why me, Lord, why me?"
"Franciscans don't have an apostolate"
"Take up your cross and follow Me"
"One who loves is willing to 'die' for the one who is loved."

How do all these fit together? What *do* they have in common?

I suppose it is only natural to spend time thinking about "crosses," "suffering" and "death" as we recall and relive Jesus' Suffering, Death and Resurrection to restore us in our relationship with God. We try to imagine the pain and the great love Jesus has for us. We think of the little love we have for Him and how much we complain about the "crosses" in our own lives—the very small, insignificant crosses when compared to His. Many theologians and "great saints" have offered explanations, usually referring to Sacred Scripture, as to the "why" and "how" we are called to suffer/carry our crosses—to atone for our sins; to "show" us areas of our lives in need of "conversion"; to release souls from Purgatory, to show our love for God by willingly sharing in Jesus' Suffering and Death, etc. The following is a somewhat different "explanation."

As I struggle to make sense of the "concepts" listed above, I hear the Holy Spirit say, "Is your brain really that 'foggy' today? Can't you see the connections?" What did God ask of Francis? What was he called to do? "Rebuild My Church which is falling into ruin." That was Francis's primary vocation and apostolate (which was the visible expression of his love for God); it was and is the same for all Franciscans today. Francis was open to the Holy Spirit's guidance as to what needed to be done or said each day and he expected his followers to be equally open. There is no "one" apostolate for Franciscans except following God's guidance in "rebuilding His Church" wherever we are; in whatever "position" we hold/service we provide (spouse, parent, child, employee, employer, priest, religious, politician, etc.). We are called to "live the Gospel . . . going from gospel to life and life to gospel"; we are called to love and live as Jesus did; to experience and to deepen for all the experience of "brotherhood"—oneness in God. How do the various concepts above related to "suffering" and "dying" fit in here? While I accept the teaching of theologians and saints on this, I am being led to see another facet, as it were, to these issues, and for me, it answers perfectly and completely the question, "Why me, Lord, why me?" It also addresses the Franciscan vocation/apostolate of "Rebuild My Church/My Kingdom." There are entirely too many "social justice issues" and "moral issues/problems" that need "correcting" for us to try to tackle. I know I have asked many times, "Lord, where do You want me to put my time and talents?" He answered, "It lies in your 'crosses'!! That is if you let them." Through our "crosses" God is showing us what He wants us to "rebuild" through prayer and action. Through sickness and disease, we can/should see many related issues—the medical care needed; the cost of this medical care; the personal and emotional support needed; what needs to be done to prevent or cure that disease, etc. A child or close friend tells you (s)he is homosexual; a child or friend is arrested after hitting another vehicle after having one too many drinks or being overtired; a child or friend is stalked by an ex-boyfriend/girlfriend; a child or friend is attacked or kidnapped. What do you do? What do you say? Are you overwhelmed by what is/has happened to you or that close person? Are you able to go beyond yourself and think of/pray for others in similar situations? God has led me to believe that the reason these things "happen to me" is to make me more aware of these issues in the rest of His Kingdom and that He wants me to pray for others; to be more compassionate and understanding of others in these situations, and to act in some way to "end these evils." In other words, God is calling me (and you) to be a sister (or brother) to those in need in circumstances similar to "my/our crosses."

Shaped by Their Secularity: Vatican II and the Secular Franciscan Order

Ed Zablocki, SFO

"What then was the council? What has it accomplished?" So asked Pope Paul VI during his address to the Last General Meeting of the Second Vatican Council on December 7, 1965.¹ In marking the fortieth anniversary of the close of Vatican II, recent Catholic publications have sought to reflect on these same questions. While acknowledging momentous changes over the past four decades, commentators have also noted those aspects of the Council's vision that have yet to be fully realized. In this article, I will consider how one generally undeveloped aspect of the Council's vision has had a profound influence on a branch of the Franciscan family.

In a recent *St. Anthony Messenger* article, in response to the question "Have parts of Vatican II not yet influenced the Church's life as the Council intended?" Archbishop John P. Foley replied: "I think that the specifically secular vocation of the laity has not been fully appreciated—the role of the laity to transform their world of work through their own personal integrity and professional excellence, to make the world better by a profound evangelization of one's workplace and home."² John D. Meehan, former president of Magdalen College, concurs:

The Council Fathers . . . affirmed without equivocation, qualification, or reservation the baptismal integrity and ecclesial status of every member of the People of God. In doing so, they highlighted the vocation, apostolate, and spirituality of the largest number of citizens of the Church—the laity. Indeed, this was something new! The reality of that 'new thing,' however, has not been transmitted effectively to the lay people of the Catholic Church in America.³

These statements truly jumped off the page when I read them because I had recently completed a study guide that paid particular attention to the de-

velopment of the 1978 SFO Rule. And what was undeniably striking about the Rule's development was the strenuous effort made to incorporate Vatican II's "new" understanding of the Catholic laity—an understanding that I was now seeing has been largely unrealized within the Church. The Franciscan "Third Order Secular" (as it was called at the time), like all religious and secular orders, had been called by the Council to "an adjustment of the community to the changed conditions of our times."⁴ The "changed conditions" to which the Franciscan Third Order Secular specifically responded were precisely those contained in the Council's depiction of the "secular character" of the laity. The transformation of the pious Franciscan "Third Order Secular" into the self-governing, apostolically-oriented Secular Franciscan Order has been driven by this dynamic.

Vatican II's Vision for the Laity

Before considering the SFO's journey toward a secular identity it is important to recall the staggering difference in the positions occupied by Catholic laypersons in the pre-and post-Vatican II Church with respect to their vocation, apostolate and spirituality. Prior to the Council, the vocation to holiness was commonly understood as attainable by those called to the religious or consecrated life but not something to which the common lay person should aspire. "For all too long, the prevailing attitude in the Church had seen the laity as second-class members expected to live the commandments but not called to lives of holiness as were priests and religious."⁵ In contrast, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) taught that the laity should strive for sanctity: "All Christians in whatever state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of charity; by the pursuit of holiness."⁶

With respect to the mission of the Church, pre-Vatican II laity were understood to be participants only to the extent that they were carrying out the initiatives of the hierarchy. Such participation was commonly referred to as Catholic Action. "[I]n participating in Catholic Action, Catholic lay people were not engaging in an apostolate properly theirs—not doing something they had a right and duty to do just because they were members of the Church—but were sharing in something that properly pertained to the clerical hierarchy."⁷ Conversely, *Lumen Gentium* emphasizes the universal call to mission with laypeople "sharing in the Church's saving mission."⁸ Another Conciliar document, the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*) states that laypersons "are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord himself."⁹ Moreover, *Apostolicum Actuositatem* emphasizes lay autonomy: "Laymen ought to take on themselves as their distinctive task this renewal of the temporal order.

Guided by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the Church, prompted by Christian love, they should act in this domain in a direct way and in their own specific manner" (AA #7; p. 498 in Abbott).

With regard to spirituality, pre-Vatican II laypersons knew that they could grow in their relationship with God through prayer and the sacraments. But there was not a common understanding that a layperson's everyday life could be a spiritual path as well. This corresponded with the pre-Vatican II perception of the world as more a place of temptation than one of grace. The Council, in contrast, invited laypersons to encounter the Divine in every aspect of their daily lives: "This lay spirituality should take its particular character from the circumstances of one's state in life (married and family life, celibacy, widowhood), from one's state of health, and from one's professional and social activity" (AA, # 4; p. 494 in Abbott).

Vatican II's re-visioning of the vocation, mission and spirituality of the laity is summarized in the phrase "the secular character of the laity." Catholic laypersons were being invited to become responsible participants in the Church's vocation to holiness and mission to evangelize. They were to undertake these challenges in and through the circumstances of their daily lives.

"Secularity" in the Development of the Secular Franciscan Rule

As noted above, the so-called "Third Order Secular of St. Francis," like other orders both religious and secular, was called upon by the Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life (*Perfectae Caritatis*) to undertake a two-pronged initiative: to return to the charism of the founder and to adjust to the changing conditions of the times. To fulfill the latter mandate, orders were to update their rules, constitutions and rituals. In his book "*De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam*" *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation*, Fr. Robert Stewart, OFM, describes the rule development process. The so-called *Rule Project* was initiated in November, 1965, and took more than a dozen years before culminating in the promulgation of the new Rule in June, 1978. From the beginning of the *Rule Project*, inclusion of the secular character of the lay state was paramount. Initial worldwide feedback received in 1967 "called for a Rule which would present the members of the Third Order as followers of Francis . . . but in a manner truly adapted to the laity."¹⁰ Consequently, initial recommendations were sorted into two categories: 1) the Franciscan charism or 2) the "secular" nature of a lay Order. Among the recommendations concerning the secular character of the Order were the following:

- to incorporate the decrees of Vatican II especially *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*;

- to emphasize the personal nature of the secular vocation;
- to understand "profession" as a deepening of one's baptismal commitment rather than entrance into religious life.¹¹

Despite these recommendations, Fr. Stewart notes that the first Rule draft completed in 1968 elicited responses "ranging from disappointment to complete rejection of the Project" in large measure due to its failure to appropriately capture a truly "secular character" as part and parcel of the way of life of a lay Franciscan.¹² After this false start, a special Congress was convened in Assisi in 1969, with the specific mission of establishing the parameters that would guide the *Rule Project*. The Assisi Congress accomplished its mission in approving Motion 9 "that guided the rest of the redactional process for the New Rule."¹³ This motion recommended that the new Rule should contain seventeen essential elements including the following: "to have a spirituality of a secular character" and "to participate in the Apostolate of the Laity."¹⁴ Despite the inclusion of these elements, the next Rule draft, the 1974 *Basic Text* was most strongly criticized for its failure to present a "specifically secular spirituality" because "other than the mention of 'secular' and 'the laity'" the 1974 *Basic Text* contains little that would not also be appropriate within a rule for a canonical religious Franciscan group.¹⁵ The right words were being used but the essence of Vatican II's encompassing vision for the laity was missing from these early rule drafts.

Finally, ten years after the initiation of the *Rule Project*, the 1975 *Redaction* contained a lengthy paragraph entitled *In the Midst of the World* that captured the Conciliar vision of the apostolate of the laity:

Like all members of the Franciscan Family, we are sent to the entire world. As seculars, we have our own vocation: living in the midst of the world, engaged in various duties and works of the world, it is our duty to enlighten and direct all temporal realities to which we are closely united, in such a way that they may work and prosper constantly according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer. . . . By our witness and our action, joined with that of other men and women, we will work in these different sectors towards the realization of the plan of God for the world. It is first of all in our family that we will live the Franciscan spirit, striving to make it a sign of the world already renewed in Christ. We will make our work a participation in the development of creation, in the redemption of men and women, and a service to the whole human community. Finally, aware that it belongs to the whole Church to make people capable of building the temporal order well and of pointing it toward Christ, . . . the secular Fraternities will assume their apostolic and social responsibilities and commit themselves to concrete evangelical choices.¹⁶

The vision and contents of *In the Midst of the World* are represented in articles 14-19 of the approved 1978 Rule; articles which call on Secular Franciscans to "build a more fraternal and evangelical world" (art. 14); to "be at the forefront in promoting justice" (art. 15); to "esteem work as a gift and a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service to the human community" (art. 16); to "cultivate a spirit of peace, fidelity and respect for life" in their families (art. 17); to "respect all creatures" (art. 18) and to be "bearers of peace" and "messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance" (art. 19).¹⁷ Unfortunately, the underlying unity of these articles as expressions of the lay apostolate, so beautifully captured by *In the Midst of the World*, is not carried over into the approved Rule but does find voice subsequently in the Constitutions.

The struggle to incorporate Vatican II's new and profound understanding of the "secular character" of Catholic laypersons into the new Rule culminated in the most symbolically significant way imaginable. Pope Paul VI, in the 1978 decree of promulgation stated: "By this letter we abrogate the previous rule of what was formerly called the Franciscan Third Order. . . . [W]e approve and confirm with our apostolic authority and sanction the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order."¹⁸ Like Abram becoming Abraham, like Simon becoming Peter—the Order had received a new name—a name meant to symbolize its new character and new orientation as an association of lay faithful called to fulfill their vocation and mission in and through the world after the example of St. Francis. Paul VI, who had brought the Second Vatican Council to its close, was now intent on seeing that the Council's pronouncements concerning Catholic laypersons be realized through the *Secular* Franciscan Order.

Making the Rule a Reality: Efforts to Embrace a Secular Identity

The secular dimension of the 1978 Secular Franciscan Rule has been appropriated in varying degrees by the Secular Franciscan Order at the international, national and local levels. At the international level, the 1993 theme of the international SFO's triennial General Chapter held in Mexico City was *Secularity as a Characteristic Element of the Identity of the Secular Franciscan*. Ronald Pihokker, SFO, then U.S. national vice minister, was invited to give a keynote address where he asked:

Are we simply relegated to the mundane; condemned to live in a space where the sacred does not exist? No! We, as Secular Franciscans are called to witness to the fact that the sacred is powerfully present in the world. We are called to live lives which resonate the song of Francis and the gospel of Christ present in every aspect of modern life.¹⁹

The most recent International General Chapter held in Assisi in November, 2005, reaffirmed this commitment:

The secular identity of the SFO is a fundamental point of our vocation and is manifested in the mission and testimony of each one of its members and fraternities. We are called to build a new, just and fraternal world, contributing to the kingdom of God with courageous initiatives and actions in the concrete situations we live in, never forgetting the importance of confident and persevering prayers.²⁰

Within the United States, at the level of the National Fraternity, several individuals have acted to advance the secular dimension of the Secular Franciscan charism. Marie Amore, SFO, in a personal communication, recalls the creation of the apostolic commissions:

It happened at the 1984 National Fraternity gathering in Colorado Springs. It was Fr. Matthew Gaskin, OFM's first time at National. I remember asking him what his impression of the National Fraternity was. I was kind of surprised by his answer. He said something like "I am disappointed." Where are the visionaries?" A couple of us were listening to him and we encouraged him to state his opinion to the whole group. When he spoke to "the whole assembly" he said something that I still remember quite well. It went like this: "I wanted to work with the Secular Franciscan Order. I have read your [R]ule and find it challenging. There are articles there that address work, family, peace and justice and the environment. Why are you not talking about these things?" There was some discussion from the floor and then Fr. Matt said, "I propose there be five commissions one for each of these subjects." It was moved, seconded and approved that the commissions be set up in the following areas: Justice, Peace, Work, Family and the Environment.

Recent U.S. National Ministers have all played critical roles in advancing the secular dimension of the Secular Franciscan way of life. Richard Morton, SFO, spearheaded the challenging regionalization effort that united fraternities according to a common mutual bond, typically geographic proximity. William Wicks, SFO, wrote often and with passion on the need to find the sacred within the secular: "We are Secular Franciscans; we are asked to be present in the world, to be His Presence in the world, and we are asked to see with His eyes. . . . We need to open ourselves to the grace through which we find God in all the nooks and crannies, in the agony and stress and frustration of life, as we travel life's paths."²¹ Current National Minister Carol Gentile, SFO, while serving as the national apostolic commissions coordinator, convened two national All-Commission Conferences in 1999 and 2004, and as National Minister was invited to give the keynote at the 2005 General Chapter of the International Fraternity in Assisi where she stated "Not only do we share His message, but we are called to BE his message."

I regret that I can here only acknowledge that many apostolic initiatives are being undertaken at the regional and local levels.

Looking Ahead

In my 24 years as a Secular Franciscan, I had never previously given any thought to the impact of Vatican II on the Secular Franciscan Order. I imagine that most of my fellow Secular Franciscans are in a comparable position. Clearly, an appreciation of our "secular character" should be more fully incorporated into initial and on-going formation. There needs to be an appreciation that most of the major changes in today's Secular Franciscan Order, such as its status as a largely self-governing lay organization, owe their existence to our secularity. Also, forty years ago, Franciscan Third Order Seculars from around the world were urging that Council documents like *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes*, and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* should be essential reading for lay Franciscans of the future. We should honor their memory in turning to these sources for inspiration and insight.

Above and beyond the awesome example of our Seraphic Father St. Francis, Secular Franciscans have something of real value to offer to other lay Catholics.



The present Secular Franciscan way of life incorporates the Second Vatican Council's uplifting understanding of the role of the Catholic layperson in the Church and the world. This understanding is, for the most part, unknown or underappreciated among Catholic laypersons. If anything, Secular Franciscans should do more to promote the secular dimension of their way of life. Certainly, embracing the secular dimension more enthusiastically in no way diminishes the Franciscan dimension and, in reality, enhances it for "Understood properly, the

Franciscan way of life is secular. This does not mean that it is godless or secularized. Quite the opposite."²²

By more fully embracing the secular dimension of their calling and more actively promoting the Church's vision of the secular character of the laity, Secular Franciscans can create a vibrant future for the Order: one rooted in Christ but oriented toward engagement in the world, a future filled with struggle, filled with life, filled with joy.

Endnotes

¹Mario von Galli, SJ, *The Council and the Future* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), 287.

²Barbara Beckwith, "Archbishop John Foley Recalls the Council," *St. Anthony Messenger*, vol. 113, No. 6 (November, 2005): 43.

³John D. Meehan, *Two Towers: The De-Christianization of America and a Plan for Renewal* (Bethune, SC: Requiem Press, 2005), 130-31.

⁴*Perfectae Caritatis* #2 [Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life] in *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, SJ, General Editor (NY: Herder and Herder Association Press, 1966), 468.

⁵Msgr. William H. Shannon, "Seven Shifts in the Church" in *St. Anthony Messenger*, Vol. 113, No. 6 (November, 2005): 16.

⁶*Lumen Gentium* #40, (LG) [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church] in *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, SJ, General Editor (NY: Herder and Herder Association Press, 1966), 67.

⁷Russell Shaw, *Catholic Laity in the Mission of the Church* (Bethune, SC: Requiem Press, 2005), 38-39.

⁸LG, #33, 59.

⁹*Apostolicam Actuositatem* #3 (AA) [The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity], in *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, SJ, General Editor (NY: Herder and Herder Association Press, 1966), 492.

¹⁰Robert M. Stewart, OFM, "De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam" *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation* (Rome: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1991), 244-45.

¹¹Stewart, 245.

¹²Stewart, 247.

¹³Stewart, 249.

¹⁴Stewart, 250.

¹⁵Stewart, 257.

¹⁶Stewart, 270-71.

¹⁷*Hidden Power III: From Gospel to Life—The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order with Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1979), 18-22.

¹⁸*Hidden Power III*, 2.

¹⁹Ronald Pihokker, SFO, "Secularity as Characteristic Element of the Identity of the Secular Franciscan," *Address to the General Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order*, Mexico City, October 10, 1993 [found on www.ciofs.org website]

²⁰Message from the Chapter to the Entire Order, Assisi, November 12, 2005" in *Koinonia*, Newsletter of the Conference of the General Spiritual Assistants to the SFO, Year 12, no. 48, page 6.

²¹William Wicks, SFO, "Pilgrimage, A Walking Through Life," *TAU-USA*, The Newsletter of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States, No. 27 (Summer, 2000), 1.

²²*Build With Living Stones—Formation for Franciscan Life and Work* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002), Unit 2, 5.

Two Sermons of St. Lawrence of Brindisi

Robert J. Karris, OFM

Introduction

There are 658 published sermons of St. Lawrence of Brindisi (1559-1619). Rarely do the sermons of this illustrious Franciscan Capuchin preacher appear in English translation. I provide an annotated translation of two of his sermons for the Third Sunday of Pentecost. Although the Gospel for these Sundays was Luke 15:1-10, Lawrence also includes the third parable of Luke 15, that is, the parable of the Prodigal Son. Thomas Patrick Neill describes Lawrence's great talents as a preacher in this way: "Witnesses insist that he was the greatest preacher of his age, and we are certainly safe in saying that he was one of the most impressive and effective preachers of the entire Counter-reformation. His ability as a preacher was due to his vast learning, his great zeal and physical stamina, and his personal appeal."² I invite my readers to sit back and drink deeply of Lawrence's proclamation of God's abundant and everlasting mercy.

Sermon on Luke 15 for the Third Sunday after Pentecost¹

*"The publicans and sinners were drawing near to Jesus to listen to him. And the Pharisees were murmuring, etc."*³

1. Not even the most compassionate human father, whose paternal heart and whole being are filled with love, desires the salvation of his most forsaken children, the way God desires the salvation of all sinners: "As a father has compassion on his children, so too does the Lord have compassion on those who fear him, for he knows how we are made."⁴ Parents love their children not only when they are healthy, but also when they are infirm, sickly, and afflicted with incurable maladies. So too God loves not only the just, but also sinners and desires their salvation, since he is "the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation."⁵

2. When God came to give the law, he descended in fire, since God himself is fire. Now fire is a solitary agent, and therefore God commanded that no one approach him and not even touch the mountain.⁶ Further, when God first appeared to Moses in the fire of the flaming bush, God said to him: "Do not draw near, for the place, where you are standing, is holy ground. Take your shoes off."⁷ Nor did God want anyone to enter into the holy of holies except the high priest and then just once a year.⁸ Nor did God want anyone to see or touch the ark of God. It is on account of this that Uzzah was struck, because he had touched the ark of the Lord,⁹ because fire is most intense, God is a jealous God,¹⁰ of infinite justice.

3. But God is also a fire of infinite mercy and love. So if God wanted to show his justice in the Old Testament, he wanted to make known in the New Testament the riches and treasures of his infinite mercy. For this reason today "publicans and sinners are drawing near" to Jesus, the living and true God. Thus by means of two parables, indeed three parables, Christ today shows his mercy and love towards sinners. The first parable deals with a shepherd who has one hundred sheep and with the greatest of concern searches for the one that was lost. The second parable features a woman who has ten drachmas, ten denarii, and searches with the greatest diligence for the one that was lost. The third is the parable of the prodigal son, whom a most loving father receives with the greatest joy upon his return home. In this way Christ shows himself to be God, the Father of infinite compassion and love towards sinners. The shepherd is Christ, the sinner is the sheep that wandered away. The woman who has ten drachmas is the love of Christ, while the lost drachma is the sinful soul. The most merciful father is Christ whereas the prodigal son is the sinner.

4. Christ desires the salvation of any sinner whomsoever in the same way as the shepherd wants to find the sheep that is lost, the woman the drachma that has disappeared, the father wants to give life to his dead son and to find what was lost. God "desires the salvation of all people"¹¹ and wants no one to perish.¹² That is why Christ speaks not of many, but of one sheep, one drachma, one son. For Christ suffered for all in such a way that he also suffered for individuals, no less for individuals in particular than for all in general: "I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me."¹³

5. But I ask, let us see why Christ may be said to be the shepherd who has only one hundred sheep, the woman who has only ten drachmas and the father who has only two sons and why the sinner is said to be a lost sheep, a lost drachma, and a son separated from his father and reduced to utter misery. Christ is indeed said to be the shepherd, the woman, and the father, since all these names are those of compassion and love. He has a few sheep, a few

drachmas, and only two sons to indicate the intensity of his love and compassion, for the shepherd who has a numberless multitude of sheep does not care greatly if one is lost, but if he has a few, he cares a great deal. And a very rich woman, who has an abundance of drachmas, is not bothered if one is lost, but the one who has very few, is greatly agitated. And the father who has many sons does not make a great fuss over an individual son, but if he has only two, he is greatly concerned about both of them, for his love is more focused and intense.

Endnotes

¹This sermon, which is little more than a sketch, is taken from the first cycle of Sunday Sermons in *S. Laurentii a Brundisio Opera Omnia*, Volume VIII, *Dominicalia* (Padua: Ex Officina Typographica Seminarii, 1943), 116-18. The second cycle of Sunday Sermons contains a more elaborate sermon. See pp. 454-59.

²"The Apostolate of St. Lawrence of Brindisi" in *Saint Lawrence of Brindisi Doctor of the Universal Church*, Volume II (Pittsburgh: Capuchin Educational Conference, 1961), pp. 48-60 (50).

³These are the opening two verses of this Sunday's Gospel, Luke 15:1-10. As will become clear, St. Lawrence of Brindisi also includes in his sermon the third parable of Luke 15, that is, the parable of the Prodigal Son.

⁴See Ps 102:13-14.

⁵See 2 Cor 1:3. I make no attempt in these notes to indicate to what extent Lawrence of Brindisi's citation of the Latin Bible varies from that of the Vulgate.

⁶Lawrence alludes to Ex 19:10-22.

⁷See Ex 3:5.

⁸See Ex 30:10; Lev 16:2; Hebr 9:7.

⁹See 2 Sam 6:6-8.

¹⁰See Ex 20:5: "I am the Lord, your God, mighty, jealous. . . ."

¹¹See 1 Tim 2:4.

¹²See 2 Peter 3:9.

¹³See Gal 2:20.

Sermon on Luke 15 for the Third Sunday after Pentecost¹

1. Prophet Isaiah prophesied that he saw the divine Seraphim having six wings, arranged in such a way that two covered his face, two his feet, and with two they flew.² Now the Seraphim are the most beautiful and most divine images of the supreme God, in whose Sacred Scriptures the number six, among many numbers, is mainly used in speaking of God: power and wisdom, justice and mercy, love and goodness. And the first two shine forth especially at the beginning of the world whereas the last two shine forth at its end while the middle two radiate in the middle. I state that the first two occur in the works of creation, the last two in the work of glorification, while the middle two in the

work of redemption. Now Our Lord Jesus Christ speaks in today's holy Gospel about one of these. I say that he speaks of God's mercy towards sinners who do penance and makes his point by means of two parables: the shepherd's care for the lost sheep and the woman seeking her lost drachma. I maintain that he even adds a third parable, that of the prodigal son and the most merciful father.³

2. Plainly the mercy of God is great just as are God's power and wisdom and justice and goodness and love, for just as wings are equal in birds, so too are these wings that were seen in the Seraphim equal. Great is God's mercy, because Moses cries out: "O the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion and true, who maintains mercy unto thousands, who takes away iniquity and wickedness and sin."⁴

3. Great is God's mercy as its effects show. O Christian, if you look at the heavens, realize that they are a work of God's mercy: "Who made the heavens by understanding, for his mercy endures forever."⁵ If you look at the earth, know that it was created by the working of God's mercy: "Who established the earth above the waters, for his mercy endures forever."⁶ If you look at the lights in the sky—sun, moon, and stars—know that they have issued from the same source: "Who made the great lights . . . the sun to rule the day . . . the moon and the stars to rule the night, for his mercy endures forever."⁷ When God saw the many crimes committed by human beings in the days of Noah,⁸ God was led by his zeal for justice to inundate the world with the waters of the flood and destroy it. But since all the sins of all ages from the days of eternity were always most present to him, why did he create the world unless his most gracious mercy led him to do so? "For his mercy endures forever."⁹

4. God's mercy in the providence of the world acts like a shepherd for his flock, as the first parable of today's Gospel shows. God's mercy is the reason why God holds our souls in the highest regard just as the woman of the second parable treats with the greatest regard her many pearls and gems.¹⁰ God's mercy functions similar to the human concern of a father who most truly and deeply loves his children, as the third parable makes clear. Through these parables it is also shown that we are the sheep, the gems, and the children of God.

5. Christ likens the lost sinner to a lost sheep and drachma. For there are two kinds of sinners. Thus there are those who are like sheep, which, separated from the flock, wander in the desert, bleating in fear of the wolf. Through its bleating it searches for its shepherd and is easily found by the shepherd both on account of its bleating and because it gives no resistance to the shepherd. Now other sinners are like a drachma, which, lost in the house, remains

buried in the dirt. It has no voice and makes no sound through which its location can be detected. Therefore, it is only after the expenditure of the greatest diligence that it can be found.

6. Furthermore, there is a threefold type of sinner according to the three parables just as the Lord raised up three dead people.¹¹ And some sin against the Father, some against the Son, and some against the Holy Spirit, just as the royal prophet says: "Blessed is the man who has not walked according to the counsel of the ungodly and has not stood along the path of sinners nor sat in the chair of pestilence"¹² or of those who mock. For just as in the case of the virtues no one immediately reaches the highest stage, but there are the beginners, the ones making progress, and the perfect, it is the same way with regard to sins. So in speaking of sinners, Christ sets forth three kinds: the prodigal son, the lost sheep, and the lost drachma, in which the different types of sinners are seen. For a human being is better than a sheep, and a sheep better than a drachma. So the coin occupies the lowest place, the sheep the middle, and the son the highest. Of his own accord the son returns to his father, for many are converted solely through divine inspiration. But the sheep that has been sought does not return to the flock by itself, and so is found with great difficulty. Finally, the drachma requires consummate diligence and is found with the greatest difficulty. For "she sweeps the house and searches carefully until she finds it."¹³ So we ascertain that sinners have been converted to Christ in these three stages. Thus, Magdalene came to Christ of her own accord.¹⁴ Matthew was called by Christ.¹⁵ Paul was helpless on the ground.¹⁶

Part II

7. The unbelief and malignity of the Pharisees¹⁷ murmured against our most merciful Savior's clemency towards sinners: "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."¹⁸ It is for this reason that our Lord attacks them by means of the three parables that show that sinners are to be welcomed to salvation with mercy. The first of these concerns the compassionate shepherd who thoroughly searches for one sheep lost out of a hundred, and when he finds it, rejoices. The second deals with a diligent woman, who searches with earthly skill, that is, most diligently, for the drachma missing from her ten drachmas until she finds it. The third parable is that of today's Gospel. So Christ is literally speaking of himself and shows that he is the merciful shepherd, the most diligent woman, and the most loving father. That is, that he loves sinners as the shepherd loves his lost sheep, as the woman her lost drachma, and the father the son who had gone away from him. So, my most beloved brothers and most beloved sisters, I want us to always meditate on these.

8. Wherefore, the literal sense of these three parables is this: O Pharisees, you murmur about me that I associate, eat, and live with publicans and sinners and not with you. I ask you. Tell me: If a shepherd has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does he act evilly if he seeks the one that is lost? If a woman has ten drachmas and loses one of them, does she not act well if she most carefully searches for it? If a father has two sons and one of them departs from him and leads a most dissolute life, but afterwards, led by repentance, returns to him, does he not act well if he welcomes him home in a paternal manner? Moreover, does he not do well to experience great joy and to celebrate his return with great festivity and with a banquet, as if a son, who was dead, had returned to him alive? Why, then, do you murmur about me that I welcome sinners and eat with them? Did the elder son do well to murmur about his father? Shouldn't he, too, have rejoiced, as if his brother, who was dead, had resurrected from the dead?

9. So in this parable the father of the household designates Christ, who, as God, is Father of us all. The prodigal son is the assembly of publicans and sinners. The elder son in his murmuring is the assembly of the Pharisees who were murmuring about Christ and who, like the elder son, considered themselves just, as that Pharisee who, along with the publican, went up to the temple to pray.¹⁹ And Christ called them just when he said: "I have not come to call the just, but sinners"²⁰ to repentance, not because they were truly just, but because they thought they were just and were confident in the justice of their works and appeared to be just in the sight of men and women. For this reason Christ compared them to whitened sepulchers.²¹ Now it is the habit of Scripture not to name things as they truly are, but as they appear. Thus it says that the serpent tempted Eve, because he seemed to be a serpent, when he really was the devil.²² So too it says that three men appeared to Abraham, although they were angels.²³

10. Christ calls the sinner the younger brother, just as it is said that of the son of the widow of Nain that he was young, because every sinner sins because of the strength of sensual flesh and the weakness of the mind. For in young people sensual flesh is especially strong, the fire of concupiscence flames forth, and the mind is weak and the reason is inexperienced. That is why Christ intimates that passion is the source of sin, as Blessed James says: "Everyone is tempted by being drawn away and enticed by his own passion. Then when passion has conceived, it brings forth sin."²⁴ This is clear in the case of the sin of the first parents²⁵ and in the sin of David.²⁶ Along with passion ignorance is also a root of sin, for if people truly knew God, themselves, virtue, vice, punishment and glory, they would flee sin as they would from the face of a serpent.²⁷

11. "Father, give me the share of the property that falls to me, etc."²⁸ In the bath of regeneration and renewal²⁹ Christ has welcomed many children from the Church who is his spouse.³⁰ Some of them always live in perpetual innocence, always serving God and never transgressing his commandment, as the older son says to his father today: "Behold, these many years I have been serving you and have never transgressed your commandment."³¹ Others pass through the stages of adolescence, infancy, and childhood³² and then, enticed by the passions of the flesh, fall into sin, for they are at an age when they have full use of reason and can distinguish between good and evil. So they can at that age, having lost baptismal innocence and grace, go astray through the counsel of the ungodly and stand along the path of sinners,³³ following both the evil counsel and the evil works of wicked people as well as their most depraved behavior and wanton sinning.

12. So the younger son says to his father: "Give me the share of the property that falls to me."³⁴ Before a Christian person sins, that person is a child of God through the grace received in baptism. So during youth, when the person has the use of reason and the exercise of free will, the person withdraws from obedience to God and lives subject to his own whim, not wishing to follow God's will, but his own will in everything.

13. Now the share which falls to men and women are the use of reason, free will, and all the powers of soul and body, and every good either of nature or circumstance that men and women possess in this world. All of these things we have received from God: "What do you have, O human being, that you have not received? If you have received it, why do you glory as if you have not received it?"³⁵ Now we have received these things from God so that we may love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength above all things.³⁶ So God "divided his means among them,"³⁷ for "there are divisions . . . of grace."³⁸ Now we see that many who live in sin have many graces, riches, honors, pleasure, health of body, bodily integrity, keen senses, beauty, graciousness, facility in languages, eloquence, ingenuity, sound judgment, prudence, practical wisdom, prodigious memory, much learning and wisdom and other matters of this kind. But we see them using all these things in an evil manner by living voluptuously,³⁹ that is, according to the flesh, not according to the Spirit,⁴⁰ so that they might please the world and not please God, and so live as if they had received none of these things from God. So this youth, "gathered up all his wealth and set off on his journey into a country faraway."⁴¹ Thus many people, although they have received many gifts from God, live far from God, far away in understanding, since they do not acknowledge God and deny that everything they have is from God. They live far away in the affection of their will

and the recognition of their heart, because they do not love God nor do they ever think of God. They live far away in memory, since they have forgotten about God, as it says: "My people have forgotten me days without number."⁴²

Endnotes

¹This sermon is taken from the second cycle of Sunday Sermons in *S. Laurentii a Brundisio Opera Omnia*, Volume VIII, *Dominicalia* (Padua: Ex Officina Typographica Seminarii, 1943), 454-59.

²See Isa 6:2.

³In his opening paragraph (or protheme) Lawrence sets up his theme, namely, the mercy of God.

⁴See Ex 34:6-7.

⁵See Ps 135:5.

⁶See Ps 135:6.

⁷See Ps 135:7-9.

⁸See Gen 6-7.

⁹See the refrain of Ps 135.

¹⁰Note how Lawrence embellishes the Gospel text which mentions drachmas.

¹¹The references seem to be Matt 9:24-25 (the official's daughter); Luke 7:14-15 (the only son of the widow of Nain); John 11:43-44 (Lazarus).

¹²See Ps 1:1.

¹³See Luke 15:8.

¹⁴Lawrence of Brindisi follows the erroneous but common view that Mary of Magdala was the sinner of Luke 7:36-50. However, the woman of Luke 7:36-50 is unnamed. Moreover, nowhere does the New Testament say that Mary of Magdala was a sinner.

¹⁵See Matt 9:9.

¹⁶See Acts 9:1-7.

¹⁷Note the anti-Judaism of Lawrence of Brindisi. Luke 15:2 says nothing about the Pharisees' "unbelief and malignity."

¹⁸See Luke 15:2.

¹⁹See Luke 18:9-14.

²⁰See Matt 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32.

²¹See Matt 23:27.

²²See Gen 3:1.

²³See Gen 18:2.

²⁴See James 1:14-15.

²⁵See Gen 3:6.

²⁶See 2 Sam 11:2-4.

²⁷See Sir 21:2: "Flee from sin as from the face of a serpent. . . ."

²⁸See Luke 15:12.

²⁹See Titus 3:5. Eph 5:26 also contains a reference to baptism.

³⁰See Eph 5:29-32.

³¹See Luke 15:29.

³²While we might say "infancy, childhood, and adolescence," this is Lawrence's ordering of the ages of youth.

³³See Ps 1:1. Lawrence returns to the Psalm verse he used n. 6 above.

³⁴See Luke 15:12.

³⁵See 1 Cor 4:7.

³⁶See Luke 11:27.

³⁷See Luke 15:12.

³⁸See 1 Cor 12:4.

³⁹See Luke 15:13.

⁴⁰See Gal 5:16.

⁴¹See Luke 15:13.

⁴²See Jer 2:32. It would be very rewarding to see how Lawrence of Brindisi would have developed a sermon just on the Parable of the Prodigal Son which was the reading for the Saturday after the Second Sunday of Lent. However, the editors of the critical edition of Lawrence of Brindisi's sermons decided to eliminate his sermons for the Saturdays of Lent. See *S. Laurentii a Brundisio Opera Omnia*, volume IV: Quadragesimale Primum (Padua: Ex Officina Typographica Seminarii, 1936), xvi.

FRANCIS

Rag-man,
wasted with hunger for God;
bone-thin, fragile as a moth,
innocent as truth.

Your fierce heart thundered with desire
to follow, running on bloody feet,
the steps of the Beloved.

Yet we cling to our comforts,
too weighed down for running,
too afraid to gaze where your blind eyes gazed
seeking an unseen Sun.

