

FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

Cyrillus Rudolphus Jarre, O.F.M., et Li Ki-jen, TENTAMEN SENSUM CODICIS IURIS CANONICI LITTERIS SINICIS REDDENDI, Typis Missionis Catholicae Tsinan, Shantung, 1943. Pp. 622.

Just at the time when the foreign clergy is being expelled from Red China and the ranks of the Chinese clergy decimated, the need of a translation of the CODEX JURIS CANONICI is more pressing than ever before. It is with pride and gratitude and renewed hope for the future that the publication of the first Chinese translation of the CODEX is announced.

The translation has been done by Cyril Rudolph Jarre, O.F.M., Archbishop of Tsinan, Shantung, with the assistance of the eminent Chinese jurist, Li Ki-jen. It was providential, in the face of the many problems and difficulties involved in the work, that Dr. Li was able to assist the Archbishop. During the Japanese occupation Dr. Li retired from the courts rather than cooperate with the enemy in legal affairs, and took up his residence at the Franciscan monastery in Tsinan. There he spent three years in close collaboration with Archbishop Jarre. Although a pagan and therefore unfamiliar with much of the ecclesiastical terminology of the CODEX, Dr. Li's wide learning and penetrating insight enabled him to give invaluable assistance in supplying exact Chinese equivalents, and, where equivalents were lacking, in coining new phrases which would become acceptable standard

additions to the body of nology.

Besides Dr. Li, many Chinese, both Franciscan and secular, gave help to the Archbishop. The Fu-jen University and their Canon Law gave them a standing of many points of view secure to the pagan Dr. Li, the foreign Archbishop Jarre.

The late Msgr. Mario Zerbini, Apostolic Delegate for China, was personally interested in this project and personally secured permission from Rome.

The translation of the CODEX took three years; the actual printing took three years. It is published in a volume of 622 pages, with titles in red and black. The typography is uniformly excellent. To Brother Wessels, O.F.M., the highest credit is due for the beauty and clarity of the Chinese characters as well as the Roman type. There is a double volume, in Latin and in Chinese. The Chinese is arranged according to the new radical system.

Unquestionably, in the near future Chinese theology students will have a work of great value, especially in view of the fact that foreign professors of Law will be difficult to obtain. This work will also serve to build up a standard of ecclesiastical technical terminology in the Chinese language.

OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they be loosed from their sins (II Mach. 12, 46). At a time of stress and struggle, the human soul is apt to reach into the lowest depths and explore the loftiest heights. In this the soul is activated by the desire for relief and the innate urge to force the hand of the Almighty, as it were, and render witness to the undying presence of the Lord Who rules over heaven and earth.

The Machabean period was the most turbulent epoch in the history of Israel. There was strife within and struggle without. The heroic up-rising of the aged Mathathias and his stalwart sons bears a close resemblance to the days of our War of Independence, of our own national self-assertion. *Everyone that hath zeal for the law and maintaineth the testament, let him follow me* (I Mach. 2, 27). This was the call of that mighty warrior, and the sons of Israel proved worthy of such a leader.

Thanks be to God that Mother Church has saved the two books of the Machabees from among the mass of apocryphal writings; for the sentence quoted at the beginning of the first paragraph above condenses in a few words a belief that undoubtedly reached back to the earliest days of divine revelation, namely, that the prayers of the faithful on earth are certain to benefit the souls of the departed. To this belief the infant Church, in the days of the apostles and the first martyrs, fell heir; and in the course of time this same belief became formulated into the explicit doctrine of Purgatory, under the infallible guidance of the living Church. The scant fragments of early Christian writings as well as the simple prayers scribbled by the persecuted believers on the walls of the catacombs bear ample witness to this ancient and, we may add, much cherished belief.

It is a matter of course that the belief in Purgatory should appeal to the first Christians even as it has appealed to the Christians of the world at large in every age and clime. The doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ and its concomitant doctrine of the Communion of Saints were so deeply ingrained in the hearts and minds of the faithful that any other notion would have seemed unnatural, unreasonable and completely at variance with the entire range of Catholic dogma. God is just; but He is also merciful, and *His mercy endureth forever*. It is readily seen that justice demands the punishment of those who have wilfully separated themselves from God and died impenitent in the consciousness of mortal offense; but it is equally clear that divine mercy will extend itself to those souls who had not completely severed themselves from God's friendship, even though they could not be afforded the sublime privilege of the Beatific Vision until they should be purified from every stain by the Holy Faith

again vindicates its claim as a *reasonable service* (Rom. 12, 1), when it declares that Christ's vast kingdom embraces within its confines three large divisions, the Church Triumphant, the Church Militant, and Church Suffering.

There is a wholesome gesture in our ecclesiastical calendar in that All Souls Day follows All Hallows, or the Feast of All Saints. In her motherly concern the Holy Church plays on the moods of her children; it is joy today and sorrow tomorrow. Today you may rejoice with the saints in glory; tomorrow you may weep with the souls in Purgatory. Somehow we should prefer to call the latter Poor Souls rather than Holy Souls. Although holiness is to be their certain reward, at this moment they are still confined to the most intense suffering. In fact, there are those who assert that these sufferings differ but little from sufferings sustained in hell-fire. Suffice to say that whatever these sufferings may be they are alleviated immeasurably by the certainty that some day the light of God will shine upon them, and they will be relieved of what is now their greatest pang: their inability to *see God face to face*.

There are many things in revelation and creation that we do not understand. Our books on theology fail to give the answer, and the catechism just smiles at our inquisitiveness. And yet, when all is said and done, we cannot but exclaim with the people of Palestine when they marveled at the miracles of Jesus, *He has done all things well* (Mk. 7, 37). For is it not wonderful, and does it not prove the vision and wisdom of Divine Providence, that while the Poor Souls are suffering in their confinement the souls living on earth should possess all their human feelings, their sympathy and charity, and above all the power to come to the rescue of the souls in Purgatory and hasten their return to the God of their love?

