#### **OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE**

There are many reasons why the month of September should salute Mary the Queen of Martyrs. The calendar for this month is studded with merous saints, of the old Church and the new, who have shed their blood our holy Faith. Conspicuous among them is the glorious band of Jesuit rtyrs, Saint Isaac Jogues and his companions, who planted the cross in the rthland of this nation and sealed it with their blood. Into this picture of lms and crowns of glowing red are set, mosaic-like, the feasts of our Blessed tother: her Nativity, her Holy Name, Our Lady of Ransom; but most mificant of all is the feast of the Seven Sorrows of Mary, right in the center, September fifteenth.

Our Blessed Mother a martyr? At first the title may seem strange. Did the not die a natural death, perhaps in the arms of Saint John, the Beloved Disciple? Recently, on the occasion of the solemn definition of her Assumption into heaven, this question was warmly discussed. The best answer given was, we believe, that of the Venerable Duns Scotus, who claims that Mary died by the martyrdom of love. This bears out what Saint Bernard of Clairvaux said of her: that Mary was a martyr in anima, a martyr in soul, or desire. Numerous arguments, illustrations and sayings of saints might be adduced to prove this thesis of Mary's martyrdom of love and desire—as if it really needed proof in view of the Seven Swords that pierced her Immaculate Heart. The present writer heard this topic discussed by a group of venerable friars. One of them, who seemed to have the least to say, yet said the most by constantly repeating in a subdued tone: "The suffering of Jesus was the suffering of His mother." No more need be said.

We are all familiar with the Seven Sorrows of Mary; in fact, we meditate on them as the beads of the Crown of the Seven Sorrows glide through our fingers. But the mere meditation is hardly effective unless it produce in our souls the stimulus of imitation. The great mistake that Religious often make is that they fail to apply to themselves the pearls of practical wisdom that their prayers contain. Prayer brings us nearer to God in thought and affection, but affection is a fleeting and flitting thing unless it be sustained by strenuous action. Let us keep this in mind as we proceed.

The story of Mary's First Sorrow is given in her own words, as recorded by Saint Luke (2, 25-35). Well may we imagine how her eyes gleamed with holy

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joy as the aged Simeon held her Child in his arms and pronounced the imcanticle, Nunc Dimitis. But then, like a thunderbolt came the prophery his trembling lips, And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that the thous many hearts may be revealed. No human being, aside from the Sor Mother herself, has ever fully understood, we daresay, the tremendous of this prophecy. She did understand, and she tasted the chalice to its bottom. Perhaps, by pondering over these words, we too may understand in a measure, the thoughts of our own hearts may be revealed, if we own lives in the mirror of Mary's sorrow.

That sorrow might well fit the days of our budding vocation, our in ture, our holy profession. It was a strenuous fight between the world an closter, between the realistic past and the idealistic future. The struggle ably lasted long, and bitter tears were shed, some in seclusion, others i open. We never understood it all, not even to this day; and perhaps we feel the smarting of that wound. But we conquered; we conquered pramorem Domini nostri Jesu Christi — because of our love for the Lord Christ. And is it not significant that Mary's story dismisses Simeon after he said those words? The scene breaks off abruptly; but you may be sure after Simeon had thrust the first sword into her heart, she clasped the Child into her arms, while her lips uttered these words: "Return to me, Child; gladly will I bear all sorrow for Thy sake." Such was the answer valiant woman, and such should be your answer when doubts regarding vocation and the life you have freely chosen beset you.

Then, in the dark night came the Second Sorrow, the flight into Eg May was a child of her day, of lovely Nazareth; and proud Jerusalem the ancestral seat of her forebears. The Magnificat reveals her noble patriot And now, the bare desert; and beyond is mystic Egypt with its idols idolaters. Did she feel the pangs of homesickness? There is no question as it; even as there can be no question that all Religious must feel the low what is most intimate and most deeply ingrained in the human heart. But John and Mary hurried on through the dark night into a foreign, heathen leate those Religious whom Obedience has ordered to distant countries, away from a happy home, surrounded by disappointments, misunderstanding often confronted by disregard for their most sacred feelings, or, what is madominable, by slurs upon their nationality — let them not be dismayed, watch the Sorrowful Mother as she presses the divine Child to her bosom. He Him she has lost all; in Him she recovered all; yes, far more than she had free

orsaken. And meanwhile the memory of her home and fatherland remained nshrined in her heart.

Mary's Third Sorrow bids us look at our spiritual life. She had lost the Child Jesus and for three days sought Him sorrowing. In our soul's innermost recesses there are days of bitter dryness — a foretaste, perhaps, of the "Dark Night of the Soul" of which the Mystics tell us. There is no apparent progress, no joy, no fervor; it seems that God has forsaken us, and we become fearful of our salvation; all is dark and gloomy. That is the time we must practise patience, confidence and abandonment to God's holy Will. When Saint Teresa was troubled thus, our Lord assured her that while she suffered and pined He was in her heart. Even so the divine Child gave His mother the gentle rebuke, How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business? (Lk. 2, 49). Stick to your Father's business. Do your work, say your prayers, and confide in the Spouse of your soul.