Francis, you escape us,
with your ravenous heart and idyllic songs;
your light flies toward the Eternal
like lightning toward mountains.

Rag-man,
count us as your retinue,
sorry in our sins,
blessed in your company.

Kate Martin, OSC

About Our Contributors

Donna Foley, SFO, is a member of St. Elizabeth Fraternity in Oakland, CA and a student at the Franciscan School of Theology. She is the married mother of four (mostly) grown sons and is co-founder of The Seldom Seen Acting Company, a troupe of homeless men performing in the Bay Area.

Eileen Haugh, OSF, is a member of the Rochester, Minnesota Franciscans. She has published poems both in *The Cord* and in *National Catholic Reporter*.

Robert J. Karris, OFM is a member of Sacred Heart province of the Friars Minor. He is a research faculty member of The Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University. He has recently completed work on a translation of Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*.

Terri Leone, SFO, is Peace and Justice coordinator for the St. Katherine Drexel Regional Fraternity. Her article was published in the national SFO newsletter last fall.

Richard S. Martignetti, OFM, is the author of a book on St. Bonaventure's *Tree of Life*. He currently resides in Rome and serves as guardian of the fraternity of the General Curia. He is a member of the Immaculate Conception province of the Friars Minor.

Kate Martin, OSC, is a member of the Poor Clare community in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Her poetry has previously appeared in *The Cord*.

Ed Zablocki, SFO, lives in Buffalo, NY and is a member of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity along with his wife, Mary. The couple served for six years as co-chairs of the Secular Franciscan National Fraternity's Work Commission and were part of the North American delegation for the revision of the course on the Franciscan missionary charism known as *Build With Living Stones*. Ed recently completed a study guide for the book "*De Ilis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam*": *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation* by Fr. Robert Stewart, OFM. The book and study guide comprise the content for a correspondence course being offered through the Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life at St. Francis University.

Book Review

My Heart's Quest: Collected Writings of Eric Doyle, Friar Minor, Theologian. Edited by Josef Raischl and André Cirino. GB-Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NA (Giles Lane), Franciscan International Study Centre, 2005. 23 cm., 619 p., ill. (£ 20; \$42.00). ISBN 0-954-9272-06. Distributed in the US by Franciscan Institute Publications.

The publication of this anthology of essays of Eric Doyle (1938-1984) marking the occurrence of his twentieth death anniversary is indeed a significant tribute to the memory of this Franciscan scholar, who "is rightly described as a *founding father* of what is now the Franciscan International Study Centre, which had its official opening in September, 1974, commemorating the 750th anniversary of the coming of the Friars Minor to England" (p. 8). The key to the understanding Father Eric's passion for Franciscanism may be found in the book's *Preface* by Austin McCormack, the OFM Provincial Minister of England: "He [Eric] alerted us to the wealth of spiritual living, prayer, devotion, philosophy, theology that saturates our Franciscan heritage; and also to the more than significant contribution made in this by friars from what is now this Province. He did this in the only real way—not just by talking about it—but by his personal effort and commitment to try, daily, to become what he was first receiving—friar minor" (7). Thanks to their enthusiasm and punctilious attention to detail, the editors have effectively brought together in a handy volume Doyle's different writings spanning two decades. The sectional titles under which the studies are thematically grouped are indicative of the wide range of Doyle's academic interests: *On Various Franciscan themes* (38-171); *On Saint Bonaventure* (pp. 174-241); *On Blessed John Duns Scotus* (244-312); *On Teilhard de Chardin* (pp. 320-50); *On Various Themes* (360-598). The bibliography of Doyle's publications (pp. 609-19) chronologically lists his literary productions. The testimonials and other personal reminiscences of Doyle's friends and confreres go to reveal not only a scholar but also "a model for all of a Friar Minor who is humble, devoted, faithful" (34).

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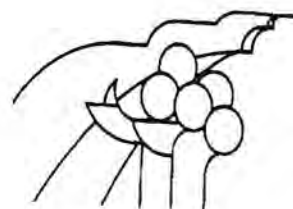
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Abbreviations

Writings of Saint Francis

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

Writings of Saint Clare

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

Franciscan Sources

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

Now, the blessed and glorious body of Christ cannot be divided into its physical parts, nor separated from his soul or from the supreme Godhead. Therefore, under each of the species the one Christ is present, whole and undivided, namely, body and soul and divinity. Hence, under the two species there is but one utterly simple sacrament containing the whole Christ.

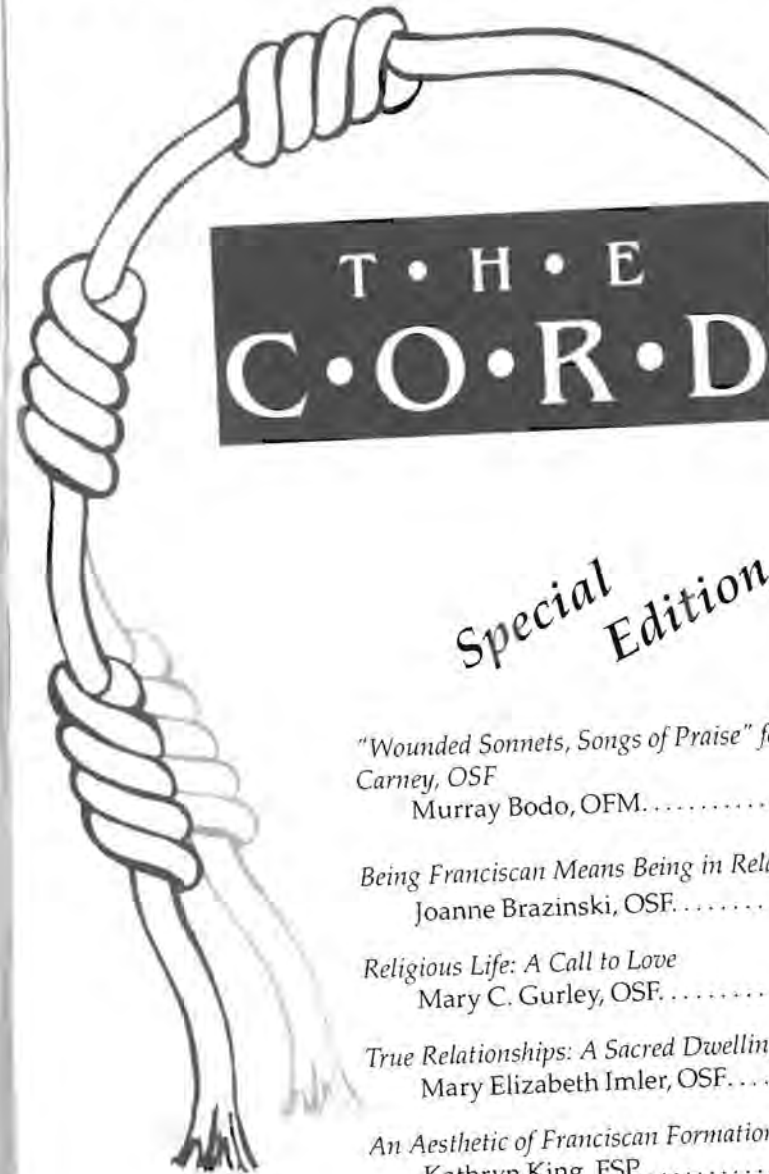
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THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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

1. MSS should be submitted on disk (or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced).
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 14th ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.
Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or italicized.
4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:
(1Cor. 13:6). (2Cel 5:8).
(RegNB 23:2). (4LAg 2:13).

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

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The Cord, 56.4 (2006)

Editorial

Once again, you may have noticed, our cover bears the label "Special Edition." We celebrate the 65th birthday this month of Sister Margaret Carney, OSF, President of St. Bonaventure University—a woman possessed of many gifts and talents, a woman whose life so far is a catalogue of challenges met and surprises gratefully received. Margaret does not know that this issue (and the next) have been prepared as an *encomium* for all she has been and all she has done to facilitate the deepening of Franciscan life not just here at the university, but throughout the many places in which she has ministered over the last forty-some years.

A sixty-fifth birthday is a momentous occasion, and an invitation to introspective evaluation. Consequently, thinking about what to say in this editorial has been somewhat daunting. Margaret has been friend, colleague, immediate supervisor, and inspiring presence for me for some time. In truth, I have come back time and again to the phrase used by Elizabeth Johnson as a title for one of her books, written about the communion of saints: *Friends of God and Prophets*. For me, Margaret is one of the paradigmatic figures who is both of these, a friend of God and a prophet. She is touched by the fire of the Spirit of God, the passion of commitment. She has, as Beth has written, embarked on an adventure of the spirit to embody the gospel in new ways in new circumstances many times in her life. Her creativity and energy are gifts freely received and freely given, for the life of the Church. A catalyst, a leader, a sister-in-arms passionate about making Clare and Francis shining stars in the firmament of the 21st century, Margaret has helped "distill the central values of the living tradition in a concrete and accessible form."¹ I am grateful for the opportunity to prepare these pages in honor of her many achievements!

By the time our readers receive this edition in their hands, it will have been presented to Margaret as part of the festivities of the feast of St. Bonaventure here on campus. We hope that the articles by our authors (all friends and colleagues in Margaret's journey/world travels) make her smile and praise God for the good graces bestowed upon her—and through her, upon us! Happy 65th, Margaret, and may there be more to come!

Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF

¹Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets* (NY: Continuum, 1998), 234.

Wounded Sonnets, Songs of Praise
(for Margaret Carney, OSF)

Murray Bodo, OFM

How to praise God with great humility
has something to do with his father's mouth
open in disbelief in the bishop's
cortile as Francis lays his clothes at
his father's feet and walks away from his
mother standing behind his father eyes
red with grief and knowing that he will not
return from his mad walk toward what she fears
is a phantasm of his sick brain which
walking cannot find a cure for although
Francis finds it almost immediately
when robbers throw him in the ditch and laugh
at the nakedness beneath his threadbare
sackcloth tunic and he is unashamed.

Sackcloth tunic and he is unashamed
reminds him now of Lady Poverty
how naked she embraced the naked
Christ homeless where she alone lay upon
the cross with him, his disciples fleeing
that intimacy for something less than
union which only stripping consummates
like now as Francis sets aside former
banquets for this gathering of scraps that
fall from tables overfull of food not
eaten by those who say they know the bread
life-giving and eternal yet drop it
on Assisi streets as they make their way to
church that eats a bread white and unleavened.

Church that eats a bread white and unleavened
and no other eats Christ the Lord without
the crust hard, its mold scraped off discarded,
a Christ who does not exist for he is

one bread one body, whole only when poor
ones are one and one is many who need
someone to bring them back to the giver
of bread to make of them new seeds that die
into wheat backlit in Umbrian light
brightly honed to Christ's sharp stigmata
that cuts through body and into the soul,
a two-edged light that separates and brings
together body and soul, sheaf and sheaves
body soul bread wheat, human and divine.

Body soul bread wheat, human and divine.
As they are to one another so is
Francis walking toward what the walk becomes,
pilgrimage as a way of prayer, of church.
As he says to Pope Innocent, "A poor
woman lived in the desert. The king passed
by her hovel and seeing her he loved
her and had sons by her too many to
feed. The king himself fed and clothed them.
Lord Pope, Jesus Christ is the king and I
am the poor woman." And the Pope agrees.
Francis becomes mother to his brothers,
the poor Lady Clare and her sisters and
all born of Francis and Christ on the road.

All born of Francis and Christ on the road
take to the road outside Assisi's walls
like Clare their first daughter who takes their words
Gospel and rule, weaves her own patterned life:
poor ladies of the King's wayside castle.
Knights errant, the brothers vie for Lady
Clare's hand, poor daughter of the Lord and his
desert bride who go before them always,
portable courts of church-making among
those fallen by the wayside, the birds and
animals, plants and heavenly bodies
brother sun and sister moon and all things
through and with and for and in which we learn
how to praise God with great humility.

Being Franciscan Means Being in Relationship

Joanne Brazinski, OSF

Introduction

As we look at the life of Francis of Assisi we are often struck by the fact that he was a man who lived the gospel radically, embraced Lady Poverty completely and loved Jesus Christ passionately with every fiber of his being. Those of us who are Franciscan are often confronted with the questions: What does it really mean to be Franciscan? What is at the core of this life? How do we really come to understand and live what Francis and the early followers knew and believed? There are probably as many answers as there are Franciscans in the world. What follows is simply one woman's reflection of what it means to be Franciscan.

The Meaning of Relationship

A few clarifications as we begin. The definition of relationship is "the state of being related or interrelated." It signifies that there is a connection, a kinship, an affinity or bond between the parties.¹ "Having a relationship" is very different from "being in relationship." To have a relationship can connote the idea of possession or the desire to keep for oneself or hold onto. Usually, when I "have" something, it is for my personal use. When we speak of "being" in relationship, however, there is a sense of presence, of identity, of existence for someone or something. Being in relationship means being concerned for and caring about another. It means being willing to take a listening stance to receive another's message and affection. It means being willing to enter into contemplative dialogue with another. It means loving and letting myself be loved by another.

In *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future*, Margaret Wheatley states: "Relationships are all that is. Everything in the universe only exists because it is in relationship to everything else."² When we look at the writings and the life of Francis, we can't miss the fact that he understood well what it meant to be in relationship. He realized that as a human person he was called to be in relationship to everyone and everything.

Francis and Franciscans in Relationship

Within the confines of this article it would be impossible to explore the entire life of Francis and note the many ways his life reveals the mystery and grace of "being in relationship." I will simply attempt to explore selections from a few of his writings to begin to uncover what they reveal about his understanding of being in relationship. As I do that, I will leave the reader with questions for personal reflection that we might continue to explore together the challenge of being in relationship as Franciscans today.

When we look at Francis's life, we see that he often sought solitude, time alone with God. He took time to discover what God was communicating to him, revealing to him and asking of him. Francis didn't spend this time with God because someone dictated that it was important. He did it because he knew what it meant to be in relationship with God. This relationship was central in his life.

We might pause to ask ourselves: Is my relationship with God central in my life? Or is it just one of many relationships? Do I find that my relationship with God changes when I am stressed and burdened? When I am experiencing good times? Think about it for a moment. What does it mean for my relationship with God to be CENTRAL in my life?

The Praises of God

There are innumerable examples in Francis's life that point to his relationship with God being center stage. I would like to use his *Praises of God* to explore this. Take a moment to simply reread the *Praises*; or better yet, take some time to *pray* them. Note the many ways Francis tries to say that God is everything to him: "You are our hope. You are strength. You are our gladness and joy. You are our security. You are our charity. You are all our riches to sufficiency."³ These words are not a philosophical treatise about God as the prime mover in Francis's life, nor are they a theological reflection on God as the Supreme Being. They are an expression of Francis's experience of being in relationship with God; they are an expression of his experience of God.

We might compare the *Praises of God* with Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem: "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways." Francis's words leave us

with a sense of touching the depth of his soul. It seems as if we are eavesdropping on a very intimate moment of Francis with God. The *Praises* are an outpouring of his love for God. They are his way of saying: "You are the center of my life. Your love is enough for me." These are not mere words for Francis. He prays them after he has received the stigmata. He knows the depth of God's love for him and realizes his poverty as he senses his own inability to return such profound love. The *Praises* give us a glimpse of what it meant for Francis to be in relationship to God. This relationship was personal, powerful and passionate. It gave life and meaning to all other relationships. For myself, how might I describe to another my relationship with God? What is it that gives life and meaning to all of my relationships?

The Canticle of the Creatures

Because God was central in Francis's life and because Francis knew God as Father and Jesus Christ as Brother, he realized his relationship to all creatures. He took his place among creatures, not in the posture of control or domination, but rather in the stance of equality, mutuality, relatedness and reverence. In his *Song of the Dawn*, Eloi Leclerc reminds us that "being fraternal with all creatures means being willing to take one's place with them and rediscover one's links to them. This can't be done simply with will power. Only wonder can pull us out of our splendid isolation."⁴ Francis was a man of wonder, who could call all creatures "brother" and "sister," because he understood the depth of what it meant to be part of the harmony and beauty of the created universe.

Francis's *Canticle of Creatures* is an example of mystic poetry that reveals his experience of the fundamental unity and coherence of reality. "The Canticle brings reality to a fine point at which it is revealed that all beings are held in unity through a vast and intricate network of love relationships."⁵ Francis acknowledges his connectedness to Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Fire, Sister Water, etc. There was something that Francis understood with his heart and tried to convey in the *Canticle* that is more than simply respect for all creatures; it is an affinity, a bond, an embrace of what it means "to be in relationship," an invitation to love all creatures.

In the numerous biographies of Francis, there are many stories about his relationships with creatures, but there is perhaps nothing so powerful and profound as his own *Canticle of the Creatures*. It calls all of us to take our rightful place in creation. It challenges us to a respect, reverence and connectedness to every creature that lives. It reveals the mystery that each one of us has the power to love all creation. By love and creativity the self and the world blend into an even finer unity.⁶ In loving we create and by creating we discover pathways to the future. Francis of Assisi's love for creatures made him unique and

original. His love heightened his sensitivity and endowed him with the precious gift of heart-sight.⁷ What does it mean for me to truly "be in relationship" with creatures? When was the last time I contemplated the connectedness of all of life? Do I have heart-sight?

Brothers and Sisters

If the lessons from Francis's life and writings stopped there, it would be enough of a challenge for a lifetime—to be truly in relationship with God and all creatures. This would indeed be a sufficient challenge for our life of continuous conversion. But Francis speaks of yet another way of being in relationship. He calls us to be "brothers" and "sisters" to every human being. What does that mean for us as we see scenes of human suffering from the war in Iraq, from the situation in Afghanistan, from the famine in Africa, from the devastation of hurricane Katrina? If we believe that these persons are our brothers and sisters, we are called not only to recognize this but do something about it. What new questions confront us before such scenes? Francis, you can't be serious about this challenge! Wouldn't it be enough if I try to be in relationship with God and with creation? Wouldn't it be enough if I were truly aware of my place on the planet? As we ask these questions, we are confronted by Francis's words in his *Testament*: "The Lord gave me brothers." The Lord showed Francis how to be in relationship to all. How do *we* hear these words and how are *we* challenged to live them? The rest of that quote goes on to say: "And after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel."⁸

The Challenges of the Gospel

In pondering the Word of God, Francis realized that Jesus Christ found himself in the midst of sinners, lepers, tax collectors and Pharisees. He responded to each of them as one in relationship to the other. The gospel passages continue to challenge us today: love one another (Jn. 15:12), love your enemies (Lk. 6:27), do good to those who persecute you (Lk. 6:27), forgive seventy times seven times (Mt. 18:22), go the extra mile (Mt. 5:41). We pause to ask ourselves: Am I really called to reach out to those who have hurt me, betrayed me and criticized me? What does the seventy times seven passage really call me to?

Literal gospel living requires Franciscans to live lovingly those relationships that Christ's fraternity effects. Thaddeus Horgan, in *Turned to the Lord*, summarizes very well the challenge of "being in relationship" in our world today. "Instead of competitiveness, Franciscans are called to mutuality. Instead of individualism, caring and shared living should be characteristic. In-

stead of negativism, support of one another ought to be typical. Service replaces control, solidarity destroys classism and respect overcomes domination. Over all these, one puts on love (1 Cor. 12)."⁹

Speaking about the ideals of Francis is one thing; trying to incarnate them in our lives is quite another. The challenge of being Franciscan is really the challenge of being in relationship. If we do not love and are not trying to deepen that love, can any of us dare to call ourselves "Franciscan?"

Endnotes

¹Webster's Third International Dictionary; The Great Library of the English Language (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1971), 1916.

²Margaret J. Wheatley, *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2002), 19.

³Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Vol. I, *The Saint*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, Wayne Hellmann, and William Short (New York: New City Press, 1993), 109.

⁴Eloi Leclerc, OFM, *Song of the Dawn*, trans. Paul Schwartz and Paul Lachance (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), 23.

⁵Eric Doyle, OFM, *St. Francis and the Song of the Brotherhood* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981; reprinted by The Franciscan Institute, 1996), 39.

⁶Doyle, 40.

⁷Doyle, 42.

⁸Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, *The Saint*, 125.

⁹Thaddeus Horgan, SA, *Turned to the Lord* (Washington, DC: Franciscan Federation, 1983), 48.

Within themselves, let them always make a dwelling place and home for the Lord God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so that they may increase in universal love by continually turning to God and neighbor.

TOR Rule II.8

Religious Life: A Call to Love

Mary C. Gurley, OSF

Introduction

The stark decline of applicants to religious life in the United States has fueled a flurry of dialog and questions. Of late, when religious women and/or men come together beyond one's congregation or order, the conversations are almost predictable. Barely have they identified one another's religious family when the topic turns to new membership or, more specifically, to the number of candidates or novices currently in preparation in one's community. This initial dialog is usually but a prelude to the real questions: Why are new applicants to religious life so few? What is it that our young adult men and women are seeking—or avoiding? What is "the message" of religious life that we advertise in our printed literature and in our encounters with potential candidates? And most important, who do WE (religious) say we are? All too often when we sit together mourning the "loss" of vocations, our analyses and suppositions become stimulating conversation; but just as often we walk away from one another without satisfying answers or direction.

A recent conversation with a friend, however, held my attention and set me on a journey of exploration into why young adults are or are not choosing religious life. Simply stated, my friend believed that we were over-emphasizing community and ministry as the focus of invitation to religious life when, in reality, most of us came to religious life because we loved God. Intrigued, I set to doing some research that began in Scripture, brought me back to the stories and writings of Francis and Clare, moved me into a library search and left me where I started—in the Gospels. From this journey of reading and reflection there has emerged a single theme that I would like to develop, namely: As vowed religious—women and men—we are called to a God whose essence is Love. We are called to love God with a lifelong passion. We are called to live Love. Everything else relative to religious life flows from this call.

Written as an eclectic overview to provoke discussion, the article will consist of four parts: (1) a reminder of the single-purpose vision of the call of Francis, of Clare and of their multitude of followers down through the ages; (2) an overview of some current understandings of the theological foundations that are of the essence of vowed religious life; (3) a review of current literature in the popular media and in sociological research that seeks to understand young adults *vis-à-vis* their experience of Church and their interest in religious life; and (4) reflections on mentoring young adults by the example of our lives as vowed Franciscan men and women.

In the Footsteps of Francis and Clare

The opening lines of the Rules for the First, Second and Third Orders of vowed Franciscans are but each a single sentence that has as its focus the following of the Gospel by living the vows. "The rule and life of these brothers is this, namely: to live in obedience, in chastity, and without anything of their own, and to follow the teaching and footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ER 1:1). "The form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters that Blessed Francis established is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity" (RCI 1:1,2). "The form of life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, in poverty and in chastity" (TOR Rule 1:1). Everything else—fraternity, community, ministry, service and leadership—flows from the individual's vowed covenant with God within the Rule that s/he professes.

Writing about Francis, Celano notes: "Overflowing with burning charity, . . . [Francis] set out on the way of full perfection, reached out for the peak of perfect holiness, and saw the goal of all perfection" (2C 90). It is in words of passionate love for God that Clare reminds Agnes of their mutual call: "O most noble Queen, gaze upon Him, consider Him, contemplate Him, as you desire to imitate Him" (3LAg 20); and to Ermentrude she writes: "Be faithful dearly beloved to death, to Him to Whom you have promised yourself . . ." (LEr 4). Francis's *Letter to the Order* exhorts his followers to "Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that He Who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally" (LtOrd 23). Theirs was a grasp of the one thing necessary.

Other writings of Francis and of Clare and of the multiplicity of Third Order founders have chronicled the selfless ministry and service that Franciscans have accomplished over the centuries. However, no matter the place, the circumstance, or the ministerial need, the reality of who we are and what we do is always, first and foremost, a passionate and permanent commitment to the

God of love. In the midst of our very busy lives and the tremendous needs of service and ministry, it's good to return to this grounding in the vows as the *raison d'être* of religious life. Herein, I believe, we have an avenue of exploration of vocational call that might too easily be taken for granted or overlooked in our day-to-day interactions.

Theological Foundation of Religious Life: The God Quest

Consideration of religious life is often a counter-cultural experience for seekers and their questions are usually many in number and scattered in focus. It is important that potential members who approach religious for answers be guided through multiple stages of understanding as they make their life decisions. All of their questions are appropriate and need a response. The dilemma, however, is the chasm that can exist between the unsophisticated questions of the young seekers and the intricate theology that supports a vowed life. There is often a void between the content of the questions we are asked and the reality of who we are as religious. In our response to questions about religious life, we need to be clearly focused on the intrinsic meaning of our life as religious, and at the same time we need to speak in language understandable to the questioner. We need to name who we are as religious women and men without resorting to marketing techniques designed to make us interesting and relevant to young adults. We need to consider critically the recruiting brochures and websites—full of pictures of our smiles and our ministries—that we use. In the first place, today's youth, having grown up with omni-present media from their cribs, have learned to skim the surface of marketing. Second, in a Church that is peopled with energetic and committed lay ministers in all areas of service, today's youth often don't see vowed religious as anything unique or different. It might be a good challenge to ourselves to understand better—and be able to explain to others—what it is that defines and makes religious life unique. The essence of who we are as vowed religious is the primary content of what we should be putting in our brochures, in our websites and in our dialogue with young adults.

The question *vis-à-vis* recruiting and welcoming new members is relatively easy to frame: What is or should be our focus (e.g. community, prayer, ministry, etc.) in recruiting new members to religious life? The more important questions go deeper; i.e., what is at the center of our lives that we, as Franciscan religious, have to offer to those seeking religious life? How is it that we can be bold enough to dare to invite others to join us? Our answers to these questions are critical and must come from a deep place in the heart of who we are as religious, not from what we do in our ministries.

A number of contemporary writers in religious communities are using different terminology to put the concept of religious life into a nutshell. Sandra Schneiders, for example, begins with the simple statement that "there is no ministry performed by Religious that cannot be equally well performed by lay people."¹ The point is further illustrated by Joan Chittister in the story of a prioress in dialog with novices: "Why have you come to religious life?" the prioress asked. "To give our lives to the church," the pious said; "To save our souls," the cautious said; "To convert the world," the zealots said. But no, no, no, the prioress signaled with a shake of the head. "Not that. Not that. Not that. You come to religious life," the prioress said, "only to seek God."²

These observations are right on target for those who choose to commit themselves to vowed religious life. Yet, how often have we discussed, in our impromptu conversations with one another or in our assembly gatherings of the whole body, that prospective members are seeking community and/or ministerial service. Though certainly important elements and goals, community life and ministerial service are not the foundation of religious life. The call to religious life has but one focus: the call to love God, unconditionally, through the vow of celibacy. For the vowed religious everything else flows from and is an expression of that single commitment of vowed, celibate love. We sustain and deepen the vow by grounding our life in contemplative prayer. We vow poverty and obedience as outgrowths of our love affair with God. We support one another in community and move out into ministry, because that is how we both experience and share God's inestimable love. This is the message, the invitation and the challenge that we must share with young adults who are interested in religious life. In their passionate love for a God who is consummate Love (the vow of chastity), Francis and Clare embraced their cherished poverty as the compassionate response and extension of Love (the vow of poverty). The deep grounding of their single-hearted love of God was the Gospel injunction of "the one thing necessary," "the kingdom of God within;" the reason to "sell all." It is in the Rule that every Franciscan follows: "to live in obedience, in chastity, and without anything of their own" (ER 1:1); "living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity" (RCI 1:1,2); living in obedience, in poverty and in chastity" (TOR Rule 1:1).

For young adults, celibacy is an important, haunting and confusing question, a question they would like to understand but hesitate asking. While central to the lives of vowed religious, celibacy is not usually the first piece of information that religious congregations and orders put into vocation literature or websites or in dialog with young adults. But celibacy, "the elephant in the room," needs a setting for dialog. For one of the best and clearest contemporary explanations of celibacy in context, we turn again to theologian Sandra Schneiders, who has written extensively on contemporary religious life and brings to the dialog a refreshing clarity of the primacy of celibacy. She writes:

The constitutive feature of religious life (not as Christian but as religious) is the commitment of religious to Jesus Christ in lifelong consecrated celibacy, just as the constitutive feature of matrimony (not as Christian but as marriage) is the commitment of the spouses to Christ through the lifelong commitment to each other in faithful sexual monogamy. Neither commitment . . . is intrinsic to the Christian vocation as such. . . . But for Christians who do make such a commitment it becomes the organizational principle of their specific Christian lifeform. This commitment generates the emphases and accents that will distinguish their lifeform from others within the Church and outside it. . . .

Aloneness is, in a certain sense, the inner structure of the life of the religious, as faithful and fruitful mutuality is the inner structure of matrimony. Religious life is organized around the single-minded Godquest, the affective concentration of the whole of one's life on the "one thing necessary," which is union with God. This aloneness, if cherished, attended to, and dwelt in as the heart of one's vocation, finds its positive meaning in contemplative prayer.³

Herein is the solid meat, the starting point of vocation discernment. Why do we choose religious life? We choose religious life because we have recognized within ourselves a passionate, personal love of God! It's that simple. And young adults are tuned into and understand this kind of love and commitment. We turn to this generation now.

Millennium Catholics: The New Generation

In the fall of 2002, Notre Dame University commissioned a task force to explore a variety of issues facing the Catholic Church. In their work of designing the necessary survey instruments, consultants James Davidson and Dean Hoge⁴ defined Catholics within four age groups: pre-Vatican II Catholics (born in or before 1940); Vatican II Catholics (born 1941-1960); post-Vatican II Catholics (born 1961-1977); and millennial Catholics (born 1978-1985). In their survey conclusions they noted (1) that the post-Vatican II Catholics and the millennial Catholics were basically the same in their views of Church, and (2) while there were no significant differences among the four age groups, the pre-Vatican II generation stood apart from the other three cohorts. Writing in a recent edition of *Commonweal*, Cathleen Kaveny, a post-Vatican II Catholic who teaches millennial Catholics, describes the common elements of Church that she sees in her generation and in the generation with whom she works. Her six-point summary of their shared experience is helpful for understanding the focus and experience of this two-tier generation of younger Catholics.

The list is instructive:

- We (post-Vatican II Catholics and millennial Catholics) learned early and well that we were children of the triune God, who loved us very much. The specter of a vengeful, legalistic judge does not haunt us the way it seems to haunt some older Catholics.
- We really didn't learn much doctrine. The emphasis in our catechesis was on engaging our emotions, not on challenging our intellects.
- The coherent culture of the pre-Vatican church had broken up by the time we came along. We did not have the "Catholic-in-our-bones" sensibility.
- The end of the Catholic ghetto means that most young Catholics do not feel a need to prove themselves to the outside world.
- Our earliest experiences of the church were marked by tumult and controversy, not stability. The church is fragile to us.
- The tensions between magisterial teaching and American culture have only grown with time.⁵

As noted in a plethora of relatively recent articles in the popular press—*Newsweek*, *America*, *Commonweal*, *Christianity Today*⁶—today's young Catholics are seeking service, meaning and community in various ways. On most college campuses, students organize themselves for outreach to the poor: in food pantries and meal service programs; in Habitat for Humanity and neighborhood clean-up projects; through immersion and forms of communal living in inner city enclaves, and outreach to foreign villages either by fund-raising or actual presence. The number of large philanthropic grants given to colleges to encourage all of these endeavors is growing. More and more students are opting for alternative fall and spring breaks, giving up their holidays in the sun to travel to developing villages in countries foreign to them. Service learning is tied into academic courses. And a post-graduate year of service in a communal setting is becoming far more common across campuses. Spirituality is important to these young people, but it is often a spirituality of searching. It's a matter of picking and choosing elements of prayer and practice that "feel right for me." It's their developing of a sense of God that has outgrown childhood images and practices. The search is sincere though its grasp awaits a growing maturity.

At the same time, despite these positive signs of growth, involvement and outreach, a significant number of the millennial Catholics have taken the road of retreating to a former time period and are looking much like pre-Vatican II Catholics. Though their service outreach is twenty-first-century, the prayer, devotions, rituals and symbols are embedded in the 1950s. This group demonstrates a growing preference for the church of their grandparents, a safe

haven of predictability. The "old traditions" provide a surety and comfortable refuge for those who wish to escape from the world and validate their extremist views.⁷ Were this simply a matter of personal choice, there would not be cause for alarm. When, however, these young Catholics choose religious communities, mostly new start-up groups that have themselves retreated to pre-Vatican II paradigms and practices—traditional habits, outward signs of religious piety, the Latin Mass, Benediction, etc.—there is cause for concern. "These revivalistic movements," claims sociologist Patricia Wittberg, "never succeed in reproducing exactly the vanished cultures which they aspired to recreate."⁸ Indeed, this walking backwards is cumbersome at best and has the potential of being destructive to the walker, to the walking partners and to by-standers along the road.

Whatever the group, forward looking to a renewed Church or looking back over their shoulders to the nostalgic Church, millennial Catholics are searching. Their hearts are wide open; their energies propel them into service; and their service brings them back to their God with all kinds of questions. There is need to tend to them, to listen to their hearts, to answer their questions.

Framing the Conversation

There is great hope and genuine searching among the millennial Catholics. They have energy and an enthusiasm that is gift for the Church and they need to be encouraged in their gifts. Parents, parishes, campus ministry centers, teachers—all have a responsibility to mentor these Catholics. This includes filling in the gaps in their religious understandings, assisting them to become strong, prayerful Catholics who will share their gifts within the Church and providing them with the challenge to listen to their own particular vocational calls. It also means recognizing the seed of vocational questions arising in the young and welcoming the conversation.

Within this context, we who have professed religious vows also need to take seriously our role as mentors to the next generation. We must be very clear about the focal point, the heart-place, of our own vocational call, including the theological foundations that are of the essence of religious life. It is a question of authenticity: how do we—individually and collectively—define ourselves at our deepest core, and how are we visible examples of that truth. Am I still being led by my personal *God-quest*? Unless we can identify, live and articulate the core value of our lives as religious—the *God-quest*—how can we invite others to the table?

Putting this entire conversation in its setting, we return to the first paragraphs of the article, the *open-hands* and *pure-desire-for-God* call of Francis and of Clare. One's call to religious life is first and only a call from God, a

heart-to-heart talk, as it were, between God and oneself. Literature, brochures, websites, conversations, retreats—all are part of the discernment. When it comes right down to decision, however, each person must listen to his/her own heart and God's whisperings. Francis and Clare and the various founders and foundresses of the Third Order heard that call; each of us who lives the vowed life today heard that call personally. New generations will hear that call if we help them to listen to their own *God-quest* that will echo through the ages as a concrete expression of a lifelong love affair. This is the call to religious vocation: the call to Love.

Endnotes

¹Sandra M. Schneiders, IHM, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000), 127.

²Joan Chittister, OSB, *The Fire in These Ashes: A Spirituality of Contemporary Life* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1995), 45.

³Schneiders, 129.

⁴James D. Davidson and Dean R. Hoge, "Catholics after the Scandal," *Commonweal* 131.20 (Nov. 19, 2004).

⁵Cathleen Kaveny, "Young Catholics," *Commonweal* 131.20 (Nov. 19, 2004).

⁶See, for example, Jerry Adler, *et al.*, "Special Report: Spirituality 2005," *Newsweek* (Sept. 5, 2005); Willard F. Jabusch, "Young and Conservative," *America* (Oct. 11, 1997); Sidney Callahan, "Nunsuch?: Reviving Religious Communities," *Commonweal* (Dec. 5, 1997); Rob Moll, "The New Monasticism," *Christianity Today* (Sept. 2005); R. Scott Appleby, "Righting the Ship," *U.S. Catholic* (Nov. 19, 2004).

⁷Colleen Carroll, *The New Faithful: Why Young Adults are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002), 99.

⁸Patricia Wittberg, SC, "Deep Structure in Community Cultures: The Revival of Religious Orders in Roman Catholicism," *Sociology of Religion* 58.3 (1997): 245.

Led by the Lord, let the brothers and sisters begin a life of penance, conscious that all of us must be continuously and totally converted to the Lord.

TOR Rule II.6

The Cord, 56.4 (2006)

True Relationships: A Sacred Dwelling Place

Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF

The earliest letter of Francis is the *First Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance*,¹ commonly referred to as the *Letter to the Faithful*. This was given, as Brother Thomas of Celano describes, to those "many people, well-born and lowly, cleric or lay, driven by divine inspiration, [who] began to come to Saint Francis, for they desired to serve under his constant training and leadership" (1C 37). Francis responded and "to all he gave a norm of life," which now serves as the Introduction to both the Third Order Regular and Secular Rules. Many, like those in Clare and Francis's time, still seek this "way of salvation" (1C 37). In the beginning of the *Exhortation*, Francis names four particular relationships, i.e. children, spouses, brothers and mothers (1LF 7-8). Francis sees these as revealing the heart of the evangelical way of life: relationships. These seemingly common words were, however, the first inklings of a paradigm shift that became the Franciscan Movement. They compel us to explore a "holy newness" (1C 103) as the contemporary Franciscan vocation is born into the twenty-first century.

First, we must consider the relational terms themselves in their medieval context. Only then can the paradigm shift that Francis initiated become evident. Second, based on my own experience, I propose that there is a further, current shift going on, a shift for hearers who, even in these tumultuous times, express a deep hunger for true relationships. Upon contemplating these terms today (children, spouses, brothers/sisters, and mothers), one cannot but be struck by the feeling that God seems to be moving humanity to a new level of personal and cosmic relations. Now is a good time to look at newly available English translations of Franciscan sources, submitting these to such lenses as quantum physics, modern psychology and the shifts in theological thinking brought about by feminism, liberation movements and a post-modern worldview.