Do we realize that this is our big chance, our glorious opportunity, to help those whom we loved on earth, and by doing so enhance, enrich and expand the House of God above? It is sad but true that our present world picture resembles the turbulent, busy and reckless days of the Machabean period. In spite of our multitudinous and often meaningless worries within, and still more onerous and pressing duties without, let us listen to the soft, appealing and soothing voice of the Book of Machabees: *It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins*.

Someone may ask, why do not the saints in heaven look after the Poor Souls? Well, that is a question for which we do not have an adequate answer. For we know, the saints in heaven do not forget their suffering brethren. However, it would seem that we are in a far more advantageous position to help them; and besides, our help will profit not only them but ourselves as well. Again, the destiny of the Poor Souls is secure, while ours is still very uncertain. It would

seem that Saints Peter and Paul and all the angels and saints are far more concerned about the safety of the poor prodigal, still wending his way over the crags and crevices of this stony way, than about the early release of the prisoners of the Lord. To put it plainly, the saints in heaven are having a good and glorious time, the souls in Purgatory are serving released time, whereas our time is just a haphazard guess between worn-out clocks, belated trains, broken-down buses, and devious paths. We do need help and direction. The saints are ever ready, to be sure; but the Poor Souls are anxious, for in their case and ours the need is mutual. Ask those elderly religious, who for many years *have borne the burden of the day's heat*, and I assure you that with one accord they will tell you: "Help the Poor Souls and they will help you." Perhaps this is one angle in your daily life and work that you have missed completely.

There are so many ties that bind you to the suffering souls. There are your parents, relatives, numberless friends. They were good to you and oftentimes you were inappreciative of their kindnesses. This is the time for restitution. God has given you a memory, a human heart; this is the time to search deep and make good what you perhaps neglected in your early years when you were thoughtless, forgetful, and probably ungrateful. Who knows but that the prayerful remembrance of the Poor Souls may be the one thing that we have missed in our spiritual life, the one thing that may prove to serve as a powerful aid to our progress in perfection. Our prayer for the Poor Souls is so genuinely human and at the same time so completely in harmony with the divine plan, that a religious cannot afford to treat it lightly. In fact, our whole religious life seems defective without a strenuous effort in this direction, especially during the month of November.

Our Founders have well provided that we do not forget the departed members of our communities. Let a new zeal, a new enthusiasm, and a new love permeate our hearts at the *De Profundis*, the *Miserere*, the *Pater's* and *Ave's* that abound in our daily routine. Then there is the Holy Sacrifice, the Stations of the Cross, and numerous other devotions that may be applied to the Poor Souls. In the matter of indulgences Mother Church seems to be extravagant when there is question of helping the Poor Souls. This is not merely a hint; no, it is a challenge, which our generosity and charity should meet to the utmost. These are indeed the least of Christ's brethren. But let us remember, we are still lesser than the least, and there is not more salutary meditation on our own happy death, as we trust, than the *Requiem Aeternam* said or sung for our departed brothers and sisters.

New York, N. Y.

Fr. Thomas P. ...

A MAP OF LIFE

(The Sermon De Modo Vivendi of Saint Bonaventure)

Whoever you may be, if you wish through faith, hope, and charity to attain to salvation, you must strive for perfection in three ways: by devout prayer, virtuous living, and worthy confession. The Prophet Micheas has said as *I will show, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: what is good, to do judgment, by confessing truthfully, and to love mercy, by living in a good manner with others, and to walk solicitously with your God, by persevering steadfastly in prayer (Micheas 6, 8).*

First, before all else, because we can do no good of ourselves, we must pray to God. *Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice (Matt. 6, 33).* Prayer must be offered to God in a twofold manner, vocally and mentally, in keeping with the twofold make-up of man. The Psalmist tells us: *My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God (Ps. 83, 3);* and the Apostle writes: *Singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord (Eph. 5, 19).*

Vocal prayer must be offered to God distinctly, attentively, and devoutly, not mixing up the words; attentively, not allowing the mind to wander to other things; devoutly, allowing the mind to delight in the praises of God. Vocal prayer should be had seven times in the day according to the prescription of the Church and the words of David, who said: *Seven times in the day I have praised you (Ps. 118, 164).* By doing this we merit the sevenfold gift of the Holy Ghost.

Furthermore, mental prayer must be offered to God, concerning which the Apostle Paul said to Timothy: *I wish that the men pray everywhere, lifting up pure hands, without wrath and contention, to God. (I Tim. 2, 8).* He thus indicates that in all our needs, our heart must take refuge in God, our first and foremost Helper. This is done by raising pure and affectionate sighs of the heart to Him. Saint Gregory tells us: "True prayer is to resound with the groans of compunction and not with many formulae of words." Now, if it is necessary that this prayer be frequently offered to God, it should be especially undertaken on solemn days and feasts, for such is their purpose, and on other days, at definite hours, especially in the morning and evening. Thus we shall receive the morning and evening dew: our morning prayer bringing us the grace that will direct us in the day, and our night prayer, God's correction and cleansing grace.

This prayer must have two companions, one preceding it and the other following. Meditation must go before, as the Wise Man says: *Before prayer*

prepare your heart (Ecclus. 18, 23), and this preparation is had through meditation. The Psalmist also speaks of this: *In my meditation a fire shall burst forth (Ps. 38, 4),* which is the fervor of desire, without which no sacrifice of devout prayer can nor should be offered.

Thanksgiving must follow, as the Church teaches by ending every prayer with the words *Deo gratias.* So too the Apostle exhorts: *Be assiduous in prayer, watching in it in thanksgiving (Coloss. 4, 2).* Thanksgiving must take up the greater part of our prayer, but should not consist in many words, but in affections. This affective character of both prayer and thanksgiving arises from an intent and constant meditation on our miseries and God's mercies, both those of the whole human race and the misery of each of us and God's special care of each soul. For no one ardently asks for something, unless he is convinced that he needs that for which he asks, and unless he has confidence that his prayer will be heard. Nor does any one return thanks to God, unless he realizes the greatness of the divine gift and the lack of merit on his part. This sacrifice of mental prayer is greatly acceptable and pleasing to God, as our Lord told us in Saint John: *The Father seeks such as worship Him in spirit and truth (4, 23).*

On the ladder of Jacob there is no place to stand, but only to ascend and descend; therefore, we must give ourselves not only to devout prayer, but also to a holy and virtuous way of life. This holiness of life consists in two things, in directing our life according to true justice and in practising severe self-discipline.