But we must hasten and be brief, or the editor will cut some of these paragraphs off. That would be a disappointment after having spent the midnight oil. Yes, how to bear disappointment in our work is the lesson we face in Mary's Fourth Sorrow. She meets her divine Son on the way to Calvary — the Sorrowful Way, the Way that all Religious must walk. In the Way there are stones and ruts and all manner of hindrances. But the Savior walks on carrying the heavy cross, while blood streams from His sacred wounds and His mother, griefstricken, meets His blood-stained countenance. What a difference between the night at Bethlehem — the angels singing, the shepherds adoring — and this dreary day! What a difference between the morning of our profession and the drudgery that is our present lot! In school with restless youngsters, in the hospital with impatient patients, in the convent with all manner of criticism, foolish gossip and unfair reprimands. But never you mind; never mind. Christ carries His cross; slowly He moves away; and His Mother follows Him with tearful eyes and a heart bursting with unfailing love. When you were a novice, you thought you might be a superior some day; but they didn't want you. You tried your hand in school, but the youngsters wouldn't mind you. In the hospital you couldn't stand the constant bickering of the nurses. And now that you handle the pot and the broom, the whole community rises up against you. And you say: O, if I had wings like a dove, I would fly away and be at rest (Ps. 54. 6) No, don't fly away. Keep on your Way, the Way of the cross; your London Savior walks before you and His Sorrowful Mother at your side.

The Fifth Sorrow will not detain us long, because it is so hard to because it is the hour when the thoughts of many hearts are revealed. flash of lightning the figure of the Son of God, raised on the cross, about the universe and lays bare the inmost depths of the hearts of all m And what do we behold? A spark of love here and there, but for the conglomerate of passion, crime and vice; of pride, sensuality and gothatred and unbelief. Why did the Son of God die? Is His Death so makes, so bare of holy and noble fruit? The Mother must have seen this Son's distressed countenance. That is why a sword pierced her heart, why our hearts should be pierced by the sins of the world, by the hat unbelief that stalk rampant through this world of ours, this vale of teat

But the Sixth Sorrow turns the spotlight upon ourselves, into of hearts. The lance pierces the Savior's Sacred Heart. It also pierced His neart which was without sin; it should pierce our hearts which are fillesins, sins of the distant past, sins of our cloister days, carelessnesses, neglicunfaithfulness to our vows, sins against charity, sins of omission and consion. There is no end to them, and confusion overwhelms us. True, the forgiven; yet our Master's Heart was wounded and the wound remain as a perpetual reminder that our hearts must ever harbor an abiding sorrour sins.

In her Seventh Sorrow Mary takes us with her to the sepulcher of Master. Death is bitter and we all must face it. Mary died with Jesus the of love, and she lived in the hope that soon she would join Him in His The noisy crowds had dispersed from Calvary's heights. silently, reverently, lovingly lowered the Sacred Body from the cross and, pious tradition tells us, placed it in the arms of His mother. None of Evangelists describes the scene for us; we are left to our imagination, ev our own death should be a matter of our daily imagination and meditation was Mary's seventh and final sorrow, and, as the sun was gradually setting the western sky, a serene calmness seemed to settle over Jerusalem: the b ness of death mingled with the sweetness of its prize. Who would dare re the thoughts in Mary's heart at that moment? Perhaps she mused over words her grandsire David had spoken; we recite them every morning at Pri Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints (Ps. 115, 15). Che death was the price paid for our life. This is what made Saint Francis in the beautiful name, "Sister Death".

New York, N. Y.

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.

# THE SEAL OF CHRIST

(From Chapter XIII of the Legenda Maior of Saint Bonaventure)
The angelic Francis was not accustomed to be at leisure from good, but
ther, like the celestial spirits on the ladder of Jacob, would either ascend to
sod or descend to his neighbor; for he had so prudently learned to dole out
he time granted to him for merit that he would spend some of it striving for
is neighbor's gain, and some of it he would devote to the raptures of conemplation. Accordingly, when he had condescended to attend to the welfare of
mother according to the demands of places and times, he would take leave of
the crowd's din and seek a secret aloneness and a place of quiet, the more freely
to give himself to God and shake off whatever dust might have clung to him
from his association with men.

Two years before he surrendered his soul to heaven, after numberless toil-some strivings he was brought by the guidance of divine providence into a high place apart, which is called the Mount of Alverna. Now, when he had begun to keep his accustomed forty-day fast there in honor of Saint Michael the Archangel, he was flooded more abundantly than usual by the sweetness of heavenly contemplation and devoured by a more ardent flame of heavenly yearning, so that he entered upon a more intense experiencing of heavenly gifts. He was caught up, indeed, on high, not as a searcher of majesty, to be overwhelmed by glory, but like a faithful and prudent servant searching out the good pleasure of God, to Whom with impatient eagerness he longed to conform himself in all things.

Then by a divine revelation he came to realize that in the opening of the book of the Gospels there would be revealed to him by Christ what would be most acceptable to God in him and concerning him. Accordingly, after praying with great devotion, he had a companion, a holy man completely devoted to God, open in the name of the Holy Trinity a book of the Gospels taken from the altar. Now, when a three-fold opening of the book revealed each time the Passion of the Lord, this God-intoxicated man knew that as he had copied Christ in the acts of His life so he must needs be conformed to Him in the distress and pain of His Passion before he should pass out of this world. And although his body was already frail and weak because of the great austerity of his past life and constant carrying of the Lord's cross, he was in no way overcome by fear but was quickened with a mightier courage to suffer move dom. There blazed up in him an unconquerable fire of love for the government.

in embers of fire and flames, so that many waters had no power to quench glowing love.