Just to situate the text in broad terms, Francis begins his *Exhortation* with the commandment of love that draws one into relationship (1LF 1), followed by the threefold penitential act of fasting (1LF 2), prayer (1LF 3) and almsgiving

(1LF 4). This penitential tradition (conversion of life) is the root value of the Third Order, and Francis offers it as the source of fecundity. He assures us that it will "produce worthy fruits of penance" (1LF 7), that it is a sign of "true faith and penance" (TOR Rule 2). Francis considers these essential gospel acts the basis for joy and blessedness, "because the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and make Its home and dwelling place among them" (1LF 7). He suggests that this is a blessed relatedness for "they are children of the heavenly Father Whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1LF 7). Quantum physics reveals that at the core of matter there is not a single entity but two quarks bonded together. In these modern times, it is found that the essence of matter is not aloneness, singleness or independence, but relationship, from which all else builds. We are being called to conversion to incarnate the fundamental idea that the universe is not simple matter but matter in relationship.

Children

The first relational term Francis uses is, "children of the Heavenly Father, Whose works they do." Francis identifies the audience to whom he addresses the *Exhortation* not by the guild that marks their trade or the towns where they live but simply by the term "children." To the common folk this would have conjured up innocence and blessing, but also mouths to feed, persons to care for, laborers for the landowners. Children were not considered fortunate in society *unless* they were born into a noble family. Francis suggests a shift in meaning that portrays for his hearers an image of children of the richest households. Using court language familiar to medieval ears, he portrays the heavenly Father as the Lord of lords. By calling everyone children, Francis equalizes rich and the poor, lord and laborer. They have a common Creator, a common Father, *Abba* (Jn. 1:12). Thus, he lifts up the poor, the *minores*, into a position of security, in which they can expect benevolence from a heavenly Father and the kind of abundance that was enjoyed only by the privileged *maiores*, (Gal. 4:7).

To our contemporary ears, there is a subtle difference shifting us into an even deeper paradigm. We are children of the heavenly Father, not of our own doing, but because we are adopted through the costly life, death and resurrection of Jesus. All humanity is generously "transferred into the Kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom all have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14).

No one race, family or religion has a rightful claim to the heavenly inheritance. Since we are all adopted children of the heavenly Father, there is no birth order, seniority or position of privilege. All are God's children—the veiled Muslim woman of Iraq as well as the President of the United States; all are included as family. Consider the Dominicans with a mission in Baghdad, who

wore a button saying: "Stop the bombing, we have 'Sisters' in Iraq!" If we really understood the depth of being related as children of God, all humanity could say of earth's human population: "Stop the bombing! Our family lives here." Francis recovers the original blessedness. There is neither the "other side" nor "our side"; there is only "inside," for all are children—family bonded in relationship by one Heavenly Creator God.

Spouse

The medieval idea of spouse would have conjured up thoughts of a fair maiden, a gallant knight or a lovely courtship as well as a dowry of chickens, an arranged marriage and even a sense of enslavement/ownership. Francis takes this in a surprising new direction: "We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ" (1LF 8).

The nuptial imagery for a religious, as mentioned earlier, would have been familiar as the spouse/bride of Christ, but Francis does not stop there. He adds: "when the faithful soul is united by the Holy Spirit. . . ." Exploring this recently with contemporary novices opened up a whole new interpretation for me. Imaging Christ as a celibate male who is also divine barely inspired much more than a sense of being one of the "frozen chosen." Chastity, in the limited understanding of novices, merely evoked negative images—what not to do or be. But exploring the idea of "espoused by the Holy Spirit" added a nuance that inspired much more. This phrase brought forth a mystery of virginal fecundity that Francis opens up to every soul asking only for fidelity. It is the Holy Spirit who is the source of generativity where others languish. It is the Holy Spirit who hovers over chaos and brings order. It is the Holy Spirit who brings wisdom out of the quiet. This phrase inspires fidelity in the deepest part of the human being and calls us to a contemplative dimension that leads to fullness of life. Francis's insight calls the soul of the disciple to a faithful, chaste and fecund communion as the sign of a true spousal relationship.

In today's view of espousal, there is a greater sense of equal sharing in a fluid partnership as of a dance rather than a notion of dominance of one person over another. Our contemporary psychology speaks of mutuality in an adult partnership, giving proper consideration to the body, mind and soul of each person. Spousal relationships call for give and take. It is no longer enough to make relational perfection consist in fulfilling certain works or duties (2 Cor. 5:17). Significant relationships are meant to transform our lives into full communion, be it in Christ or into the Body of Christ. Our very being is made for communion, Trinitarian communion, i.e. husband/wife/Holy Spirit and religious/community/Holy Spirit. The mere fact of being a reliable cog in an efficient religious/marital machine will never make us blessed if we fail to find the Holy interiorly in the spiritual blessedness of the relationship (Mt. 9:14-

17). Those who simply work dutifully may lack the love necessary for a true spousal relationship. Love seeks not only to serve the Other/other, but also seeks to know, to commune in prayer, to participate fully in communion and to give concrete expression of the bond.

Brother

When Francis discovered the relationship of being brother, the Franciscan movement was afire in a sacred brotherhood among the friars. Francis referred to this as *fraternitas*, a Latin word that translates into English clumsily as “fraternity” or “brotherhood.” In his *Exhortation*, he points to the origin of this relationship in Jesus as he writes: “We are brothers **in Him**” (1LF 9) (emphasis added). It is not that there is simply a brotherhood among all the friars. Because Jesus, as a human male, is a brother to each friar, they are brothers to one another. Clare never used a parallel collective feminine relational term, such as *sororitas*, i.e. in English “sorority,” for it fails to honor the essential connective link through the incarnation of our brother Jesus. She simply refers to the “Sisters,” because Jesus, as brother to each one, links them as sisters to one another also in *fraternitas*.²

Note also that Francis adds the familial reference to being children of the Creator God, “when we do the will of the Father who is in heaven.” The medieval ear might have sensed inclusion in the family and been inspired to live responsibly a deep loyalty associated with being a sibling. The term may also have raised negative images of fierce jealousies and competitive rivalries, of sisters/brothers wanting to please parental figures as they vied for a desired patrimony.

This phrase would have sounded an echo from Matthew’s gospel: “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Mt. 12:50). This reveals Jesus’ sense of inclusiveness. Francis takes this to a new level, being one of the first to articulate the implication that Jesus is the first born of *all* creation (Col. 1:15). He applies this same sense of relatedness in the *Canticle of the Creatures*. He looks to creation for examples of the faithful life well lived. Francis, Patron of Ecology, suggests a dramatic shift to include all of the cosmos in this love relationship of *fraternitas* and claims all earthlings of land, sea and sky as “sisters” and “brothers.”

Francis opted out of the medieval rat race and cut right across the system of feudal privilege by creating in its place a brotherhood . . . where individuals could be themselves in their dignity and uniqueness and, at the same time, belong to something greater than themselves, which guarded their dignity and fostered and enhanced their uniqueness.³

Doyle gives dramatic concreteness of this relatedness in a plea to love and be loyal to water: “As a creature, water is our sister. And it is hardly normal to pour toxic acid into your sister!”⁴

Surely as humans we have an intelligent role to play in creation. We are called to have dominion over the earth (Gen. 2). How differently we might govern if we considered how our sister Mother Earth, “sustains and guides us” (CtC) within the limitations and needs of all life on earth. It is becoming increasingly necessary to look beyond ourselves and see how best to do the will of God. There needs to be a shift from dominating the earth by raping and polluting her to caring for and tending the precious resources of which humanity is but one among others. Realizing we are only one in a sacred lineage of generations, we are beginning to live with a greater reverential attitude of mutual interdependency and to make wiser, longer, broader, and more thoughtful choices reflective of the will of our creator God, to truly live in global *fraternitas*.

The whole cosmos, in our contemporary thinking, is drawn into this sacred relationship in Christ. Much is being written to help us discover how we are called to walk gently upon the common land, our sister Mother Earth. We must honor Brother Sun and Sister Moon who offer us a sacred rhythm of Sabbath⁵ and harvest⁶. We must befriend energy as a Brother, symbolized as beautiful fire, robust and playful. The human race is asked precisely to reflect fidelity to the will of God by the simple act of forgiveness, *giving for* all our brothers and sisters so that God will reconcile all things (Col. 1:20). Francis beckons us to “serve with great humility” (CtC). As brothers and sisters of Jesus we participate in a sacred exchange honoring the particular gift and grace of every creature of every race, gender, species and era. The *Canticle of the Creatures* in today’s circumstance offers us a hopeful way to live in true relationship with our brothers and sisters in all creation.

Mother

The last relational term again presents some inclusive challenges as Francis tells us: “We are mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through a divine love and a pure and sincere conscience . . .” (1LF 10). The term mother might at first suggest Mary, who carried Jesus in her body, and thus refer narrowly to an exclusive gender role. It may have been heard as an expected duty by half of the listeners and a painful burden by the other half. “Mother” may have conjured up a feeling of fondness for some and a sense of abandonment for others.

Francis, however, offers an image of generativity beyond physically giving birth. He calls the faithful to participate in the fullness of incarnation, suggesting that we “give birth to Him through a holy activity which must shine as an

example before others" (1LF 10). Francis calls us all to bear Him with love and give birth to Him through a holy life. We are called to become aware that we are potentially pregnant with the Word. The incarnation was not a one-time event. It is constantly renewed in every vocation if we have the understanding and courage to speak, like Mary, our *fiat*.

Though this still holds true today, we are opened to a wider interpretation, one that leads beyond Mary to the *Theotokos*, made in the image and likeness of our God. Hence, she is a reflection of the source of her being, Mother God. The liberation of the feminine dimension of God struggles with the limitations of language. Feminism is more than substituting a female, for example, in the patriarchal model. It is shifting from an either/or attitude to a both/and position, reverencing both masculine and feminine qualities, both hierarchical and horizontal. The role of mother has been adapted to cultural changes in our times. We respect a shared role in tending a household; we support a single father/mother raising his/her children; we defend a rightful place for persons with homosexual orientation. All call us to a broader interpretation of the once narrow role of "mother."

Both Francis and Clare offered some innovative expressions of being mother, especially in washing the feet and bodies of others. In these simple gestures is revealed the motherhood of God and a new way for us to exercise authority, a way of humility and service. Experiencing a poverty of leadership caught in the paradox and polarity of these times, we seek a paradigm of Gospel choices revealed by the loving mother force of God. We attempt to model the body of Christ not only as a pyramid of power but also as engaging in a network for empowerment.

The example that Clare and Francis offer us in foot-washing strongly influences the Franciscan sense of leadership. Like Jesus, we exercise leadership by both standing upright and kneeling down before others (Jn. 17). This model of leadership inspires others, regardless of gender, to give birth to Jesus. It is marked not only by seniority but also by service, not only by a title of position but also in a maternal and generative relationship.

Francis's life offers this model. He "mothered" the movement in his holy life, even after he relinquished his role as General Minister. In his day, religious founders and leaders traditionally served in positions of authority for a lifetime. Francis, however, modeled for us what one does after the time of such service. While he never relinquished his relationship with others as brother, he offered a model of what might be called "grand-mothering" the Franciscan movement.

If motherhood is considered as giving birth, then, as founder, Francis was a mother. But the role of mother is not only an event; it is an "event-ing," lasting for a lifetime. In our day, when life expectancy is so much longer, it is

more obvious that the role of mother changes as children develop through the stages of dependent, independent, interdependent and back again. The grandmother is often the keeper of generations, holding the legacy of giving birth to each generation. In this respect, Francis was mother to the first and grandmother to subsequent generations, mentoring and guiding the leaders and modeling for the followers.

He did not forget or diminish the responsibility of being in a role of authority but expanded it. His holy life offers the model of a mother and later a grandmother, enlightening leaders who are called to relinquish, through retirement or election, the role of authority, while not abandoning the responsibility of safeguarding the future. In his time, Francis returned in service to the simple role of an itinerant preacher. Francis led by following. He expressed a sense of confidence in new leaders to carry on and to mentor others in the skills of mutual dialogue.

He kept himself available and connected in the movement and came to be seen as a wise elder from whom one might ask advice. We see him gently, firmly, but freely offering an experienced perspective in his *Letter to a Minister*. These are a few examples from the life of Francis. They model for us fluid relationships in the mother role of giving birth by engaging in and disengaging from leadership.

Conclusion

Almost eighty years ago, Peter Lippert, SJ, wrote that the Franciscan movement holds a significant contribution to the next form of religious life.⁷ On the cusp of the new millennium, as we explore the fullness of the apostolic way of religious life and examine the plethora of writings about the importance of relationships, there is no doubt that the evangelical lifestyle offers great hope. Relationships are more than titles we give each other as religious or as earthlings. We must consciously and willfully choose the whom, the how and the why of our relationships. In all the Rules of the Franciscan Order, the identity of the sisters and brothers is characterized by observing the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Our lives must proclaim by concrete witness⁸ the good news by being rooted in true relationships—in creative conversion, redemptive intimacy and blessed generativity. Francis writes that, for those who persevere in these relationships, "the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them," and the Lord will make "His home and dwelling place with them" (1LF 6).

As the *Exhortation's* introduction continues, it reveals Francis's enthusiasm—one can only imagine "how glorious" all this is (1LF 11-13). How seriously Francis takes on the Christ-ed responsibility as he pours out Jesus' words. He expresses his own heartfelt desire for oneness (1LF 16-19) in the evangelical life of loving. But let us not be unduly romantic or abstract—we are not

merely to imagine the blessedness of relationships, but, like Francis, truly incarnate them in our own lives. Since love is the bond of any true relationship, it is the essence of the evangelical way of life, the "good news" we are to proclaim, using words only when necessary. We are called to "desire one thing alone, namely the Spirit of God at work within us" (LR 10:8).

This loving force of the Holy Spirit reveals a new vision that helps us see Gospel choices in forming relationships. It is especially hopeful for religious of the twenty-first century. The evangelical way of life as described in Francis's *Earlier Exhortation to the Brother and Sisters of Penance* offers not new rituals but opportunities to become new. It offers a helpful description of being love incarnate. It invites us to ministerial commitment, to a sacred dwelling place. But more than that, it invites us to a sacred relationship, for God dwells in every encounter of "two or more." This way of being opens us not simply to do what Jesus did, but to be as Jesus is, a sacred heart overflowing with love. Engaging in these true gospel relationships, we receive a blessing from God and become a blessing for others. Such is Gospel blessedness, to follow this "way of salvation." True relationships will help make the world a little closer to the vision of our Creator and, in creating a sacred dwelling place for God, help make God more visibly at home once again.

Endnotes

¹All sources for the writings of Francis are from *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short (New York: New City Press, 1999, 2000, 2001).

²Interestingly, this word is, grammatically, a feminine noun in Latin, describing a masculine relationship. It is impossible to translate into English without losing the "Christ-ed" source and language bias, so I leave it untranslated until we can live into the incarnation of a new word.

³Eric Doyle, *St. Francis and the Song of Brotherhood and Sisterhood* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1997), 17.

⁴Doyle, 56.

⁵See Abraham Joshua Heschel's seminal work, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* or others such as Tilden Edward, *Sabbath Time: Understanding and Practice for Contemporary Christians*; Marva Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting*; Donna Schaper, *Sabbath Sense: A Spiritual Antidote of the Overworked*.

⁶Cf. Diane Bergant, "Sabbath-Keeping" or Carol Zinn, "Right Relationships with the Earth," papers presented at LCWR Assembly in 2005.

⁷Peter Lippert, SJ, *Stimmen der Zeit*, quoted by William J. Short, OFM, *The Franciscans* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989) and *Living our Future: Francis of Assisi and the Church Tomorrow* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972).

⁸*The Rule and Life of the Third Order Regular*, 7:23, references John 8:18 saying, "Let them manifest their love in deeds."

An Aesthetic of Franciscan Formation

Kathryn King, FSP

The Character of Franciscan Ministry

Nine years ago, Michael Blastic published an article entitled "The Conversation of Franciscans: Ministry in Cosmic Context."¹ He takes off from what he calls a "magisterial synthesis of the Franciscan world view" as described by Zachary Hayes. Blastic identifies the wisdom of the Franciscan tradition as originating in the religious experience of Francis and Clare and in the theological reflection on their experience by the doctors of the Order. This theological reflection stretched the Jesus of the Paschal Mystery to the "widest possible horizon" by saying that the whole of creation is structured Christologically. Because of this perspective, says Blastic, Franciscan ministry has a particular character. It is a ministry that serves the divine aim in creation, a ministry that serves the transformation and completion of the world as intended by God.

Franciscan Formation Ministry as Conversation

Formation ministry in the Franciscan tradition explicitly facilitates the transformation and the completion of the human person as servant to the greater cosmic transformation. Blastic uses the metaphor "conversation" to describe the Franciscan activity of making the connections between the ordinary daily experience of human activity and the Gospel.

In Franciscan formation, what is the conversation about? With whom does one converse? For what purpose? In our fragmented world, most people gain a sense of continuity and identity by telling stories. These stories reveal that the human person is composed of many "selves," which can be harmonized and woven into an identity. Narrating the stories of one's life can help to harmonize the fragments of the self, express identity and even allow for creating a newer, richer identity as one's experience is linked to the Christian and Franciscan story. In initial formation, mature adults enter into a transition

time, that is, a time of de-construction, of breaking apart, which allows more of the self to become available for integration and meaning. This time of de-construction surfaces fragments of the self that can be put into the service of identity re-formation as "brother" and "sister."

Anthony Paul Kerby, in his work, *Narrative and the Self*,² aligns himself with other narrative psychologists in the belief that self-narration is the defining act of the human person, an act that not only describes the self but evokes the actual emergence of the person in his or her reality. The selves that emerge through narrative are grounded and held in the body. There is a dynamic interrelation between mind, emotions, spirit and body. Moreover, women narrative psychologists, such as Susan Stanford and Joy Hooton, hold that women's autobiographical narratives differ from those of men in that women usually present the self-in-relation rather than the self-as-an-individual in isolation.

It would seem that, in the process of religious formation, the construction of a narrative through conversation(s) is a fundamental method of shaping and integrating fragmented experience into a "theological way of being." If we accept the premise that "formation" is "a theological way of being," then formation is descriptive of a way of living one's whole life! Hence, the construction of a life narrative through conversation(s) becomes a fundamental method of shaping and integrating fragmented experience into one's way of being. The articulation of personal experience is more than language. Conversation is embodied and relational insofar as one presents oneself as a distinct person to another. In the conversation relationship, one becomes "more" one's self. In conversation, the grounded person enters the experience of the other and returns enriched, challenged, deepened and changed without losing oneself. One is capable of leaving and returning to oneself. Conversation then becomes both the context and the expression of a narrative in the formation process.

Formative Direction

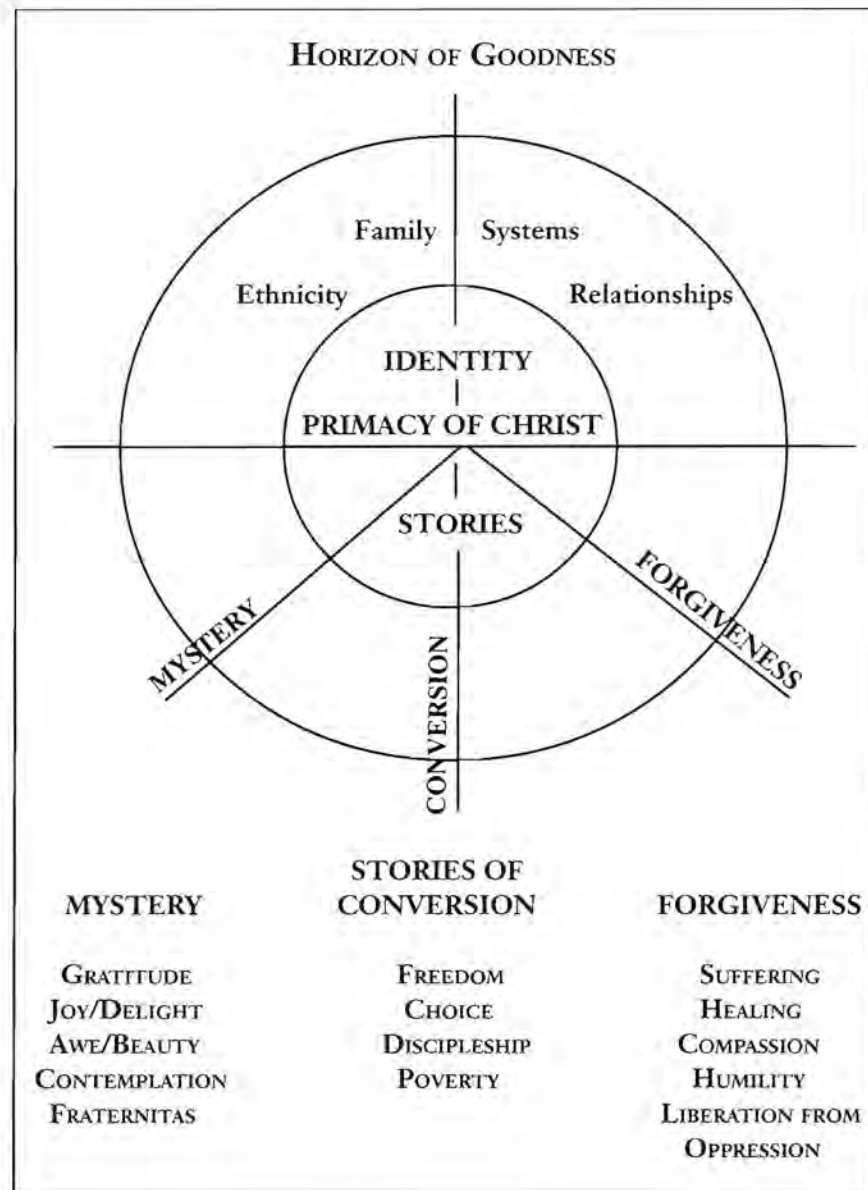
Formative relationships occur with and among persons who are already "on the way" and who acknowledge "formation" as a theological way of being. In the initial stages of formation, there is another distinct relationship between a trained mentor and one who is in the process of being initiated into the way of conversion for the purpose of public consecration of one's entire life to God. The specific focus of this article is on the conversation between the mentor and the seeker in the dynamic relationship known as "formative direction." The core of the conversation known as "formative direction" is conversion through integration. It is distinguishable from other similar conversations such as the spiritual direction relationship and the counseling or therapeutic relationship. In the former, the core is the religious experience or the God experience of the person coming for "direction." In the latter, the

core is psychological exploration in order to facilitate intra-personal or inter-personal relating. All three "conversational" relationships are distinguished from "study" insofar as the primary purpose of study is the assimilation of a specific body of knowledge. Certainly, a theological way of being includes an integration of all three aspects. However, "formative direction" involves a unique relationship of conversation in which the plots of one's life are re-interpreted and integrated into a new (read Franciscan) worldview leading to concrete choices that are reflective of a changed perspective, one of which may be a decision to commit one's whole self to Gospel living in a public way.

In initial formation, the primary narrator is the candidate. However, both the formator and the congregation members participate in the narrated conversations by becoming both a loving audience and interlocutors. By sharing her stories, a candidate reveals her/his sense of self, of God, of the world, of the complex of relationships, of prejudices, of Church. The congregation members and the mentor receive the stories and influence the candidate's conversation through questions, their own shared stories and their non-verbal responses, all of which reveal their own understandings of self, God, world, relationships and Church.

God's Work of Art

Franciscans possess a certain vision—that is, a positive view of the human person derived from the implications of the Incarnation, of God's Divine Desire and of a Christological worldview through which an optimistic understanding of the human person emerges. For the Franciscan theologian, John Duns Scotus, the human person is seen as the summit of divine creativity. Each human person has a natural affection for both happiness and justice. The particularity of each human person ("thisness") is an expression of beauty, a work of art. Freedom is central for a love relationship that expresses desire through rational choice. There is, in Scotus's view, a confidence in Divine Love. God's divine acceptance expresses God's liberality and graciousness. Beauty resides in the whole, in harmony. Ultimately, the storied life of the candidate will be shaped into a narrative of integrity and transparency, a narrative that expresses the value and dignity of the human person as a work of art, God's work of art. Hence, Scotus offers an aesthetic model for his vision of the world. In initial formation, story or narrative is the art form, crafted through conversations that both express the incredible beauty of each human person and joins him or her in the dance of communion that is simultaneously human life, Trinitarian life and Franciscan life. The elements of this dance can be imagined within the context of the following illustration:



The illustration indicates that God, the Divine Artist is the horizon of All Goodness, which flows into creation through Jesus Christ with Beauty, Harmony, Love. Every aspect of a person's life is penetrated with the Good. Goodness is woven through the "data" of experience waiting to be fully incorporated into one's life story through conversation.

The Language of Metaphor

The narratives that form the substance of formative conversations are not merely compilations of fact. They contain descriptions, interpretations and metaphors. Metaphors are figurative comparisons between two unlikely things resulting in an image in the mind's eye. Kathleen Forsythe¹ argues that metaphor is the core of our conceptual system. She maintains that metaphor is a pervasive and organizing mental "adhesive" underlying the structure of thought. Metaphors hold energy, a power to create new meaning, new insights and new perceptions. They offer a "way" or "method" by which a person can discover and learn, risking the leap from the familiar to the unfamiliar, which can harmonize intelligence, emotion, and imagination.

Some say that language began as metaphor! Metaphor may offer a "language" for the inexpressible, may assist in making connections and may offer humor. Metaphor carries many levels of meaning and provides access to conscious meaning, unconscious material and symbolic meaning. In the conversational model for formation, the mentor listens and receives the story. From his/her interpretive framework, developed along the lines of a Franciscan worldview, the mentor responds. His/her response probes the themes and metaphors that are evident as well as those that are absent. By the mentor's response, the candidate is encouraged and challenged to relate the content of her/his own life narrative to the Gospel, the Franciscan sources and other human and religious study.

The "movement through metaphor" in the formation process is a transformational approach to formation. It links the left brain (analytical) with the right brain (imaginative). The candidate surfaces one or more metaphors through the narrative. It is here that the formator or mentor has a key role. She/he holds up the metaphor for confirmation and assists in relating it to the candidate's formative study and experience. Or the candidate may present a problem or conflict. Here the formator questions the content and challenges the candidate to transform it into a metaphor. Images sometimes appear intuitively in the candidate and these can be used. Using images to play out conflicts and problems can be less threatening than analytical or conceptual conversations especially when candidates move through two or three "directors" in the course of initial formation. Metaphor may also bring out the humor and or creativity latent in the issue. Metaphors enrich the life of the candidate and foster integration to the extent that they engage the Scripture, Franciscan sources, congregational charism, ministerial experience and other study. Conversations with the mentor that are open both to shared meaning and experience may yield a changed identity (perhaps for both).

Categories of Narrative

In initial formation, there are three necessary narratives to be told: Mystery of God, Conversion, Compassion. All three involve relationships that are "formative" for one's life and identity.

Encounters with the Mystery of God

The first set of stories concerns encounters with the Mystery of God—the Fountain Fullness, Overflowing Goodness, Extravagant Love. These stories are foundational insofar as their content and experiences point to a depth of grace that is necessary and sufficient to fund a call to put one's entire life at the service of the divine aim through a committed, publicly vowed, religious life over a lifetime. It is essential that these stories convey an interpersonal encounter with God as well as a sense of real relationship, that is, a sense of being loved and accepted by God in the uniqueness of one's own personhood (*haecceitas*).

Encounters with God can be mediated through nature, other persons (such as family and friends), or social organizations that are religious, economic or political. An experience of God that is, at the same time, an experience of the ineffable value and loveliness of oneself is derived from an understanding and acceptance that one's life is the gift of divine generosity. Narratives that disclose an individuated sense of being are related to the developmental level of the candidate. Nevertheless, in initial formation, a prospective candidate will necessarily identify the encounter with the Holy One in such a way that one's personal and unique life purpose and mission are clarified and strengthened.

These stories of encounters that individuate become the "touchstones" for continuing discernment throughout one's life. Stories of encounters with Mystery will evoke "Franciscan" attitudes such as gratitude, joy, delight, awe, compassion and wonder. Values such as beauty, contemplation, "fraternitas" (relationships of communion) ought to be discovered when one acknowledges God's activity in human life.

Conversion of Heart and Manner of Life

The second set of narratives critical to the formation of the Franciscan person concerns conversion of heart and manner of life. If one is to follow Christ in the Order of Penance, how has one experienced the movement of freedom to make a choice to become a disciple? How has the experience of conversion been one of self-emptying in order to follow Jesus Christ? In conversion stories, one attends to life-transformation through self-transforma-

tion. Narratives concerning freedom, choice, discipleship and poverty will be uncovered and discovered.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

A third set of narratives concerns forgiveness and growth in compassion. Here the stories of suffering and of liberation from oppression caused by economics, ethnicity, gender and age will offer insight in two ways. For some, forgiveness and reconciliation will mean claiming one's dignity and reverence for the self. This is especially true for some who are poor and marginalized and is often the experience of women. Some women form poor self-images because they have internalized inadequate and damaging theologies of sacrifice, suffering and redemption. It is possible that impoverished self-images are being carried in some fragments of the self, fragments that had been placed outside conscious awareness in one's previous professional and social life. In the process of de-construction referred to earlier, which takes place during initial formation, these fragments may appear. They need to be subjected to the healing process of transformation into Franciscan brotherhood or sisterhood.

For other persons, narratives of forgiveness and reconciliation may require a "letting go" of privilege, that is, of the fragments of the self that possessed power, wealth, or status, either in the family or in other social organizations. Such persons may need to let go of attitudes that disclose unconscious domination, control, exhibitionism and the like. Finally, "letting go" may include recognizing and owning one's complicity with systems of oppression that had been sources of security.

The Role of Formative Narratives in Vocational Discernment

In narrating conversion stories or stories of forgiveness and reconciliation, grace helps to loosen the ego's control. This can create confusion and vulnerability through which underlying conflicts and contradictions may be exposed. Narratives of encounter with the mystery of God, narratives of conversion and narratives of forgiveness and reconciliation contribute to vocational discernment. Relating these stories to the Gospel, to Franciscan sources and to the charism of the congregation, the candidate can reinterpret his or her values, attitudes and beliefs from a new perspective and determine those that are not congruent with a Franciscan theological and spiritual worldview. Such a reinterpretation can bring about a deepened understanding of the self, of conversion and of healing.

Through conversations that invite the disclosure of the narratives of one's life, the formation of the "Franciscan person" occurs. This human formation will precede the unique formation for vowed religious life! In other words, the

man or woman who considers the prospect of a publicly vowed life in the Franciscan family must possess a level of individuation that acknowledges the unique value of his or her person and, by implication, the extraordinary graciousness of God. Once this process is underway, a prospective candidate's intention to move into publicly vowed life in the Franciscan tradition can be explored in concert with the freedom required for such a choice. Narratives that surface the truthful desires of one's heart must eventually answer the questions: Can I live vowed religious life? Do I want to live this life from the worldview of the Franciscan *charism*? Do the congregation members and the mentors who accompany the candidates agree with this choice?

Presence, Poise and Praxis

Narrative is a universal form of human expression. The narrative conversation transcends both culture and ethnicity. Hence it has the potential for being a constructive strategy for intercultural formation. The conversation that crafts the work of art that is the new narrative of the candidate relies heavily on the art and skill of the formator in order to enter into a "center" that both attracts and harmonizes. In an address to the Franciscan Federation in August 2003,⁴ Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ, posed a three-fold challenge to those who would be reconcilers. These challenges of presence, poise and praxis are also skills for formators or mentors who accompany others in the process of becoming Franciscan persons. The ability to realize "self-presence" and "other-presence" in a single simultaneous act both unifies and empowers both parties in the conversation. "Poise" on the other hand requires the ability and the skill to be open and waiting for the "inner voice" of intuitive wisdom to speak. It is an artful trusting of the movement of the Spirit in the present moment.

Ingham, in *A Harmony of Goodness*,⁵ grounds her understanding of "relationship" in the Trinity. The relationship between the formator and the candidate is based on mutuality, "the communion of shared life among persons," and is key to the crafting of the "work of art" that is a Franciscan identity. Goodness and beauty are hallmarks of Franciscan men or women whose dimensions of the self and of life are harmonized and integrated into a whole. There is a new proportion to the elements of their life stories. The order that emerges from the fragments affirms the loving hand of a Creator in a work of beauty that evokes delight. Such is the formation of the Franciscan person.

Conclusion

In summary, a Franciscan model of formation is relational. It is an art form—the creating of a narrative saturated with beauty, harmony and good-

ness. It is crafted in, with and through conversations marked by presence and poise. Franciscan formation is essentially the development of a Franciscan person who is free to live the Gospel in sisterhood or brotherhood. Only then do ecclesial roles become a consideration in the ongoing discernment of the Franciscan person.

Endnotes

¹Michael Blastic, OFMConv., "The Conversation of Franciscans: Ministry in Cosmic Context," *The Cord*, 46.2 (Mar/Apr, 1996).

²Anthony Paul Kerby, *Narrative and the Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981).

³Kathleen Forsythe, *Cathedrals of the Mind* (Unpublished paper delivered at the American Society of Cybernetics, 1986).

⁴Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ, "Presence, Poise, and Praxis: The Three-fold Challenge for Reconcilers Today," *The Cord*, 51.6 (Nov/Dec., 2003), 303-314.

⁵Mary Beth Ingham, *A Harmony of Goodness* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1996).

Because God loves us, the brothers and sisters should love each other, for the Lord says, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you (cf. Jn 15:12). Let them manifest their love in deeds (Jn 8:18). Also whenever they meet each other, they should show that they are members of the same family. Let them make known their needs to one another. . . .

TOR Rule VII.23

About Our Contributors

Murray Bodo, OFM, a member of the St. John the Baptist province, is a well-known poet and teacher, the author of 24 books, including the international best-seller, *Francis, the Journey and the Dream*. His poems have appeared in many literary journals, including *The Paris Review*, *The Western Humanities Review*, and *Mystics Quarterly*. He is presently a visiting lecturer in the Franciscan Institute summer program, St. Bonaventure University. Since 1976 he has been a staff member of the Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs. Fr. Murray's latest book, forthcoming from St. Anthony Messenger Press in 2006, is *A Sort of Bliss: Reading the Mystics*.

Sister Joanne Brazinski is a Sister of Saint Francis of the Providence of God. She has her M.A. from St. Bonaventure University in Franciscan Studies. Her experiences include: teaching, formation ministry, leadership, and pastoral ministry in Brazil. She is presently on staff at the Franciscan Spirit and Life Center in Pittsburgh, PA and is involved with facilitation work and retreat ministry.

Mary Gurley is a Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia, currently on sabbatical leave from St. Bonaventure University. In addition to articles written for *The Cord* and a number of other journals (*Human Development*; *Prayer*; *Weavings*), Mary has recently authored a book-length biography of Mother Francis Bachmann, founder of the Philadelphia congregation.

Sister Mary Elizabeth Imler is serving in her second term as General Community Leader for her religious congregation with a 125-year tradition, the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Frankfort, Illinois. She completed a Master's degree at the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University, NY in the summer of 1999 of her election. With the help of her mentor, Sr. Margaret Carney, she completed her thesis which was printed in 2002: *A Franciscan Solitude Experience and the Pilgrim's Journal*. Passionate about the Third Order Regular tradition, she regularly gives presentations, retreats and facilitates every kind of Chapter as an instrument wrestling with the questions that will give new life to the tradition far beyond tomorrow.

Kathryn King, FSP, participated in the development of the Eastern Franciscan Common Novitiate and was a member of the five member Formation Team 1998-99. She was named Novice Minister in 1999 until 2004. She has been Provincial, Congregation Administrator and General Councilor of her congregation, the Franciscan Sisters of Peace. She was adjunct faculty at the Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education, Fordham University for nine years where she taught the Practicum in Giving Spiritual Direction and more recently a Formation Seminar for those preparing for ministry in seminary or religious life formation. She is currently Pastoral Associate for spiritual direction, retreats, and adult faith formation at St. Ignatius Loyola Parish, New York City.



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4. We commit ourselves to defending the right of everyone to live a decent life in accordance with their own cultural identity, and to form freely a family of his own.

5. We commit ourselves to frank and patient dialogue, refusing to consider our differences as an insurmountable barrier, but recognizing instead that to encounter the diversity of others can become an opportunity for greater reciprocal understanding.

6. We commit ourselves to forgiving one another for past and present errors and prejudices, and to supporting one another in a common effort both to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence, and to learn from the past that peace without justice is no true peace.

7. We commit ourselves to taking the side of the poor and the helpless, to speaking out for those who have no voice and to working effectively to change these situations, out of the conviction that no one can be happy alone.

8. We commit ourselves to taking up the cry of those who refuse to be resigned to violence and evil, and we desire to make every effort possible to offer the men and women of our time real hope for justice and peace.

9. We commit ourselves to encouraging all efforts to promote friendship between peoples, for we are convinced that, in the absence of solidarity and understanding between peoples, technological progress exposes the world to a growing risk of destruction and death.

10. We commit ourselves to urging leaders of nations to make every effort to create and consolidate, on the national and international levels, a world of solidarity and peace based on justice.