We map our life according to justice when the will is so directed as to give to everyone his due: to superiors, obedience and reverence; to equals, harmony and good will; to inferiors, thoughtfulness and care; *because each must administer the grace which he has received to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God (I Pet. 4, 10).* This is done when help is given to the needy, instruction to the ignorant, correction to the delinquent, tolerance to those of ill-will, comfort to the afflicted, support to the falling, compassion to all who are miserable, and peace and charity to all men. In this is the fulfillment of the whole law and justice. *Who loves his neighbor fulfills the law (Rom. 13, 8).* And Saint Paul especially exhorts us to fulfill this obligation, when he said: *Owe no man anything except to love one another.* For if we fulfill this obligation, all other obligations are taken care of, especially when *we love our neighbor not only in word or with the tongue but also in deed and truth (I John 3, 18),* when there is an opportunity. But when there is no opportunity the good will takes the place of the deed, as Saint Gregory said: "The hand is never empty if the will is the coffer of the heart is filled with good will." And he adds: "The will is

good if we are concerned over another's calamities as though over our own, if we rejoice over the prosperity of another as over our own advancement, if we consider another's losses as our own, and reckon others' gains our own, if we love a friend not because of the world, but for God's sake, if we bear with an enemy loving him, if we do to no one what we do not want done to ourselves, if we do no one what we ourselves justly demand, if we bring aid to the needs of a neighbor, not only according to our strength, but even try to help him beyond what we are able." This is a correct description of a good will, in which the rectitude of justice, which cannot be without the sweetness of mercy.

But to acquire, increase, and preserve this good will strict self-discipline is necessary, the purpose of which is to subject the spirit of our mind to the law and rule of holiness in both the inner and outer man. Exterior discipline consists in guarding the senses and all those things connected with them; the interior, in guarding the passions and thoughts.

The first step in subjecting oneself to the task of self-discipline is to curb the sense of touch by the strong bond of chastity; the sense of taste, by the rule of sobriety; the sense of smell, by flight from those things that arouse the flesh by giving desires for fine food or luxury; the sense of hearing, by flight from worldly song and pleasing sounds and all vain speech, especially that which detracts or flatters; the sense of sight, finally, must be kept from what might arouse desires, since as Saint Gregory says: "One should not look at what one cannot desire." This then is the first step of self-discipline; to restrain the five senses. These are like five windows *through which death enters* (Jer. 9, 2) unless we offer resistance by vigilant self-control.

Besides this custody of the senses, it is necessary to discipline oneself against those things which are connected with the senses. First, our talk or speech must be freed from any undisciplined word, whether of detraction, or flattery, complaining, suggestiveness, filthiness, cursing, insults, swearing, lying, and every *idle word* for which *account must be given on the day of judgment* (Matt. 23, 36). Let us recognize too that such words are expressed not only in speech, but also in sign or gesture. The clothing of the body must also be so regulated that it will be neither superfluous nor soft and rich, nor greatly decorated. Laughter and especially boisterousness, must be checked. One's manner of walking must also be controlled so that it is not loose or sloppy. All gestures of the body and any familiarity must be curtailed that could in any way give offense to oneself or another, as the Apostle Paul warns us: *Keep yourself from every kind of* (I Thess. 5, 22).

Add to this a close watch on the affections; in particular, the passion of concupiscence, lest the spirit seek the delights of the flesh, or embrace passing goods, or human praise, all of which make up the threefold concupiscence of the world. One must shun the passion of anger, lest his heart be disturbed against anyone; our anger, if aroused lawfully, should be directed against the vice and not against the person. Also the inclination to lukewarmness or sadness must be avoided, which is wont to come from human respect or spiritual weariness. But one cannot perfectly avoid this in the midst of the evils of this present life, unless he rejoice in the Holy Ghost.

Lastly, our thoughts must be brought under the law of self-discipline; so that the mind is kept from vain thoughts, filthy thoughts, spiteful thoughts. I call vain the day-dreams of human ambition; filthy, thoughts of carnal pleasure; spiteful, thoughts of suspicion or harmful planning against our neighbor.

We cannot carry out this fourfold discipline unless the body is worn down by fasts, vigils, and hard work, the hands exercised in humble and fruitful labors or tasks; the tongue, in the praises of God; the ears, in hearing the words of God; the eyes, in good and holy readings; and the heart, in good and holy meditation. But because it is most difficult to keep the heart centered on one thing, God has given it many good things on every side upon which it might think: above, heavenly things, that is, our heavenly homeland; below, eternal punishments; in front, the examples of the saints; behind, our sins; to the right, the divine gifts; to the left, the divine judgments; and everywhere, the divine commandments which command us on every side, and which our heart must keep before itself wherever it turn. Thus the Psalmist says about the just man that *day and night* he must *meditate on the divine law* (Ps. 1, 2); and the Wise Man: *Whatever the Lord commands you, ponder always on those things* (Eccli. 3, 22).

But since there is no one who so pursues discipline or justice that he does not neglect or omit something, one must have recourse to a worthy confession. In this the penitent must lay bare his defects wholly, truthfully, and purely without any covering of excuse or concealment or coloring. He will do this, in the first place, by confessing his omissions in the things that pertain to God, especially in prayer, both mental and vocal. Then he must confess faults in the observance of justice as regards his neighbor; after this, omissions which come from poor custody of the senses and the appetites and thoughts connected with sensible things, according to the fourfold description of self-discipline set forth above.