Then, as he was being caught up on high towards God by the serae fervor of his desires and in the sweetness of compassion was being transfor into Him Who by reason of His very great love wished to be crucified, certain morning near the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, while was praying on the mountain side, he saw a Seraph with six bright and flat wings coming down from the heights of the heavens. When the Seraph in s flight had come near the man of God and was hovering in the air before there appeared amid the wings the likeness of a crucified man, hands feet stretched out in the form of, and affixed to, a cross. Two wings were ra above this figure, two were extended in flight, and two veiled the whole be At this sight he became crushed with wonder, and joy commingled with engulfed his heart. For he was gladdened in the indulgent sight whereby C decreed that He should be viewed under the guise of a Seraph, but crucifixion pierced his soul with the sword of ruthful grief. He wond greatly at the sight of so unfathomable a vision, knowing that the bitter of suffering in no way harmonized with the immortality of a Seraphic sp At length he thereby understood, because the Lord revealed it, that this vis was given to his sight by divine providence so that this lover of Christ wo foreknow that he must be wholly transformed into the likeness of Ch Crucified, not by martyrdom of the flesh but through the searing of his s Then, in disappearing, the vision left a wondrous fervor in his heart; but impressed a no less wondrous visible likeness in his flesh; for immediately his hands and feet began to appear the signs of the nails, as a short time before he had seen them in the likeness of the crucified man. His hands and feet week seen transfixed by nails in their very centers, the heads of the nails showing the palms of the hands and the insteps of the feet, the points of the nath protruding from the opposite sides; the nail-heads in the hands and feet water round and black, and the points, rather long and bent back as though hammered down, protruded from the very flesh and were raised above it. In addition, right side was gashed by a red wound, as though pierced by a lance, and wound often oozed a sacred blood that stained his tunic and underclothing.

Perceiving that the stigmata, so clearly stamped upon his body, could be concealed from his close companions, but fearing none the less to rest the secret from the Lord, the servant of Christ was in the throes of uncertain whether he should speak of what he saw, or remain silent. Therefore, he call some of the brethren and in general terms laid his doubt before them

askd their advice. One of the brethren, Illuminatus by name and illuminated by grace, knowing that he had viewed things full of wonder because he seemed to be full of wonder himself, said to the holy man: "Brother, you should know that divine secrets are at times shown to you not only for your own sake but also for that of others. Evidently, then, you should be afraid of being held responsible for the hidden talent, if you conceal what you have received for the advantage of the many." Although the holy man was accustomed on other occasions to say, My secret to myself, now he was moved by the Brother's words, and in great fear related the story of his vision, adding that he who had appeared to him had spoken of some things that he could never in this life reveal to any man. It must be believed, in fact, that these words of the holy Seraph, miraculously revealed upon a cross, were so secret that man may not speak them.

Now after this true lover of Christ had been transformed into the very image of the Loved One and the forty days completed, which he had set for himself, upon the feast of the Archangel Michael that angelic man, Francis, came down from the mountain, bearing with him the likeness of the Crucified, not hewn by craftman's hand upon tablets of stone or wood but drawn in his bodily members by the finger of the living God. And since it is good to hide the secrets of a king, this man who partook of a kingly secret kept hidden as well as he could those sacred seals. But, because God is wont to make known for His own glory the wonders He performs, the Lord Himself, Who had in secret imprinted these signs, openly showed that through them certain miracles occurred, in order that the hidden and wonderful power of the stigmata might become known through the evident fame of the signs. . . .

Although Francis strove in great earnest to hide this treasure found in a field, nevertheless it could not lie concealed without some seeing the stigmata on his hands and feet, even though he had his hands almost always covered and from that time on walked with slippered feet. While he was living, very many of the brethren saw them, who, although worthy of all belief in view of their outstanding sanctity, but in order to set aside all doubt, swore upon oath and the relics of the saints that these signs were as described and that they had seen them. Furthermore, some cardinals, who had been on terms of intimacy with the holy man, saw the stigmata, and, truthfully including praise for them in prose works and hymns and antiphons which they published in his honor have borne witness to the truth both in speech and writing. Moreover Supreme Pontiff, the Lord Alexander, preaching to the people before my the brethren and myself, affirmed that during the saint's life he

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these holy stigmata with his own eyes. More than fifty friars and the Clare, who was wholly devoted to God, together with her Sisters and in able lay-people saw them upon the saint's dead body; among these with were many . . . who kissed these wounds out of devotion and touched repeatedly, and these serve to lend weight to the testimony.

So carefully did he hide the wound in his side that while he lived could gaze upon it unless by stealth. Now when a certain Brother, whose custom it was to minister to him, had induced him by a pious stratagem t off his tunic so that it might be cleaned, he saw the wound opened to his tive gaze and, touching it lightly with three fingers, avowed to its extent by sight and touch. By means of a like stratagem the Brother who vicar at that time viewed the wound. A companion Brother of an simplicity, happening to touch his shoulders which were bowed in pain. dentally thrust his hand under the saint's hood and touched the sacred w which caused the saint great agony. From this time the saint wore undered so made that it came up to the arm-pits in order to cover the wound side. The brethren also, who used to wash the underclothing or clean the at times, were convinced of the existence of the sacred wound beyond all since they would find the saint's clothing reddened by blood, and afterwar was revealed to them face to face and they together with many others upon it and gave it veneration.