(February, 2002)

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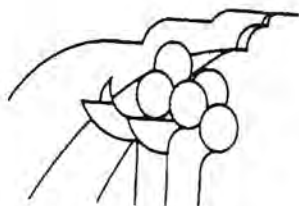
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The 40 Day Franciscan Hermitage Retreat. November 4-December 14, 2006. At the Portiuncola Center For Prayer, Frankfort, IL. For information, contact: 815 - 464-3880 or visit www.portforprayer.org

Blessings and Best Wishes All the Days of Your Life, Margaret!

Abbreviations

Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	The Admonitions
BIL	A Blessing for Brother Leo
Cic	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 Aliegheri
TL	Tree of Life by Ubertino da Casale
1MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Smaller Version
2MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Larger Version
HTrb	The History of the Seven Tribulations by Angelo of Clareno
ScEx	The Sacred Exchange between St. Francis and Lady Poverty
AP	The Anonymous of Perugia
L3C	The Legend of the Three Companions
AC	The Assisi Compilation
1-4Strm	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

You will have the highest regard for the most high God if by way of a faithful, pious, and penetrating intuition you believe, admire, and praise God's vast power creating everything from nothing and preserving all things, God's infinite wisdom governing and ordaining all things. . . . You must first leave yourself, then return to yourself, and finally transcend yourself so that you may sing with the prophet: *The daughters of Judah rejoiced because of your judgments, O Lord. Because you, O Lord, are the Most High over all the earth, exalted far above all gods* (Ps 96:8-9).

St. Bonaventure, "On Governing the Soul," 2

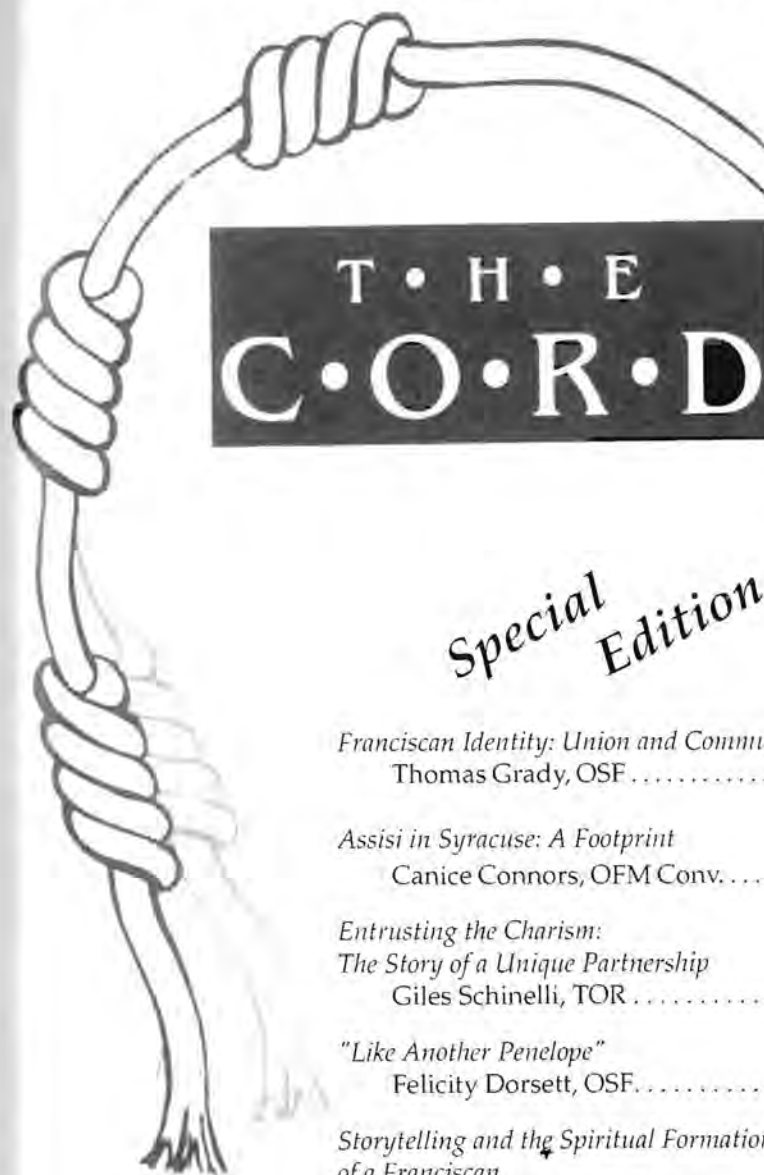
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THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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

The Cord, 56.5 (2006)

Editorial

Our September/October *Cord* continues the celebration/recognition of the 65th birthday of Sr. Margaret Carney, OSF, the current president of St. Bonaventure University. Begun in the previous issue, the "Special Edition" includes pieces written to name some of the ways in which Margaret has inspired others and worked with them to enrich the "living tradition" of our evangelical way of life.

Whether it be in pilgrimage leadership, the struggle for inter-Franciscan union and communion, the development of new initiatives between branches of the family, or the ways in which the stories told about Francis of Assisi are unpacked today, the four articles in this issue speak to the kinds of labor and envisioning that have always marked Margaret's life. Giles, Canice, Tom, and Ed all touch upon some aspect of what we should be devoted to in these times, aspects that Margaret herself has named so often as what our good God is inviting us to in this 21st century. And the poem by Sr. Felicity Dorsett has been added for two reasons: it refers to the Lady Clare, whose story Margaret has given such love and devotion, and it uses a truly fascinating phrase—"abundance, blissed with blessings."

Surprises can be as bittersweet even as they are energizing and exciting. As some of you already know, in July I was elected to the leadership team of my congregation, and the God of surprises now leads me down an unexpected fork in the road. The call to service is a profoundly humbling moment in my life; it carries with it the need to surrender my role as editor of *The Cord* as well as other responsibilities in publications here. I am grateful for so many experiences of the last five years: the support of friends and colleagues, the loyalty of readers, the generosity of the authors who have never left me without resources!

Yesterday I had the opportunity to return to the wonder of nature that is Niagara Falls. The overflowing force and energy of the water embodied for me the potential of the present transition as well as the unknowns that lie ahead. Powerful sights and sounds throughout the day became a contemplative reality in which I was able to consider how God's grace is present in our lives and how it can be simultaneously forceful, beautiful, and overwhelming. It was a glorious day, not just in itself, but in all it suggests for all of us. May the force that is God's love, demonstrated in the life of each of us, become years of "abundance, blissed with blessings."

Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF

Franciscan Identity: Unity and Communion

Thomas Grady, OSF

Introduction

A tedious, multi-lingual conversation about simplicity and poverty was droning into its second session during a five-day meeting held in Assisi to establish statutes for the newly formed International Franciscan Conference (IFC). The year was 1985. The participants were major superiors of Religious Institutes of the Third Order Regular branch of the Franciscan family from across the world. The purpose was to create an organization that would hold together those many Third Order Regular Institutes, all committed to living a Gospel life. These Institutes, in spite of very obvious differences, had worked together for several years to bring about the promulgation of the new Rule and Life of the Third Order Regular Brothers and Sisters based on living as authentic followers of Jesus Christ. In his *Propositum* of 1982, Pope John Paul II acknowledged "how diligently and assiduously this Rule and Life has traveled the path of 'aggiornamento' and how fortuitously it arrived at the convergence of different points of view through collegial discussion and consultation, proposals and studied amendments" and, "for this very reason with well-founded hope," he promulgated the Rule and Life.

At the International Franciscan Conference meeting in 1985, enthusiasm for dialogue and collaboration was high. However, in the course of debating the particularities of poverty and simplicity, eyes were crossing and heads nodding as the legalities of statutes were being simultaneously translated and reformulated.

At one moment a Sister took the microphone and, in a very soft but emotional voice, told the story of what daily life was like for herself and her Sisters in war-torn Beirut. Their houses were bombed, their hospitals and convents were filled with children, the elderly and disabled—those left behind as people fled the city bombarded by shells every night. She simply asked the audience to remember them; and, she added earnestly, to send her Sisters some formation materials on the new Rule, in French if possible.

The assembly was then awake, but silent. Her testimony changed the tone of the conference and its conversations. Poverty and simplicity had human faces and names. And the Sisters and Brothers gathered there in Assisi found a renewed unity and communion in their Franciscan identity.

This essay will highlight inter-Franciscan efforts over the past twenty-five years to foster such unity and communion. The theme is taken from that same new Rule and Life of the Third Order Regular which begins with a chapter on identity and, in its third article, states: "The sisters and brothers . . . wherever they are . . . should foster unity and communion with all the members of the Franciscan family."

National and International Organizations

For Franciscans of the Third Order Regular, collaboration began on national levels in the 1960s as part of a renewal effort to recover the spirit of the various founders, the common ancestor being, of course, Francis of Assisi. In the United States, major superiors of Franciscan communities of women joined together to design programs of Franciscan formation. From this venture, the Franciscan Federation of the Third Order Regular in the United States was born in 1965. At that time, the Institutes of Third Order Regular men worldwide were affiliated through the Inter-Obediential Conference, which had as its primary focus the direction of the Franciscan educational ministry.

In 1981 the Franciscan Federation in the United States welcomed the brothers into its organization, and in 1990 the Federation added general membership through a regional structure. Each of these developments made the circle of participants more expansive and inclusive.

In 1985, the Assisi meeting established the International Franciscan Conference (IFC), which created a global link for Third Order Regular congregations of women as well as those of men. It also served to link national federations, united by their common Franciscan identity as articulated in the new Rule and Life. That development obviated the need for the Inter-Obediential Conference, which disbanded in 1987. For the first time, the Sisters and Brothers of the Third Order Regular had a common international forum through membership in the IFC.

Also in 1985, the English-speaking Conference of the Friars Minor and the Franciscan Federation of the United States began a series of joint meetings to explore the possibility of a Franciscan presence at the United Nations. Other branches of the Franciscan family (Capuchins, Conventuals, Clares and Seculars) quickly joined in the process. In spite of the complexity of this undertaking, the dream became a reality. Franciscans working on the United Nations project joked that it was easier to navigate the complex UN systems than it was to find all the Franciscans! However, the concept resonated with

members of the Order around the world, especially those who, like the Sister from Beirut, encountered the human faces of poverty and violence daily. The various federations and conferences endorsed the project, and many congregations and provinces financed it. Finally, Franciscans International was recognized as a non-governmental organization by the United Nations organization and opened its first office at the United Nations building in New York in 1990.

Since that time, Franciscans International has received consultative status at the United Nations and sponsorship by the Conference of the Franciscan Family (made up of the five Ministers General and the President of the International Franciscan Conference). It has also established a headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. Its credibility has been tested and recognized, and it has grown in size and influence. The projects of Franciscans International, based on "unity and communion within the Franciscan family," give global voice to the marginalized with whom the Brothers and Sisters minister around the world. Poverty and simplicity again take on a human face through familial collaboration.

Simultaneously, the Correspondence Course on the Franciscan Missionary Charism (CCFMC) was inaugurated to create and share Franciscan formation resources throughout the developing world. Begun under the auspices of the Friars Minor and headquartered in Germany, CCFMC brought Franciscan education, as well as greater "unity and communion" to Franciscans across Africa, Asia and South America. In the United States the program was called "Build with Living Stones." Many European and American Franciscans contributed their resources, knowledge of Franciscan source material and experience of contemporary social and pastoral thought to the ongoing development of the program. CCFMC continues to link Franciscans worldwide through its unifying focus on Franciscan identity.

Regional Efforts

In addition to these global initiatives, regional projects of interfamilial collaboration emerged during the last decades of the twentieth century.

Franciscans in Brazil are noteworthy models of early reflection, discussion and action on the challenges that "preferential option for the poor" presented to the congregations and provinces in their country. Friars and Sisters, with lay colleagues and base communities among the poor, discerned together the directions that could be taken to embrace those who were marginalized or abandoned, much as Francis embraced the lepers of his time and culture. As one family, they prayed, studied and acted together on the social injustices of our time. Their experience has, in turn, enriched the larger global efforts, such as Franciscans International, the IFC and the CCFMC.

On the other side of our planet, Franciscans in Asia have joined forces to establish the Franciscan Institute of Asia, an inter-Franciscan formation center headquartered in Manila. Similar centers have developed in India, England and Kenya, each now at varying stages of development and accessibility. It is noteworthy that the international projects would not be as successful as they are now without the collaborative work of the Franciscan family at regional levels.

Local Efforts

Local interfamilial projects are no less important in clarifying our Franciscan identity. One such effort came into being in Chicago in the 1970s. It began as a study group on Franciscan history for Sisters and Brothers from a poor neighborhood rather heavily populated with a variety of Franciscans. From that group emerged the Franciscan publication called *Haversack*. This rather simple, home-style journal eventually reached Franciscans in dozens of countries and became a vehicle for sharing stories and analyzing situations through a Franciscan lens. As such, it was a link to the wider family, both past and present, as well as a stimulus and resource for other local and regional initiatives. There are understandable reasons for critics to say that a project like *Haversack* might not be a good example for "unity and communion" in the Franciscan family, for it critiqued structures within the family as well as within Church and society. However, during its twenty-two-year history, its contributors created a vibrant network among Franciscans from all branches of the family. They were united in their dedication to strive for authentic application of Gospel mandates to social problems in a way consistent with our common Franciscan identity. For me, that local effort was a liberating experience that helped me expand my future contributions to interfamilial projects.

Another influential local inter-Franciscan project is *Pace e Bene*, a resource for nonviolence. Members of the Franciscan Center in Las Vegas began this project at the Nevada Test Site as "The Lenten Desert Experience." While remaining faithful to the original mission of opposing the proliferation and testing of nuclear weapons, *Pace e Bene* has developed into a comprehensive program of education in nonviolence in order to address our national and global "cultures of death" from a Franciscan perspective. Its inspiring and persevering founders and dedicated staff are now based in California as well as in Nevada, and their influence is international.

Formation

Here in the United States and all across the globe, inter-Franciscan formation programs have been developed in recent decades. Examples of these

collaborative efforts are presented elsewhere in this issue. Suffice it to say that sharing resources—human, financial and experiential—is wise; and introducing novices to the wider family is appropriate preparation for the task of passing our patrimony on to the new generation in forms that are not yet quite clear.

Education

In more recent years, there have been a series of exciting programs of collaboration among Franciscan scholars for the benefit of the entire family. Of course, the most venerable model of Franciscan scholarship in America is the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure's University, which produced many of these same scholars. The Franciscan Institute, in conjunction with the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley and the Franciscan Center at Washington Theological Union, is engaged in an interfamilial effort to study, recapture, reinvigorate and share the "Franciscan Intellectual Tradition." This tradition, a gem of our heritage, has not received as much attention among our various branches of the family as is necessary for it to thrive and be passed on to future generations. Thus, a collaborative effort began in order to articulate our intellectual tradition anew and make it more accessible. Already we have parallel programs spreading the tradition in scholarly presentations annually, such as at the Franciscan Forum sponsored by the Franciscan Institute and at the Franciscan Symposium sponsored by Washington Theological Union. In addition, we have seen the publication of four new volumes of sources: *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. Regis Armstrong, Wayne Hellmann and William Short (New York: New City Press, 1999-2002).

Related to this scholarly work is the recent establishment of the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities (AFCU). This organization is a network of Franciscan institutions of higher education in the United States. Its members have sponsored one major conference and planned a second for summer 2006. AFCU has also published two issues of its new journal. This publication makes it possible for faculty, staff and administration of participating institutions to share insights and concrete experiences about bringing Franciscan values, history, traditions and intellectual inquiry to life in their classrooms and on their campuses. This project expands the concept of Franciscan "family" to include colleagues devoted to making the Franciscan spirit concrete in their educational ministries. Its work bodes well for passing our Franciscan identity on to the next generation.

A similarly inclusive program is Franciscan Pilgrimages. Hundreds of Franciscan religious have been enriched by this spiritual and educational journey in the footsteps of Francis and Clare. Now this opportunity is more and more available to colleagues who give leadership in traditional Franciscan institutions of health, education and social ministries. While many of the inter-

familial projects mentioned earlier in this article require long, sometimes tedious days of multi-lingual organizational meetings, this project is not only educational, but refreshing. One can simply enjoy it. That, too, is essential for creating "unity and communion."

Conclusion

This retrospective of interfamilial Franciscan projects over the past twenty-five years cannot be considered, by any means, exhaustive. It is limited by the usual constraints of time and space. Even more, it is limited by my own limited experience and perspective as a member of a small, North American lay Institute of Third Order Regular Franciscan men based in Brooklyn, New York. But, membership in that "humble proud" Institute (the oxymoron is a tribute to our Irish founders) has brought me into contact with most of the projects included in this article—sometimes very directly, as in positions of leadership, sometimes quite indirectly, as in casual acquaintances. Beyond these, there are certainly many inspiring stories of interfamilial efforts to clarify and strengthen our Franciscan identity, efforts based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, notable efforts with which I am, regretfully, unfamiliar. We must continue to heed the injunction in article 3 of the Third Order Regular Rule and Life for the Brothers and Sisters—to foster the spirit of "unity and communion" with all members of the Franciscan family.

The same Rule concludes with another, final injunction: the Brothers and Sisters should "desire one thing alone; namely, the Spirit of God at work within them" (article 32). The working of the "Spirit of God" becomes manifest in the "unity and communion" of our Franciscan lives. Many, many of our sisters and brothers have been engaged in that incarnation during the past two and a half decades. A special few of these Franciscan pioneers have been ubiquitous, leaving their nurturing handprints, sometimes in shadow, sometimes in bold relief, on all of these projects. None of those hallowed handprints are more faithfully present than are those of Sister Margaret Carney, to whom this brief retrospective is affectionately and gratefully dedicated.

References

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Assisi in Syracuse: A Footprint

Canice Connors, OFM Conv.

Introduction

The dynamics and detritus of seraphic confusion may validate more of this narrative than any evidence certifying artful planning and rational forecasting. This compressed recollection describes how Franciscan Collaborative Ministries originated out of the dull depression of a collapsed dream and developed into an aspiring and developing vision of a renewed urban Franciscan presence in Syracuse, New York. The story may quicken your creative imagination or provide a practicum deserving of your critical review. The title memorializes the vitality of discussions among sisters, friars and associates from May 7-10, 2002, at the Carmelite Retreat Center in Niagara Falls, Ontario. Margaret Carney suggested that our dream of creating a model of shared Franciscan communal life might be facilitated by using the analogy of FOOTPRINT—an architect's metaphor for indicating the scope of a proposed new structure. In this account, it is being used in two senses—first, in the empirical sense of describing evidence of the project already imprinted through programs and services and, secondly, as a device for sharing indicators of future directions.

The Footprint of Existing Collaborations

Out of Confusion

The seven years following the Covenant House scandal and Bruce Ritter's fall from grace was a period of low grade depression throughout the Immaculate Conception Conventual Province, all but muting collective energy and imagination. An official internal report of the scandal situation was submitted to our Minister General, who, for reasons complex and confusing, interdicted any communal discussion of the impact of the tragedy on our membership. Consequently, the thematic of quiet despair colored all province discussions.

We practically memorized the stats of diminishing numbers, rising median age and financial woes.

At a Province Assembly in 1997, the friars took the risk of engaging our grief overload by writing and praying lamentations and anger psalms. The released energies found outlet in a strongly supported planning proposal to establish Centers of Conventual Life and Ministry. At this early stage, the influence of the Franciscan Institute mediated through John-Joseph Dolan, newly elected Vicar Provincial, and our own Conventual sources coming from Padua were shaping concepts and action formulas. The text of a filed, almost forgotten, letter from the Bishop of Syracuse provided a point of departure. He had asked us to consider expanding our presence within the diocese.

Since the Chapter had mandated that all efforts be worked out through collaboration, we asked the Franciscan Sisters of Syracuse to join us at the chancery table. We went into the conversation determined to avoid past patterns of filling diocesan slots and to negotiate on the premises of our values and life style. With the image of Francis's relationship with the Bishop of Assisi in mind, our exchange was productive, and out of it grew a new corporation with strong diocesan approval and participation—Franciscans in Collaborative Ministry (FCM). A symbolic early initiative was diocesan funding and a rent-free facility. This allowed eight friars, who had gone through a discernment process, to establish Francis Brother of Peace Friary as the initial center for Conventual Life and Ministry.

A year-long discernment process involving the sisters, local clergy and laity resulted in the establishment of several other ministries: Franciscorps (a volunteer cadre of college graduates); Faith Centers (gathering places for public high school students); Franciscan Place (a ministry in Carousel Mall); North Side Ministries (an evangelization and service program sponsored by four parishes); and Campus Ministry at Syracuse University. From the friars' point of view, all of this was done in the context of framing a Conventual lifestyle that subordinated all ministry commitments to the exigencies of fraternal and prayer life. From the sisters' perspective, this was a generous expansion of their presence in the Diocese. They were already serving at St. Joseph's Hospital and Francis House (a celebrated hospice facility) and involved in a strong day care program and assorted other diocesan ministries.

Current Status

Over the ensuing eight years, the friars and sisters developed an effective advisory board of leading laypersons, who have assisted in negotiating the complex issues of organizational and financial development. We have focused on the continuing formation of our lay collaborators through regular days of reflection and, more recently, through a pilgrimage to Assisi. With the excep-

tion of the Faith Centers, each of the ministries has moved steadily toward realizing initial goals. The demands of the Faith Centers exceeded our personnel capacities, and they were returned to the care of the diocese.

All the ministries now face new challenges: Franciscorps is implementing a mission extension in Costa Rica; the Mall Ministry, anticipating the likelihood of a mall expansion, is considering opening a Peace Center; Syracuse University Campus Ministry is attempting to clarify its Franciscan character. Most demanding of all is the challenge of integrating the emerging services with the mission of Assumption Church. The Corporation has purchased an apartment complex and is expanding its food, medical and legal services under the motif of "Assisi in Syracuse."

Footprint for the Future

After seven years of participating in FCM as Minister Provincial, I am now transitioning toward a new role as Guardian of the friar community and co-director of FCM with Grace Ann Dillenschneider, OSF. Spending three months recently on the campus of St. Bonaventure University, engaging in enlightening interactions among faculty and students of the Franciscan Institute, has given me opportunity to reflect on our experiences to date and to generate a footprint for the next building phase of Assisi in Syracuse.

Like all design proposals, this footprint will be submitted to the discipline of colleague critique, board review and chancery discussions. It affords the opportunity to interpret the current situation in Syracuse through the lenses of critical essays sponsored by the Commission on the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition (CFIT) as well as writings by Franciscan scholars. These resources will help formulate guidelines for and indicators of progress during the next five years. The footprint design will respond to questions generated by the successes and limitations of the past eight years.

Conceptual Framework

To begin with, we need to ask what historically-grounded Franciscan construct/formula has the scope to underpin and guide the composite FCM Syracuse mission. Up to this point, we have restricted the deceptively simple "Franciscan Values" formula to its outer and yet to be defined limits. For internal and public communications, this formula indicates preference for serving or being present among the poor along with the warmer values of hospitality, joyfulness and simplicity. However, we need to become more articulate in recommending a conceptual framework that can serve a unifying function for our several initiatives as well as assist us in focusing energies and resources for the immediate future. Perhaps the construct, "penitential humanism," as described by Joseph Chinnici, can become the effective referent:

1. Welcome and contemplate the realities of the social situation. One has to be incorporated into the reality and contemplate its beauties and limitations.
2. Break out the disciplines, potentials and insights of our Franciscan tradition from their religious ghetto and translate them into "therapies of the self-in-community" that facilitate full engagement with the stresses and potentials of the urban situation without being victimized by its addictions.
3. Draw upon the new anthropology developed by Francis in response to the demands and threats of his thirteenth-century for social reconstruction and care for the poor.
4. See the penitential life as a synthesis of theological-social-political humanisms and frame it in such a way as "to give specifically religious symbolism (the sacraments of Eucharist and penance) a universalist interpretation. . . . Adherence to this ecclesial program of life produces human liberation, community, peace, and justice."
5. Within the perspective of penitential humanism, value human agency as a means of participating in the creative activity of God. From the very beginning of his conversion Francis wanted "to do penance" and "to do mercy," and he extended an invitation to others to engage in a similar project. "Doing," "making," "creating," "acting," "building," "following," "working": all are terms implying human agency and freedom, engagement in a project which makes a person a true *imago Dei*, made in the image of the one who is the Creator and the one who takes up his cross in order to restore and re-create.¹

What emerges from penitential humanism is a new model of what it means to be "holy," one directly connected with the most basic elements of life in the city—economy, work, behavior, participation in government. This construct has the promise and potential to generate convictions, energy and a spirit of inclusion of all those who share a congruent humanism.

Praxis Guidelines

Another question is how we should develop our current services for and among the poor so that they reflect the distinctive, revolutionary dynamics symbolized in the images of Francis and Clare. Up to this point, services generated for immediate and short term needs of the poor have followed the ordinary dynamics of generous presence and liberal giving. Sister Stella Maris, a former college president, assembled legions of volunteers and solicited mounds of surplus food to create a daily outpouring of sustenance for a constantly increasing stream of the hungry. This effort, which preceded the formal be-

ginnings of FCM, was expanded to incorporate legal and medical assistance. All these services were consolidated and placed in a more accessible location on Syracuse's main street.

The question is, How does this ministry share the Franciscan charism? It is admirably addressed by William Margraf, who bundles source material into some current vocabulary: "The function of ministry is not merely to attend to the poor; it is the process of strengthening, imagining, and encouraging those identified as brothers and sisters that acts as the impetus of an entire community moving more deeply into union with God. This is what Francis of Assisi believed and lived."²

The challenge beyond the dynamics of collecting, organizing and distributing is how to dismantle the limits placed on the poor and marginalized by contemporary social forces and cultural values. How do we generate a model of mutuality? Margraf harvests the key elements from three Francis stories: 1. The Gubbio narrative yields the dynamics of peace, acceptance and conversion. 2. The encounter with the leper reveals that what is despised generates conversion. 3. The *Canticle* unfolds the values of personalism, mutuality and community. Appropriating these values will be evidenced through a suspension of personal and social disbelief in the resilience of the poor. This will lead toward their empowerment as active members of our communities and be confirmed through a peacemaking characterized by mutual experiences of healing and community building.

This must be an intentional, ongoing process centered in the local community. It involves mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation. Through it, persons who are poor gain greater access to and control over valued resources. Already there exist a few examples that might model a network of "base communities," each capable of generating its own "rule of life."

Given the stubborn biases of current "do-for-others" social interventions, the three stories mentioned above might offer a catechesis for participants from the "haves" of our society. A Franciscan Urban Retreat Center might very well realize such a goal by establishing a residence equipped to welcome four to six persons at a time, who would experience first hand the rhythms of the inner city, discovering, through reflective listening, gifts of resilience among the marginalized. In such a setting, they could imagine new forms of alliance and the possibility of non-possessive warm generosity.

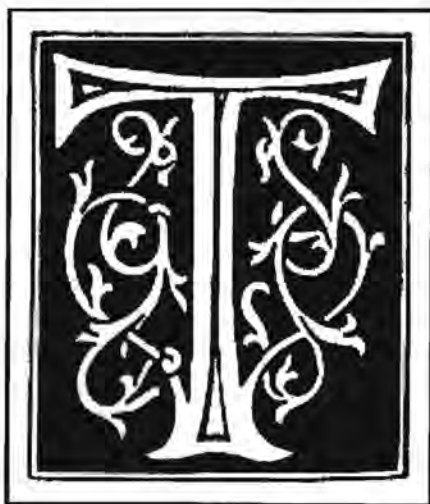
Prayer Practices

Next, we must ask what exactly is a Conventual church and what will be the character, style and design of its liturgical life? Five years ago, the friars approached the Bishop of Syracuse with a petition to remove Assumption

Church from the parish roles and place it in the category of a "Conventual church." The rationale was several-fold: 1. We wished to avoid the stresses of diocesan planning focused on consolidating urban parish facilities. 2. Our dreams for a worship center fell outside parish goals and objectives. 3. There was evidence that city pastors would support an alternative Catholic presence that had a clear ecumenical and evangelical mandate. The Bishop's approval carried only the proviso that a five-year plan be submitted to evaluate and guide our efforts. Immediately, a friar-pastor became rector, and, since then, we have been in continuing conversation with the Pastoral Council, assuring them that no pastoral services are being suspended.

While it was relatively easy to submit a plan for pastoral/social services, it is more challenging to articulate a framework for membership. It is also difficult to establish a public prayer context that is welcoming and inclusive of all persons of good will who are interested in justice and peace. As Gerald Dolan reflects:

Francis discerned our sin, our fall, fundamentally to be an arrogant act of appropriating the gift of liberty and of exalting one's self over the surrounding goodness. What took root in the human heart, and has come to expression repeatedly through human history is the vice of injustice. It is the taking as of one's own making what is given as a gift; it is the claim that what is received is one's own doing. The human heart is, and continues to be, unsettled and disordered because of coveting what is or seems to be an advantageous good. In its root and expression the fundamental vice is injustice, the theft of claiming to be one's own what is received as a gift.³



Dolan asserts that we should seek to recover "the symbolic sense and sacramental intuition of reality that has so widely disappeared before our western fascination at science's probing." Christian hope is grounded in a presentiment that reality is more than we say it is and that through prayerful listening we can transcend its apparent muteness.

Much of what we know from Scripture we know from the iconic, the symbolic, or the typical mediation of meaning. In-

deed, a reality or a relation that must remain always and naturally invisible, that eludes our abilities to focus into clear ideas or reduce to some practical or useful expression, demands the symbolic, the iconic or the typical. A visible manifestation of what is indomitably invisible can indeed come into view and focus—across the "distance" whose boundaries are infinite and finite—in some adequate way in a symbol, an icon, or by means of a type.⁴

Assumption Church is saturated with Franciscan iconography. It also has a memory bank of devotional experiences that once lifted and sustained the spirits of German immigrants. Ennobled and empowered through liturgical participation, they believed and celebrated their individual and communal dignity in an "alien" land. The current goal is to build a bridge to new immigrants and to the current marginalized and to welcome them in language and ritual that mediate this treasure.

Communicating Identity

Another question is how we can integrate a variety of presences into a unifying image that focuses our invitation to participate in the realization of our mission. After one hundred and twenty-five years of rather muted presence on the north side of Syracuse, the Franciscan "label" has gained a rather widespread consciousness in the last seven years. But this label is spread across a variety of missions and services—St. Joseph's Hospital, St. Francis Hospice, Nun-better Chocolates, Day Care Program and the FCM Ministries. Is it possible to use a unifying name that allows each program to benefit from an inter-connective identity? Compounding and relating to this issue is the question of how to engage the imagination of individuals and groups so that they experience excitement and inclusion in opportunities for mission and meaning. It is possible that the three Franciscan stories mentioned above (Wolf, Leper and Canticle) provide points of departure.

The artist, David Haack, OFM, has been commissioned to develop a painting synchronizing the images of Francis and Clare with symbols of the city and citizens of Syracuse. Developed into a nine by twenty-two foot poster, this image could be displayed on the front of the Assisi Center and provide a unifying concept for all other messages on the website, program materials, etc. The Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, the Syracuse Opera and the Children's Theater might also provide performance opportunities in which neighbors can come, see and be impacted by the power of the arts.

Up till now, the Franciscan Place in Carousel Mall has, for reasons of space and resources, focused on sacramental services and inter-personal support programs. With the proposed ambitious expansion (Destiny USA), this

could become the largest mall in the United States. A Peace Center, proposed for the core of the mall geography, could provide multi-media presentations of the wide variety of peace projects being implemented globally, along with conflict resolution methodologies and analysis of violence at all levels of our society.

Finally, our presence on the campus of Syracuse University has, up till now, been inhibited by trying to put new wine into old wine skins. After five years of complex and fractious efforts toward integration, the challenge remains how to present the message of evangelical life to students and faculty.

Continuous Leadership

A very great question is how we can assure the continuity of the mission by eliciting lay service commitment and leadership rooted in Franciscan values. Given the success of Franciscorps over the past seven years, we are encouraged to extend the model to incorporate senior citizens who can, for three to five years, direct some or all of their energies to the mission. In order to sustain such commitment and give direction to continuing education, we are negotiating with the Franciscan Institute to develop a satellite program in the Syracuse area. This possibility may provide teaching opportunities for many talented graduates of the Institute while providing a "lab" for testing the viability of new concepts and programs.

Renewing the Beginnings

Finally, how do we elicit energy from the sisters from the ground up? This issue raises two questions. The first has to do with the way the Sisters of St. Francis entered into the process and projects seven years ago. The second has to do with how the friars will engage their confreres of the other Eastern Conventual presences.

The leaders of the sisters' congregation generously responded to the friars seven years ago in supporting the initiative. The friars had had an entire year to form the initiating community. The sisters, however, were simply invited without considering the question of forming shared community. While they responded quickly and generously to the services, they were, as a whole, only minimally aware of the rationale of the decision and how it related to their many sponsored ministries. There was an impression that their involvement was simply limited to some Sisters supporting the friars. This impaired effective collaboration over the long haul. The sisters' congregation, however, has recently completed a process of uniting with two others. This experience may provide a "spontaneous" rationale for revisiting the original decision for participation in the collaborative project.

Our Conventual Province is also in fraternal discussions with the St. Anthony Province concerning possible merger. One friar of the latter province is already serving within the project, and there has been a constant flow of information to the leaders of the St. Anthony Province, who have consistently manifested interest and support.

Conclusion

Wisdom figures currently churning through our sources and history (such as David Flood, Joe Chinnici, Margaret Carney and others) flash frequent warning signals about imagining that ideals can be paste-on values. Genuine emergence into the realities of human situations is often marked by embracing what is despicable and disgusting. Persons who engage in such a process risk becoming despised themselves; yet, this is the authentic path to evangelical life. Outlined above is a brief summary of how sisters, friars and their lay companions have engaged in reading the signs of opportunity in a current "town setting."

It has been and will continue to be a balancing act of holding firmly in mind the values, stories and witness of our Franciscan tradition while ingesting and digesting the limits and transcendent opportunities of the social situation of our Assisi experience. Surely the temptation to limit our attention to either of these contraries (transcendent-values and limit-situations) demands constant vigilance and prayer. What is comforting is that the challenges are being and will continue to be mediated through communal discussion and prayer.

Endnotes

¹Joseph P. Chinnici, OFM, "Penitential Humanism: Rereading the Sources to Develop a Franciscan Urban Spirituality," in *Franciscans in Urban Ministry*, ed. Roberta McKelvie, OSF (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2002), 122.

²William Margraf, "Francis of Assisi and the Strengths Perspective: Guiding Principles for Franciscan Urban Ministries," in *Franciscans in Urban Ministry*, ed. Roberta McKelvie, OSF (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2002), 94.

³Gerald M. Dolan, OFM, "Words of Hope in Troubled Times: Francis of Assisi in the Presence of the Mystery of the Trinity," in *Solitude and Dialogue: Contemporary Franciscan Theologize*, ed. Anthony Carrozzo, OFM (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2000), 16.

⁴Dolan, 16.

Entrusting the Charism: The Story of a Unique Partnership

Giles Schinelli, TOR

Introduction

I presently serve as a staff person of Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs (FPP) and I want to tell you the story of a creative and unique partnership that has been developing over the course of some years. It is my hope that this story will make clear how privileged I am to engage in this ministry and, more importantly, spark your enthusiasm to explore additional avenues of inviting others to become trustees of the Franciscan heritage.

The cast of characters in this story is composed of FPP staff members and men and women working in Franciscan sponsored healthcare institutions.¹ They come together for a two-week period to engage in a multi-faceted pilgrimage experience that includes living in Assisi and Rome, visiting the places frequented by Francis and Clare, receiving factual input and participating in group processes and communal prayer. The emphasis throughout is on an adult learning model. The hermeneutic used enables the participants to make connections between the past and the present, between a visit to a particular place and a more general or contemporary emotive response, etc. When the light of understanding goes on in an individual pilgrim, s/he begins to comprehend the ethos of being a pilgrim as well as appreciating why the sponsoring community has made this investment. When this understanding is further translated into the language of empowerment for the sake of the Franciscan charism, a certain sense of dignity and personal challenge emerges. Interestingly, this deepened awareness cuts across religious denominational lines and highlights the dynamism of the Franciscan story and values today.

Focusing on some significant steps in this pilgrimage experience may help clarify the challenges and benefits of this unique partnership.

Preparation

Preparation, of course, is much more than the material pre-arrangements. These are necessary and inevitably take some time and organizational skills. But the *sine qua non* is the spiritual preparation or the time required to shape a certain frame of mind. Both pilgrim and staff person must engage in a mind-heart dialogue and focus with some clarity on personal desires.

For pilgrims this means reading a biography of Francis or Clare and getting some understanding of their respective spiritual journeys. Additional reading might include articles that aid in clarifying Franciscan values and that consider the contemporary applicability of these values to a health system.² Presently, health systems retain a certain independence in determining the scope of this requirement. However, both partners (FPP and the Franciscan health system) agree on its importance.