Confession must have two companions, contrition and satisfaction. The penitent should be sorry for all his offenses, not only the mortal ones, but the venial the

little ones, taking heed of the warning: *He that contemneth small things, fall by little and little* (Eccli. 19, 1). Being sorry, let him avoid repeating fault; more, let him try to cut away the cause and occasion of sinning since attached to them through perverse love. Such is the teaching of our Lord: *eye that is an occasion of sin must be plucked out* (Matt. 5, 29). This is understood to mean the member of our body, but the occasion of sin, even the cause of sin seems to be as precious to the sinner as the eye is precious to the whole body.

The truth of a pure confession depends on the purity of our prayer vice-versa, because the closer one approaches a light, the more one sees what is deformed; and the more deformity he removes from his power of sight, the more sweetly he enjoys the light. Therefore, a pure confession leads to prayer, just as dawn follows the night. Prayer, in its turn, leads to the light of contemplation as to the midday, wherein every holy soul wishes to rest in Christ her spouse, here in the present through grace, until God is seen in glory, to which may He lead us, who lives and reigns forever. Amen.

Detroit, Mich.

Fr. Florentine Rayes, O.F.M. (t)



Whilst Francis was at Greccio and in its environs, Peter of Catania, first vicar-general, died in the convent of Saint Mary of the Angels, on the 2d day of March, 1224. As soon as he was in the tomb, God bore witness to his merit by many miracles. The people crowded to his grave, and left votive offerings, which greatly disturbed the quiet of the Religious, and caused much uneasiness on account of their strict poverty. Francis, having been informed of it, went to the tomb, and, moved by holy zeal, he addressed the dead in a commanding tone, which God alone could have inspired him with: "Brother Peter, whilst you were living, you always obeyed me punctually: I command you to obey me similarly now. Those who come to your grave are very troublesome to us. Our poverty is offended, and our quiet infringed on, so that our discipline becomes relaxed; thus, I command you, by your vow of obedience, to abstain from performing any more miracles." His order was obeyed. From that time no more miracles were performed on the tomb of Brother Peter . . . After having directed the body of Brother Peter to be removed sometime after, it was found that it was turned and kneeling, the head bowed down, in the posture of one who obeys a command given him.

Candide Chalippe, O. F. M.

CHRISTO-CENTRIC REFLECTIONS (II)

Thoughts on Christian Perfection

THE TRUE CONCEPT OF THE MYSTICAL LIFE

If false notions of asceticism can deter one from the ascetical life the more so is it true of the mystical life. Some have associated the mystical life with extraordinary states of mind, even with a pathological condition. It has been taught, and still is by some, that the mystical life is something to be shunned since it is filled with danger, or at least as if it were reserved only for privileged souls. According to this doctrine, to tend to the mystical life would be the same as exposing oneself to great illusions and lessening Christian humility, since it would mean the abandonment of the ordinary way of Christian perfection. For such, the mystical life is the extraordinary way to Christian perfection and to aspire to it smacks of pride.

Therefore, to understand correctly the Christian journey of the soul, one must have the true concept of the mystical life. The ascetical life of Christocentric spirituality is not placed in some psychological exercise proper to an initiate, *per se*, nor in one's own efforts of intellect and will, but from the very beginning it draws its motivating reason from on high. Its motive is the love of Christ and God in the Mystical Union. The entire ascetical life of this spirituality is rightly called mystical on account of its formal principle.

The mystical life does not consist in extraordinary phenomena, such as visions, hearing of voices, levitations, ecstasies, and prophecies. These are either illusions and pathological states, or they may be graces freely given which are not necessary for *one's own sanctification*. Such phenomena are not so much to be sought as shunned.

Christian mysticism is something entirely different, since it is a life fully supernatural in grace. In mystical contemplation Saint Bonaventure tells us that "God is beheld in the effect of grace and the experience of His sweetness through the mystical union." Surely all souls in sanctifying grace possess the principle of the supernatural life. But it is one thing to possess grace and another thing to live according to it and by it. A person can possess grace and still lead a merely natural life, either corporeal or psychological, so that his own manner of acting or living differs little from that of the pagan. A mystic, however, experiences and lives the grace by which he works; and because of this the actions of his life become supernatural and divine on account of his operation in the Mystical Christ. A mystic acts more easily and more perfectly since he acts with docility to the conscious inspirations of the Holy Spirit. *The mystic can lead a perfectly human life*, since he is able to act spiritually and . . . to his

elevated capacities which participate in the operations of the divine will and intellect. The mystic *lives* and *experiences* the riches of grace and of the Christian religion, which others recognize only imperfectly in the cold abstractions of speculative theology. *Taste and see that the Lord is sweet.*

ALL ARE CALLED TO THE MYSTICAL LIFE

The mystical life is the expression of the life of grace, which is the source of the entire spiritual life from baptism to the beatific vision. Saint Thomas says that "Grace is the beginning of glory in us." And since all are called to grace, so all are called to the mystical life which is the life of grace in us. It is the supernatural life through grace and according to grace, for it does not suffice to possess the principle of the supernatural life and nevertheless live in a manner thoroughly natural, as if grace did not exist!

Mystical life is the life of Christ and according to the elevation of the powers of the soul. But all men are called to that life which is perfectly human and Christian. Therefore, all men are called to the mystical life.

Lest anyone say: "I intend to enjoy that supernatural life in heaven; now, the ordinary life suffices for me." This fallacy stems from the evil spirit who wishes to deter one from Christian perfection. This perfect submission and conformity to the influence of grace cannot be experienced except in the mystical state, where the soul feels the influence of the Holy Spirit and follows it. It is evident that if all are called to grace and in it to Christian perfection, therefore, all are called as well to the mystical life.