Come now, valiant soldier of Christ, take up the arms of the all-conquined Leader with which thou art so mightly armored; thou wilt overcome enemy. Raise up the banner of the most high King, at sight of which all warriors of the divine army are quickened. Bear openly the seal of Christ High Priest, in virtue of which thy words and deeds, blameless and gent will be received by all, and rightly so. For now at last, because of the man the Lord Jesus which thou bearest in thy body, no man must give thee trous nay rather, every servant of Christ is bound to be love-struck in everything. at last, in these undoubted signs the testimonies of God in thee and the thee, having become exceedingly credible not by two or three witnesses us sufficiency of proof but by as many as possible unto an excess of proof, be every pretense of excuse by the unfaithful while strengthening believed faith, elevating them with the confidence of hope, and setting them on with the flame of love. . . .

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## TOWARD A FRANCISCAN CONCEPT OF WORK

Work is for man as personal an obligation as living. A sign of ignominy to the pagan, it acquired a certain dignity with the coming of Christ, Who spent the greater part of his thirty-year retreat at Nazareth as a carpenter. Little wonder then, that the Gospel-minded Francis of Assisi should have chosen to devote an entire chapter of his brief, twelve-chapter rule to the discussion of work as commanded by Divine-Natural law, exemplified by the God-Man on earth, and interpreted through the simple genius of the Seraphic Saint himself.

Francis begins the chapter on work with the words: "Those friars to whom the Lord has given the grace of working." Behold Francis' ideal of work. What was despicable in the eyes of the pagan was looked upon by Francis as a grace. Francis here shows his followers how to turn, in the words of the poet, the common dust of servile opportunity into gold, i.e. how to turn the meaningless things of life into a source of merit for heaven.

Yet, before proceeding further, we might ask ourselves: What is work? Pope Pius XI gave us a good definition of it in his encyclical Quadragesimo Anno, when he defined it to be the "application of one's forces of soul and body to the gifts of nature for the development of one's powers by their means." Notice, he does not limit his definition to manual work, and he furthermore shows us that all work must have some perfecting influence upon the worker. We shall distinguish for ourselves, three classes of work: spiritual, intellectual, and manual work, and proceed in the following paragraphs to analyze the nature of each.

SPIRITUAL WORK. There are two types of spiritual work, namely, that which we commonly call "striving for perfection" and which is incumbent upon every human being, and that which has as its object the perfection of others.

The former type of spiritual work concerns itself with the progressive development of the soul-life of the individual Christian, terminating in union of the soul with God, the end of all human endeavour. As Religious we are bound in a special way to this type of work in virtue of our Religious Profession. Now this type of work is distinguished from all the other types in that it demands of us: personal effort, i.e., we cannot delegate others to perform this work for us — it is a question of our individual relations with our Creator;

progressive activity, which is a sign of a healthy spiritual life, and the abswhich is an indication of spiritual stagnation, or retardation; constants does not permit us to be swaying to and fro as the reed in the wind but of us unrelenting progress toward our eternal goal.

The second type of spiritual activity is principally that of the Fr priest. He is the shepherd placed over the flock; he it is who must seek lost sheep and bring them back safely into the fold. Whatever task the lot of the Franciscan priests, be it in the pulpit, or in the classroom home or foreign missions, he must teach the word of God both by we personal example, in season and out of season. His must be the motter Saint John the Baptist set forth when Christ began His public mission, increase, I must decrease. We might compare the Franciscan priest to a burning itself out with energy for the sake of forming Christ in human.

In both types of work we have an example given us; we have our Model. In our striving for perfection we have the example of our Lord taught us how to pray and showed us also that in all that we do we strive to do the Will of the Father. The Franciscan priest will likewise Christ his Model. He sees first of all Christ the Savior, Who had come on the multitudes, Christ the Preacher and Teacher, Christ the divine Phand Christ the Judge of Man. Christ is the Eternal Sun whose rays at tinually focused upon a miserable creature whom God has raised up dignity of an alter Christus, and it is left only for the priest to allow the penetrate into his innermost self that he may learn to give both self and to those whom he serves.

INTELLECTUAL WORK. Here would be placed all those whose though not entirely excluding manual work, nevertheless requires great of the intellective faculties. Franciscan priests would again be placed this heading for we find them teaching in the halls of learning, and every ordinary parish priest must read much in order to get new ideas for his sermons, etc. Our clerics, seminarians, teaching Sisters, hospital Sisters also be included under this heading as well as those Third Order members are engaged in professional work.

Though this type of work is not as inspiring as the former, it is theless, a medium for our personal sanctification and must be consider such — we must consider it, as Saint Francis does, a "grace". And just the former type of work Christ was portrayed as our Model, He is also

lodel in this sphere of human activity. Are you a teacher? Then consider hrist the Divine Teacher, and as you stand before your pupils imitate the living Pedagogue. Or perhaps you are a Doctor? Very well, look to Christ to Divine Physician, and may His constant trust in His Father's help inspire by with hope as you make your rounds in the hospital wards from day to ay. Are you a lawyer? Here too Christ stands out as your Model, Christ the living Lawgiver; think of Him expounding the meaning of the law to the loctors of the Temple, look to Him for guidance and inspiration. Yes, Christ the source of all knowledge — He is our Divine Model; imitating Him we annot err.

MANUAL WORK. This type of work is the exact opposite of that thich we have just considered, for it requires greater physical exertion under the direction of the intellect. Here would be classified our Franciscan Laybrothers and Lay-sisters and the greater portion of the human race, known as "The Working Class". Their condition, despised by the worldly wise, is nobler than a thousand worlds because of the graces it is capable of procuring. The multi-millionaire with all his riches cannot be compared to one of these humble servants of the Almighty.

