

PAX ET BONUM

*This salutation the Lord revealed to me, that we should say:
May the Lord give thee peace.—Testament of Saint Francis.*

In the beginning I invoke that First Beginning from Whom all enlightenment descends, "the Father of lights from Whom there is every good and perfect gift," the eternal Father; Him I invoke through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that through the intercession of the most holy Virgin Mary, the Mother of the same God and Lord Jesus Christ, and through the intercession of the blessed Francis, our Father and Leader, He may enlighten the eyes of our mind "that we may direct our footsteps along the way of that peace" which "surpasses all understanding." This peace it was that was brought to us as good tidings and was given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ; it was preached anew by our Father Francis who announced peace at the beginning and end of every sermon, who greeted all with the salutation of peace, who longed for ecstatic peace in every contemplation; for he was like the citizen of that Jerusalem about which the man of peace, "who was peaceable with them that hated peace," says: "Pray ye for the things that are for the peace of Jerusalem." For he knew that the throne of Solomon was only in peace, since it was written "In peace is his place and his abode is in Sion."

(Prologue: Itinerarium mentis in Deum, St. Bonaventure.)



For several years there has been felt among Franciscan religious in America the need of a periodical devoted specifically to traditional Franciscan spirituality. It is a deplorable fact, and one that has been brought to our attention time and again by the Ministers General of our Order, that all too many of us seem but dimly aware of what our vocation as Franciscans requires of us. Apparently we do not understand with sufficient clarity and penetration what it means to live and think and act in the spirit of our Seraphic Founder and Exemplar.

There is grave danger, especially among the women religious of our Order, that the essential spirit of Our Holy Father Francis may be lost sight of amid the superficial and sentimentally romantic concepts of Franciscanism so enthusiastically popularized today. And to this must be added the still greater danger of our becoming infected with those erroneous and even pernicious concepts of Franciscanism which at best can produce nothing but spiritual sterility. At the opposite extreme are those among us—unfortunately not a few—who are completely indifferent to, and wholly devoid of, any concept of

Franciscanism whatsoever. Indeed, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the majority of Franciscan Sisterhoods in this country can hardly be distinguished, by their spirit, from other congregations.

The matter should not be dismissed lightly. A religious who fails to reproduce in his own life the ideals laid down by the rule of his Order must realize that he is in grave danger of failing utterly in his vocation. As Franciscans we are bound to live according to the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi. We are bound to this by a threefold obligation: to God, Who wills us to be not religious merely, but religious who follow the Franciscan way of life and no other; to the world, which looks hopefully to us for some feature of the radiant countenance of our Father, some flame of the all-embracing charity which he poured out upon the world; and to ourselves, for if our spiritual life bears no resemblance to that of our Father, we must fear to be cut off from the rich heritage promised to his true sons and daughters.

Our vocation to the religious life is something altogether exceptional; but our vocation to the Franciscan life is something equally exceptional and cannot be equated with vocation. God Himself, through His Church, has approved every religious rule, each with its own distinctive spirit, its own peculiar excellence, its own holy and sanctifying aims. It follows, naturally, that the Divine call to a certain order implies the call to live, in its fullest perfection, both the letter and the spirit of the rule of that order. Only in this way can the religious attain to that perfect conformity with the Will of God which is sanctity.

To live to ourselves alone and to remain indifferent to the misery of the world, especially in these days of impending crisis, would be clean contrary to the essence of Franciscanism. Let us recall that to his own turbulent, war-torn century our Holy Father Francis brought the clear, calm light of Christ's own peace. To a society scourged by poverty and misery and corruption, he brought the cleansing and healing warmth of Divine charity; to riches grown sick with surfeit and greed, he presented the fresh loveliness of his Lady Poverty; to power grown arrogant and cruel with pride, he presented the humility and self-abnegation of his Divine Master; to oppose the ravings of heresy and fanaticism, he preached perfect obedience to the Church, love and reverence for the priesthood; to rekindle the charity of the world grown cold, he cast again upon the earth the fire of the Gospel. The world has never forgotten Francis of Assisi. For his sake, because we are children of this saint, who loved men as Christ loved them, the world still looks upon us with admiration and confidence. If we wish to be worthy of this, we must, as becomes true children, reproduce in ourselves the image and virtues of our Seraphic Father.