The mystical life is not a sort of egotistical enjoyment of God, since it is the life of perfect charity. This virtue concerns itself with the love of God and also with the love of neighbor. A mystic is no less active than contemplative for he lives within himself the life of Christ. With Him he adores the Father and prays for sinners who have abandoned God. With Him he suffers and dies daily for the redemption of the world. With Christ he speaks to men and carries on all the works of the apostolate. This apostolate is more fruitful the more the mystic is united with Christ. The Holy Spirit speaks and works in him. This is the reason why the good example and simple sermons of the humble saints of God converted more men to God than the profoundest words of human oratory. Thus it is evident that if all are called to the mystical life, this does not mean that they are called to the selfish enjoyment of God, but rather to a very high and fruitful activity for God and men, in perfect love of benevolence. This is the way to sanctification, which is not merely seeking one's own satisfaction but the fulfillment of the will of God: *For this is the will of God, your sanctification.*

The ultimate end cannot be anything else but God. Man, moreover, does not attain this end except through his own sanctification, in which he also finds his own beatitude.

THE SUPERNATURAL LIFE

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-dresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he will take away; and every branch that bears fruit he will cleanse, that it may bear more fruit. . . . Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it remain on the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing. In this text of Saint John is contained the entire doctrine of our supernatural life, which is the life of Christ in us. What else is the life of any branch except the life flowing from the vine? The same life animates and vivifies all the branches and produces a unity of the vine. By the strength of the vine the branches bear their fruit, while by themselves they would remain sterile, cast off and worthless, fit only to be used as fuel for the fire.

The same holds true in the supernatural life wherein of ourselves we can do nothing. The supernatural life is divine which cannot proceed except from a divine principle. That principle is Christ in us; Christ to Whom we are ingrafted through Baptism and Who becomes for us the principle of our every act produced in union with Him. As the branches of the vine bear fruit when they adhere to it, so the baptized bear the fruit of Christ when they adhere to Christ by grace and intention.

Conditions required for Supernaturality. There are two conditions required in order that our acts may be supernatural: 1. *Grace*, since it is the principle of that union with Christ without which we can do nothing supernatural. 2. *Intention* is also required because, although through grace man is united with Christ and elevated to the supernatural order, still he retains his nature and so he can act naturally only if he does not act without an actual (or at least virtual) intention in union with Christ living in him.

The supernatural operation is indeed performed by us but only in so far as we are ennobled and made one with the Mystical Christ. He is the principle of supernatural being and so the principle of the supernatural operation as the fruit is certainly from the branch but in virtue of the vine, from whom he receives life and nourishment. Although man may be united with Christ in a natural participation in His divinity connoted in sanctifying grace, and through radical freedom, he can act outside that union.

This he does when he intentionally acts for a natural end only, not ordering his acts unto Christ. Thus we can see the importance of good intention in our works, which are vitiated by a natural or bad end and so lack merit and supernatural value. The work which does not arise from a supernatural end cannot be a work of Christ, Who always intends the will of His heavenly Father. *Of myself I can do nothing . . . because I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me.*

The nature of the union with Christ. The intention by which we are united with Christ in our acts seems to pertain to the moral order. Nevertheless, the union of intention cannot come about unless first there is a union of being. This union was mentioned specifically by Christ in the parable of the vine and the branches. This union, however, belongs to the physical order.

Just as we admit the physical union between the branches and the vine, so we must admit the union between the Christian and Christ. For as Christ is one and all Christians share in the one life of Christ, so also they are made one in Him. It is evident that here we are dealing with the supernatural order and hence with the physical union and unity only in that order, for the physical distinction and multiplicity of individuals will remain by reason of the nature and person, which are ennobled but not destroyed in this union with Christ.

The supernatural order is essentially the elevation of nature. If the nature would not remain, then neither would the multiplicity nor the personality, and we would have annihilation and not elevation. This elevation, moreover, is possible in itself by reason of the intellectual nature, which possesses a desire and potency extended to the infinite; then to the co-participation of the divine nature and operation. This co-participation can be realized only by God, and is realized in fact in so far as the Word assumed to Himself human nature and so potentially all men. When men are actually united with Christ, namely by the mystical Incarnation of the Word in them, they become partakers in Him of the divine life of the Most Holy Trinity. The elevation, therefore, to the supernatural order indicates the informing of the activity of a subject by the divine principle in a participation of the divine nature, since in God action and being are identified. This elevation, moreover, infinitely surpassing human forces, cannot be effected except by a union with Christ through which humanity is elevated in grace to the divine level.

THE LIFE OF GRACE

From the concrete consideration of our elevation in Christ Jesus, it becomes evident what that wonderful gift of God is, which we call "sanctifying grace,"

and what the life of grace is, "the beginning of glory in us." It is the life of Christ in us and our life in Christ. It is the habit of our union with Christ and through Him and in Him, with God the Father in the Holy Spirit. Thus it is the participation in the ineffable divine life of understanding and love of the Most Holy Trinity.

How much would our life be changed, if we often meditated upon the wonderful life of grace in us! How much more should we endeavour to increase it, especially by a more intimate union with Christ in life and action. How much more should we strive to flee sin, which precipitates us from this wonderful divine life into the most miserable state of reprobation. Finally, how much more should we yearn for the happy life of the mystic, where the life of grace progresses to light; where man experiences the sweetness of the divine embrace of Christ, and in Him the delights of the elevation to the Father in the light and love of the Holy Spirit!

The habit of grace is something created in us, but it takes its profound reality from our union with the Mystical Christ. By this union we are partakers of the life of the Word in the Most Holy Trinity. With Him and in Him there is a return to the Creator and Father, in a reciprocal procession of love of the Holy Spirit. We participate in this life in Christ through our intellect and will: *If any one love me . . . my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him.*

By our adherence to the Mystical Christ we become partakers of the life of the Word and our supernatural life is inseparable from the life of Christ on account of the hypostatic union, which union is the exemplary cause of our union with the life of the Word and of the Most Holy Trinity: *That all may be one, even as thou, Father, in me and I in thee; that they also may be one in us.* This is effected through grace, or through the union with Christ: *I in them and thou in me; that they may be perfected in unity.*

Our conformity to Christ ought to be as intimate as that substantial union of the branch with the vine. For as the branches live from the substance of the vine, so also the Christian lives from the life of Christ with Whom he becomes one in grace. The Christian becomes one in the supernatural life, which is the participation of the divine nature and of the life in Christ Jesus, in the Man-God. O great mystery of the spiritual life which is the divine life! O great foolishness of those who desert the magnificence of the divine life and relinquish Christ to take up again the misery of vanity and the natural life of the flesh. Follow their own will and the evil desires of the body. For no one can follow Christ

unless by the union of intention and love, and by the abnegation of his own will in order that he may embrace the will of Christ, which is the will of His heavenly Father.