In the former types of work we have referred to the potentialities each contains for personal sanctification. What shall we say concerning manual work? Actions speak louder than words, and biographies are silent witnesses to God's heroes. Pick up any volume containing biographies of Franciscan saints and you will see there the number of those who have reached the highest honors in the Church by merely performing the humblest tasks about the cloister, home or factory.

After an analysis of the various types of work, another question enters our mind: Why should Saint Francis call working a "grace". I am sure our Holy Father would not object to a few conjectures on this point. Sanctifying our daily tasks is one of the more powerful means of attaining to the heights of sanctity. Few of us are privileged to spend the day before our Eucharistic Lord, speaking with Him, contemplating His numberless Attributes, but we are all able to commune with Him through our work — indeed, every movement of the working hand can become an individual act of love which angels carry to our heavenly home and place at the Throne of Almighty God in our stead. Again, the person who works finds in his tasks an opportunity of imitating one or the other of the Divine Attributes, e.g. Goodness. Justice, Charity. And, lastly, while work at first sight seems to be a punishment afflicted upon man-

kind by God, the spiritual-minded person will find out before long to rather an act of God's infinite Mercy than it is of Justice; for in given the opportunity to work, Almighty God permits him to atone for the committed against him, and, if directed by a good intention, our work is of lessening our stay in the prison of purgatory. Viewed in this light, expression from morning till night will become for us an act of penance and in statements of Saint Francis who was wont to followers: "The Penitents of Assisi".

After having given the nature of work, Francis of Assisi tells us twork must be performed "faithfully and devoutly." These are the qual all truly Franciscan work. Faithful work implies a sufficient knowledge object before us (we might call it conscientiousness), but, above all, it a continual, incessant praise of Almighty God, in remembrance of the of the Apostle: Not serving to the eye as pleasers of men, but in single heart from fear of the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it from the heart the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receipheritance of your reward (Col. 3, 22-24). The Franciscan is not so muscerned with whether his superior is watching him or not; on the contrary interested in making each task he performs an individual act of reparation an act of love of God. In practice, the Franciscan who works faithful, have a sense of personal responsibility: a watchful care of articles give his use; a sense of thrift and economy. Moreover, he will do all he can to self-will and murmuring.

And yet "faithful" work is not enough for the Franciscan. If his we to have any value before God, it must be performed in a spirit of devenow, by devotion we must not understand the sensible feeling of piety religious persons often have in mind. Devotion is rather a reasoned and delike act of the will whereby one's intellect and will have nothing else in view the will and glory of God; the end is mind in union with God, as Saint Athe Great expresses it so beautifully: ". . . through a good will, that you be mentally united with God within yourself." (De Adharendo Deo). This work performed with devotion becomes a rationabile obsequium, a homage of reason, raises even the most menial task to a supernatural level and makes of source of merit. No Franciscan, therefore, can justly complain: "I have not for prayer"; for his very work is ordained to be prayer.

Now, the end of all Franciscan work is to banish "idleness, the enem the soul". This was Francis' way of telling his brethren what the Apostl

Gentiles meant when he said: Brethren, be steadfast and immovable, always bound in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not vain in the ord (I Cor. 15, 58). There is no place in the world where time can be more sily wasted than in religious life, and yet there is no other place where even the most insignificant action can become the source of greater merit. Founders Religious Orders without exception have always censured the spirit of idleness a their followers, and, mindful of the words of the Apostle, that their followers hould abound in the work of the Lord, most of them in the manner of Saint trancis of Assisi have recommended a spirit of industry as its remedy. Idleness of the Franciscan life, for, a Father Cajetan of Bergamo remarks, the Franciscan Order has suffered more from these two vices than from any other evil.

But all that has been previously stated by Saint Francis in the fifth chapter of the Rule was merely directed towards one supreme thought in his mind: that all work, whatever it may be, should never be allowed to "extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion to which all other temporal things must be subservient." An eminent authority on Franciscan spirituality in this country, Father Philibert Ramstetter, has rightly remarked that in these few words is contained the Franciscan's "recipe for success". Commenting on these words, Father Philibert remarks that "here in black and white we have a recipe for success in any kind of Franciscan activity. Nothing a Franciscan may legitimately be engaged in is to be excluded from the spirit of prayer and devotion; indeed—and here we behold once more the daring genius of our saintly Founder—each and every thing in this life and world must serve, must contribute its meed to, that spirit of holy prayer and devotion which is more important than all other temporal matters."

Every Franciscan, therefore, must consider work in the light in which it has been outlined in the preceding pages, if he or she wishes to remain faithful to the Franciscan vocation. He must regard work as another opportunity of gaining merit, and, above all, he must abhor idleness, since it is the arch-enemy of his own soul and of the Seraphic Order. Finally, in all the things he does he must never let this principle escape his attention, that nothing he does may ever be permitted to "extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion to which all other temporal things must be subservient."

Washington, D. C.

Fr. 1818 . . . Faddish, O.F.M.

### EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

### According to Saint Bonaventure

When Saint Bonaventure urges us to look into ourselves to whether we are making due progress in religious perfection, he does that we should try to discover how perfect we are. Such an attempt not only un-Franciscan but even un-Christian; in fact, it would be utter The spiritual life has its own laws and measurements, and they are the terrible paradox that he who would save his life must lose it.