Finally, we owe it to ourselves to understand the origin and genius of our vocation as Franciscans and to develop our interior life according to that distinctive kind of asceticism traditionally fostered in the Order. Failure to do this very often results in a hybrid type of spirituality that must of necessity prove ultimately sterile and fruitless.

The need for a means of revitalizing Franciscan spirituality among us has been recognized by members of all Three Orders, but by none more than by the women religious of the Third Order Regular. Many of our Franciscan sisterhoods have been forced by circumstances, and sometimes have been moved by choice, to seek spiritual guides and directors from other religious orders. Admirable though such directors may be, superior, even, in experience and learning and personal holiness, they are not likely to guide our sisters along the path of true Franciscan spirituality. It is even possible, if not actually the case, that such directors may gradually alienate the sisters from the spirit of our Seraphic Father, or modify or diminish that spirit. The same applies to the spiritual reading of our sisters. Though it must be admitted, to our shame, that our Order can boast of few contemporary spiritual writers equal in stature to those of other Orders, there is still at our disposal the rich tradition of Franciscan asceticism set down for us by the great masters of past centuries and by our own confreres of today.

The primary purpose of THE CORD is to aid in effecting among us a deeper knowledge and more ardent love of the Franciscan way of life. In no way does THE CORD intend to supplant any of the excellent spiritual reviews already available to religious. It will restrict its material to Franciscan spirituality in its various forms and aspects and applications, and to such matters as are of particular concern and interest to the Franciscan family.

We urge our confreres to look upon THE CORD as a means for them to provide mutual guidance, through their writings, for those of our Sisters who have no direct contact with Franciscan priests. For, as the Franciscan cord is the symbol of that way of life which binds together all members of the Franciscan family, so it is the symbol of that charity which Saint Paul describes as the bond of perfection, the means to unity. THE CORD is an instrument for promoting closer unity among us, and in fact, and greater perfection through mutual love.

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M.

THE FRANCISCAN SPIRIT

(Monthly Conference)

It is generally agreed that there is a distinct Franciscan spirituality; there is little agreement, however, in the determination of that spirituality. Yet, to a religious who observes the Franciscan Rule, it should be a matter of vital importance—one might say of spiritual life and death—to know exactly what our form of life really and essentially is. For how can we reach a goal if we are unaware of it? Let us, then, meditate briefly on the ideals that gave rise to the Franciscan spirit and on its essential characteristics. But first let us clear away some of the false concepts of Franciscanism, then we shall be able to proceed more easily to the true.

WHAT THE FRANCISCAN SPIRIT IS NOT

The first error to avoid is this: to look upon Franciscanism as a new doctrine or a new gospel. There is nothing more foreign to Saint Francis and to a true Franciscan than to deviate in the slightest from that which our Holy Mother, the Roman Catholic Church, teaches. If this statement required any proof, we would need but to point to the First Antiphon for the Vespers of the Feast of Saint Francis where this idea, and this idea only, is so forcefully expressed:

Franciscus, vir catholicus et totus apostolicus

Ecclesiae teneri

Fidem Romanae docuit.

Saint Francis was, and every true Franciscan must be, Catholic to the core, unwaveringly attached to the Apostolic See.

If Franciscanism is not a new doctrine, neither is it an emphasis laid on certain established doctrines of the Church or on certain devotions. It is true that Saint Francis had an ardent love for the Blessed Sacrament, for the Divine Child, for the suffering Christ. But all this is simply an expression of the spirit that animated Francis; it is not the spirit itself.

Franciscanism is not essentially a life of penance, if by penance we understand self-inflicted corporal punishment and mortification. True, our Holy Founder called the Third Order the Order of Penance and in his Rule for the First Order he speaks of admittance to the Order as admittance to a life of penance. He himself astonished the world by his asceticism. Yet this spirit of penance is not typically or exclusively Franciscan. It is essential, yet it is essential for all who strive for perfection. Franciscan asceticism is effect, not cause. The cause has to be sought in something deeper.

Again, Franciscanism is not that charmingly natural, familiar, and wholly original attitude toward creatures that was so characteristic of Saint Francis. That he loved nature, called the sun his brother, talked with animals, sought the solitude of mountains and forests and exulted in the beauty of the natural world is all perfectly true. All his songs to the glory of his Father in Heaven reflect this love for his Father's creatures. How deeply this beautiful attitude of Saint Francis has influenced art and literature and our whole outlook on nature is everywhere apparent. Yet in this, too, we find only an expression of the Franciscan soul; its essential spirit lies deeper.