For staffers, preparation is communal and personal. At annual staff meetings, there is time for exchange and learning from one another. One staffer's interest in art, for example, may spark another's study. Individual research is rarely territorial but shared in a fashion that complements a staffer's already acquired resources. The FPP leadership is likewise committed to regular and quality continuing education. Over the years, we have enjoyed valuable updates of ongoing research into matters Franciscan from scholars who have a finger on the pulse of the most recent and thought provoking developments.³

Personal study is also important for staffers. They explore and emphasize the historical contexts or situations that will prompt these particular pilgrims to ask penetrating questions in an attempt to discover contemporary significance. Like all good preachers, staffers study the pilgrim-field so that the connections will be clear and make sense. We often refer to what we do on pilgrimage as entering into a spirituality of place. This is a complex phenomenon that engages all the levels of a human person: intellect, spirit, feelings and senses. The focus is on a sacred encounter. This is an encounter with a living Christ, whose voice is mysteriously mediated through the medieval personalities of Francis and Clare and through the making of connections. This sacred encounter is equally mysterious as it grasps individual pilgrims. Its effect on personal change is more than apparent. Perhaps examining some pilgrimage experiences might help to clarify what I refer to as "entrusting the charism."

Pilgrimage Experiences

The first experience centers on how one communicates the complex levels that constitute a human personality. Modern day biographers continually struggle with this challenge. Over the years I have found that trying to under-

stand the historical context of Francis and Clare as citizens of Assisi is very helpful in this regard.

In the early thirteenth century, Assisi's struggle to find its own voice was a multi-tiered reality that involved a titled noble class, an emerging merchant class, as well as an entire segment of the population that was unable to participate. In a series of successes and failures, the dream of an independent commune emerged. The nobles and merchants arrived at a tentative agreement or pact of peace. This was a societal shift of seismic proportions and achieved at great price. It had economic, civil and moral consequences.

David Flood⁴ and Jan Hoeberichts⁵ explore these events in greater detail. Flood takes the examination one step further and argues cogently that "the early Franciscan movement arose in opposition to its context."⁶ The panorama of Assisi's history—not the postcard view of a city perched on the slopes of Mount Subasio—is more than a collection of coincidences and dry data from the past. In fact, the historical backdrop, when sufficiently understood, enables pilgrims to see Francis and Clare as people like themselves, living in particular historical circumstances that are formative in the sense that they confront individuals with moral choices. Seen through this lens, the Franciscan project does not just drop from the heavens but is rooted in factual circumstances. Lesser Brothers and Poor Ladies find in a very human Christ an alternative set of concrete living arrangements that are more inclusive and that are founded on a different value base. In attempting to offer this alternative to their fellow citizens, the early Franciscans impress us as real, three-dimensional people. The fact that their project is a work in progress amplifies its human, though graced, character.

Pilgrimage and "entrusting the charism" are all about making two kinds of connections. The first reaches to the past. We try to understand Francis and Clare and what shaped their choices and why. We discover points of similarity in our own lives and experience a spirit of solidarity. The second type of connection stretches into the present and even the future. History has a habit of repeating itself. What is there in the present that reminds us of a past scenario but calls for a new response, a new moral choice from us? We find in this line of thinking an invitation to become involved and, in some way, to make a difference for the good in our present circumstances.

The deep truth and far reaching effect of this task of making connections became clear to me when, after input and discussion on the above themes, the CFO of a particular hospital and a person not of our faith tradition, confided: "Can we talk more about this? I really want to discuss this further. I am beginning to understand and want to explore what I consider to be the implications with hospital administrators, especially in reviewing what we can do to make healthcare more accessible." This pilgrim understood the reality of disenfran-

chisement. He connected with that bit of historical data. He saw the implications for his role as chief financial officer. Yes, connections are everything! And once begun they seem to develop further. With the experience of the sacred place of Assisi and its transformative history, a pilgrim found a voice and a mission as a new trustee of the Franciscan heritage.

The second experience centers on a visit to the plain of Assisi and in particular to two small chapels: La Maddalena and San Rufinucio in Arce. Both are located relatively near Rivo Torto and both have some connection with the lepers to whom Francis and Clare ministered. The Maddalena is small and dark and serves the devotional needs of an Italian family. San Rufinucio is well kept and attached to a community house of sisters who offer hospitality to retreatants and who allow us to use their garden for prayer and discussion. According to Fortini⁷ the hospital for lepers from the Assisi commune stood near the castle of Arce.

Imagine, if you will, sitting on a shaded lawn with a magnificent view of the city of Assisi in the distance while at the same time being invited to reflect on the reality of this disease called leprosy. There is a feeling of unsettling incongruity—the spectacular view begging to be contemplated or photographed alongside Fortini's graphic and disturbing word imagery, which describes how medieval people viewed leprosy and the life-changing consequences befalling those afflicted by it.⁸

Perhaps most disturbing of all is the growing realization that one of these life-changing consequences—exile from the city—was a personal loss compounded every time the leper looked up at the city. A punishment, if you will, for ignorance and sickness. Group reflection, chapel visits and prayer always find a way to articulate the alienation that accompanies sickness. For some this experience is a personal epiphany as they embrace their own feelings of alienation and find or pray for healing. For others this experience becomes a renewed call to attend to the combined spiritual and physical needs of others. Whether it is heard here or in the dormitory of Clare at San Damiano, where we tell of the many persons who came to her for healing and where we also invite participation in a healing service, this experience of sacred place is powerful. It reinforces the calling of those who serve in the health and healing professions. But it does more. It provides pilgrims with a connection that is rooted in a long, honorable and varied tradition of Franciscan care for the sick. And in the present, it challenges pilgrims to discover inventive ways to humanize this care.

Group processes take these themes further. The sharing between pilgrims and between pilgrims and staff persons is always an enriching learning experience.

Virtual Pilgrims

Generally speaking the health systems that partner with FPP send their top level management personnel for this kind of pilgrimage experience. Interestingly, in one system a further step was taken. Pilgrimage participants were invited to share their experience and learning with middle management personnel in what I describe as a kind of virtual pilgrimage or a giving to others what they had received. Allow me to explain this briefly.

I worked with two hospital communities from one system and was impressed by the creative ingenuity of actual pilgrims as they went about accomplishing this task. The planning, execution and quality of these one- or two-day experiences were exceptional and serve as a model next step in this unique partnership. In both cases, requests were made to address the topics of relationships and reconciliation.

In one community, we examined Clare's Rule as a locus for how to develop and nurture genuine and mature relationships. In another, we explored Francis's relationship with the Sultan Malek al-Kamil.⁹ The present corporate sensibility toward Islam since September 11 is an advantageous predisposition for making contemporary connections.

Likewise, a brief glimpse at the magnitude of violence in the last century serves as a perfect introduction to a discussion of reconciliation. Robert Schreiter's approach is contemporary, practical and deeply spiritual.¹⁰ It is an effective resource tool.

Conclusion

This story is not by any means unique. It is being retold by many similar initiatives. Participation in this partnership has strengthened my spirit. From evaluations and continued conversations with pilgrims, it has had an equal effect on many of them. The hope and joy come from individuals who realize that they are changed. Like Francis and Clare, their encounter with a living Christ has given them a voice and a mission. Together we have discovered that we are brothers and sisters.

Endnotes

¹I have facilitated groups that were attached to Franciscan Health Systems, but FPP also works with other groups such as boards and/or upper level management personnel of Franciscan colleges and universities, as well as student groups from these same schools.

²The following are examples: Adrian House, *Francis of Assisi: A Revolutionary Life* (Mahwah, NJ: Hidden Spring, 2000); Pierre Brunette, *Francis of Assisi and His Conversions*, trans. Lachance and Krug (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1997); Elise Saggau, ed., *Franciscans and Healthcare* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2001).

³Seminars by Margaret Carney on the lay Franciscan movement and Joseph Chinnici on the development of the Poor Ladies of San Damiano as well as the following volumes: Kathleen Warren, ed., *Franciscan Identity and Postmodern Culture: Washington Theological Union Symposium Papers-2002 CFIT/ESC-OFM*, Series Number 2 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2003); Elise Saggau, ed., *True Followers of Justice: Identity, Insertion and Itinerancy among the Early Franciscans* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2002) are some examples of this commitment to ongoing education.

⁴A summary of David Flood's original essay "Doing Peace (1985)" can be found in *Franciscan Digest* 9.2 (Manila, Philippines: CCFMC Office, June 1999).

⁵Jan Hoeberichts, *Francis and Islam* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1997).

⁶Flood, 3.

⁷Arnaldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, trans. Helen Moak (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 1985), 206.

⁸Fortini, 206-210.

⁹See the following for material on the latter approach: Kathleen Warren, *Daring to Cross the Threshold: Francis of Assisi Encounters Sultan Malek al-Kamil* (Rochester, Minnesota: Sisters of St. Francis, 2003); Daniel Dwyer and Hugh Hines, eds., *Islam and Franciscanism: A Dialogue*, Spirit and Life Series, Vol. 9 (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2000), as well as Hoeberichts.

¹⁰Robert Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998).



Photo by Anthony Paratore (May, 2005)

Like Another Penelope

*Like another Penelope
Clare longed
to be with her Beloved,
Lady Poverty's handmaiden
in a court besieged.*

*Her ladies
steady in spirit
attended,
yearning for peace.*

*Importunate suitors
came to breach her boundaries
bumptious,
not knowing they were bounders.*

*She sought Philippians' Jesus
found satiety and surfeit
abundance
blissed with blessings.*

Felicity Dorsett, OSF

Storytelling and the Spiritual Formation of a Franciscan

F. Edward Coughlin, OFM

Introduction

In this essay I will explore the role that St. Bonaventure's work, the *Major Legend* of St. Francis¹ (1263), might play in the spiritual formation of those who aspire to follow Christ after the example of St. Francis. More specifically, I will explore how many of the "stories" in this work are intended to demonstrate experiences of personal encounter through which Francis was led, in cooperation with grace, to embrace a Gospel form of life as a lesser brother (*frater minores*). Through these stories, Bonaventure invites his readers, even in very different times and circumstances, to find some "graced space" and encourages them: (1) to look more closely at and listen more attentively to the competing claims of truth and goodness that might be operative within one's own stories, (2) to explore and discern more carefully the desires of one's heart, and (3) to consider more broadly and creatively the range of possible choices through which one "might yet become through grace and effort" more mature psychologically and spiritually.² I believe it will be of interest in particular to those who are involved in the spiritual formation of Franciscans.

Storytelling and Formation

In an article entitled "Storytelling, Doctrine, and Spiritual Formation," Catherine Wallace observed that "Real lives are awash in chaos and ambiguity and uncertainty, in suffering and pain and fear." And, for that very reason, she continues, "we need stories, . . . stories to help us survive the mayhem and the drudgery; stories to help us imagine some order and some meaning within the tedious uproar of ordinary work."³

Wallace's observations may seem rather harsh and pessimistic. However, I suspect that her statement would provoke a whole lot of storytelling. Through

our personal stories, each of us attempts to demonstrate how we came to grips with the chaos, ambiguity, and/or uncertainty of a particular experience; how we explain a particular insight evoked by "this" event, or the challenge to look at something new occasioned by "that" moment. Ideally, in the telling and re-telling of my stories, I come to understand better who I am (a sense of personal identity), what kind of person I am becoming and/or how I create myself, as it were, through my actions and my choices.⁴ In this way, storytelling, when honestly and adequately attended to, can become an important and dynamic process. Through it we are challenged to come to grips with life's inevitable and unsettling events (conflicts) as well as with the critical turning points (crises) towards which human experience invariably leads. Ultimately, storytelling can be one of the important processes through which the truth of one's inner spirit and primary values are revealed. It is, thus, an important tool in spiritual development.

Stories—written and/or shared in a variety of forms (e.g., autobiographies, biographies, fairy tales, folk tales, *legendae* and the like)—can, over an entire life span, play an important role in an individual's developmental journey toward a greater sense of maturity, integration, wholeness and meaning. For example, in his groundbreaking study, *The Uses of Enchantment*,⁵ Bruno Bettelheim invites his readers to understand better how fairy tales hold an amazing capacity to delight and instruct prepubescent children. He asserts that the power of these stories lies in their capacity to offer children between the ages of 6–12 a way to enter into their inner psychic and emotional tensions and allow them to: (a) clarify their identities, (b) mature emotionally, (c) see how life's problems are dealt with, and (d) show them what they might become. Part of the effectiveness of fairy tales lies in their capacity to help without the child "having to become consciously aware" of all that is happening within them.⁶ Thus, the reading and re-reading of fairy tales has a potentially deep formative impact. This kind of story, and the characters in them, hold the potential to: (a) depict ego integration and the appropriate satisfaction of personal desires, (b) provide answers to important questions about how one might deal with life's challenges and live with other persons, and (c) lay the groundwork for fuller consciousness and relatedness, the next critical life transition.⁷ While some may be uncomfortable with Bettelheim's use of a Freudian psychoanalytic interpretive lens, there is no doubt that classic fairy tales have spoken to children across cultures and through the centuries.

Bonaventure's Major Legend of St. Francis as Formational Storytelling

Bonaventure's Major Legend is a classic text, in the medieval genre of a *legenda*, and it provides some information about the life of St. Francis. But

more importantly, it seeks to demonstrate how God's loving power (grace) made its presence known in the life of Francis and how his cooperation with grace led him through a variety of experiences to a total change in his ways of thinking, loving and choosing. It describes his conversion and how many were inspired to follow his example. It demonstrates how Francis, an "Exemplar of Gospel perfection," (LMj 15:1)⁸ impacted the Church and the world of his day. As a classic, the text also demonstrates its capacity to "transform the horizon of the [reader] and thereby disclose new meanings and experiential possibilities" to men and women in very different times and circumstances.⁹

A spiritual classic requires a "capable" reader, that is, an individual who has an adequate measure of preparation to interpret the richness of the text and its layers of possible meaning.¹⁰ For example, profitable reading of a classic presumes that the reader is receptive to the text and is prepared to allow the author to speak on his own terms and within his own categories of thought. At the same time, the interpreter of the text needs to be prepared to take a critical position with regard to whether or not the text's significance is of enduring value. In the case of Bonaventure, this kind of preparation would include, among other things: (1) a basic grasp of his theology of the spiritual life, (2) an awareness of his basic intentions and presuppositions when writing the Major Legend, and (3) an adequate knowledge of the historical context: the religious, political, social and economic realities of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the time in which Francis discovered his call to "live according to the form of the Holy Gospel."¹¹

In addition, readers of this text would also benefit from a working knowledge of the insights of twentieth-century psychological theorists, such as Rollo May, Erik Erikson and Carl Jung. These and others have articulated insightfully, for example, the stages of psycho-social development through which individuals typically grow toward a sense of personal identity. They have also suggested key psychological challenges that individuals face on their personal journeys toward maturity. An adequate grasp of these insights and perspectives would provide a multi-dimensional and richer context for understanding how Francis consciously and intentionally chose the values and priorities around which he organized his life. Such an understanding might very well assist readers to address their own challenges of religious conversion, *conversio/metanoia* (spiritual growth and development).

In the prologue to the Major Legend, Bonaventure asserts: "The grace of God our Savior has appeared . . . in his servant Francis." Those who are "truly humble and lovers of holy poverty," he continues, can venerate God's mercy and "learn by his example to whole-heartedly reject ungodliness and worldly passions, to live in conformity with Christ, and to thirst after blessed hope with unflagging desire".¹²

The text can be divided into three parts: (1) four historical chapters, (2) eight chapters organized thematically around core virtues, the inner strengths of Christ-like character that Francis sought to cultivate in cooperation with grace,¹³ and (3) three concluding historical chapters.¹⁴ Throughout the text, Bonaventure uses stories to illustrate the variety of personal experiences touched by grace that led Francis gradually to a more conscious embrace of a Gospel form of life. This way of life contrasted sharply with the ways of seeing, judging, valuing and acting that characterized the fading feudal system and the emerging commune system in medieval Italy.

In chapter one, Bonaventure provides a description of Francis's "manner of life (*conversatio*) while in secular attire"¹⁵ by telling the following stories: Francis sends away empty-handed a poor beggar; he endures a prolonged illness; he meets a poor knight; he has a dream; he strongly desires "to obtain the glory of knighthood"; he withdraws for a time from public business; he encounters a leper; he seeks out solitary places, [where], totally absorbed in God, he beholds Christ Jesus fastened to a cross. Through these stories, Bonaventure attempts to relate how grace influenced Francis at an early and critical stage in his life.¹⁶

Each story gives an account of seemingly disconnected and random unsettling events (conflicts) that coalesced and brought Francis to a critical turning point in his life (crisis)—an experience of religious conversion that, over time, would deepen and transform him ever more completely into a follower of the poor and humble Christ. Bonaventure describes the spiritual dimensions of that early experience of conversion—a time characterized by a "true change" of mind, heart and choice. He writes:

[Francis], from that time on, clothed himself with a spirit of poverty, a sense of humility, and an eagerness for intimate piety (*pietas*), showed deeds of humility and humanity to lepers. . . . [T]o poor beggars he wished to give not only his possessions but his very self. . . . [T]o poor priests he also provided help. . . . He visited the shrine of the Apostle Peter [in Rome], . . . gave his own clothes to one of the poorest and neediest [before the entrance to the church of St. Peter] (LM 1:5-6).¹⁷

He did all of this, Bonaventure explains, "while he had not yet withdrawn from the world in attire and way of life" (LM 1:6).¹⁸

In a 1255 sermon, Bonaventure asserted that Francis "did not acquire his knowledge by reflecting in general terms on a limited number of truths, but by individual experience over a wide range of life."¹⁹ This assumption offers an important clue to understanding the purpose that is served both by telling the story of Francis and by inviting others to "imitate" the Christ-like virtues of

Francis.²⁰ The stories suggest how Francis was led through a variety of experiences to make choices that changed his attitudes. These experiences offered him different criteria for determining what he would do and how he would use and share the goods at his disposal so he might live in greater conformity with the wisdom of God made known in Jesus. Bonaventure invites us to understand how Francis, in particular situations, began to make more intentional choices to live in greater conformity with a Gospel-centered way of life rather than meeting Assisi's expectations of "good citizenship." Bonaventure explains how Francis learned through experience to cultivate the attitudes of mind and dispositions of heart that enabled him to choose increasingly humble, generous, compassionate and "right" ways of living (*pietas*) as a man of faith in thirteenth-century Italy.

Here we will look more carefully and critically at just one story, hoping to demonstrate more concretely the potential of these stories to play a role in the spiritual formation of those who aspire to follow Christ after the example of Francis:

Dressed as usual in his fine clothes, [Francis] met a knight of noble birth, but poor and badly clothed. Moved by pious impulse to care for his poverty, he took off his own garments and clothed the man on the spot. At one and the same time, he fulfilled the two-fold duty of piety by covering over the embarrassment of the noble knight and relieving the want of a poor human being (LM 1:2).²¹

This encounter took place in 1205 or 1206—a time when Francis was struggling to find inner peace of spirit. The world around him was caught up in intense social-political turmoil as Assisi's merchant and artisan classes struggled to overthrow the dominant feudal system with its rules of essential dependencies and inherent inequalities.²² Bonaventure describes the knight as "poor and badly clothed," embarrassed and needy. Francis, the son of a successful merchant, "dressed as usual in his fine clothes," is described as a man who enjoys the advantages of his wealth, success and power. For him, the meeting must have involved an experience of "genuine encounter"; it must have "shaken and changed" his self-world relationship and provoked a good measure of anxiety. He did not, however, run from it. Rather, he chose to wrestle with it, to "force it to produce meaning."²³ In this way, a chance encounter became a moment of true encounter—a spiritually formative experience because Francis attended to it (*attendere*) and, through it, learned something about who he wanted to become (*intendere*).

Francis "took off his own garments and clothed the man on the spot." This choice reveals a change in the customary way Francis thought about, cared for and responded to the needs of a person for whom, up till then, he

would typically have had little concern. Such a "true change" in behavior, according to Erik Erikson, typically results from "worthwhile conflict" wherein a person is "led though the painful consciousness of one's position to a new consciousness in that position."²⁴ In this instance, the story suggests how the stark reality of the knight's need raised Francis's consciousness in some significant way and enabled him (1) to see and be moved by the real human-spiritual need of the "other," (2) to understand how he was not yet living and loving in full accordance with the teaching of Christ, and (3) to grasp, in a new way, how he could respond more adequately and lovingly. Bonaventure asserts that, in this instance, Francis mustered inner strength of character (virtue) in cooperation with grace to fulfill "the two-fold duty of piety by covering over the embarrassment of the noble knight and relieving the want of a poor human being." He based his choice on the religious law of piety (*pietas*) rather than the rules of either the feudal or the commune systems.²⁵ Francis's heart was moved by the misery and need of the other (*miser cordia*). He chose to cover over the "embarrassment of the noble knight" in a compassionate (*compassio*) and Christ-like way (*pietas*). He relieved the needs of the knight by sharing his possessions.

Using the Major Legend as a Resource for Formation

In order to "learn by [Francis's] example" and use stories like this as resources for spiritual formation, one must face two challenges. First, one must *linger* and "not run through [Bonaventure's] reflections in a hurry." One must take "time and ruminate over them very slowly."²⁶ Bonaventure presumes that readers, while avoiding the dangerous extremes of either fanciful or religiously pious interpretations, will take the time—create the inner space—to consider thoughtfully these formative stories. In this kind of spiritual exercise, the reader would have to learn (1) to consider imaginatively the different, competing and conflicting principles of right action that would have been normative for the feudal system, the commune system and the Gospel way of life; (2) to wonder what Francis might have felt in a particular situation—to imagine how his natural affective inclinations might have drawn him in one direction while his ideals might have drawn him in opposing directions; and (3) to consider creatively the range of possible choices Francis had that would help him live in greater conformity with the norms of the Gospel. Ideally, this kind of thoughtful consideration or meditation²⁷ would allow the reader to enter into the unsettling inner struggle Francis experienced within his customary ways of thinking, feeling and choosing. Through this kind of consideration, the reader might begin to imagine the kind of conscious and deliberate effort Francis made in cooperation with grace to respond to the needs of the "other" and to address the inner challenges of change and conversion.

Second, the reader must be open to the possibility that meditative reading of these stories might include the graced invitation and encouragement to consider, perhaps re-consider, a story from one's own experience—a story with implications and meanings that have not as yet been adequately explored by the reader.

Dermot Lane reminds us of an important aspect of doing theology—the "critical unpacking of the revelation of God that takes place in human experience through faith."²⁸ Such a "critical unpacking" demands that one pay thoughtful attention (*attendere*) to the whole story. Unpacking requires minimally that one make an effort to honestly, openly and reflectively consider: (1) What happened or did not happen? (2) What thoughts, judgments, interpretations and/or assumptions are operative within me? (3) What are some of the dominant personal and subjective responses or feelings that I experience? (4) What does the story reveal about my priorities, values and/or intentions (*intendere*)—the religious dimension of the experience? (5) What decisions did I make? Did my decisions reflect an honest effort to join theory and practice, knowledge and love, wisdom and action—to live the Gospel as best I can? (6) Did I carry out my decisions? (7) Do my choices reveal my desire, with the assistance of grace, to live the Gospel as a lesser brother or sister, minister and servant, after the example of St. Francis? This kind of exercise will undoubtedly evoke unsettling anxiety. Will I resist the temptation to run away from it, struggle to finding meaning within it and address its implications for my personal spiritual growth and development? When my experience is adequately attended to in ways that clarify my intentions, I am able to grasp the story's revealing implications, and its formative implications become obvious. I can begin to discover a pathway through which I might be led in fact to "true change," religious conversion.

Conclusion

Bonaventure believed that Francis was a good teacher because he "taught what he himself had learned" through "personal experience over a wide range of life."²⁹ His experiences became formative because he attended to them adequately and intended increasingly to live their revealing implications as a way to follow the poor and humble Christ.

In telling the story of Francis's life, Bonaventure intends to invite the friars of his own time, as well as men and women of future times, to understand better how, in the midst of his daily life (*conversatio*), Francis's whole soul-mind, heart and will—were being converted (*conversio*) in his ways of thinking/judging, loving/desiring, choosing/doing. Thus, within the categories of thirteenth-century spiritual theology, Bonaventure describes the dynamic processes

through which Francis became an "exemplar of all Gospel perfection" through graced choices over the whole course of his life (LM 15:1).³⁰

Bonaventure believed that Francis was a "messenger of God—so worthy to be loved by Christ, imitated by us and admired by the world" (LMj, prol., 2).³¹ His belief is evident throughout *The Major Legend*, a text that might serve as an important resource in the spiritual formation of future Franciscans. This kind of intellectual formation must be practical. It must intend to invite others to learn the dynamic process through which men and women are invited continually, through grace-touched daily human experience, to become persons of faith, lesser ones, brothers and sisters, ministers and servants after the example of St. Francis.

Endnotes

¹The *Major Legend* (*Legenda Maior*) was composed to be read (the Latin verb *legere* mean "to read") and follows rules of literary composition. *Legendae* were a distinct kind of literary work. The translation used here is in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* II, ed. Regis Armstrong, Wayne Hellmann and William Short, (New York: New City Press, 2000), 525-649. The text is referenced hereafter as FAED II. For a critical discussion and review of Bonaventure's text, see Jacques Dalarun, *The Misadventure of St. Francis of Assisi* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002), 221-58.

²This refers to the virtue of "true self-knowledge," which Bonaventure considered a foundational virtue if a person was to grow spiritually and achieve the "perfection of charity." See Bonaventure, "On the Perfection of Life," chapter one in *Writings on the Spiritual Life*, ed. Edward Coughlin, Works of St. Bonaventure X (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, forthcoming).

³Catherine Wallace, "Storytelling, Doctrine, and Spiritual Formation, *Anglican Theological Review* 81.1 (January 1999): 39-59, here 53.

⁴See Regis Duffy, *Real Presence* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982), 59; see also Daniel Hehminiak, *The Human Core of Spirituality: Mind as Psyche and Spirit* (State University of New York Press, 1996), 253. I am particularly indebted to the chapter three of Duffy, "Conflict as Crossroads for the Christian," (58-82). It challenged me to consider more carefully and critically the stories Bonaventure included in his masterful and classic work, *The Major Legend* of St. Francis.

⁵Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment* (New York: Random House/ Vintage Books, 1975).

⁶Bettelheim, 191.

⁷Bettelheim, 41, 24 and 278-79.

⁸FAED II, 645.

⁹David Tracy, "The Particularity and Universality of Christian Revelation," in *Concilium: Revelation and Experience*, vol. 113 (New York: Seabury Press/Crossroad, 1979), 111. See also David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 108, 68, 14, and the whole of Chapter 5: "The Religious Classic," 193-229; Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method* (NY: Crossroad, 1992), 165; and Elizabeth Dreyer, *Earth Crammed With Heaven: A Spirituality for Everyday Life* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994), 37. For a more detailed treatment of the interpre-

tation of a text, see Sandra Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 150-51 and 157-79 in particular. I am able here to make only a brief reference to the important question and challenges of interpretation-hermeneutics.

¹⁰References to material that explains in greater detail the challenge of the interpretation of texts can be found in note 9 above.

¹¹Francis of Assisi, "The Testament," n. 14, in *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, ed. Regis Armstrong (Mahweh, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982), 155.

¹²FAED II, 525-649, here 525. This sentence is a reference to Bonaventure's understanding of the spiritual journey into wisdom according to the hierarchizing activities of the threefold way: purgation, illumination and perfection.

¹³Bonaventure, *The Minor Legend*, VI: Ninth Lesson. See FAED II, 712-13; *The Major Legend*, prol. 2; see FAED II, 527.

¹⁴Michael Blastic, OFM, outlined this interpretative framework in a presentation at the Franciscan Institute Forum V, 2003, Colorado Springs. Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap., offers another framework of interpretation in "Towards an Unfolding of the Structure of St. Bonaventure's *Legenda Maior*," *The Cord* 39 (1989): 3-17.

¹⁵For more on Bonaventure's use of the term *conversatio* and its significance, see Michael Blastic, "The Conversation of Franciscans: Ministry in Cosmic Context," *The Cord*, 46.2 (1996): 55-63.

¹⁶These stories seek to demonstrate how Francis's soul was hierarchized, that is, began to operate in conformity with the divine power, wisdom and goodness—an experience of such profound transformation of spirit that Bonaventure would later describe Francis as an "angelic man" (LMj 8:1; see FAED II, 630), the one who "burned with a seraphic love into God" and "thirsted with Christ crucified for the multitude of those to be saved" (LMj 14:1; FAED II, 640).

¹⁷See FAED II, 534-35.

¹⁸FAED II, 534-35. The early Franciscan hagiographic-ascetical tradition tended to understand Francis's sense of himself as a sinner in terms of personal-moral weakness or failure. David Flood argues persuasively that Francis's understanding himself as a sinner is best understood in terms of his decision not to participate in the rules of the feudal or commune systems as he made an increasingly conscious and deliberate choice to pursue the Gospel way of life revealed in the life of Christ. See David Flood, "Doing Peace," in *Franciscan Digest: A Service for Franciscan Spirituality* 9.2 (Quezon City, Philippines: CCFMC Office for Asia/Oceania, 1999); *Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan Movement* (Quezon City, Philippines: FLA Contact Publications, 1989).

¹⁹Bonaventure, "The Morning Sermon on Saint Francis, 1255" in FAED II, 512. In this sermon Bonaventure gives four reasons why Francis is a "model of discipleship" and an effective teacher.

²⁰The followers of Francis are called to imitate the virtuous actions of Christ as evidenced in the life of Francis, not to replicate his actions literally. See Zachary Hayes's discussion of Bonaventure's principle that "every action of Christ is for our instruction, not all are for our imitation" in *The Hidden Center* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1992), 133-35.

²¹FAED II, 532.

²²See the work of David Flood cited in note 17.

²³Rollo May, *The Courage to Create* (NY: W.W. Norton and Co., 1975), 77-94, esp. 90-93; here, 93.

²⁴Erik Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility* (NY: W.W. Norton and Co., 1964), 30. See also Duffy, *Real Presence*, 63.

²⁵See David Flood, "Leaving Assisi," in *Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan Movement*, 7-68, esp. 10-14.

²⁶See St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium*, prol. 5, ed. Zachary Hayes, Works of St. Bonaventure, II (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002), 41. I am adopting his advice to the readers of the *Itinerarium* as a way to approach reading the Major Legend. The word-image, "to linger," is used by St. Francis in *The Testament* (cf. Cousins, 154) and by Bonaventure in the Major Legend, III:1 in FAED II, 543.

²⁷See St. Bonaventure, *The Threefold Way*, 1:18, as cited in note 2. He explains here that meditation should concentrate not only on Sacred Scripture but also on divine acts and human deeds and how the two ought to be joined.

²⁸Dermot Lane, *The Experience of God: An Introduction to Theology* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981), 3-4.

²⁹St. Bonaventure, "The Morning Sermon on Saint Francis, 1255" in FAED II, 511 and 512.

³⁰FAED II, 645.

³¹FAED II, 527.

In that love which is God (cf. Jn 4:6) all the brothers and sisters, whether they are engaged in prayer, or in announcing the Word of God, or in serving or doing manual labor should strive to be humble in everything. They should not seek glory, or be self-satisfied, or interiorly proud because of a good work or word God does or speaks in them. Rather, in every place and circumstance, let them acknowledge that all good belongs to the most high Lord and Ruler of all things. Let them always give thanks to Him from whom we receive all good. TOR Rule IX.31

The Cord, 56.5 (2006)



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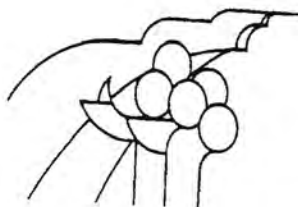


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Reproduction of a fresco of "Beat Bonaventura" by Benozzo Gozzoli, in the church of St. Francis in Montefalco. From *S. Bonaventura da Bagnoregio* (Rome: Ed. Antonianum, 1974), p.13.

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Abbreviations

Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	The Admonitions
BIL	A Blessing for Brother Leo
Cte	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 of the Praise of God
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
PrsG	The Praises of God
OP	The Office of the Passion
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix
ER	The Earlier Rule (<i>Regula non bullata</i>)
LR	The Later Rule (<i>Regula bullata</i>)
RH	A Rule for Hermitages
SalBVM	A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SalV	A Salutation of Virtues
Test	The Testament
TPJ	True and Perfect Joy

Writings of Saint Clare

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

Franciscan Sources

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

A WORD FROM BONAVENTURE

Whoever you are that wish to attain salvation through faith, hope, and love, you must submit yourself to three occupations: namely, to devout prayer, to an honest way of life, and to satisfactory confession, according to what [is written] in Micah: *I will show you, O human, what good is, and what God requires of you: Namely, to make judgment, by confessing truthfully, "and to love mercy," dealing with everyone in a holy manner, "and to walk solicitously with your God,"*² vigilantly persisting in your prayers.

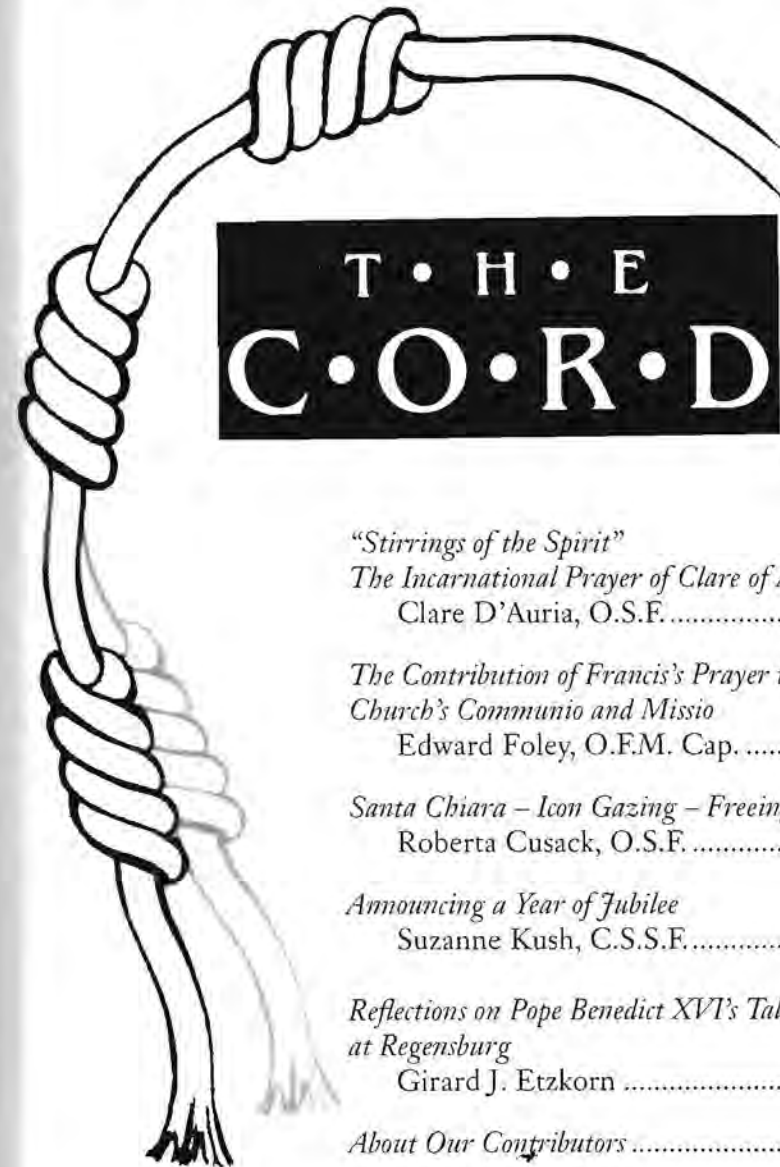
St. Bonaventure, "On the Way of Life," in *Sermones de diversis*.

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THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:

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

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

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Cover design: Basil Valente, O.F.M. and David Haack, O.F.M.

The Cord, 56.6 (2006)

Foreword

The inevitable upheavals resulting from Sister Roberta's departure from Franciscan Institute Publications for the halls of Congregational Leadership have subsided somewhat. We are gradually taking up the daily tasks which were for a while overshadowed by the personal passages which have characterized the past two months. Now the planning begins to continue to serve our readers while filling in the gap left by the loss of Roberta's talent and perspective. I can tell you the Institute hallway at Friedsam is a little quieter these days without her hearty laughter!

We have, as usual, a jam-packed final issue of this year's *Cord*. The first two articles, one by Sister Clare D'Auria, O.S.F. and the other by Father Edward Foley, O.F.M. Cap., are adapted from the keynote addresses presented at the Franciscan Federation gathering in Rochester, New York in July. Given the conference theme of Franciscan prayer, a central image of water and a concentration on the heart of Clare of Assisi, these two offerings merit a reflective reading – and probably re-reading. We are also pleased to bring you the reflections of Sister Roberta Cusack, O.S.F. as she makes connections between the TOR Rule and way of living, and the sacred icons we meet as we travel our Franciscan paths. The brief explanation of the TOR Rule project by Sister Suzanne Kush, C.S.S.F. will alert all to the significance of the upcoming 25th anniversary celebration.

While the planning for the 2007 volume of *The Cord* is currently ongoing, you may get an inkling of change in the offing as you read the final offering in this issue: Girard J. Etzkorn's thoughts about the recent discussions concerning Pope Benedict XVI's comments – and in particular a quotation he cited – to the academic community at Regensburg. It's our hope that, amid the Monday morning quarterbacking and other talk around the office water-cooler, we might occasionally engage in some dialogue that sheds a little light on our Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. We do, after all, have something to offer to today's world.

Although I have a backlog of details to become familiar with and to respond to, please don't hesitate to send me your comments and suggestions. You can reach me at 716-375-2160 or dmitchel@sbu.edu

While we are all praying for the needs of each day, let us not forget Sister Roberta (and all the other congregational/provincial leaders), those who are burdened by natural disasters (the phenomenal October snowfall in Buffalo and its environs springs to mind--not to mention the earthquake in Hawaii), and the world's urgent need for peace.