THE MYSTICAL UNION

The supernatural union of man with Christ is likened by Sacred Scripture to the union of the Son to the Father; of the body to the head; of the branch to the vine; all of which seem to indicate a formal union. Nevertheless this union is simply supernatural in essence and in activity while the human person remains with his own natural principles. This union, therefore, is not substantial except insofar as it is supernatural, for man's own nature, with his individual personality, remains. Neither is it then hypostatic, as the union in Christ of the two natures in one person. It is a union of the individual person of man with the divine person of Christ. It is a union of the human soul with its mystical Spouse, Christ the Word, and in Him and through Him, with God, in the unity of a supernatural operation.

Since man in the supernatural order is united to the Word in Christ he becomes "another Christ." Therefore, St. Augustine could proclaim: "Let us rejoice and give thanks; not only have we been made Christians, but we have been made Christ . . . Rejoice!"

Since the faithful are united in one and the same Christ, so all in Christ effect one body of which Christ is the head and the faithful are the members and this body of Christ is called the Church. The unity of the Church in the unity of the body of Christ is a consequence of the doctrine of the elevation of man in Christ. Just as anyone who receives the Eucharistic Communion receives the whole Christ, and still Christ is one, so all who adhere to the mystical Christ in the Word possess Him entirely. Each and every soul receives its Spouse and yet the body of Christ remains one; one Church, one Communion, one Spouse in the unity of Christ.

In Him all effect one body and form one Church, since *all things have been created through and unto him, and he is before all creatures, and in him all things hold together.* That is true even in the natural order, but in a divine manner in the supernatural order of man's elevation united to Christ.

Since the faithful in grace commune with God and Christ in the innermost reaches of their heart, they accordingly comprise one body in virtue of this intimate union. Christ the head of this body diffuses His life to the members, and this vivifying life is the Holy Spirit. *Again, he is the head of his body, the Church; he, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the first place.*

The Word works through the Holy Spirit, and so He is called the principle of our union with Christ and the principle of the unity of the Church in Christ, because the root of union is love, and the Spirit vivifies and unifies this love. The entire spiritual life consists in grace, namely, in the participation of the life of the Most Holy Trinity in the unity of God. The principle of the divine unity in the Trinity is the Holy Spirit, namely the mutual love of the Father and the Word to Whom we ourselves should be joined in grace and in a mystical union. But since the Church cannot be anything else except the unity of all the members of Christ, therefore the principle of the life of each and every one in Christ is the principle of the life of the entire body. And hence the Holy Spirit is said to be the soul of the body of Christ, the Church, as He is said to be the principle of the life of grace in each and every member.

Washington, D. C.

Fr. Method C. Billy, O.F.M. Conv.



So powerful, so demanding of attention, so productive of grace is the Mystery of the Most Holy Passion, that if the human mind contemplates it and really enters into the experiencing of it, co-suffering from the heart with the suffering Christ, it will be so inflamed and transformed into love of Him that as it comes to realize that Christ died for love of it, so it will be prepared not only to shrink from all guilt for Him but also to undergo every pain of death.

Saint Bernardine of Siena



There is a great difference between pondering upon Christ Jesus, knowing about Him, and being of the same mind with Him (Phil. 2, 5). Some few have investigated Him deeply and acquired a profound knowledge of Him; but fewer still are of the same mind with Him, have experienced Him at first hand. This last comes about only by a complete conformation of the mind to Christ by means of the most ardent love.

Saint Bernardine of Siena

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

According to Saint Bonaventure

Closely related to inordinate desire for the pleasures of eating and drinking is inordinate desire for gratifying the sense of touch. Love of softness and ease, of creature comforts, has come to be regarded in modern times as something quite normal and not at all to be worried about. But in the middle ages this love of softness was regarded with fear and loathing as one of the greatest enemies to our sanctification. While sense pleasures, as we have already pointed out, are by no means forbidden to us, nevertheless as Franciscans dedicated to the ideal of poverty and penance we must recognize definite limits. It is not so much the real excesses, the grave sins of sensuality, that require our attention here, but rather the fine and sometimes very subtle contradictions between our ideal of evangelical simplicity and our actual living of that ideal. Because this desire for physical well-being is so integral a part of our nature (for the body instinctively seeks protection as well as nourishment), and because, if uncontrolled, it can become so destructive of the spirit of our Order, Saint Bonaventure would have us ask ourselves:

DO I SEEK INORDINATE PLEASURE IN APPAREL
AND IN PHYSICAL COMFORTS?

In general, of course, our Rule and Constitutions prescribe the quality and quantity of our clothing, and the first point of our examen should concern our fidelity to these prescriptions. More specifically we may ask: Am I content with the clothing allotted to me by my superiors, or do I seek to obtain better or more comfortable clothing from other sources? Do I secretly try to have my preferences in regard to material and style of clothing satisfied through family or friends? or through nagging my superiors into allowing me these exceptions? or through independent purchase? Do I gladly wear the coarser and less comfortable kind of underclothing, or do I consider nothing but the finest and softest garments fit for contact with my body? Am I content with a variety of clothing sufficient for seasonal needs, or do I accumulate little storehouses "just in case?"