It requires a pretty naive imagination to form the concept of progress as a weeding and planting process. Unfortunately, however, reading of certain spiritual books seems to have given many religious that concept. They proceed on the happy assurance that progress in pa consists in uprooting the weeds of vice one after another, and implant flowers of the opposite virtue until the soul becomes a flourishing beautiful blossoms with never a weed to mar its loveliness. While it is tionably true that if every year we would rid ourselves of one vice we soon become perfect men, the sober fact is that our spiritual life simple not develop in that way. If it did, it would expose us to the danger of Phan leading us to enjoy the beauty of our own perfection and to dissociate God. True progress, on the contrary, is measured — if indeed it can be me at all — by the extent to which we realize the depths of our sinfulne misery. For the closer a man comes to God the more clearly does he the brightness of the divine perfections, and in the light of his love for his own utter wretchedness.

Thus it is that Saint Bonaventure would not have us ask: Have I progress in perfection, but:

# HAVE I BEEN NEGLIGENT IN MAKING SPIRITUAL PROGRESS?

Negligence in making spiritual progress can be understood only in sense of negligence in using the means and opportunities God has provide our sanctification. This negligence can arise from three possible sour weariness and discouragement in the face of repeated failure; a distorted con of religious perfection; or a disregard for those practices which help us to perfection.

In considering the first source of negligence, discouragement, we must stinguish between the case of the worldly religious who has never really striven r closer union with God and consequently regards the obligations of his state wearisome restrictions on his liberty, and the case of the sincere religious who rough human weakness has fallen into disillusionment or dissatisfaction. briously, the problem of the worldly religious need not be considered here; ut the sincere religious may well ask himself whether or not there has been slackening in his efforts. It is quite natural for all of us to become discouraged hen we realize how far we are from our ideal, how slowly and painfully we dvance, how crippled we are by our daily falls into sin and imperfection, how ghtly bound we are by our pet faults and bad habits. But if this feeling is atural, it is none the less dangerous, and we must fight against it. There is, owever, a healthy dissatisfaction with ourselves, and this, rightly directed, can e a powerful incentive to greater efforts, for it has its source in our love for God. Let us ask ourselves honestly if we are dissatisfied with the state of our oul for God's sake — because we do not love Him and do not live for Him as we ought. Or are we dissatisfied for our own sake — because we cannot take complacence in our own perfection?

The second source of negligence arises from an erroneous concept of religious perfection itself. In this regard we may examine ourselves on some of the following points: Is my justice that of the Pharisees, the externalism so severely condemned by Christ? Do I try to convince myself that my progress is indicated by a multiplication of formal prayers, by an increase in physical mortifications, or by a cultivation of external mannerisms which I feel enhance my religious personality? Do I equate perfection with the sensible pleasure I derive from certain devotions, or from a purely affective and emotional approach to God? Do I expect as my just deserts the grace of mystical experience? Do I allow myself to imagine that I actually receive such favors? Do I seek in prayer the sweetness of God instead of the God of all sweetness? Am I restless and discontented when I suffer spiritual dryness?

If God has blessed me with an abundance of natural virtues, do I take pride in them as if I had acquired them by my own efforts? Do I believe that popularity with my fellow-religious and with outsiders is an accurate gauge of my spiritual progress? Do I think that being the perfect lady or gentleman, sociable, helpful, interested, is sufficient to make me beloved of God and men? Or do I realize that whatever naturally attractive qualities God has given me must be supernaturalized lest they drag me down into the abyss of vanity and

pride and spiritual blindness? Must it be said of me, as it was once said ancient pagans, that my virtues are splendid vices?

Do I feel that I am making progress as I increase in docility tow superiors and toward those with whom I associate? Am I satisfied with because I have the knack of avoiding conflicts with others, because that others like me, that I mean something to them? For that reason strive to remain in the sun of their good graces? A religious should make every effort to be an agreeable subject and confrere, but for super motives. We should all ponder, and ponder deeply, the words of a swriter: "The most agreeable subjects are not always the best ones."

The third source of negligence lies in our misuse of the means of advin perfection. If humility is the basis of our spiritual life, we ought to use of every opportunity to practice it. Let us, then, ask ourselves: Do to avoid humiliations, preferring instead the easy road of escape into medi. When I cannot avoid a humiliation, do I at least take it in the right sp. do I always seek to excuse or defend myself? Do I have the unenviable tation of being a person who cannot be corrected without violent reaction, my conduct actually force my superiors and confreres to refrain from correct me and am I consequently left in culpable ignorance of my faults? Do I dothers or condemn them, failing to understand that in condemning other condemn myself? Do I make use of the Sacrament of Penance as a medeepening my humility? Am I convinced that of myself I can do nothing but for the grace of God I would be the greatest sinner? Unless, like Seraphic Father, we grow daily more contemptible in our own eyes, we dail ourselves his children.

If our spiritual life is based on humility, it thrives and flourish charity. Hence, if we are negligent in practicing charity, we are negligent utilizing an essential means of advancing in perfection. We must under however, that we are not making real progress so long as our charity real on a purely human or natural level. Here we may ask ourselves not whether, but also and especially why we practice fraternal charity. Is it be of higher motives? Because we know we ourselves need the mercy of God for that reason try to be kind and mild and understanding toward others do we strive to see in our neighbor a child of God, a fellow member of Mystical Body of Christ? More particularly, let us ask ourselves: Am I to be the servant of all because Christ made Himself a servant for us taught us by His example? Does my charity rise above the level of put

human relationships and sympathies (for even the pagans can love on a natural level), and am I ready to make personal sacrifices for others, even for those who are naturally repugnant to me? Do I forgive and forget in the spirit of Christ? Do I complain when others fail to return my kindness? Do I bear with those who dislike me and oppose me and exhibit ill-feeling toward me? Can I give up my opinion graciously when charity demands it? Do I strive to fulfill the law of Christ by bearing the burdens of others? There are innumerable points on which we could examine ourselves in regard to charity, but the one essential point to keep in mind is this: We must practice charity for love of God, not for love of ourselves or of any other creature.