Daria R. Mitchell, O.S.F.

“Stirrings of the Spirit”

The Incarnational Prayer of Clare of Assisi

Clare D'Auria, O.S.F.

As I began to think about what I would share with you today and prepared to attend the first planning meeting last October, I wondered what possible connection there would be between the theme of this conference with its central image of water and the prayer life of Clare of Assisi. However, as I began to pray with this image myself and reflect on the heart of Clare as I have come to know her over the years, the opening lines from a poem by Carmelite poet and mystic, Jessica Powers, came back to me and I knew I had both the connection I was looking for and the title for this presentation. In her poem, "To Live with the Spirit," Powers writes,

To live with the Spirit of God is to be a listener,
It is to keep the vigil of mystery,
earthless and still.
One leans to catch the stirrings of the Spirit,
strange as the wind's will.¹

In these five brief lines, the poet captures the soul of contemplative prayer and the heart of Clare of Assisi. Attentive to the “stirrings” of the Spirit of God as she hovers over the sometimes chaotic waters of all that is created, Clare looks and listens for the Word that will inevitably speak to her of the mystery of Incarnation: the mystery of the poverty of the God who took flesh and became fully human in Jesus Christ. And once she discovers the truth of this mystery on Palm Sunday, 1212, she commits her life to “keep ... vigil” at the foot of the cross of this “strange mystery”: to “gaze, consider, contemplate” so that she might “imitate [her] Spouse.”²

Incarnational Prayer: “The Poor Crucified” Christ

Last March, a segment on CBS' "60 Minutes" stirred something unmistakable in me on the evening I first watched it.³ Since viewing it, I have

prayed with it many times, so much so that it has become a kind of allegory for me that illuminates the invitation and the demands, the call and the conversion which are inherent in one's choosing to be faithful to a contemplative way of life.

The interview featured a community of sea gypsies called the Moken. Among the least touched by modern civilization, they've lived for hundreds of years on the islands off the coast of Thailand and Burma. Although they live precisely where the devastating tsunami of 2004 hit the hardest, they suffered no casualties at all because as people who are born on the sea, live on the sea, and die on the sea, they know how to read the signs of the sea. And, as interviewer Bob Simon noted, "It was their intimacy with the sea that saved them."³¹

On December 26, the day the tsunami hit, Saleh Kalathalay, a skilled spear-fisherman, noticed that a strange silence had come over the waters. Then, he told Simon, "The water receded very fast and one wave, one small wave, came and I knew – this is not ordinary." He began to run around warning others, but few believed him. So he brought the skeptics to the water's edge where they too saw the signs from the sea. Eventually everyone, the Moken and the tourists, listened to the warnings from the sea, climbed to higher ground and were saved. Their village, however, was completely destroyed. Later in the interview, Saleh was asked why he knew something was wrong, and the Burmese commercial fishermen, also at sea at the time the tsunami hit, did not. Saleh replied, "They were too busy collecting squid. They were not really looking at anything. They saw nothing, they looked at nothing. They don't know how to look. They were too busy collecting squid."

Clare of Assisi knew "how to look" and "how to read the signs" of her times written on the hillsides of Mount Subasio where the small and walled town of Assisi is nestled in the Umbrian Valley about halfway between the cities of Perugia and Foligno, ninety miles north of Rome. As she stood with her townspeople on the brink of the 13th century, Clare also stood apart from them because she knew how to "listen" to the "strange silence": to that paradoxical voice of God that rumbled quietly beneath the noise and clang (cf. 1Cor 13:1) of warring factions and clashing feudal classes fighting for their lives in a political and social system headed toward extinction.

Unlike those among the nobility who stood at the "edge" of the impending disaster but failed to see what was coming, and unlike those among the rising merchant class who were "too busy" taking advantage of such pervasive societal upheaval to either "look" or "listen," Clare knew how to pay attention to the "stirrings" made by the "one small wave" that was "the Poor Crucified" Christ (1Lag, 13) incarnated in the countless and unnoticed poor and marginalized who knocked at her family's door. And, most importantly,

because she knew "something was wrong," she "listened to the warnings" and, against all traditional, cultural, and conventional wisdom, she "climbed to higher ground and [was] saved." Again, paradoxically, as only God's designs could envision, Clare's climbing to "higher ground" set her on a journey of choosing not upward but downward nobility, a journey that would take an irrevocable turn on Palm Sunday, 1212, in the Cathedral of San Rufino. From that day forward, Clare would remain at the "water's edge" and "keep the vigil of mystery," always watching for the "one small wave."

"Keeping the vigil of mystery" is essential to human life, but especially to a life of prayer. For Franciscans, however, it is essential that we keep our prayer vigil in the presence of the mystery of Incarnation. In her book, *Franciscan Prayer*, Ilia Delio, O.S.F., clearly states: "The simplest way to describe Franciscan prayer is that it begins and ends with the Incarnation."⁴ From my perspective, this kind of "incarnational prayer" is grounded in a contemplative way of life that sees and hears the cyclic pattern of flesh made Word and Word made flesh repeated over and over again in the ebb and flow of one's own life experience. Such a vision of life demands a disciplined and focused attentiveness to both the subtle and the seismic "stirrings" of the water: to both the formative, daily experiences, as well as to the unique and unrepeatable transformative events which happen over the course of one's life journey and indicate the unmistakable presence of the invisible God become visible in Jesus Christ.

Although we have no extant prayers from Clare as we have from Francis, that is, prayers consciously written as such, the formative experiences of her daily prayer life in San Damiano evidence her own incarnation of the ebb and flow of the Paschal Mystery. Her four *Letters to Agnes of Prague*,⁵ along with the witness of her own sisters whose testimony is recorded in *The Acts of the Process of Canonization*, invite each of us to "gaze," "consider," and "contemplate" the heart of this woman where we, too, can touch the "stirrings of the Spirit" expressed in her unwavering, "passionate desire" for "the Poor Crucified." It is these letters and the text of her life that we want to "read," reflect upon, and pray with today so that, like Clare, we might "be strengthened in the holy service" which we have undertaken (1LAg, 13) and "direct [our] attention to what [we] should desire above all else: to have the Spirit of the Lord and Its holy activity, to pray always to Him with a pure heart" (RCI, 10:9).

Before Her Conversion: Clare's Preferential Option for the Poor

The formative experiences of her daily life, even before her conversion, attest to the truth that, from her earliest days, Clare knows how to "gaze" at the world in which she lives. It is this "world" that she brings before God in

prayer – this "flesh" of the "other" that she carries in her own heart. Ingrid Peterson, O.S.F., acknowledges that "The testimonies of the women who lived in the house of Favarone Offreduccio help to construct a picture of Clare as a young woman in the midst of Assisi's activity" and a "portrait" of the household as "an extended family of holy women."⁶ In this primary sacred space with women of like vision, who "either lived together or came together frequently for common spiritual exercises,"⁷ Clare finds support for the penitential way of life she has chosen.

Many of these women were later examined by the Church as part of the process of Clare's canonization. Witness after witness from among these women agree with Pacifica de Guelfuccio of Assisi, the first person to be interviewed and to narrate Clare's story: "while that holy woman [Clare] was in the world in her father's house ... she was considered by all those who knew her [to be a person] of great honesty and of very good life; and that she was intent upon and occupied with works of piety" (Proc 1.1).⁸ However, it is only Pacifica who notes most exactly that, although "all the citizens held her [Clare] in great veneration," Clare herself had already narrowed her gaze: "Lady Clare very much loved the poor" (Proc 1.3).

We can only imagine what happens within Clare's own heart as, day after day, "she willingly visited the poor" (Proc 1.4) and prays with and shares those experiences within the "enclosure" of the Offreduccio household. What we do know is that this formative "gazing" on the "flesh" of those who are poor leads her to "consider" the Crucified Word that was calling and challenging her to incarnate a way of life markedly different from that of her contemporaries. To glimpse the mystery of God at work in the heart of Clare, I again turn to Jessica Powers whose poem, "The Master Beggar," offers us some insight into what happens with this kind of formative gazing and considering: flesh made Word becomes *the* Word made flesh and one truly sees the face of Jesus in the face of those who are poor.

*Worse than the poorest mendicant alive,
the pencil man, the blind man with his breath
of music shaming all who do not give,
are You to me, Jesus of Nazareth. ➔
Must You take up Your post on every block
of every street? Do I have no release?
Is there no room of earth that I can lock
to Your sad face, Your pitiful whisper "Please"?
I seek the counters of time's gleaming store
but make no purchases, for You are there.
How can I waste one coin while you implore
with tear-soiled cheeks and dark blood-matted hair?*

*And when I offer You in charity
pennies minted by love, still, still You stand
fixing Your sorrowful wide eyes on me.
Must all my purse be emptied in Your hand?
Jesus, my beggar; what would You have of me?
Father and mother? The lover I longed to know?
The child I would have cherished tenderly?
Even the blood that through my heart's valves flow?
I too would be a beggar: Long tormented,
I dream to grant You all and stand apart
with You on some bleak corner, tear-frequented,
and trouble mankind for its human heart.⁹*

"Jesus, my beggar ... I too would be a beggar." True contemplation leads to imitation and, again, the flesh of Jesus becomes the committed Word of God incarnated in this woman who chose to be poor – as Jesus was poor and as those who are poor, were poor.

In order to give "flesh" to the Word which she hears in her own prayer, Clare, before she is eighteen years old, makes a radical break with her social class by selling her inheritance and giving the money to the poor.¹⁰ By disposing of her inheritance in this way, she not only gives her assets to those who are poor, but she herself becomes poor. Clare Marie Ledoux elaborates on the significance of this choice as an irreversible turning point in the life of Clare:

From then on, her opting for poverty set her up against the noble class of her lineage. From the time of her conversion, poverty became and would remain for Clare a way of life, the indispensable foundation for realizing her religious ideal. By her choice to live in poverty, like Francis, although in her own original way, Clare was challenging a society in which strength, power and money were masters and in which the church itself was the empire's rival power.¹¹

Renouncing her inheritance, along with the private vow of virginity she had previously made,¹² solidifies Clare's undesirability as a prospective bride, thus protecting the inviolability of the decision she had made to receive her holy vocation. Ingrid Peterson, O.S.F., notes the practical wisdom Clare evidences in making such a conscious and counter-cultural choice:

Clare claimed legal and social rights in choosing poverty, and the personal right to make decisions about her body in choosing the state of virginity. Seizing these individual rights, Clare was able to bring

to her religious reception 'the gift of poverty and the vow of chaste virginity,' described as her dowry by Pope Innocent IV.¹³

Throughout her life, Clare will continue to display this kind of practical wisdom in dealing with both the political and ecclesial environments in which she finds herself. However, it is the wisdom of her heart, her "passionate desire" to imitate "the Poor Crucified," that impels her to "grant [Jesus] all and stand apart with [Him]." Indeed, she had "emptied" her entire "purse" into the "hand" of the "Master Beggar": "The lover [she] longed to know ... The child [she] would have cherished tenderly."

As we ourselves take a contemplative gaze at the process underneath the narrative of these events which occurred even before her "conversion," we see that the "stirrings" reveal a formative pattern of incarnational prayer – really, incarnational living – that will thread through the tapestry of Clare's life. She "gazes" on the "flesh" of her daily experience because she knows that all that is created has the potential to speak to her of God and that the human person who "groans" in concert with all of creation is the privileged place for God's self-revelation in Christ (cf. Rom 8:22). If, through prayer and reflection, she then "considers" her experiences, that is, she listens to them "in stereo"¹⁴ and looks at them again in the light of the Gospels, that "flesh" becomes the "Word of God" that invites her into a contemplative experience with the "Word made flesh" in Jesus Christ. In that mysterious place within the human heart where lovers meet, she "contemplates" herself, both as she is and as she is transformed by the One who loves her. And in that mystic moment, so "desiring to imitate" the One she loves, she truly becomes, in her own flesh, the image of this Word of Love. This process, as we describe it happening in Clare, also happens in each of us if we truly desire, like her, to "be a beggar" too. Flesh made Word and Word made flesh: this is the movement and the mystery of incarnational prayer.

Clare's Conversion: Making the Passover with Christ

If this "pattern" of prayer is already discernible in Clare before her conversion, how, then, are we to understand the Palm Sunday event? Given the fact that Clare is leading a penitential way of life before meeting Francis, it seems more consistent to view her conversion, not so much as the radical shift of life orientation which liminal experiences provide, but rather as a radical shift in how Clare is to give expression to what she had already discerned as her call.¹⁵ When Clare leaves her family home and her former way of expressing her call, she takes on the beginnings of a new form of life which will enable her to continue to express that same call at a deeper level.

Although Clare herself remembers this experience on Palm Sunday as the moment of her "conversion" and a critical turning point in her personal journey,¹⁶ it must more importantly be viewed as the inevitable consequence of her "daily" fidelity to the kind of incarnational prayer we have already seen evidenced in her *before* her conversion. In fact, according to Margaret Carney, O.S.F., Clare's conversion is an experience in which she "summoned the primordial and graced energies of her entire human existence and focused them into a laser point of light and fortitude."¹⁷

What "stirrings of the Spirit" move Clare to such a "primordial and graced" place? What "mystery" compels this woman to journey with certainty into a completely unknown future, walking in "light and fortitude"? In reflecting on her own "conversion experience," one grounded in her own kind of incarnational prayer, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, Mary Oliver, offers us her own answer to these questions and may provide some insight into what may have been happening in the heart of Clare. "Listen" to her poem "The Journey," and "lean" with me to "catch the stirrings" in her heart, in Clare's heart and in your own.

One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began,
though the voices around you
kept shouting
their bad advice –
though the whole house
began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
at your ankles.
"Mend my life!"
each voice cried.
But you didn't stop.
You knew what you had to do,
though the wind pried
with its stiff fingers
at the very foundations,
though their melancholy
was terrible.
It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road full of fallen
branches and stones.
But little by little,

as you left their voices behind,
the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,

and there was a new voice
which you slowly
recognized as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do –
determined to save
the only life you could save.¹⁸

Palm Sunday is this kind of "one day" for Clare, "the day [she finally knew what [she] had to do, and began, though the voices around [her] kept shouting their bad advice." In that moment when, according to the author of *The Legend of Saint Clare*, she "remained immobile in her place" (LCI, 7), all the days of faithful gazing come together with the unmistakable clarity that is contemplative certainty, and she "knew what [she] had to do, though the wind pried with its stiff fingers at the very foundations, though their melancholy was terrible."

As she continues to participate in the celebration of the liturgy and hears, as she has probably never heard before, the proclamation of the Passion, flesh again becomes Word for her, and she feels confirmed in the choice she had already considered: to let the Word become flesh in her by making her own passover in imitation of the Jesus whom she experiences as remaining poor and powerless in the face of his impending death. With the "light and fortitude" she receives in this mystic moment, Clare is convinced that the only response to the love of an all good God poured out in the kenosis of Jesus Christ is the extravagance of a love fully expressed only in a life of absolute poverty, that is, in the alabaster vessel of her very self, broken and poured out.

And so, although "it was already late enough, and a wild night, and the road full of fallen branches and stones," Clare "left [all other] voices behind" and, as *The Legend* continues, "she embarked upon her long desired flight." Her departure, described in the most powerful symbols of death and resurrection,



takes her on a journey away from her family home, by way of "that other door" which "she broke open with her own hands," to a place outside the walls of all that was familiar and through the darkness of the woods that finally leads her from Assisi to the Portiuncula and eventually to San Damiano.¹⁹ In this place, Clare will live her remaining forty-two years in daily faithfulness to the gift of her vocation given to her by a faithful God.

She witnesses to this experience of mutual fidelity at the very beginning of her *Testament*:

Among the other gifts that we have received and continue to receive from our magnanimous **Father of mercies** (2Cor 1:3), and for which we must express the deepest thanks to our glorious God, there is our vocation, which the more perfect and greater it is, the more are we indebted to Him (TestCl 2-3).

It is to her daily life of incarnational prayer that we will next turn our attention. As we read the text of her life and letters, we will journey with her in discovering that the "new voice" which she "slowly recognized as [her] own," was, indeed, becoming the voice of "the Poor Crucified" Christ who "kept [her] company as [she] strode deeper and deeper into the world."

Living in San Damiano: "The Fullness of the Incarnation"

As we now keep Clare "company" on her journey "deeper and deeper" into the world, I offer us a caution. Although we will walk this journey with Clare in a kind of "sequential" manner and will explore, in somewhat of a "logical" order, the daily experience of her gazing, considering, contemplating, and imitating, we need to remember that, as we know from our own experience, life events, especially those which involve developing relationships, do not happen in logical or sequential order. Rather, they spiral downward in ever narrowing and deepening circles through providentially directed happenings which occur simultaneously, spontaneously, surprisingly, and seldom safely. Almost never developing or progressing in the kind of clearly delineated stages which we sometimes use to mark the movements and turns in the spiritual journey,²⁰ they nevertheless transform us in such a way that there is no turning around or turning back – only turning forward and turning toward.

The irrevocable and irreversible place in which Clare finds herself after Palm Sunday, 1212 – the interior place in which she stands as she begins her life in San Damiano – is captured well, I believe, in a poem by David Whyte entitled "All the True Vows."

All the true vows
are secret vows
the ones we speak out loud
are the ones we break.

There is only one life
you can call your own
and a thousand others
you can call by any name you want.

Hold to the truth you make
every day with your own body,
don't turn your face away.

Hold to your own truth
at the center of the image
you were born with.

Those who do not understand
their destiny will never understand
the friends they have made
nor the work they have chosen

nor the one life that waits
beyond all the others.

By the lake in the wood
in the shadows
you can
whisper that truth
to the quiet reflection
you see in the water.

Whatever you hear from
the water, remember,

it wants to carry
the sound of its truth on your lips.

Remember,
in this place
no one can hear you

and out of the silence
you can make a promise
it will kill you to break,

that way you'll find
what is real and what is
not.

I know what I am saying.
Time almost forsook me
and I looked again.
Seeing my reflection
I broke a promise
and spoke

for the first time
after all these years

in my own voice,

before it was too late
to turn my face again.¹

Throughout her life in San Damiano, Clare will "hold to the truth" – to the "true vows" to which she committed herself on Palm Sunday. She will "hold to [her] own truth at the center of the image [she was] born with" and, borne from the "silence" of her prayer, she will "carry the sound of its truth on [her] lips." And, every day, as she hears "the Poor Crucified" Christ "whisper that truth to the quiet reflection" she sees when she looks at herself in the eyes of Jesus, Clare will choose again to live that truth rooted in "a promise" that it would "kill [her] to break."

Again, it is Ilia Delio, O.S.E., who explains this formative and transformative interchange between how one lives and how one prays:

... contemplation is bound to transformation. We cannot help seeing – gazing – on the crucified God for long without being changed. And this change, this gazing on the God of self-giving love, must eventually impel us to love by way of self-gift. In this way, we realize the greatness of our vocation that is to bear Christ, to become a Christic person. Only in and through this "Christification" do we see the world as the sacrament of God, and all of creation as holy ground. Engagement with the other becomes an engagement with

God. Contemplation is not directed toward heaven but toward the fullness of the Incarnation.²²

It is to "the fullness of the Incarnation" that Clare directs her gaze during the forty-two years in which she lives in San Damiano. Unlike her contemporaries, that is, other enclosed communities of women whose monastic regulations proscribed restrictions around seeing and being seen,²¹ Clare continues to direct her "gaze" – and that of her sisters – on the "flesh" of those who are poor. On any given day, the "poor" might appear on the other side of the parlor or choir grille as the face of a hungry beggar who comes to share in the meager portion of bread that the sisters could offer. After the death of Francis, the "poor" might look like a pilgrim journeying to visit the places already named "holy" in the popular imagination of those who knew or knew of the Poverello and his brothers. At other times, the "poor" might take the form of a friar returning from his mission in Africa with all the news of how the Gospel was being preached.

In whatever face appears in the frame of this grilled icon, Clare sees the face of "the Poor Crucified" Christ, the same face that she gazes upon when she prays before the icon of the crucifix that had spoken to Francis in the early days of his conversion. But, as Michael Blastic, O.F.M. Conv., so insightfully notes, Clare does not gaze only on Jesus: "The uniqueness of the San Damiano cross lies in the image of a Jesus who is not alone – he is surrounded by others."²⁴ So, too, Clare is surrounded by her sisters as together they gaze on "the fullness of the Incarnation" imaged, not only in this icon, but in the faces of one another. And, in this mutual exchange of loving reverence, they are formative and transformative for one another.

This Christ, who is Brother to each of them, continues throughout Clare's life to return her gaze, his eyes silently speaking the same words spoken to Francis: "Go and repair my house."²⁵ Thomas of Celano testifies to the efficacy of Clare's life and of her prayer in rebuilding, not only the Church and the world, but the Franciscan "order" itself: "The Lady Clare, a native of the city of Assisi, the most precious and strongest stone of the whole structure, stands as the foundation for all the other stones.... A noble structure of precious pearls arose above this woman" (1Cel 8.18).

So, day after day, flesh becomes Word and Word becomes flesh as Clare gazes upon the "face" of those who are poor and upon the face of "the Poor Crucified" Christ imaged in her sisters and in the icon that is always before her, and she is formed and transformed and rebuilds the Church in the process. Her life experience, then, is formative for her prayer and her prayer formative for her life. Of this intimate connection between the concerns of her world and her enclosed daily life and daily prayer, Marco Bartoli writes:

She [Clare] transcended the limits of the hermitage [read enclosure] in two directions: from the inside toward the outside, by accepting that she was an example, a model, one who had something to say to the whole Church; and from the outside towards the inside, by the way in which she and her sisters welcomed whoever and whatever came from the outside, so that everything becomes their concern.²⁶

One of Clare's concerns was the fledgling community begun by Agnes of Prague in 1234. Agnes, a princess of Bohemia, had been betrothed to Frederick II, Emperor of Germany but, like Clare, she had made a private vow of virginity and could not be coerced into marrying. When she writes *The First Letter to Agnes of Prague* sometime before June of that year, Clare is forty years old and has already lived twenty-two of them in San Damiano. However, because the letter is directed toward this woman who is, in some sense, just "beginning the public aspect of her conversion," it "recreates Clare's personal conviction at the early stage of her spiritual journey ... her own understanding of poverty as the starting point of her spiritual maturity. While there is much evidence in Clare's writings and life that she loved poverty and loved the poor, her desire to live without property is grounded in her imitation of Jesus."²⁷ In this letter, so focused on the necessity of poverty, Clare directs Agnes and each of us to "gaze" in the same direction:

Be strengthened in the holy service of the Poor Crucified undertaken with a passionate desire, Who **endured** the suffering of the cross for us all.... O God-centered poverty, whom the Lord Jesus Christ ... came down to embrace before all else! (1LAg 13-14, 17)

Like the Moken fisherman we spoke of earlier, Clare knows how and where to look. And, who and what she sees looks back at her, and she is transformed in the process. However, everything and everyone that Clare sees also has its own voice which speaks to her with formative and transformative power. From the "outside" she hears the poor, the pilgrim, the friar, and, from the "inside," the voices of her sisters. So, like that same fisherman, she also needs to know how to listen and how to choose what to really "consider" from all that she hears. In the "strange silence" so essential to her enclosed life in San Damiano, Clare listens to each of these voices. However, like her gazing through the grille, Clare's listening to both the silence and the speaking is also framed: framed by her communal experience of Eucharist and of her praying with her sisters the Liturgy of the Hours which marks the passing of time each day, as well as the movement through the seasons each year.

Within the rhythm of this liturgical prayer, Clare listens day after day and year after year to the "Song of the Suffering Servant," sung in the music

of the Scriptural Word and played out in her own life and in the lives of her sisters. Over and over again, she hears the story of the same "Poor Crucified" Christ, upon whom she is gazing, recounted in the Gospels and proclaimed by the prophets and offered for her consideration and meditation. And, in chorus with her sisters, Clare lifts her own voice in the "psalms, hymns and inspired songs" (cf. Col 3:16) which were part of the Liturgy of the Hours of the medieval Church. The paschal experience of Jesus, central to all liturgical prayer, is the mystery within which she chooses to pattern her own life's rhythm and keeps faithful "vigil."

In *The Second Letter to Agnes of Prague*, written between 1234 and 1238, Clare speaks of the formative power of this kind of prayer through which one listens to and considers one's life within the context of this larger Word of God. It impacts, Clare tells Agnes and each of us, the very way in which we hear our lives happening at a more deeply, emotional level:

*If you suffer with Him, you will reign with Him.
weeping with Him, you will rejoice with Him;
dying on the cross of tribulation with Him,
you will possess heavenly mansions with Him
among the splendor of the saints
and in the Book of Life, your name will be called glorious among the
peoples (2LAg 21).*

And, as Clare listens to this mystery, not only in the Scriptural Word, but also "considers" this mystery in the word which comes to her in the cries of those who are poor, in the voices of her sisters, and in the word spoken in the silence of her own heart, she hears the same message: no matter the source, the Word which she is always invited to "consider" is the Word made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ and how this Word calls her to be poor in imitation of him.

Always, always, it is Clare's "passionate desire" for "the Poor Crucified" which drives her and leads her. This is what her gazing leads her to see. This is what her listening leads her to consider and eventually understand: that, for love of her, Jesus freely takes upon himself the limits inherent in being flesh – the poverty intrinsic to being human. Once Clare brings the consideration of this truth to the point of conviction, nothing can deter her. This vision of poverty as having a privileged place because Jesus is "the Poor Crucified" One will determine how she sees not only herself, but the way of life she envisions for her sisters. Indeed, it is this vision that empowers her strong-willed, tenacious, and unyielding grip on the "Privilege of Poverty" granted to her by the Church. Finally, it is this vision that enables Clare to contemplate

in such a way that this Word becomes flesh in her, over and over again, and always more deeply and truly.

Her contemplating empowers her to see herself as she is, to see herself as a "we" with her sisters,³⁸ and to see herself and all others in and as the image of Christ. Her acceptance of the poverty of being human – of saying "yes" with one's life to the limits of being human and to the glory of loving without limits – unites her with Jesus in an intimate and inextricable way. So contemplation necessitates imitation, and imitation, transformation, and the Word again becomes flesh: Christ is imaged in Clare and Clare is constantly being re-imaged as herself and re-created as the image of Christ. "What is original to Clare is that transformation/imitation of Christ cannot take place apart from contemplation, and contemplation involves self-identity or acceptance of oneself in relation to God."³⁹

Clare sees herself and, consequently, her sisters and every other person, inserted into the mystery of Christ and, through Christ, into the mystery of God, in a very real, ontological way. Her much reflected upon "mirror" image, obviously borne from her own prayer experience, invites us to contemplate continually both the mystery of being human and the mystery of God become human, the Word incarnate who is always and forever, "the Poor Crucified" Christ. In *The Third Letter to Agnes of Prague*, Clare offers Agnes spiritual direction, as it were, by focusing her 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, through contemplation,
transform your entire being **into the image**
of the Godhead Itself (3LAg 12-13).

Although the imperatives of her injunction may sound daunting to us, Clare believes this call is for everyone: for those "outside" as well as for those "inside." She "provides a common path to contemplation because what she advocates is daily prayer before the cross – something every person can do ... [because] the cross provides the most honest reflection of ourselves."⁴⁰ To contemplate the suffering Christ is to look at the poverty of our own human condition and that of others and know that God understands because, in Jesus, God has been where we are. To contemplate Christ crucified is to look at ourselves and others and know that death does not have the last word because the Incarnate Word, risen in glory, speaks the Word of Life. Ledoux says very clearly:

The mystery of poverty essentially is part of the mystery of salvation and the gospel. Poverty is evangelical in the strongest sense of the term. It is in and by it that we live the heart of the Good News. Christ's Resurrection is the revelation of the staggering fruitfulness of poverty. Christ the Lord is indeed the "poor Christ" of Nazareth, raised in glory because he lived poverty to the extreme limit of love. All human beings benefit from this rising, not just the oppressed and the hungry but also the richest among us.⁴¹

So, all of us are called to heed the advice Clare offers in *The Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague* about the necessity of praying with "the Poor Crucified" Christ. In this letter, probably written just months before her death, we find Clare reiterating the imperatives of praying in the incarnational way we have spent this time together describing and reflecting upon: prayer in which flesh becomes Word so that *the Word* can again become flesh in you and in me. Look on the Crucified Christ now, and listen to Clare's words as we bring our time to a close:

Gaze upon that mirror each day, O Queen and Spouse of Jesus Christ, and continually study your face in it.... Indeed, in that mirror, blessed poverty, holy humility, and inexpressible charity shine forth, as, with the grace of God, you will be able to contemplate them throughout the entire mirror.... **Look**, I say, at the border of this mirror, that is, the poverty of Him Who was placed in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes.... Then **reflect upon**, at the surface of the mirror, the holy humility, at least the blessed poverty, the untold labors and punishments that He endured for the redemption of the whole human race. Finally **contemplate**, in the depth of this same mirror, the ineffable charity that He chose to suffer on the tree of the Cross and to die there the most shameful kind of death (4LAg 15-26).

Like Clare, *gaze* on Jesus, and you will become like the One you see. Like Clare, *consider* Jesus and you will be transformed. Like Clare, *contemplate* Jesus and you will see yourself with new eyes as you look at him looking back at you with delight and with love. And finally, like Clare, *imitate* this Jesus of the Gospels, the Incarnate Word of God, and, follow his way of washing feet, nourishing others from your table, healing the sick and the sick of heart, preaching by your example, and living poverty stretched out to the limits of love.

Like Clare, the experiences of my daily life and, thus, of my daily prayer can be formative for me, that is, they can hover over my interior chaos as the "stirrings of the Spirit" of the living God creatively at work within me. As

truly my "flesh," these experiences can reveal and speak God's Word to me in such a powerful and creative way that they can, in the words of the old charismatic hymn, "melt me" and "mold me," indeed, recreate me into the image and likeness of *the Word* made Flesh: Jesus Christ. My prayer, then, is bound with my life in such an inextricably mutual way that it becomes what I have called incarnational prayer: flesh becomes Word and Word becomes flesh, in Christ and in me.

Who or what I gaze upon in my daily experience and in my daily prayer matters, then, because it is *formative* for me in this *incarnational* way. And depending on "who" the who is or "what" the what is, I may be formed in this incarnational way in the image and likeness of Jesus Christ, or in some other image and likeness. In either case, I am being formed and transformed, so, I need, like Clare, to choose wisely *who or what I look upon*. As we reflect on Clare's own gazing and on her exhortation to Agnes, we must ask ourselves: Who or what do I gaze upon in my daily experience? Who or what do I gaze upon when I come to prayer or to my prayer space? Do I see *those who are poor*? Do I see those who are poor? Do I see *my sisters and/or brothers* with whom I live? Do I see my sisters and brothers with whom I live?

I also need, like Clare, to choose wisely who or what I listen to, who or what I "consider" in my daily experience and in my daily prayer because, again, these are formative for me. As we reflect on Clare's own considering and on her exhortation to Agnes, we must ask ourselves: Who or what do I listen to and consider in my daily experience? Who or what do I listen to and consider when I come to prayer or to my prayer space? Do I really listen to the voices of others and take these voices to the silence of my own prayer? Is the Scriptural Word the focus of my listening and considering so that it becomes formative for me, or does my listening and considering focus elsewhere? What is the place of silence in my day? In my prayer?

What is the place of communal liturgical prayer in the rhythm of my day, my week, my year? How is it that I pray with my sisters or with my brothers in community? How is it that I pray with others? What is the focus of our listening and considering in these communal prayer experiences? How is this prayer incarnational, forming me in such a way that it deepens my desire to enflesh the paschal mystery of Jesus in my own life, that is, in poverty stretched out to the limits of love?

I also need to reflect on who or what I see when I look in the metaphorical "mirror" of myself. As we reflect on the intimate connection Clare sees between contemplation and imitation and on her exhortation to Agnes in this regard, we must ask ourselves: Do I see myself as I truly am – both flawed and graced? Do I see myself, not only as "the fairest one of all," but also as part of the human family, as one who is truly intrinsically poor and, therefore

one with and at home with those who are poor? Do I dare to see the image of "the Poor Crucified" One when I contemplate myself and experience myself as "beloved" by God, both as myself and as the image of the Christ? Does this vision impel me, like the One I contemplate, to imitate his choice for the downward mobility that led him to live poverty stretched to the extreme limits of love? How do I contemplate others in the light of this vision, especially my sisters and brothers in community? How does my imitation look like washing feet, nourishing others from my table, healing the sick and the sick of heart, and preaching by example – all in mutual exchange?

Conclusion: Climbing to Higher Ground

Unlike the commercial fisherman who had neither the eyes nor the ears of the Moken, see the "one small wave" and listen to the call to climb to "higher ground." It is from this vantage point that, like Jesus, like Clare, we will again be impelled by love to make the choice for downward mobility and the privilege of poverty. And, in the "strange silence" that we have come to understand as the paradoxical voice of God, we too will hear "The Song of the Waterfall" that the sojourner, Much-Afraid, hears on her passage to the "High Places" in Hannah Hurnard's classic allegory on the journey of the spiritual life.

Toward the mid-point of the story, the Shepherd leads Much-Afraid to the "Place of Anointing" where she will make the choice for downward mobility and begin the final phase of her journey to the "High Places." As they stand together "at the foot of the cliffs," they hear the "voice of a mighty waterfall ... whose rushing waters sprang from the snows in the High Places themselves.... As she listened, Much-Afraid realized that she was hearing the full majestic harmonies, the whole orchestra as it were ... thousands upon thousands of voices ... yet still the same song:

From the heights we leap and go
To the valleys down below,
Always answering the call,
To the lowest place of all.

When the Shepherd asks Much-Afraid, "What do you think of this fall of great waters in their abandonment of self-giving?" she replies, "I think they are beautiful and terrible beyond anything which I ever saw before." "Why terrible?" the Shepherd asks, already knowing the answer. "It is the leap which they have to make, the awful height from which they must cast themselves down to the depths beneath, there to be broken on the rocks. I can hardly bear to watch it." However, at the bidding of the Shepherd, Much-

Afraid looks more closely, and begins to see her experience with his eyes and to hear "The Song of the Waterfall" with his ears and so is able to make the rest of the journey. The Shepherd says:

At first sight perhaps the leap does look terrible, but as you can see, the water itself finds no terror in it, no moment of hesitation or shrinking, only joy unspeakable, and full of glory, because it is the movement natural to it. Self-giving is its life. It has only one desire, to go down and down and give itself with no reserve or holding back of any kind.¹²

Let this be our prayer: to have this "only one desire." Like Jesus, like Clare, like Much-Afraid let us listen, in our living and in our praying, to the "stirrings of the Spirit" in "The Song of the Waterfall" that is the Paschal Mystery of "the Poor Crucified" Christ. Like Jesus, like Clare, like Much-Afraid let us beg for the grace to take the plunge, enflesh the Word, and fall with joy into the loving arms of God.

ENDNOTES

¹ *Selected Poetry of Jessica Powers*, Eds. Regina Siegfried, A.S.C., and Robert F. Morneau (Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1989).

² 2LAg, 20. All citations from the early documents written by or about Clare of Assisi are taken from *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, Revised edition and trans. Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap. (New York: New City Press, 2006). Hereafter, all citations will be noted within the text.

³ "Sea Gypsies See Signs In The Waves," *60 Minutes*, CBS Broadcasting, Inc., March 20, 2005.

⁴ Ilia Delio, *Franciscan Prayer* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2004), 181.

⁵ See Clare Marie Ledoux, *Clare of Assisi: Her Spirituality Revealed in Her Letters*, Trans. Colette Joly Dees (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1996), 2.

⁶ *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), 83.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁸ See also the testimonies of Benvenuta of Perugia (Proc 2.2), Filippa de Leonardo di Gislerio (Proc 3.2), Amata di Martino (Proc 4.2).

⁹ *Selected Poetry of Jessica Powers*.

¹⁰ Proc 2.22; 12.3; 13.10; 19.2.

¹¹ Ledoux, 10-11.

¹² Proc 2.2; 19.1.

¹³ Peterson, 102.

¹⁴ See Francis Dorff, O.P., *The Art of Passing Over: An Invitation to Living Creatively*, Integration Books (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1988). See especially Part I: On Listening and Hearing Creatively, 9-34.

¹⁵ For an interesting study on the distinction between conversion stories presented by male authors as experiences of "liminality" and by female authors as experiences of "continuity," see Caroline Walker Bynum, "Women's Stories, Women's Symbols: A Critique of Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality," in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 27-51.

¹⁶ See *Testament*, 24-26.

¹⁷ Margaret Carney, O.S.F., *The First Franciscan Woman: Clare of Assisi and Her Form of Life* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), 132.

¹⁸ *New and Selected Poems* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 114-15.

¹⁹ See *The Legend of Saint Clare*, 10.

²⁰ "All neat organizations of the spiritual life are hindsight creations. After events, activities, and people have provoked our spirits to journey to another place, we look back and sort out the chaos into some form of orderly progression. We may even dare to talk about providence. But we should notice that providential interpretations are usually backward looks from a safe place. When events, activities, and people are actually happening, the spiritual life has the "feel" of an insight here, a quandary there, and a sense of being on the very edge of something everywhere ... in the spiritual life the mind is often the last to know." See John Shea, *Starlight: Beholding the Christmas Miracle All Year Long* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 14-15.