The Franciscan ideal in regard to clothing requires that we avoid the extreme of luxury and the extreme of poverty, for both extremes attract not only the attention but also the just censure of the world. If we are to preach by our appearance, as our Seraphic Father wished, we must aim at his standard—which was also the standard of Christ—of poverty combined with decency. Anything more or less, for Franciscans, is definitely objectionable. Here, then, we may ask ourselves: Am I overly concerned about my appearance? Do I insist, for

example, that my habit be without spot or wrinkle? that my trousers be creased to a knife-edge sharpness? that my wimple fall in just the right folds? The smartly groomed and highly polished look is an asset for secular persons, but it is painfully unbecoming for religious. On the other hand, the unclean and untidy look is equally offensive. Saint Francis said that with the blessing of God we should not be ashamed to wear decently patched and mended clothing; he did not suggest that the blessing of God is attached to the wearing of torn or ragged or dirty clothing. Our ideal in regard to clothing lies in the way of the ordinary.

This leads to another point: Do I realize that my habit protects both soul and body, that I must respect it accordingly? Am I faithful in wearing it as the Church and my Constitutions prescribe? Do I keep in mind that the Franciscan habit is the habit of penance, and that I should gladly endure whatever discomfort it causes? Or do I tend to dispense with certain parts of the habit merely for the sake of ease and convenience?

Do my secular clothes also reflect Franciscan poverty? Or must it be said of me that I outdo even the secular clergy in elegance of attire? Am I inclined to blossom out in flashy or expensive sport clothes and to take pride in having the newest and best in sport equipment? Am I duly cautious about appearing in public in completely non-clerical garb, and when I must do so, am I careful to avoid anything that might cause unfavorable comment?

It sometimes happens that while the clothing of a religious may be in harmony with Franciscan poverty, his accessories are not. This is understandable in view of the custom prevailing among religious of receiving such objects as gifts. Loving parents and friends are very often guided—or misguided—by the conviction that only the best is good enough for us, and we all too frequently encourage them in their error. In the last analysis the guilt lies with us, for we have a serious obligation to make known to relatives and friends that whatever we use must be in harmony with the poverty we have vowed. Let us, then, honestly ask ourselves: What about my accessories? Must I have the latest style in shoes, hosiery, gloves? Am I content with the ordinary, or do I prefer my things to be just a little different? What about such articles as umbrellas, luggage, handbags? What about watches, glasses, fountain pens, cigarette cases and lighters? It is an odd sight indeed to find a son or daughter of the Poverello exhibiting accouterments so elegant that they cannot be distinguished from those of fashionable lay persons. To be sure it is natural for all of us—and especially for those who like nice things. But we must realize that herein lies a very subtle danger. The desire for nice things, a form which can easily undermine and destroy the spirit of poverty,

ideal but the entire structure of our spiritual life. If we wish to reduce the virile beauty of our form of life to a state of spineless effeminacy, there is no better way than that of softness and fastidiousness in dress. Softness and sanctity are at opposite poles.

Besides the sense satisfaction connected with *mollia vestimenta et colorata* Saint Bonaventure also warns us against the sense satisfaction derived from too comfortable living quarters. The room of a religious is a cell, a sanctuary, a place where he may pray, work, and rest. If in furnishings and arrangement our cell does not reflect our religious ideal, it is a dangerous incongruity. We may therefore do well to ask ourselves: Is my room pleasant and comfortable according to Franciscan standards? Am I content with the room allotted to me by obedience, even though it may lack certain conveniences? Or do I insist on the best room in the house, and rationalize my insistence on the grounds of imaginary needs? ("My health is delicate; I must have plenty of fresh air and sunshine." "My work requires concentration; I must have absolute quiet.") Hardly any room in a modern monastery could compare with Rivo Torto, or for that matter with the cells of any of the early friars and nuns. Such extreme rigor, of course, is not expected of us pampered children of the twentieth century; but what is very much expected of us is the *sense* of Franciscan poverty. In this regard we may ask ourselves whether we have retained at least some semblance of monastic austerity in our rooms. More specifically: What about my bed? Is it so soft and comfortable that it satisfies my love of ease rather than my obligation to penance? What about my chairs? My desk? Must I have soft and luxurious rugs? Handsome drapes? Expensive pictures, statues, curios? Can it be said in justice that my room looks more like an art gallery, or a clubroom, or a lady's boudoir—or even a pet shop—than the cell of a poor Franciscan? Or do I perhaps fall into the opposite extreme of clinging to the disreputably threadbare and unsightly in the name of poverty? Do I neglect order and cleanliness under the pretext of holy indifference to surroundings? Our Holy Father Francis was in love with poverty—more deeply in love than any of us can ever hope to be; but he was always controlled by a fine sense of order, a feeling for the fitness of things. The poverty of Francis was never sloppy poverty.

In matters of clothing and furniture, of course, a heavy responsibility lies with superiors, for subjects may not have or use things without legitimate permission. Superiors would therefore do well to ask themselves: In granting permissions, do I keep the Franciscan ideal in mind? Have I had to grant permission for unwarranted exceptions because my own example did not allow me to refuse?

Have I provided necessary things for my subjects, taking due regard to both quantity and quality? According to the example of Saint Francis, do I check the needs of my subjects without waiting for them to ask? Do I realize how much harm can be done to the spirit of the Order if I fail in these points?

Finally, we may look into the matter of our houses in general. Most of us, it is true, have little to say about what kind of monastery we live in (architecturally speaking); but there are some points that do concern us. For example: Do I help maintain high standards of cleanliness, sanitation, and order in the monastery? Do I strive, in so far as I can, to promote true artistic beauty in the chapel, in the community rooms, and in the grounds and gardens? This is really more important than may seem at first blush; for while it is true that beauty, both in nature and in art, appeals to the senses, its ultimate effects are in the soul. If we are forced to live in ugly surroundings we can, of course, make a virtue of necessity and accept it as penance; but we should be very careful not to deliberately cultivate or sanction ugliness in the name of poverty. In general, Franciscan houses and churches should always manifest the spirit of our Order—the spirit of poverty and humility. If this were always kept in mind by those concerned, much scandal would be averted.