Saint James assures us that the man who does not offend with his tongue is a perfect man (James 3, 2); and in this point we have an excellent means of determining something of the true state of our soul. Our words reflect our thoughts. If the instrument of speech, the tongue, is a symbol of the divine love which descended upon the Apostles, and if the words we utter are symbols of the divine Word, our speech must be holy, and we are neglecting a means of sanctification if we neglect to bridle our tongue. It goes without saying, of course, that a religious who uses blasphemous, equivocal, or off-color expressions is a monstrosity. But this is the extreme. Let us rather consider whether we make serious efforts to sanctify our tongue. For most of us the danger lies not in positively sinful speech but in careless, worldly, uninspiring or useless speech. We may ask ourselves, for example: Does my conversation habitually and exclusively center around mundane topics — politics, sports, news items, local gossip, and the like? While it is true that a religious should be well-informed on secular affairs, and be prepared to make intelligent and ethical judgments whenever an occasion presents itself, to make such matters the sole topic of conversation indicates a lack of the true religious spirit. The same holds for our professional activity. We are obliged to keep well-informed, and an interest in our work is natural and praiseworthy; but let us ask ourselves: Do I constantly "talk shop", even to the point of boring others? Do I find myself unable to take part in conversations dealing with matters of a higher intellectual or spiritual content? If so, why? How does my speech reflect the charity in my heart? Do I refrain from carping criticism, from talking about the faults of others, or about their Peculiarities? Do I allow myself the dubious pleasure of indulging in witticisms at the expense of others?

Together with the practice of the above-mentioned virtues, the prayers and spiritual exercises prescribed for religious are basic and necessary means of

advancing in perfection. Since, however, we have already covered these in previous examens, we shall select for brief discussion here only the examinations of conscience.

In order to make progress we must know ourselves as thoroughly as properties for this reason we have the obligation of fidelity to the daily examinate conscience. We should do well to ask ourselves: Do I honestly try to do my faults and weaknesses during the time allotted to the general and parexamens? Or do I spend the time carelessly, running through a routine for indifferently and superficially? Do I perhaps waste the time in day-dre or in voluntary distraction? Do I seek to discover not only my faults be motives behind them? It is often more important for us to know why we fallen into sin than to know we have sinned; and we should always make the motive to our confessor or spiritual director.

Let us never permit ourselves to fall into the state of spiritual seneglecting the means God has given us to draw us closer to Him. Let us keep ourselves spiritually alive and youthful, and repeat with Saint Frank brothers, let us begin today, for up to now we have done nothing."

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O

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That the Church might be formed from the side of the dying Chris the cross and the Scripture fulfilled, which said that they looked upon Whom they have pierced, the divine decree permitted one of the soldie pierce that sacred side with a lance so that in the flow of blood and water price of our salvation would pour out, which would bestow from its so from that hidden Heart, a rich might to the Sacraments of the Church for conferring of a life of grace, and so that the living might even now have Christ a drink from the fountain of water, springing up unto life everlas Behold, now, the lance of Saul's treachery—of the forsaken Jewish people fastened in the wall, by the divine mercy baulked of its aim, made a cleft in rock and a cranny in the wall like a dove-cote. Arise, then, thou lover of C be like the dove building her nest on the cave's lip; there, as a sparrow fin a home, cease not to hold vigil; there, as a turtle-dove of chaste love, hide brood; there open they lips to drink deep from the fountains of the Sat For He is the river going out from the midst of paradise, which, divided four heads and pouring into devoted hearts, nourishes and waters the will earth. Saint Bonaventure

# FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

## OUR HOLY FATHER PLEADS FOR GREATER UNITY IN THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY

On the Wednesday before the Feast of Corpus Christi this year, the members of the General Chapter of the Friars Minor were received in private audience by our Holy Father. In the course of his address, which was carried in L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO the next evening, His Holiness pointed out the necessity for greater union in spirit and work among the various branches of the Frenciscan family.

"It is a characteristic of love to excuse rather than to accuse," His Holiness said, "and if love is sincere and genuine, it is eager only to tear out the roots of bitter discord, to strengthen the bonds of unity, to bend the proud neck under the yoke of obedience. In regard to this point We propose something worthy of your consideration and examination. For various reasons, as history records, the Franciscan foundation has produced many branches. We leave to the judgment of history the separations and opposing opinions that have come between them in the past; but is it not most salutary and desirable that, while retaining their autonomy, the individual branches of the Franciscan family be closely united in the bonds of friendship and carry out in common plans and undertakings of greater significance?"

If our Holy Father so strongly urges closer cooperation among the members of the Franciscan family, we should indeed give the matter serious and Prayerful consideration.

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### GOLDEN JUBILEE OF THE SISTERS OF SAINT JOSEPH OF THE THIRD ORDER OF SAINT FRANCIS

This year the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Third Order of Saint Francis are celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the founding of their congregation.