²¹ *The House of Belonging* (Langley, Washington: Many Rivers Press, 2002).

²² Delio, *Franciscan Prayer*, 138.

²³ See Marco Bartoli, *Clare of Assisi*, Trans. Sister Frances Teresa, O.S.C. (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), 76-97.

²⁴ From personal correspondence, February 23, 2006.

²⁵ LMj 2.1. All citations from the early documents written by or about Francis of Assisi are taken from *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, Eds. Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J.A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. Conv., William J. Short, O.F.M. (New York: New City Press, 2000). Hereafter, all citations will be noted within the text.

²⁶ Bartoli, 87.

²⁷ Peterson, 164.

²⁸ See *Testament*, 2-3. In contrast, see Francis's *The Testament*, 1-3.

²⁹ Delio, 130.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 128.

³¹ Ledoux, 55.

³² Hannah Hurnard, *Hinds' Feet on High Places* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1975), 184-87.

The Contribution of Francis's Prayer to the Church's *Communio* and *Missio*

Edward Foley, O.F.M. Cap.

Introduction

Franciscan prayer is neither a new nor overlooked topic, and one might wonder about the necessity or even value of another article addressing the matter. There are already both bountiful and helpful resources on the subject that laudably explore the fundamental characteristics and essentials of Franciscan prayer.¹ Central to the contributions of such works is their guidance in uncovering what it means for twenty-first century believers to pray as Franciscans. This is a critical issue for those of us who follow the Franciscan path of brother-sisterhood. Two ecclesial issues, however, prod us to a different approach.

First is the *obvium* that all Roman Catholics and further, all Christians, do not follow a Franciscan path. While this is not new information, it is nonetheless an important datum. Sometimes those of us wed to a particular Catholic-Christian religious charism are prodded by a basic instinct to export that charism to others, and initiate them into the spiritual journey we call Franciscan, or Ignatian or Salesian. Yet, the call to holiness for the baptized, freshly articulated in *Lumen Gentium* (e.g., n. 39), finds its central hermeneutic in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* that lifts up the church's public worship as the font of summit of holiness. Thus it is the church's liturgy, rather than some particular religious charism, that is to "[move] the faithful filled with 'the paschal sacraments' to be 'one in holiness'" (n. 10).

A parallel ecclesiological perspective is that Franciscans – like every other group of religious in the Church – are not called to live or minister or pray by themselves or for themselves, but with and for the church in service of the world. Francis himself was lauded as a *vir catholicus*,² and the women and men who bear his name must embrace a similarly "catholic" perspective on our charism. Thus, an important focus is not so much "how" do or should

Franciscans pray, as much as what is the contribution of Franciscan prayer to the Church's *communio*? As the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has summarized, "Vatican II affirmed that religious life belongs 'undeniably' to the life and holiness of the church and placed religious life at the very heart of the church's mystery of communion and holiness."³ Thus our own questions around Franciscan prayer need to be motivated by a fundamental concern that they contribute to the church's *communio* and be conceived within the context of that *communio*.

But out of what vision of church, out of which "communion ecclesiology" should we consider our contribution, for the term is certainly not univocal.⁴ Some who espouse a vision of Church as a mystery of communion do so with a centripetal bias. This is apparent from the fact that some communion ecclesiologies seem to be lacking any "communion missiology." But the church was not called into being for its own sake, and is not sustained by the Spirit of Jesus Christ for self-preservation. Rather, as Vatican II clearly stated and Pope John Paul II reiterated, the "Church is missionary by its very nature."⁵ Thus, in the words of Paul Lakeland:

we must reiterate the symbiosis of communion and mission. While communion can be a cozy notion upon which to meditate, the validity of the particular expression of communion in the church is to be found in the quality of the same community's commitment to its mission. The praxis of communion is visible in the church's faithfulness to its mission; the praxis of mission is directly connected to the understanding of communion. If what we mean by "communion" is an inward-looking, self-congratulatory, and fearful huddling together against the forces of modernity ... then "mission" will mean little more than the periodic exorcism of the "outside" world. But if communion means a generous and loving association of free and faithful children of God, then the dynamic excess of love, without which it is not love at all, spills over into a mission to the whole human race, one marked by a generous sharing of the knowledge that God wills to save the world.⁶

This is a communion ecclesiology which clearly resonates with the nature of religious profession.⁷ As made abundantly clear in the *Instrumentum Laboris* proceedings, and postsynodal exhortation from the 1994 special Synod on Consecrated Life, the call to mission is an essential part of every form of communal consecrated life.⁸ My own Franciscan community, almost 16 years prior to that Synod espoused a similar view, noting that, "The Franciscan life-plan according to the gospel implies, at its root, a natural apostolic dimension without limits"; and, again "Fundamentally every Franciscan vocation is missionary."⁹ Thus, it seems appropriate to consider the contribution of

Franciscan prayer not from an intra-Franciscan perspective, but rather from an ecclesial vantage point with a strong and coherent missionary trajectory that redounds not only to the benefit of the Christian Churches, but erupts in mission to the whole human family.¹⁰

While there are many ways one could proceed with this inquiry, we have chosen to mine the tradition here, particularly selected prayer practices of Francis of Assisi. It is hoped that by examining key worship patterns of Francis, with an eye toward discerning how they contributed to the building up of not only a fledgling community, but also the wider church, we might gain some insights about how Franciscan prayer today might analogously contribute to the Church's *communio* and *missio* in this new millennium. While we could examine Francis's prayer patterns according to their liturgical genres (e.g., Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, etc.), we will instead access this prized stratum of the Seraphic tradition through the prism of key characteristics that seem to permeate his vision of prayer for himself and his followers. The challenge here, is that since Francis was one of those charismatic figures who lived and thought and prayed outside the given frameworks of his or any day, it is important to respect the polyphonic nature of his charism. In an attempt to do that, we will propose three compound images that hopefully will capture something of the richness of his prayer spirituality.

Communal and Accessible

Francis lived in a period marked by the growing privatization of the Church's liturgy, increasingly shaped for execution by the ecclesial elite. The celebration of private Mass, a phenomenon already known in the Carolingian period,¹¹ was not the preferred form for Eucharist as it emerged in the eighth and ninth centuries and was often critiqued. The late ninth century *Interpolated Rule of Chrodegang* decrees that "no priest should presume to celebrate Mass alone, since we can find no authority for this practice."¹² In this spirit Peter Damian (d. 1072) noted that "this sacrifice of praise is offered by the whole faithful, not only men but also women."¹³ By the early thirteenth century, however, private Mass had become normative, an important personal spiritual exercise for many clerics, and a font of virtually irreplaceable income for clerics. Similarly, the private recitation of the Divine Office was increasingly common, as demonstrated by the growing ease with which communal recitation of the Office was dispensed,¹⁴ as well as the multiplication of breviaries in this period.¹⁵

In this wider ecclesial context, Francis's concern for prayer that was both communal and accessible is notable. This is not to suggest that Francis himself was not given to long periods of personal prayer, for it is reported that he spent significant portions of each day and night in prayer.¹⁶ As noted

above, one cannot be reductionistic about Francis's spirituality in general, or prayer life in particular, so there are multiple prayer vectors discernible in his life and teachings, which are at least paradoxical. At the same time, one can detect clear trajectories or flows¹⁷ in his vision for a common life that evoked a parallel vision for common prayer that was open to the humblest of God's creatures. One undoubted influence in Francis's own life shaping this vision was that he came to community life as a lay person, not a cleric. While he and his first followers were granted tonsure by Pope Innocent III, making them minor clerics,¹⁸ and while Francis was ordained deacon sometime before 1223,¹⁹ his own conversion and subsequent gathering of followers was much more in the style of a lay movement and retained those characteristics well into the second decade of the thirteenth century.

As a consequence, the prayer style of Francis and his early followers was not in service of some overriding institutional vision, turned in on itself in



a spirit of self-preservation, tied to some established horarium, or in any way privatized or reserved for the *literati* or elite. On the contrary, in a full embrace of poverty and simplicity, Francis led his followers in prayer styles that required no books, no buildings, no liturgical artifacts and little learning. This is illustrated by various episodes in the life of Francis and his followers. For example, when Francis first began to attract followers and when the brothers asked Francis to pray "because ... they did not know the church's office," Celano reports that Francis instructed them to pray the *Pater noster*²⁰ and his favored acclamation "We adore you,"²¹ a popular verse widely employed in

the Offices of the day.²² Such a prayer style was portable, open to both the literate and illiterate, lay and clerical followers, did not rely on any material resources, and was a shared euchological vernacular. Because there were no early Franciscan "texts" to pray nor Franciscan *ordo* to follow, Francis and his followers could happily join with others – clerics or monks or lay – in various forms of prayer including the Divine Office and the Eucharist.²³ This did not jeopardize his vision of prayer. Rather, drawing upon the prayer resources of

others could be understood as symbolic of the minority and itineracy which he embraced, and wished to bequeath to his brothers and sisters.

Even when things did change and the brothers acquired their own places,²⁴ were required to pray the breviary,²⁵ and Eucharist was clearly part of the daily horarium, Francis consistently seemed to value communal over individual prayer for the brothers. His Rule for Hermitages, for example, offers a contemplative image of shared life that is yet structured around the celebration of the Divine Office.²⁶ Clearly the hermitage image here is in service of fraternity. When it came to his own recitation of the Office, at the end of his life Francis – attempting to adjust to the growing canonical requirements for the clerical brothers in the recitation of the office – himself asks that he might always have a cleric brother with him to pray the office.²⁷ In so doing, Francis seems to emphasize that having a breviary²⁸ or even being sick did not excuse one from a prayer that was essentially communal.

As for the Eucharist, in A Letter to the Entire Order Francis directs the brothers “to celebrate only one Mass a day according to the rite of the Holy Church in those places where the brothers dwell. But if there is more than one priest there, let the other be content, for the love of charity, at hearing the celebration of the other priest.”²⁹ While there is some disagreement about the interpretation of this passage, given Francis’s concerns about poverty and humility, it seems credible to interpret the passage as a rejection of the commonplace practice of multiplying Masses with their accompanying stipends, and a valuing of the conventual over private Mass for the good of the fraternity. This was not a vision that always prevailed, and with the growing clericalization of the order came parallel currents that both emphasized private prayer, and required the cleric brothers to perform prayer in language and style that was no longer accessible to the unlettered. While concessions in this direction had already taken place in Francis’s lifetime, they seemed to contradict the early vision that prayer among his followers was a shared, accessible event that contributed to the building up of the community.

The contemporary contribution here is at least twofold. From the viewpoint of *communio*, the prayer vision of Francis that is both communal and accessible has great resonance with the liturgical vision of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* of the Second Vatican Council which insisted that the reform rites of the church, “should be distinguished by a noble simplicity. They should be short, clear, and free from useless repetitions. They should be within the people’s powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation” (n. 34). This vision is in service of the overriding goal of the liturgical reforms that “all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and ... in the restoration and promotion of the sacred

liturgy ... is the aim to be considered before all else” (n. 14). While Francis’s vision for prayer was wider than what we would today consider under the rubric of “liturgy,”³⁰ his prayer praxis and spirituality nonetheless contributes to the *communio* of the contemporary church by anticipating and supporting key aspects of the liturgical vision embedded in the Second Vatican Council. In so doing, Francis’s prayer vision implicitly critiques any approaches to prayer which would emphasize the arcane, gnostic, or personalistic.

Besides contributing to the *communio* of the Church, this vision also contributes to and supports the *missio* of the Church. In particular, a prayer vision that is accessible and communal is resonant and in solidarity with that of a multitude of Abrahamic believers – Jews, Christians and Muslims – whose prayer and ritual instincts gravitate more to the shared than the privatized in prayer. Whether the analogue is the minyan for the Amidah,³¹ the call from the minaret of a mosque by the muezzin for one of the prescribed canonical prayers (salat),³² the baptized gathered at Vespers or the Sunday eucharistic assembly, each ritual paradigm asserts the centrality of the community, and implicitly affirms the assembly as the ground of prayer. Such resonance is particularly important in those cultures whose inclinations are more sociocentric than egocentric. For Euro-Americans, steeped in an egocentric world view, ceding primacy to the communal nudges us to closer solidarity not only with our Jewish and Islamic sisters and brothers, but also with a growing number of Christians and Catholic Christians whose cultural prejudice is more towards “We are, therefore I am,” rather than “I think, therefore I am.”³³ Finally, such communal and accessible prayer instincts provide a potent critique to the flows of individualism and elitism that have become part of the globalizing trends of the twenty-first century.

Incarnational and Ecological

Our second compound image for considering the contribution of Francis’s prayer to the church’s *communio* and *missio* is rooted in the embodied and creational flow in his prayer and spirituality. Reminiscent of the language of Jesus, which was marked by vivid and realistic examples of fig trees, mustard seeds and lost coins,³⁴ Francis’s prayer vocabulary was clearly rooted in this world. While Francis’s own life was marked by many mystical experiences, and he was graced with the most intimate of contemplative experiences with the Holy One, his prayer language shows a marked preference for incarnational and ecological images. This prayer trajectory had much in continuity with certain cultural-liturgical trends of his era. Under the influence of what James Russell labels “Germanization,”³⁵ the Middle Ages witnessed the rise of a more magico-religious interpretation of Christianity and its rituals. One

result of such Germanization was increased focus on the objects and elements employed in worship.³⁶

Various religious objects and liturgical elements were significant catalysts for Francis's own prayer. Multiple are the prayer stories of Francis before a crucifix. His own "Prayer before a Crucifix" was reportedly composed in praying before the Crucifix at S. Damiano.³⁷ When teaching the brothers to pray during the early years of the community, Celano reports that whenever they saw a cross "or the sign of a cross, whether on the ground, on a way, in the trees or roadside hedges" they would prostrate on the ground, and repeat the acclamation Francis had taught them, "We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ, in all your churches throughout the whole world and we bless You because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world."³⁸ Celano reports that they would do a similar thing whenever they would even glimpse a church from a distance.³⁹

Francis's religious imagination, as revealed in his praying, displays another Germanizing tendency that corresponds to this incarnational-ecological motif, and that is what Russell dubs a dramatic-representational interpretation of scripture and liturgy.⁴⁰ Two prayer practices of Francis are particularly resonant with this tendency. The first is his Office of the Passion.⁴¹ According to Gallant and Cirino, this Office was not composed by Francis as much as it evolved over many years, a series of disparate elements that gradually came together creating this "unique form of prayer."⁴² Rooted in Francis's profound devotion to the whole of the paschal mystery whose center point was the cross,⁴³ and demonstrating his broad scriptural memory and special facility with the psalms, the office is divided into five parts: 1) Triduum and weekdays through the year, 2) the Easter season, 3) Sundays and principal feasts, 4) Advent, and 5) Christmas and Epiphany. The most complete section is the first in which, particularly resonant with the previously noted Germanizing tendencies, five of the hours broadly relate to particular episodes of Christ's passion, death and resurrection: 1) Compline, the prayer and arrest in Gethsemani; 2) Matins, the trial before the Sanhedrin; 3) Terce, the appearance before Pilate; 4) Sext, the agony and suffering; 5) None, the Crucifixion.⁴⁴ Prime appears as a morning interlude, celebrating the morning sun as a symbol of Resurrection, and Vespers as an acclamation of Christ's victory.⁴⁵ Together, these hours could be considered a kind of euchological tableau or dramatic allegory of Christ's passion, death and resurrection. In Francis's development of the *crèche*⁴⁶ he moves even further with a key moment in our salvation history, no longer content with allegorical presentation but instead progressing to fully formed representation.

While Francis's Office of the Passion and development of the *crèche* are considered here under the rubric of incarnational-ecological, one cannot

narrow the incarnational lens to the point that it appears as synonymous with the Christological. There has been much written about Francis's prayer as essentially Christological, yet there is a strong Trinitarian strand in Francis's prayers, in which the communion of the Father and the Son in the Spirit is repeatedly honored.⁴⁷ To assert, therefore, that Francis's prayer reveals an incarnational-ecological bias does not mean that it is in any way narrowly focused on Christ's own incarnation, but more broadly embraces the incarnational mystery of God's action in the world throughout the whole of salvation history – what Rahner calls the "liturgy of the world"⁴⁸ – that culminates in the living, dying and rising of the Son of God.

It is this broader sense of the incarnational that compels us to link it with the ecological, suggesting that the world is not simply a venue for God's self-revelation, but creation itself is such a self-revelation. The classic manifestation of this in Francis's prayer compositions is his "Canticle of the Creatures."⁴⁹ Inspired by the biblical model found in the *Benedicite* (Dan 3:52-90), Francis crafted a distinctive prayer in which brother and sisterhood resonates throughout all of creation. While there are philological debates about the exact meaning of this hymn, Pozzi believes that grammatical analysis reveals a prayer in which creation itself possesses an inherent ability to praise God.⁵⁰ It is not each isolated element of creation which lauds God, however, and God does not seem to be praised by the creatures we see and touch, but rather is praised "by the mutual harmony of the energies that make up our visible world. In modern terms we would speak of elementary particles, atoms, molecules, cells, and so forth. It is here that God's wisdom is supremely manifested; here is rooted the act of praise."⁵¹ Similar are his "Praises to be said at all the Hours."⁵² In this prayer a vast horizon of a cosmic choir unfolds as "Francis seems to envision himself as the voice of the cosmos, which praises the Creator and Redeemer on behalf of and together with all other creatures."⁵³

While Francis's incarnational-ecological tendencies resonate with parallel currents in Medieval Christian Europe, there are two characteristics of his prayer and ritualization that demonstrate a clear separation from the trends of his time. The first is the predominance of praise rather than petition in his prayer, especially that prayer marked by what we have characterized as the incarnational-ecological. The opposite tendency characterized much of the individual and collective prayer forms of medieval Christianity. The threat of final judgment loomed large for medieval Christians, symbolized by its ubiquitous depiction on tympanums over church portals throughout Europe. Writing of late medieval Christianity, Eamon Duffy suggests that most Christians hoped for salvation, but thought that only saints went to heaven directly. Consequently it was purgatory rather than hell that became

the focus of Christian fear.⁵⁴ This fear revealed itself in many prayer patterns of the Middle Ages, marked by penitential psalms, *psalmi familiares*, Offices of the Dead, and especially Masses for the Dead. Francis's prayer language, however, does not dwell on the petitionary, but rather is marked by words like praise, honor, exalt, adore, bless and give thanks. Bonaventure aptly describes Francis as a "praiser and worshipper of God,"⁵⁵ whose unshakable confidence in divine providence moved him to praise rather than petition,⁵⁶ unlike many coreligionists of his day. A second divergence between Francis's incarnational-ecological approach and those of many other medieval Christians under the Germanizing influence is that Francis's respect for and even love of things of this world were never a substitute for an intimate relationship with God and ethical living. Thus, Francis never seemed persuaded by what Russell characterized as a magico-religious interpretation of prayer or worship.⁵⁷ On the contrary, his radical embrace of poverty disallowed any element to come between himself and the Holy One or disable him for offering due reverence to all of his sisters and brothers. Furthermore, it could be argued that it was this abiding commitment to poverty which fueled Francis's preference for praise over petition, as it is the former which "is the prayer par excellence that flows out of an experience of total poverty of self."⁵⁸

As for the contributions of Francis's unique incarnational-ecological prayer approach to *communio* and *missio*, several come to mind. First is the rich resonance here with a church which defines itself sacramentally (*Lumen Gentium* 1), and fundamentally embraces the "sacramental principle." As Richard McBrien summarizes:

"Catholicism has never hesitated to affirm the 'mysterious' dimension of all reality; the cosmos, nature, history, events, persons, objects, rituals, words. Everything is, in principle, capable of embodying and communicating the divine.... There is no finite instrument that God cannot put to use. On the other hand, we humans have nothing else apart from finite instruments to express our own response to God's self-communication."⁵⁹

More recently David Tracy has argued theologically⁶⁰ and Andrew Greeley attempted to prove empirically⁶¹ that Roman Catholics have a distinctive sacramental imagination. This is an imagination that believes that God continuously self-discloses through the created world, and thus renders worship both accepting of and inclined toward utilizing the things of creation and produced from creation (e.g., water, bread, wine, oil, candles, statues, etc.) at the heart of worship. Francis thus provides a traditional and accessible affirmation of this basic sacramental principle. His prayer instincts draw Roman Catholics through the incarnational-ecological principle back to

the heart of their faith while simultaneously grounding them in a real world populated by real people facing real ethical dilemmas. Catholic-Christianity is not a disembodied faith journey that beckons us to *fuga mundi*, but is sacramentally committed to a church in history, that must grapple with the ethical issues of the day.⁶²

A second contribution of the incarnational and ecological in Francis's prayer to both *communio* and *missio* is the connection between these and major theological flows within Catholicism and Christianity as well as across the major world religions. Within Roman Catholicism, there is a growing awareness that those of us who embrace a sacramental principle need to attend to embodiment in our prayer.⁶³ Though it is not much acknowledged, the very Eucharist rite at the center of our worship is both embodied and fundamentally ecological.⁶⁴ And as Eucharist is the fount and summit of our communion and mission, the ecological cast of our worship reminds us that the incarnational-ecological, the embodied in humankind and creation is a basic ecclesiological issue.⁶⁵ Being a Church in the world means attending to the concrete and particular embodiment of the baptized in particular contexts. Thus issues of gender, physical ability and disability, sexuality, and other incarnational aspects of our lives lie at the very heart of what it means to be Church, and cannot be ignored or marginalized.

More broadly across Christianity, in 1990 the World Council of Churches moved the ecological agenda in a significant way by placing the theme "the integrity of creation" at the heart of their world convocation that year.⁶⁶ Their affirmation that creation is "beloved of God," mirrors Francis's invitation to engage in cosmic praise and thanksgiving. His incarnational-ecological prayer instincts not only resonate with currents operative among today's Christians, but are affirmed in the multitude of eco-theologies which Robert Schreiter considers one of the major theological flows of the twenty-first century across the world's major religions.⁶⁷

At the same time, Francis's profound sense of poverty and total dependence on God provides a strong critique to church and world regarding the rampant flows of human exploitation and consumerism which increasingly characterize our globalized economy. Neither the human body nor the biosphere we inhabit are to be manipulated for individual or corporate gain. Here the incarnational-ecological harmonizes with the previous compound image of communal-accessible, reminding us that engagement with the things of this world are for the sake of the common good. Thus Francis's incarnational-ecological vision, filtered through the lens of poverty, eschews profiteering and exploitation, critiques the petitionary "give me" mentality all too prevalent today and, instead, calls us to the most profound gratitude for God's unbounded goodness that encourages a spirituality of detached thanksgiving.

Passionate-Lyrical

Our third compound image for accessing the contribution of Francis's prayer to church and world highlights the heartfelt and the poetic. Francis is often remembered as an affective, lyrical and dramatic individual.⁶⁸ Celano's first description of Francis is rich in corroborating images, noting him to be "an object of admiration to all ... [who] endeavored to surpass others in his flamboyant display of vain accomplishments: wit, curiosity, practical jokes and foolish talk, songs, and soft and flowing garments."⁶⁹ The frequent caricature of Francis as a romantic is grounded in his well documented chivalrous reverie, first about noble acts that would bring him glory in this world, and ultimately about choosing as a bride a Lady called poverty⁷⁰ as befitting a herald in service of a new King.⁷¹

On the one hand, Francis's rich affectivity could be dismissed simply as a personality trait, born of a sensitive soul raised in the troubadour spirit of a privileged merchant class.⁷² Closer examination, however, suggests that passion was not simply a random genetic inheritance but a mature choice, intimately wed to his incarnational instincts fired in the crucible of Lady Poverty. Religious commitment and prayer for Francis were marked by unrestrained abandon, which required both complete interior commitment and a consonant public enactment. Thus, Francis did not simply tell his father that he was willing to renounce all rights of inheritance, he publicly stripped himself bare and handed his clothes back to father.⁷³ When his superior wanted to sew fur into his habit because he was so cold and ill, Francis allowed it only if he sewed the fur on the outside as well.⁷⁴ When celebrating the feast of the Nativity, he would kiss images of the baby's limbs, stammer sweetly as a baby, and even though the feast would fall on a Friday and require abstinence, proclaimed that he wanted "even the walls to eat meat on that day, and if they cannot, at least on the outside they [should] be rubbed with grease!"⁷⁵ When he was concerned that he might be misleading the people for abstaining when he was actually eating meat in secret, he had himself stripped and dragged before the people with a rope tied around his neck in imitation of common criminals.⁷⁶ And as he progressed in the complete abandonment of self to Christ crucified, the drama eventually played itself out on his own body in stigmata.⁷⁷ It is not surprising that Celano describes Francis as "a man of great fervor."⁷⁸

The paradox of such dramatic abandon is the way it so often expressed itself lyrically and joyfully. Passion for Francis did not translate into anything dour as though his only passion was for misery. Rather, his fundamental stance in gratitude and instinct for praise over petition, seemed to sustain him in joy. Prototypical is Celano's description of Francis before the Pope and cardinals,

"speaking with such fire of spirit that he could not contain himself for joy. As he brought forth the word from his mouth, he moved his feet as if dancing, not playfully but burning with the fire of divine love, not provoking laughter but moving them to tears of sorrow."⁷⁹ True and perfect joy for Francis, as was made clear to Brother Leo,⁸⁰ was not some fleeting feeling or spontaneous affect, but a spiritual stance and gospel resolve.

Francis was not only born in the age of troubadours, he adopted and purified the troubadour spirit. His limitless confidence in God and complete lack of self-consciousness transformed him into a unique minstrel. His passion for the God whom he continuously praised begot a self-effacing genre of hymnody. Some of these texts have come down to us, such as the "Praises to be said at all the Hours,"⁸¹ the "Praises of God,"⁸² and the "Canticle of the Creatures."⁸³ These exemplars do not, however, define or exhaust the lyricism of this mystic whom Celano recalls would "pick up a stick from the ground, and put it over his left arm while holding a bow bent with a string in his right hand, drawing it over the stick as if it were a [fiddle]"⁸⁴ as he sang about the Lord. Thus, the Assisi Compilation could note how the "sweet melody of the spirit bubbling up inside him would become on the outside a French tune."⁸⁵

Francis's passion and lyricism were contagious. Notable in this regard is Celano's description of the canonization of Francis. Not only were the people filled with joy, but Celano describes the pope as one who "rejoiced and exulted, dancing with joy."⁸⁶ That others would participate in and continue his legacy of spiritual passion and perfect joy does not appear to be purely coincidence, for Francis is well remembered as one who intentionally instructed others in this legacy. Notable in this regard is the passage in the *Mirror of Perfection* in which he rebuked a brother who looked sad: "This sadness is a matter between you and God. Pray to Him, that by His mercy He may spare you and grant your soul the joy of salvation of which it was deprived by the guilt of sin. Try to be joyful always around me and others, because it is not fitting that a servant of God appear before his brothers or others with a sad and gloomy face."⁸⁷ Francis himself was not always capable of fulfilling this vision. Sometimes, for example, when contemplating the poverty of the blessed Virgin and her Son, he would groan "with sobs of pain, and bathed in tears ... [eat] his bread on the naked ground."⁸⁸ As a mystic with a rich affective life, Francis was both capable of and experienced in expressing the range of human emotions. At the same time, a trajectory of disciplined and sustained joy flowed through his life.

More broadly, it is useful to consider Francis as someone who, throughout the whole of his life, dramatically instructed and initiated others into his passion, joy and lyricism. Laura Smit considers this a form of "aesthetic pedagogy." She writes:

[Francis is] concerned to illustrate a way of life, not with mnemonic devices, but with his entire being. He is a teacher in the sense that the Hebrew prophets were teachers, or that Socrates was a teacher, or that Gandhi was a teacher. His life is the lesson. The virtuous life which he wishes to communicate is the life of Christ. So he takes on the persona of Christ, as a role which he plays in the drama of his life. It is not accidental that his followers recognized Francis as "the Mirror of Perfection." His life is meant to be such a mirror. He is a performance artist for whom drama functions pedagogically.⁸⁹

One dramatic example of this pedagogy for passion occurs in both his earlier and later Rules regarding the care of brothers for one another. Eschewing the disembodied or impassive, Francis instructs his brothers "Let each one confidently make known his need to the other, for if a mother loves and cares for her son according to the flesh, how much more diligently must someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit."⁹⁰ Similarly did he induct his followers into his joy and lyricism.⁹¹

One of the abiding issues in Christian prayer is that of orthodoxy, and a concern that the prayer both express and create "right belief." While Francis's prayer was certainly orthodox from a doctrinal perspective, he seemed more concerned with orthopraxis, and the absolute continuity between the way he and his followers prayed and the way they lived. Our consideration of Francis's life and prayer as passionate and lyrical, however, further highlights how Francis was also concerned with orthopathy, or "right feeling." For Francis "right feeling" was a disciplined passion through which affect became virtue, and feeling was directed in service of a higher purpose. While intimately linked to the strong incarnational predisposition of his spirituality, this orthopathy is a yet distinctive aspect of his spiritual life and prayer. His affectivity and lyricism were disciplined through poverty so that they only and always served the ultimate goal of uniting him with the God who was both the font and the summit of these gifts.

The contribution of this passionate-lyrical aspect of Francis's spirituality and prayer to the Church's *communio* and *missio* is both rich and paradoxical. For example, Francis's dramatic and exuberant orthopathy provides a vivid example of what is imaged in the opening lines from Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts" (n. 1). To be a true follower of Christ is to be fashioned in the image of that Christ who is aptly understood as the compassion of God.⁹² Authentic belief is a matter of one's whole self, including one's emotions. And

authentic worship is also participation with the whole self, including one's emotions.

At the same time, Francis's lyricism is disciplined and his passion has taken a vow of poverty. Thus, his orthopathy provides no pretext for a religion or religious expression whose roots go no deeper than impulsive sensitivities or sentimentality. The drama of Francis's praise was not anchored in a gift for theatricality, but in a commitment to the Most High God in gratitude for the salvific drama of the Cross. Thus while authentic Christian discipleship and worship engage the emotions, they neither begin nor end there. These require discipline and maturation, so that authentic love may grow.⁹³ Worship as entertainment finds no grounding in the spirituality and prayer of Francis.

In *communio* and *missio*, Francis's passionate lyricism is a gesture of hospitality to peoples and cultures who value the public expression of affect in religion and worship. Sometimes the worship forms of Western Christianity have lost touch with the lyrical and ecstatic nature of early Christian worship,⁹⁴ become overly cerebral and prosaic. The poetic and musical trajectories of Francis's prayer, however, remind us that we were a community born in song that was virtually incapable of public proclamation without lyricism.⁹⁵ There are many cultural groups within the contemporary Church whose penchant is for worship that is similarly lyrical and inspiring.⁹⁶ The evangelizing import of worship that integrates mind, heart, body and spirit is further underscored by the rapid growth of Pentecostal churches today, the fastest growing denomination in the twentieth century.⁹⁷

Finally, Francis's aesthetic pedagogy in prayer and hymnody, canticles and poetry is a striking reminder that we honor a God who defines the very nature of beauty. But the beautiful as revealed in the God of Jesus Christ is both a different beauty and a beauty in difference.⁹⁸ As Francis hymns, this is a God that is both beauty and meekness, charity and humility, joy and justice.⁹⁹ To enter into the theater of this God's love, to join our voices to this song of the Lamb is to embrace a similar aesthetic whose criteria are meekness, charity, humility, joy and justice.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

The mystery of God in Francis the mystic, the mystery of Christ crucified in Francis the lover cannot be reduced to formulae or footnotes – nor can the reservoir of spirituality or the well of prayer we name Franciscan. Yet, through analogy and narrative, it is possible to grasp something of the key flows and movements in his prayer and spirituality. Similarly, it is possible to suggest certain prayer characteristics that are not well supported by the Francis legacy. Prayer in the spirit of Francis, for example, is not stolid,

monotonous, exclusive, self-serving, dour, hygienic, cerebral, gnostic, flat-footed or prosaic. On the contrary, it tends toward the impassioned, lyrical, inclusive, centrifugal, joyful, vulgar, embodied, fleet-footed and poetic. Further, it summons a church and evokes a God of passion, lyricism, joy, and poetry, neither of whom retreat from hands in the mud – whether that means creating human beings from the clay of the earth, or enabling human beings to recover their dignity by helping them till the land – and whose grace and prayer embrace this world in all of its brokenness as a source of grace. Francis's own gifts and graces, especially his discipline of poverty, liberated him to serve church and world with a breadth of vision unencumbered by the need to control or possess. May those of us who similarly wish to be *virī et mulieres catholici* drink deeply of his vision so that it may only redound to the good of church and world in authentic *communio* and *missio*.

ENDNOTES

¹ One recent example is that of Ilia Delio who characterizes Franciscan prayer as "Christ-centered, affective, contemplative, cosmic and evangelizing." *Franciscan Prayer* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2004), p. 3 et passim.

² From the first antiphon of First Vespers of the Office of St. Francis, composed by Julian of Speyer and others, *Officium S. Francisci, Ad I Vesperas, Antiphonae I* (Enrico Menestò and Stefano Brufani, *Fontes Franciscani* (Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1995), 1101; English translation in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* [hereafter FAED], ed. Regis Armstrong et al., 3 vols. (New York: New City Press, 1999-2001), I:327).

³ *Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor* (1994) n. 2.

⁴ See, for example, the overview of various interpretations of communion ecclesiology provided by Dennis Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology: Vision and Versions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000).

⁵ *Ad Gentes*, n. 2; *Redemptoris missio*, n. 5.

⁶ Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church* (New York-London: Continuum, 2002), 225-26.

⁷ See, for example, *The Roman-Seraphic Ritual of Religious Profession*, n. 6, which emphasizes our consecration for mission in the world.

⁸ See, for example, "Synodal Message," *Catholic International* 6:3 (1995), 137; also, *Vita Consecrata*, nn. 3-4 and *passim*.

⁹ The Third Plenary Council of the Capuchin Order (Mattli, 1978) n. 10; p. 44 in *The Path of Renewal: The Documents of the Five Plenary Councils and the First Assembly of the Order of Capuchin Friars Minor*, ed. Regis Armstrong (n.pl.: n.d.).

¹⁰ Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity*, 226.

¹¹ See Otto Nussbaum, *Kloster, Priestermonch und Privatmesse*, *Theophaneia* 14 (Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1961); also, Angelus Häussling, *Mönchskonvent und Eucharistiefeyer*, *Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen* 58 (Münster/Westfalen: Aschendorf, 1973).

¹² *The Longer Rule*, n. 77 in Jerome Bertram, *The Chrodegang Rules* (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2005), 221 and 276.

¹³ *Opusculum XI*, "Dominus Vobiscum," *Patrologia Latina* 145:237D.

¹⁴ Pierre Salmon, *The Breviary through the Centuries*, trans. Sister David Mary (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1962), 14-15.

¹⁵ Eric Palazzo, *A History of Liturgical Books from the Beginning to the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993), 169-72.

¹⁶ Octavian Schmucki, "Divine Praise and Meditation according to the Teaching and Example of St. Francis of Assisi," *Greyfriars Review* 4:1 (1990): 42.

¹⁷ "Flow" is a term originally employed in sociology, anthropology and communication sciences, and more recently in theology, to denote commonly shared or circulating information or ideas that are clearly detectable yet difficult to define with any specificity. See Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicism* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1997), 15.

¹⁸ See, for example AP 36 in Lorenzo Di Fonzo, "L'Anonimo Perugino Tra Le Fonti Francescane del Secolo XIII," *Miscellanea Franciscana* 72 [1972], 456; FAED II:51; L3S 52 in Théophile Desbonnets, "Legenda Trium Sociorum," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 67:128; FAED II:98; Bonaventure LM 3.10 in S. Bonaventurae opera omnia, ed. Collegii a S. Bonaventura [Quaracchi, 1889], 8:512; FAED II:549.

¹⁹ Julian of Speyer, *The Life of Saint Francis* 54 (*Fontes Franciscani* 1075; FAED I:406); Bonaventure, LM 10:7 (*Bonaventurae opera omnia* 8:535; FAED II:610).

²⁰ The significance of this prayer for Francis is not only underscored by its importance in his own prayer and that of his followers, but also by his catechesis on this prayer which "is perhaps the only instance in which we find an example of how Francis responded to his brother's request to teach them how to pray." FAED I:158.

²¹ I Cel 45 (*Fontes Franciscani* 319; FAED I:222).

²² For example, in the early 13th century Ordinary of St.-Denis, it is employed as a versicle at Matins on the Feast of the Finding of the Holy Nails; a versicle during Sunday processions to the cross; a versicle for Matins and Sext on the feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross; an antiphon and versicle for Matins, Responsory for Lauds, Responsory for the Procession to the cross, and versicle at Sext on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. See my *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis*, 392, 442, 522, 523, 608, 609, 609, 609 and 610 respectively. Earlier it is found as an antiphon for the adoration of the cross on Good Friday in Benevento and other Italian centers. See David Hiley, *Western Plainchant* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 527.

²³ Stephen van Dijk and Joan Hazelden Walker, *The Origins of the Modern Roman Liturgy* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1960), 138 and 237.

²⁴ The brothers acquired the Portiuncula in the years following the first approval for the primitive rule in 1209 or 1210. See L3S 56 in Théophile Desbonnets, "Legenda Trium Sociorum: Edition Critique," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 67 [1974] 130; FAED II:100.

²⁵ A requirement embedded in the Rule of 1221 (RegNB 3.3 in Kajetan Esser, *Die Opuscula des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi*, 2nd ed., Spicilegium Bonaventurianum 13 (Grottaferrata: Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1989), 379; FAED I:65, but probably occurring in the middle of the previous decade.