By way of final emphasis, let us repeat once more that Franciscanism is not asceticism or total denial of sense pleasures. A completely negative asceticism is foreign to the Franciscan ideal. Without charity, mortification is useless; without simple trust in God, poverty is soulless. It is the spirit that vivifies, and it is the spirit that is to be applied in the mortification of the senses. Saint Francis himself had scant affection for rigid rules and precise regulations. In fact he admonished superiors to take special care of the sick brethren and to see that all the friars were suitably clothed according to season and locality: *secundum loca et tempora, et frigidas regiones*. We should therefore refrain from comparing our standards with those of our brothers and sisters in other countries. There are needs in one country which are unknown in another; customs and points of view differ widely. Let us instead remember that the Franciscan ideal is not a definite set of rules nor even a clear-cut formula, but a way of life based on evangelical simplicity. And let us also remember that the Franciscan ideal is not a license for license. There are indeed limitations, but they are defined and

FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

NEW OFFICE AND MASS FOR CHINA'S MARTYRS

The Office and Mass for the Feast of BB. Gregory Grassi, Francis Fogolla, Anthony Fantosati, Bishops, and their Companion Martyrs of the First and Third Orders, was approved February 9, 1951. The Feast is to be celebrated July 4.

These twenty-nine martyrs of China were put to death during the Boxer Rebellion. Among them were three bishops, four priests, one lay brother of the First Order, seven sisters of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mary, five seminarians, and nine lay associates.



INTRODUCTION OF THE CAUSE OF LOUIS NECCHI VILLA

Among the members of the Third Order Secular who have reached heroic perfection in their state of life, the most recent is the eminent Italian physician and educator, Louis Necchi Villa. His life proves again that the Rule of the Third Order, if observed fully and faithfully, is one of the greatest powers in the Church for the personal sanctification of the laity, for the correcting of social evils, and for the effective combatting of godless materialism.

Louis Necchi lived in the world according to the Rule of the Third Order, practised medicine, fulfilled perfectly the duties of husband and father, and strove to promote the development of a Catholic intellectual elite in Italy.

Born in Milan, November 19, 1876, the Servant of God was first instructed in the faith by two devout women relatives, and later by the Jesuits. He became a brilliant young theologian, able to withstand the arguments of keen and mature adversaries.

His many intellectual gifts as well as a compelling personality easily enabled to influence his school fellows. By example and tactful exhortation he led many to the practise of high virtue; by his insistence he brought the wayward to a sense of duty; with remarkable kindness and prudence he gave help to all in need.

Louis Necchi became an outstanding successful doctor, but the majority of his cures, especially during the time he was attached to the army, were wrought by prayer than by human skill. He was particularly successful in treating nervous diseases and mental disorders, where his holy serenity and never-failing patience stored tranquility to tortured minds. Victims of apparently incurable psychoses were completely cured by him. He was heroically self-sacrificing in the care of the sick, never disdainingly performing the most arduous services for his patients. He brought consolation to the suffering, and prepared the dying by prudent admonition and exhortation.

Louis Necchi was a model husband and father, living to the full the obligations of the married state. He regarded his wife and children as precious treasures committed to him by God, and he cherished them with a tender and holy love. In spite of his innumerable activities, he was most diligent in watching over the education of his children.

As co-founder of the Catholic University of Milan, Necchi not only gave himself to his work but also to the cause of Catholic education and higher learning, but also, through his prestige and ceaseless efforts, influenced others to do likewise. His task was difficult for at that time Catholic education in Italy was in official disfavor.

Attacked by a fatal illness, the holy Tertiary died January 10, 1930, in Milan. His cause was introduced January 7, 1951.

Third Order directors will find the life of Louis Necchi Villa rich in inspiration and encouragement. It is to be hoped that the devotion to him will become more widespread among American Tertiaries, especially among professional people.

OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

The Holy Infancy

When the beautiful Christmas Season draws near, we always have a feeling of sadness and sympathy for that vast multitude of people who "do not understand." Surely, they celebrate Christmas; they exchange gifts and greetings; they engage in holiday visits and perhaps revelries; they may even attend midnight Mass; but they fail to grasp the deeper meaning of it all. Christmas means no more to them than does the Fourth of July or Washington's Birthday—if it means as much.

And here is another reflection. What would this world be without Christmas? Snowballs, sleigh-rides, winter sports would continue as usual, but the whole season's luminous highspot would be missing, and all joy and glamour would fade away into drab and dreary everyday monotony. And the children! They need sunshine and joy and cheer, even as the little plants and flowers need the light and warmth of the sun. What a vagueness would be in their lives, if there were no Santa Claus, no Christmas tree, and, above all, no Christmas crib. Somehow these very names carry with them a glistening sheen, a silvery sound, which must surely originate above the clouds.

And so it is. But this busy, bustling world no longer remembers. It has forgotten that Christmas originally signified "Christ-Mass," a time when our forefathers devoutly gathered round the altar, in those gray, weather-beaten churches or cathedrals to welcome and worship the Christ Child in the little white Host and chant those immortal carols whose melodies still thrill the ears, but often fail to enter the heart. It has forgotten that Santa's real name was Saint Nicholas, who on the sixth of December would visit Christian homes to distribute sweets and nuts to good children who were able to say the *Our Father* faultlessly. Even our modern dictionaries seem to get mixed up when they confuse good old Santa with Kriss Kringle; for the latter term is nothing but a corruption of the German *Christkindl*—really the Babe of Bethlehem. In the good old days either Saint Nicholas with mitre and staff, or the Christchild, followed by a donkey and a bulging little cart, would go round on Christmas Night and hang cookies and candies on the Christmas Tree, which would greet the children as they entered the bright, candle-lit sitting room on Christmas morning. That was real Christmas joy.

What then constitutes the real Christmas joy? Saint John, the Beloved Disciple, tells us in one word: *For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son* (John 3, 16). For many years the Blessed Mother was Saint John's companion; and I venture the opinion that she had kept this word with so many