In 1901 Mother Mary Felicia and Mother Mary Clara, under the guidance of the Reverend Luke Pescinski, founded the congregation to care for the Polish Catholics in Stevens Point, Wisconsin. On July 1, 1901, forty-six sisters left the motherhouse of the Franciscan Sisters in Milwaukee to establish a new and independent religious community.

During the fifty years of its existence the congregation has done excellent work, especially among Polish-speaking groups in the Middle West, and now includes three provinces: Stevens Point, Cleveland, and Chicago. The sisters engage chiefly in education and nursing.

May God continue to bless the congregation and all its undertakings.

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#### THE FRANCISCANS CAME FIRST,

Fanchon Royer. Paterson, New Jersey: Saint Anthony Guild Press, 1951. Pp. 208, with 16 illustrations and an end map. \$2.50

Despite its rather unpleasantly prodomo-mea title, THE FRANCISCANS CAME FIRST is an interesting little volume dealing with early Spanish Franciscan mission history. It contains biographical sketches of nine great missioners who, according to the author's chapter headings, have the added distinction of being on the list of "Franciscan Firsts." The biographies are arranged chronologically, beginning with "The First Schoolteacher: Pedro de Gante" and concluding with "The First Californian: Junipero Serra."

Although by no means to be rated as either literaure or history, the book is well written on a comfortable level and the events are presented with sufficient accuracy for the average reader. It could be recommended as supplementary reading for secondary schools.

The author has included a glossary of Spanish and Nanuati terms, a bibliography and statem illustrations.

THE SPIRITUAL LEGACY OF SISTER MARY OF THE HOLY TRINITY. Edited by Silvere Ven Den Broek, O.F.M. Translated from the French. Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1950. Pp. 364. \$3.50.

Sister Mary of the Holy Trinity (Louisa Jaques) was born in Pretoria, Transvaal, of Swiss-French parents. After a series of long and painful trials, God led her to the Catholic Church, and a few years later, after further trials, to the Poor Clares in Jerusalem where He drew her to Himself in the intimate union of mystical contemplation. Sister Mary died in 1942, two years after her religious profession.

The first part of the SPIRITUAL LEGACY — about one-third — deals with the story of Sister Mary's conversion and of her strange vocation to the religious life. The second part of the book contains her account of about six hundred communications from Our Lord. These communications have been carefully annoted by her confessor, the late Father Silvere Van Den Broek, O.F.M., a man of deep spirituality and wide experience in the guidance of souls.

There is much more in the SPIRITUAL LEGACY than the rapturous exclamation of the mystic in love; there is the voice of Christ, the Master and Teacher of the spiritual life, the compelling restatement of the doctrine of the Gospel delicately adjusted to the needs of our own era. The theme of the LEGACY resolves itself into a plea for greater faith and love. Throughout the history of God's dealings with man, faith, as the expression and proof of love, has been demanded. God does not change; He still seeks souls whose love for Him will urge them on to total self-surrender, to blind abandonment, in faith. "Love does not doubt." Our Lord said to Sister Mary (p. 264) and a plea for greater confidence is the constantly recurring motif of the communications. "Ah. how

convents would flourish if they had spirit of faith and poverty which all, and if they would strive only to what I ask" (p. 91). Significantly, Lord asks for greater confidence in power of the priesthood, for confide would develop a healthier spiritual in both priest and penitent. "My privould be more conscious of their mis if they met more living souls hun enough to ask for the help needed which they can give." (p. 155).

It is impossible to read the LEGA thoughtfully and prayerfully with being stirred to a deeper realization the fact that God speaks to all se that He desires all souls to reach up with Him in contemplation through use of the natural faculties. Contemp tion is the natural culmination of Christian life; God gives the necess graces, but He demands on our both total surrender of the will in and total concentration of all our facties on the effort to reach Him. "C centrate all the effort of your mind arriving at a true understanding of what I am, of what I desire, of what I value so as to choose as I choose, so as judge all things in the sense that judge . . . It means work; false ide must be got rid of, the evidence of right understanding must be sough within you, you must listen to Me, loc at Me, never leave Me . . . I do not to you what you should know - I on tell you a tiny part; you must fin out and understand for yourself: the is life. Oh, if you knew how much I need your cooperation." (pp. 154-55).

THE SPIRITUAL LEGACY is valuable not only as a guide to a fuller and deeper supernatural life but also as a inspiration and stimulus to more serious striving. It offers excellent material femeditative spiritual reading both for the beginner in the spiritual life and feather more advanced.

The translation is good, despite a for awkward mechanics, and there is a useful index.

#### TRANSITUS

Because October languishes with love, Flinging quick beauty down like words, Sighing out leaves through the night For her beautiful Lover,

Because October walks unshod, Is wounded entirely with purple loneliness, Has no defenses for her incredible dreams, This was your hour.

This was your hour, with the blood that once Scorched this whole arteried map with riotous flame, Seeping like sighs from five most perfect wounds. This was your hour, and your eyes that owned The universe once, like dollars, now exchange The Umbrian hills, the spread of stars on sky, For penury of blindness.

Will they stand
Around you, Francis, weeping?—Let song split
The stones, and tear the hearts out of the trees,
For Christ has kissed you dead!

No other hour Is yours, none knows your soul except October When the whole earth is dreaming of her Lover And the air waits all day and night, like a woman.

O great, dark mystery, cleave me flesh from bone! How Christ shall kiss me dead When I am blind.

Poor Clare Monastery of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Roswell, New Mexico Sr. M