²⁶ RegEr 3 (*Opuscula* 410; FAED I:61).

²⁷ Test 29 (*Opuscula* 442; FAED I:126).

²⁸ Francis seems to have acquired this breviary when the Rule of 1221 was approved. See, for example, Julio Micó "The Spirituality of St. Francis: 'To adore the Lord God' Francis's Prayer," *Greyfriars Review* 9:1 (1995): 25. An accessible description of this

breviary is found in Stephen J.P. van Dijk, "The Breviary of St. Francis," *Franciscan Studies* 9 (1949): 13-40.

²⁹ EpOrd 30 (*Opuscula* 261; FAED I:119).

³⁰ Since the promulgation of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (1963) liturgy includes all rites contained in officially published post-conciliar liturgical books, including: the sacraments, the liturgy of the hours, and various other officially approved rites such as viaticum and the commendation of the dying; rites of Christian burial; Rites for the dedication of a church, religious profession and consecration of virgins; and the contents of the revised Roman *Book of Blessings*. See Lawrence Madden, "Liturgy," *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, ed. Peter Fink (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990), 741.

³¹ Shmuel Himelstein, "Minyan," *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, eds. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Widoger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 468.

³² Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, *Forgotten Aspects of Islamic Worship*, Encyclopedia of Islamic Doctrine 7 (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1998), 55.

³³ "Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.' This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man." John S. Mbiti, *African religions and philosophy* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 109. On the other hand, *Cogito ergo sum* (literally "I am thinking therefore I am") is a translation of René Descartes' original *Je pense, donc je suis* from his *Discourse on Method* (1637), and a dominant image of the "enlightened" Euro-American individual.

³⁴ Amos Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 89.

³⁵ James Russell, *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity: A Sociocultural Approach to Religious Transformation* (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

³⁶ Ibid., 191.

³⁷ OrCruc (*Opuscula* 354; FAED I:40).

³⁸ ICel 45 (*Fontes Franciscani*, 320; FAED I:222).

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Russell, 6.

⁴¹ The critical edition is found in Laurent Gallant, *Dominus regnavit a ligno. L'Officium Passionis de saint François d'Assise, édition critique et étude* (Institut Catholique de Paris: thèse, 1978).

⁴² Laurent Gallant and André Cirino, *The Geste of the Great King: The Office of the Passion of Francis of Assisi* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2001), 194; also, see Dominique Gagnan, "Office de la Passion, prière quotidienne de Saint François d'Assise," *Antonianum* 55 (1980): 3-86.

⁴³ H. Felder, *Die Ideale des hl. Franziskus von Assisi* (Paderborn, 1951), 401-2, as cited in Esser, *Opuscula*, 322.

⁴⁴ Gallant and Cirino, *The Geste of the Great King*, 198; alternate interpretations are offered in FAED I:140-7.

⁴⁵ Gallant and Cirino, *The Geste of the Great King*, 245 and 281 respectively.

⁴⁶ Julian of Speyer, *The Life of Saint Francis* 54 (*Fontes Franciscani* 1075; FAED I:406); also, Bonaventure, LM 10:7 (*Bonaventurae opera omnia* 8:535; FAED II:610).

⁴⁷ "Much has been written about the so called Christocentrism of St. Francis. In light of the writings, such a term should be used with a certain caution. If the term is used in a broad sense to indicate the amount of space and special position given to Christ in the piety and life of the Poverello, no one can take exception to this. On the other hand, if it is maintained that in the writings direct references to Christ are more frequent than those to God the Father and to the Trinity, this runs contrary to the statistical evidence." Oktavian Schmucki, "Fundamental Characteristics of the Franciscan 'Form of Life,'" *Greyfriars Review* 5:3 (1991) 334; also, see Thaddée Matura, "The Heart Turned Towards the Lord" – The contemplative Dimension of the Christian Life in the Writings of Francis," *Cord* 44 (1994), 7-8.

⁴⁸ Karl Rahner, "Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event," in *Theological Investigations XIV: Ecclesiology, Questions in the Church, The Church in the World*, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 169; for a further exploration of this topic see Michael Skelley, *The Liturgy of the World: Karl Rahner's Theology of Worship* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991).

⁴⁹ CantSol (*Opuscula* 128-9; FAED I:113-4).

⁵⁰ Giovanni Pozzi, "Canticle of Brother Sun: From Grammar to Prayer," *Greyfriars Review* 4:1 (1990), 18.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 9.

⁵² LaudHor (*Opuscula* 319-20; FAED I:161-62).

⁵³ Oktavian Schmucki, "Divine Praise and Meditation according to the Teaching and Example of St. Francis of Assisi," *Greyfriars Review* 4:1 (1990): 60.

⁵⁴ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1992), 341.

⁵⁵ *Dei laudator et cultor*, LM 8:10 (*Bonaventurae opera omnia* 8:529; FAED II:594).

⁵⁶ Schmucki, "Fundamental Characteristics of the Franciscan 'Form of Life,'" 333.

⁵⁷ Russell, p. 189.

⁵⁸ John Grygus, "Poverty and Prayer: The Franciscan Way to God," *Cord* 39 (1989), 40.

⁵⁹ Richard McBrien, *Catholicism*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1980), II:743.

⁶⁰ David Tracy, *Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), esp. 405-38.

⁶¹ See, for example, Andrew Greeley, "Sacraments keep Catholics high on the church," *National Catholic Reporter* (12 April 1991) 11-13; idem, "Why do Catholics Stay in the church? Because of the Stories," *New York Times Magazine* (10 July 1994), 38-41; and, idem, *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2000).

⁶² See Gustavo Gutierrez's discussion of the Church as a "Sacrament of History," in his *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973), 255-85.

⁶³ See, for example, Susan Ross, "Body and Gender in Sacramental Theology," in her *Extravagant Affections* (New York, Continuum, 198), 97-136.

⁶⁴ See my "The Preparatory Rites: A Case Study in Liturgical Ecology," with Kathleen Hughes and Gil Ost diek in *The Ecological Challenge: Ethical, Liturgical and Spiritual Responses*, eds. Richard Fragomeni and John Pawlikowski (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 83-101.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Natalie Watson, et al., *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2002).

⁶⁶ World Council of Churches, *Now Is the Time: The Final Document and Other Texts from the World Convocation on Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation*, Seoul, Republic of Korea, 5-12 March 1990 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1990).

⁶⁷ Schreiter, *The New Catholicism*, 19.

⁶⁸ E.g., Edward Hays' *The Passionate Troubadour: A Medieval Novel about Francis of Assisi* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2004).

⁶⁹ 1 Cel 2 (*Fontes Franciscani* 278; FAED I:183).

⁷⁰ 1 Cel 7 (*Fontes Franciscani* 283; FAED I:188).

⁷¹ 1 Cel 16 (*Fontes Franciscani* 291; FAED I:194).

⁷² See, for example, Linda Paterson, *The World of the Troubadours: Medieval Occitan Society, c.1100 - c.1300* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); also, Hans-Erich Keller, "Italian Troubadours," in *A Handbook of the Troubadours*, ed. F.R.P. Akehurst and Judith Davis (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 295-306.

⁷³ 1 Cel 15 (*Fontes Franciscani* 290; FAED I:193).

⁷⁴ SpecPerf 62 (*Fontes Franciscani* 1946-47; FAED III:307).

⁷⁵ 2 Cel 199 (*Fontes Franciscani* 617; FAED II:374). I am grateful to Br. William Hugo, OFM Cap. for this reference.

⁷⁶ LM 6.2 (*Bonaventurae opera omnia* 8:520; FAED II:570).

⁷⁷ LM 13.1-3 (*Bonaventurae opera omnia* 8:542-3; FAED II:630-33).

⁷⁸ 1 Cel 58 (*Fontes Franciscani* 333; FAED I:234).

⁷⁹ 1 Cel 73 (*Fontes Franciscani* 349; FAED I:245).

⁸⁰ VPLaet (*Opuscula* 461; FAED I:166-67).

⁸¹ LaudHor (*Opuscula* 319-21; FAED I:161).

⁸² LaudDei (*Opuscula* 142; FAED I:109).

⁸³ CantSol (*Opuscula* 128-9; FAED I:113-4).

⁸⁴ 2 Cel 127 (*Fontes Franciscani* 559; FAED II:331); although FAED II gives the English "viola" (Latin viella), that instrument did not exist at the time. "The fiddle was the most important bowed instrument in medieval court music, suitable for any kind of music and cultivated by both professionals and amateurs." Jerome and Elizabeth Roche, *A Dictionary of Early Music from the Troubadours to Monteverdi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), s.v. "fiddle."

⁸⁵ CompA 38 (*Fontes Franciscani* 1511; FAED II:142).

⁸⁶ 1 Cel 121 (*Fontes Franciscani* 401; FAED I:291).

⁸⁷ SpecPerf 96 (*Fontes Franciscani* 2003-04; FAED III:342-43).

⁸⁸ 2 Cel 200 (*Fontes Franciscani* 617; FAED II:375).

⁸⁹ Laura Smit, "The Aesthetic Pedagogy of Francis of Assisi," <http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Medi/MediSmit.htm> (accessed 14.v.06).

⁹⁰ RegB 6.8 (*Opuscula* 369; FAED I:103), also RegNB 9.11 (*Opuscula* 386; FAED I:71).

⁹¹ See notes 52 and 87 above.

⁹² Karl Rahner, "The Theological Meaning of the Veneration of the Sacred Heart," *Theological Investigations VIII: Further Theology of the Spiritual Life* 2, trans. David Bourke (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 228.

⁹³ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 4.

⁹⁴ See my "Concert, Theater or Liturgy: What Difference does it make?" *Sung Liturgy*, ed. Virgil Funk (Washington DC: The Pastoral Press, 1991), 77-93.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Bernhard Lang's "Paul the Possessed and the Lord's Supper in Corinth," in his *Sacred Games: A History of Christian Worship* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1997), 372-83.

⁹⁶ See my *Foundations of Christian Music: The Music of Pre-Constantinian Christianity* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 67-90.

⁹⁷ For example, such is commonly predicated of African-Americans. See *Plenty Good Room: The Spirit and Truth of African American Catholic Worship* from the Black Liturgy Subcommittee of the United States Catholic Conference (Washington DC, 1991) nn. 49, 82 and *passim*.

⁹⁸ See Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven* (Reading MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1995).

⁹⁹ Alejandro García-Rivera, *The Community of the Beautiful: A Theological Aesthetics* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 39-61.

¹⁰⁰ LaudDei (*Opuscula* 142; FAED I:109).



Santa Chiara – Icon Gazing – Freeing the Fire!

Roberta Cusack, O.S.F.

Every tradition has its role models and in our Catholic tradition we are confronted, often confounded and challenged by those we call saints. These are the people we look to for their internal vision of Divine Goodness as they give us a glimpse of the heart of God in the center of their humanity and thereby focus eternity for us. Why? Because they've made it! They are already there dwelling in the full presence of God. And we believe the Holy Ones of God give us a taste of the possibilities of greatness in ourselves as they wait and pray for us to join them. They are icons of the Face of God, of hope and peace, of joy and truth – of the God who is relentlessly compassionate and just. They show us the Face of a God of Holy Madness, of the Foolishness of God; they show us the Poor and Disfigured Face of God, and also God's face of Radiant Joy and Glory, the God who has loved us into being.

We are reminded in Hebrews 12:1-4 that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses who actually watch after us and help us to move forward in our struggles so as to arrive at the fullness of the Reign of God. Those Holy Ones have already completed their course in this life and are ever encouraging us as we continue to run the course.

Icons likewise remind us of God's great plan of salvation for the universe. So when we observe an Eastern Christian bow before, kiss an icon, sign themselves, burn incense and light candles – this is all an indication of humility and respect to our God who acts through the subject or individual depicted in an icon.

St. Clare of Assisi certainly belongs to that "great cloud of witnesses" talked about in Hebrews 12:1-4. And she surely is a great woman of light as was foretold to her mother, Ortulana, during her pregnancy with Clare as is related in her legend. Ortulana visited a church, a frequent practice, and one day in prayer she was assured that she would have a safe delivery and that the girl child she was about to give birth to would be a light, a clear, radiant and bright light, to illumine the world. (LCI, 2.)

Ortulana journeyed as a medieval pilgrim to the famous shrines of St. Michael in Apulia, and perhaps to St. James of Compostella, Spain and the Holy Land and did her gazing on those very turbulent, demanding and risky journeys in the middle ages. So too Clare, like so many before and after her, grew into this gazing upon the Icons set before her in life. These icons ever raise up for us consciously or not, three core questions: Where did I come from? What am I doing here? Where am I going? I trust most Christians would answer that we come from God. Here we are expected to become icons of Christ Jesus, Images of that firstborn of all Creation, the Incarnate One. And we hopefully have our hearts set on going to God in the fullness of the Kingdom.

I've been leading PRAYING WITH ICONS RETREATS for the last few years. Some have been a week long, others a few days. And in the course of this process, I most clearly learned from Clare how I'm to best pray before the icons. She gives us the meaning of many of her simple yet profound statements in her letters to St. Agnes of Bohemia. Most Franciscans are familiar with Clare's instructions or steps to the interior life. In her 2nd letter to Agnes, likely written c1235, she encourages one of her neophyte Sisters, Agnes, over in Prague. Listen up to these words of wisdom from Clare in what was then still a rather new Order.

Your Spouse, though *more beautiful than the children of men* (Ps 44:3) became, for your salvation, the lowest of men, was despised, struck, scourged untold times throughout His entire body, and then died amid the suffering of the Cross. O most noble Queen, gaze upon [Him], consider [Him], contemplate [Him], as you desire to imitate [Him]. (2LAg, 20)

As Regis Armstrong and Ignatius Brady state in their footnote to this passage:

"These may well be considered steps of prayer: gazing upon (*intueri*) the poor crucified Christ, considering (*considera*), and contemplating (*contemplare*) Him. Throughout all of these expressions of prayer, the desire to imitate the poverty of Christ is present. This may be seen as a perfect expression of affective spirituality, which characterizes the Franciscan tradition."

Having been in formation work for so long I often muse over how our newcomers, 21st century Franciscans, would take to this advice. I likewise ponder how I am taking to Clare's words of wisdom and instruction in my everyday life. I find Clare's advice, instruction and encouragement greatly resonating in my heart both as I "write" the icon images and as I gaze upon

them ... and hopefully bear them to the cloister of our world as I go forth as a living icon in action.

Expanding on this same vision of gazing, Clare in her 3rd and 4th letter to Agnes around c 1238 and 1253, and in her Testament 1247-1253, moves into the mirror theme which was quite a popular image among the monastics of the middle ages. Even St. Bonaventure used this image in his "The Soul's Journey Into God" in 1259 – who knows, perhaps echoing Clare's inspiration ... I like to substitute the word icon or image for mirror in these texts. "Place your mind before the mirror of eternity..." (3LAg. 12).

Inasmuch as this vision is the splendor of eternal glory, the brilliance of eternal light and the mirror without blemish, look upon that mirror each day, O queen and spouse of Jesus Christ, and continually study your face within it, so that you may adorn yourself within and without with beautiful robes and cover yourself with the flowers and garments of all the virtues, as becomes the daughter and most chaste bride of the Most High King. Indeed, blessed poverty, holy humility, and ineffable charity are reflected in that mirror, as, with the grace of God, you can contemplate them throughout the entire mirror. Look at the parameters of this mirror ... the surface ... then the depth of this same mirror ... Therefore, that Mirror, suspended on the wood of the Cross, urged those who passed by to consider ... From this moment, then, O queen of our heavenly King, let yourself be inflamed more strongly with the fervor of charity! (4LAg, 14-27).

The mirror of Christ becomes a reflection in ourselves as we strive to Incarnate Him to the world by our simple Franciscan presence. If this is truly our call from God why all the frenzy and fanfare over what I or others think I ought to do. Francis in his first admonition tells us "we give birth to Him through our holy manner of working which should shine before all others as an example".

Francis and Clare definitely found the fire, the stunning brilliance, the pervading warmth of the Gospel which had passed from Jesus down to the Church of today, as imperfect as it frequently is at times. Clare was certainly a very passionate woman and expresses her desire to be transformed by the fire of Christ's love. This is clearly contained in her letters to Agnes, more so than in the other few writings we have from Clare. After all, she does belong to that Seraphic family, burning afire with God's love, and takes the lead as the first Franciscan woman with the foundation group of Franciscan troubadours of her time. And since the celebration of her big Birthday year, 1993-1994 which brought us a number of fine resources, with many still in process, most of us

have been touched by Clare's burning passion, and like her we too are trying to seize the moment of gift-grace.

We've witnessed the multitude of new ways in which our TOR family of Francis has been moved by that event. Clare certainly figured powerfully in the International thought process of the development of our new TOR Rule. She became so significant in the minds and hearts of some of us that there was initially great confusion in trying to work through the historical emphasis of various aspects of Francis's charism for each of the families of our tradition on an International level. And were we ever passionate about that!

Actually this is one of my great concerns presently as I gaze upon icons. I wonder about the passion each of us have for our "new" TOR Rule. I often ask myself whether my enthusiasm has continued to grow as it started off about 30 years ago. Or has it slacked since the birth of its revision in 1982? Perhaps it has never taken hold? Am I afire in desiring to live all that is implied in my commitment? In what way do my routine activities Incarnate Jesus and His Gospel message? Am I becoming what I GAZE upon and am I willing to be thereby transformed into a new one for Christ? What am I doing with the Franciscan vision? There is a Japanese Proverb which tells us "Vision without action is a daydream, and action without vision is a nightmare." (anon) Our Franciscan tradition has ever been fired by a passion for the Gospel. And this must ever give energy to whatever sparks our desires as Franciscans to burst into a Christ-like flame of light in the warmth of love as did our foundation people. Jesus has told us clearly "I am the light of the world and the one who follows me will have the light of life." (Jn 8:12) St. Clare in her gazing process reflected this light brilliantly and so might we when we draw close to the source of the fire. Sacred icons are a very effective means for this experience of mystical prayer.

In Clare's Testament we note:

The Lord Himself not only has set us as an example and mirror for others, but also for our (own) sisters whom the Lord has called to our way of life, so that they in turn will be a mirror and example to those living in the world. Since, therefore, the Lord has called us to such great things, that those who ~~are~~ to be models and mirrors for others may behold themselves in us, we are truly bound to bless and praise the Lord and to be strengthened constantly in Him to do good. (TestCl, 6)

Clare encourages us to look, to gaze, into the mirror of Christ, to really see Him, and to continue GAZING and see ourselves becoming that Christ. Yes, The Ole Skin Horse and Rabbit got it right – "Being Real, isn't Easy! It does take a long time, being real might cause you to hurt and it might make

you cry!" This passionate fire consumes and transforms us, and it does cut us to the quick, it hurts! And don't we know it.

In all of this, freedom is a prerequisite, not as an option nor an easy gift to come by, but certainly it is God-given. Our contemporary culture frequently distorts the true meaning of the freedom by which God gives us the capacity to become our very best selves! Truly Ambassadors of Christ Jesus! Clare strikes me as a woman of great freedom who lets no one, or no thing stand in the way of her spirited convictions, thus capable of allowing herself to change and grow and thereby bring the world to a greater sense of unity in love. Likely this began with her family, the divided hearts of the people of Assisi and Perugia, the Church, the Friars, and especially in her own community of Sisters.

Clare doesn't stop with the Gazing, the Considering, nor the Contemplation, but rather tells us to move out to the world of action and bear that Christ Image. There's no easy formula for letting the others of our lives see the Christ in us. But the Spirit of Jesus is promised to teach us. Above all, Clare encourages us to let the others, especially the "lepers" of our lives, mirror the Christ to us. They might best serve us as powerful icon images of Christ! For me, this is most difficult.

I hope all Franciscans have some powerful "leper" icons in their life stories. I certainly do, and lots of them. These are God's gifts to us whenever we let these lepers mirror the Christ to us. I presently have a powerful image of a woman who stopped us one Sunday morning on South Grand, in St Louis at St. Pius V Parish after a wonderful Eucharistic celebration. She was coming toward a group of us using a walker. She wore a toothless grin and was obviously poor, but clean, a woman about my age. A ripe senior citizen! She called out to us "Would someone please be able to help me?" One Sister suggested she go to the rectory but I knew our Pastor was away. Since she was looking directly at me I asked her what she wanted. It was a simple case of having taken the bus all the way to a South side Walgreens for her medicines, only to be told that the co-pay had leapt up. I asked her how much she needed and then invited her to get in the car and we set off for the drug store. We are discouraged from giving to panhandlers in the neighborhood, but hers was a story which my intuitive heart could not doubt. Enroute she told me of her experience with material poverty, in that her daughter who recently died of cancer, needed so much medication and care, that she, the mother, lost all she had in the process. She headed straight to the drug counter at Walgreens.

I went about my bit of shopping and we met at the cashier's counter. She couldn't thank me enough, tried to give me change, and would not let me take her home. That woman's face has been a persistent icon before my mind's eye and in my heart for the past year. What Gospel action do we Incarnate?

Likely we are doing this so often we might not even be aware of the power we hold as Icons of Christ, nor the power of others as His icons to us. I've forgotten that woman's name but never the Icon face.

In the grand mystery of Triune love it's very important to Gaze upon Christ and process through the power we do hold to give and receive. Either way, gazing, considering, contemplating is definitely a Divine Calling in the process of becoming icons in action. In the spiritual discipline of fasting and praying as one "writes" the subject of the icons, we do so with reverence to embody the essence of the holy one's energy onto the material matter of wood with paint. The images are not worshipped, but venerated, giving due respect to the person they represent. The icon mystically carries within itself the Presence of the holy person depicted of that "great cloud" and is considered a sacred image. I believe that this is our goal, our mission and purpose that we are all called upon to focus and thus become afire by the image of the icon.

It is my deepest hope and prayer that all Christians will be spiritually enriched by the profound spiritual awakening icons provide as the earliest form of our liturgical art. These images are "written" according to the canons of iconography. They invite us into the mystery, especially by means of the inverse perspective, the flat 2-dimensional style, the position of any background props, the light coming from within, particularly from the eyes – those windows to the soul enabling the holy event of the divine embrace, nudging us to take off into the life of action. I pray that Clare's lesson plan might provide us the sensitivity to this sacred aspect of life, and the realization that there is much more available than this material world – there's eternity!

Clare and her Sisters had the San Damiano Crucifix to gaze upon as their most powerful visual icon. But God-given discipline was needed on the part of the Damianites in order to become that image. Granted, no doubt Clare and her Sisters had to struggle as do the rest of us with the great desire for Seraphic Poverty and total dependency on God. True, the speed and force, noise and business, the time and energy of their secular world was so far different from our own. Likely she enjoyed many freedoms we have lost – the silence, the beauty of the Umbrian Valley, the continual support group of her Sisters and some of the Friars, the simplicity of life without computers, TV, Radio, cell phones, boom boxes, high powered means of travel, even tractors in the fields ... Visiting many holy places today such as Assisi, Mt. LaVerna, in Italia, Switzerland, the Holy Land, Lebanon, Greece, Germany, France, England, Wales, Ireland, Belgium, Guadalupe, Mexico, Jamaica and wherever our travels take us, enables and increases our awareness with deeper meaning as we gaze in prayer, consider, and contemplate upon the mysteries of our faith as portrayed in the hand-written icon. All this in order to let ourselves be enriched via the exchange of borrowed energies to and fro of our electro-

magnetic fields on a universal scale. In this we become what we love as the prayer brings us into the likeness of our beloved Christ.

Every quality icon opens to us three dimensions:

Firstly, is the visible beauty of the image or sacred subject, which is a reminder of the unseen beauty of the Godself in infinite mystery.

Secondly, the holy one depicted became him or herself the mirror of Christ, since they grew into the living image of Jesus by following the Gospel.

Thirdly, it involves the one who looks at the icon. And this is the great challenge! For the icon calls the person who prays before it to take the Gospel seriously, allowing ourselves to be transformed, to become a living icon of Christ, as Clare did in her time and as she encourages us to do. We become like that which we like!

How it all happens is somewhat of a mystery, yet it comes into being by following the path mapped out for us by Christ Jesus, especially in death to selfishness and openness to others, thereby upheld by God's healing grace. But the most important element is undoubtedly prayer. Prayer is transforming. It means risk and abandoning ourselves to the guidance of God. It means entering the darkness of our faith. It means waiting in hope for the light of his presence. In the darkness of prayer each icon and the living icon of the one it depicts can be a light leading into the presence of the one who waits for us in love. Clare had it right "Gaze upon Christ, Consider Christ, Contemplate Christ", and thereby become an icon enabling us to go forth in imitation of Christ as images to others as well as to receive the icons of our everyday experiences. St. Clare indeed offers us a great witness for the process of "writing" and praying with icons, and in becoming icons for the Kingdom as well as receiving the icons, sometimes lepers, God sends us along the way.

And in the process Clare remains that new woman truly dazzling and ever fresh for Franciscans who are sincerely smitten with icons. Pope Alexander IV in the Bull of Canonization, 12 calls Clare a "lofty candlestick of holiness that burned brightly before the tabernacle of the Lord".

In a sense when "writing" or praying before a sacred icon we place ourselves beyond our human construct of time and into eternity. We try to follow this God-given desire through discipline to let go of time, space, and concepts of Western art. Eventually we might even forget about ourselves. Clare tells us all

What a great and laudable exchange: To leave the things of time for those of eternity. To choose the things of heaven for the goods of the earth. To receive the hundredfold in place of the one. And to possess a blessed and eternal life. (2LAg, 30).

Through our gazing prayer we must move into the infinite dimensions of our soul, into that sense of eternity. It is there we discover the Temple aflame with the presence of the Living God, the Source of all that is Good, every Good, the only true Good! That is a laudable exchange! May the fire of the Gospel flame in our Franciscan hearts from time into eternity! Right now!

ENDNOTE

¹ Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap. and Ignatius C. Brady, O.F.M., *Francis and Clare The Complete Works*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 197.



Announcing a Year of Jubilee

Suzanne Kush, C.S.S.F.

The Franciscan Institute in conjunction with St. Bonaventure University announces a year of Jubilee celebrating the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Third Order Regular Rule. On March 8, 1982, the International Assembly of Franciscan Superiors General in Rome, Italy approved the Revised Third Order Rule. Reflective of this significant date, March 8, 2007 will mark the beginning of the year of celebration. The year of jubilee will conclude on March 8, 2008 with a Symposium at St. Bonaventure University consisting of lectures and the presentation of a newly published *Source Book on the History of the Third Order Rule*.

Margaret Carney, O.S.F., STD, President of St. Bonaventure University, and Jean François Godet-Calogeras, PhD., Associate Professor at the Franciscan Institute, served as members of the original International Work Group revising the Rule. As persons who can say "We were there" throughout the process of rewriting the Rule, they will guide our project through the culminating Symposium. Sharing the richness of their experience with participants at the Symposium will enable more of our Third Order Regular Family to appreciate the significance of this event and to share the spirit of the Rule and our way of life.

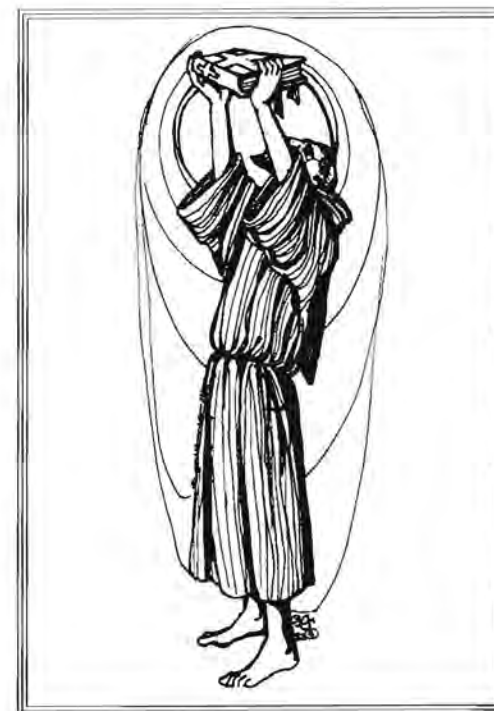
The International Work Group captured, in the revision of the Third Order Rule, the source and meaning of our lives as Third Order Regular Franciscans. The impact of the Rule on the Third Order members is not only in the words that it contains but also in the process implemented in writing the Rule. The International Work Group respected the relational quality of our lives as Franciscans by seeking and reflecting upon input from members of the Third Order throughout the world. In the years following the approval of the Rule by Pope John Paul II, dated December 8, 1982 these efforts continued through the International Franciscan Conference and national groups. In addition, Third Order Congregations engaged in workshops and retreats reflecting on the words and message of the Rule.

As a way of life, the Third Order Rule expresses the original Franciscan spirit and challenges us who embrace the Franciscan Call to reflect it in our

daily lives. Since the approval of the Third Order Rule, monumental changes have occurred in the Order and in the world. In the past twenty-five years, our Franciscan Family is expanding in developing countries. National and international issues are calling us to respond in accord with evangelical values. The challenge for the year of Jubilee is to capture the spirit and excitement of the Work Group, remembering and preserving the story for future generations of Franciscans. As a living and spiritual document the Rule also provides guidance for a contemporary exegesis for our life and action in the 21st Century. It is anticipated that The Third Order Rule Project will respond to this call.

Highlighting this year of celebration the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University will offer the Course on the Rule and Life of the Third Order Regular. Taught by Jean François Godet-Calogeras, the course will be offered in the Spring and Summer 2007 Semesters.

The Twenty-fifth Anniversary Project has received the affirmation and support of the members of the Franciscan Federation Conference at the meeting held this past summer in Rochester, New York. A very special note of gratitude is expressed to Fr. Christian Ovaric, TOR Provincial and the Sacred Heart Province of Loretto, Pennsylvania for a generous grant that is making possible the *Source Book on the History of the Third Order Rule* and the collection of archival materials to establish a permanent TOR Collection for the Franciscan Institute in the Freidsam Library of St. Bonaventure University.



Reflections on Pope Benedict XVI's Talk at Regensburg

Girard J. Etzkorn

While Pope Benedict's talk aroused a great deal of controversy partly, perhaps, due to misunderstanding, there were a lot of insights directed to a sound partnership between faith and reason. In a negative way, he pointed out that faith cannot be forced and is incompatible with violence, although it is curious that he did not repudiate the Inquisition or the trials of Joan of Arc and Galileo. In the best Christian tradition, faith is a free assent to what is not sensibly or rationally obvious. Benedict's appeal to a companionship between faith and reason is firmly rooted in the Anselmian tradition of faith seeking understanding. This stands as a repudiation of blind and non-thinking fundamentalism whether it be Christian, Islamic, or Jewish. The ability to think and reflect is not adversative to faith; if faith is a God-given gift, then so is the human mind.

It is his appraisal of the thought of Duns Scotus with which I would like to deal here. The following is a paragraph (in English translation) from the Pope's address:

In all honesty, one must observe that in the late Middle Ages we find trends in theology which would sunder this synthesis between the Greek spirit and the Christian spirit. In contrast with the so-called intellectualism of Augustine and Thomas, there arose with Duns Scotus a voluntarism which ultimately led to the claim that we can only know God's *voluntas ordinata*. Beyond this is the realm of God's freedom, in virtue of which he could have done the opposite of everything he has actually done. This gives rise to positions which clearly approach those of Ibn Hazn and might even lead to the image of a capricious God, who is not even bound to truth and goodness. God's transcendence and otherness are so exalted that our reason, our sense of the true and good, are no longer an authentic mirror of

God whose deepest possibilities remain eternally unattainable and hidden behind his actual decisions.

The above passage is not an accurate appraisal of the thought of Duns Scotus. In all probability, it stems from the philosophical and theological manuals of the late 19th and early 20th century whose authors had no access to the critical editions of Scotus's writings. All too often their agenda included a defense of the ideas of Thomas Aquinas by constructing 'straw men' as his opponents. During his tenure as professor of theology at the University of Bonn, Dr. Ratzinger could have had access to the basic texts of Scotus, thanks in large part to the editions of the Scotist Commission in Rome and the contributions of Allan B. Wolter, O.F.M. who spent his life retrieving the writings of Duns Scotus and translating them into English.

Scotus, with Bonaventure and Ockham, knew that Hellenism needed correction by those who hold the tenets of the Christian faith. According to Socrates, if we know clearly what is right, we will do what is right. For Aristotle, the world was necessary and eternal, always was and always will be. His God was aloof from the contingencies of human behavior with which he could not be 'contaminated'. For Aristotle, divine providence and miraculous intervention were a priori impossible.

The Fathers of the Church and the great medieval theologians repudiated this necessitarianism. God's creation, incarnation, and redemption were gifts of goodness freely bestowed; God cannot be constrained by creatures. God made whatever may be construed as rational in the universe; the basis for rationality is God-made. It is not as if 'this is reasonable, therefore God must make it'. It should be noted that the Franciscan predecessors and followers of Scotus asserted that God could do nothing disorderly and therein lies the foundation for rationality. Likewise, the universe is good because God has created it and not the contrary: 'the universe is good; therefore God must create it'. There were theologians, of course, who indulged in 'counter-factual and hypothetical theology', by indicating, for example, that this is not the only possible world, *pace* Aristotle, nor the best of all worlds, *pace* Leibniz. Yes, God could have done and could do 'otherwise' except create a contradiction. However, that God could do otherwise does not lead to divine capriciousness as Benedict claims. The foundation for our reason is what God did do, not what He could have done.

In the human realm, Scotus's so-called voluntarism is not anti-intellectual but co-intellectual. One of God's greatest gifts is man's free will, and it must be a very precious gift or it would have been taken away long ago, given all the abusive misuse of this gift. In Scotus's view, the human will is superior to the human intellect, which operates necessarily, not being able to dissent from the true or assent to the false. However, the will can direct or divert the intellect.

It is the will that determines what is to be examined or reflected upon. The will is the ultimate basis of morality: we are not morally good because we know what is right, but because we act rightly and do what is right. Even Aristotle knew that we are not praised or blamed for what is 'necessary' in us but for the choices we freely make. The gauge of moral goodness, according to Scotus (and Ockham), is right reason, and right reason must go by what God has done, that is, creation as we seek to understand it, and not what God might have done. "Moral goodness is formally something inherent in a human act, namely, its suitability or conformity to what right reason dictates." (Allan B. Wolter, *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*; Catholic Univ. Press 1986, p. 20) There is no capricious God in either Scotus or Ockham, as is clear to an unbiased reading of their writings. In his efforts to clarify the role of the intellect and will in making moral decisions, Scotus makes careful distinctions through lengthy analyses which require equally careful reading and are not subject to facile summarization; he has been called the 'Subtle Doctor' with good reason.

It is unfortunate that Pope Benedict, it would seem, has simply reiterated a distorted view of Scotus's thought perpetuated by certain manuals of philosophy and theology and certain historians who, too often motivated by the desire to defend Thomas Aquinas, have made a caricature of Scotus's thought without troubling themselves with going back to the texts.

Editor's Note:

For our readers who would like to explore more of Scotus's thought, the Franciscan Institute has the following publications available for sale:

Scotus for Dunces: An Introduction to the Subtle Doctor

Mary Beth Ingham, C.S.J. 2003.

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Girard J. Etzkorn is a well-known Franciscan scholar having been project director of the Scotus-Wodeham edition and general editor of Scotus's Philosophical Works at the Franciscan Institute. He is retired and living in Tennessee.

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Suzanne Kush, C.S.S.F., is a recent graduate of the School of Franciscan Studies at the Franciscan Institute. A Felician from Buffalo, Sr. Suzanne is working on the TOR Rule Anniversary project at St. Bonaventure University.



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4:15 pm • Liturgy

Evening • Open space to explore resources

SUNDAY

9:30 am • Dignity of Human Person

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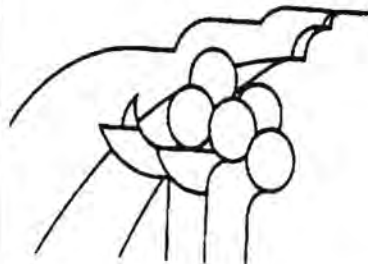


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***On the Franciscan Circuit
Coming Events 2007***

Scriptures, Saints, and Songs.

December 8-10, 2006.

With James DiLiuzio, CSP. At the Franciscan Renewal Center, Scottsdale, AZ.

St. Bonaventure's Journey of the Human Person into God

April 10-18, 2007

André Cirino, OFM and Josef Raischl, SFO

At the Franciscan Renewal Center, Scottsdale, AZ.

The 40 Day Franciscan Hermitage Retreat

February 17-March 9, 2007.

At the Portiuncula Center for Prayer, Frankfort, IL. For information, contact: 815.464.3880 or visit www.portforprayer.org

"A Franciscan Day of Prayer ... Mysticism with Open Eyes"

Wednesday, April 11, 2007; 10:30am - 4:30pm

Faciliator: Sister Loretta Denfeld, osf.

Franciscan Scripture Retreat (time/theme negotiable)

Facilitated by Joyce Brandl, OSF

A private retreat (one to eight days) based on favorite stories from Franciscan Early Documents with related Scriptures.

Select from various themes: Nature; Conversion; Minority/Simplicity; Poverty; Prayer; Obedience; Fraternity/Community; Mission.

Contact the Franciscan Life Center,

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

Writings of Saint Clare

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

Franciscan Sources

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