The love Saint Francis bore to all men, his deep conviction that all men are brothers, children of the one Father in Heaven, is another characteristic of Franciscanism, but not its essential spirit. Undoubtedly, the charity and reverence with which Francis regarded his brothers and sisters in the Lord was rooted in this conviction. He called his Order an Order of Brethren: *Ordo Fratrum*, consciously using the term as an expression of love. Even a robber was to him a "brother robber." But again, though this attitude is genuinely Franciscan, it is not to be identified with the Franciscan spirit. It is effect, not cause.

Franciscanism, finally, is not that love of poverty and simplicity through which Francis, by means of his Order, effected the great social reform of his age. Poverty is indeed a distinguishing mark of the Franciscan Order, and without it the Order would lose an integral part of its spirit; it would certainly lose Saint Francis, with his romantic love for poverty, for simplicity, for humility. But here again, we must say, the ideal of poverty cannot be equated with the Franciscan ideal itself. The life and spirit of that ideal lies deeper still.

WHAT IS THE FRANCISCAN SPIRIT?

After so many negations, can there be anything positive left? What, then, is the Franciscan spirit? To answer this question it is not necessary to search learnedly in books and documents. We need only look to our Holy Father Francis himself, need only listen to what he himself tells us about the soul, the spirit, the life of a Franciscan. It is a message all of us, as his children, have heard time and again, for he speaks to us through our Rule. The form of life prescribed by the Rule is this: *Domini nostri Jesu Christi Evangelium observare*. The Franciscan spirit is to live according to the Holy Gospel. Hence the life of the Franciscan family is the life of the Holy Gospel, what is really the same—the life of the Apostles, the life of the primitive Church. This ideal was not a personal discovery made by Francis, it was revealed to him. For the Lord Himself, as Francis tells us in his *Testament*, made known to him that he should live according to the Holy Gospel. Justly, therefore, we may say that the spirit of the Franciscan Order is the spirit of the

Holy Gospel as lived by the Church of the Apostles, relived by Saint Francis, and expressed in the Rule as the form of life to be observed by every Franciscan.

The content of the Franciscan ideal is not exclusively Franciscan, for it is the spirit of the early Church. But like every institution composed of human beings, the Church is subject to the various changes that affect human society, and there must always be times when she is afflicted through her members by indifference and loss of pristine fervor. Franciscanism, then, in its origin, was a true revolution, a movement back to the immediacy in which the Holy Gospel had been lived by the early Church. It is a youthful embrace of the Gospel ideal, a holy radicalism in regard even to its least implications, a break with the fetters of traditional forms which levelled the standards of religious life, and a return to originality and simplicity. In a word, Franciscanism is a religious youth movement with the Gospel as ideal.

In this light the form of life laid down by Saint Francis for his Order is easily understandable. The experience which gave rise to the Franciscan movement was his rediscovery of the spirit of the Gospel, embraced with youthful enthusiasm and lived with refreshing, unaffected, simplicity. The Lord reveals that Francis should live according to the rule of the Holy Gospel. Francis responds to this call, not by reflecting or defining, but by actually *living* the Gospel. From now on the Gospel is the mainspring of his life, and it becomes the ideal of his Order. To express this life in certain formulas, or even in his Rule, is the least concern of Saint Francis. For a rule at best can be only an inadequate expression of the true life which cannot be measured or defined by laws. This, then, is the holy Franciscan adventure: Saint Francis lives the Holy Gospel according to the life of Christ. He reads the simple story of Christ's life on earth and immediately realizes his duty to relive it. Therefore he renounces all things and becomes poor as Christ was poor. He retires to the mountains as Christ did. He wanders through the towns and villages of Italy preaching penance, as the Divine Preacher did in Palestine. He wishes peace to all whom he meets on his way, for Christ had done and taught him to do likewise. He gathers disciples—twelve at the beginning—and sends them out to preach the good tidings to the poor, as he had learned from the example of his Divine Master. Finally, so perfect in his imitation of Christ, that he is transformed on Mount Alverna to the likeness of the Crucified.

Saint Francis also lives the Holy Gospel according to the teaching of Christ. Deeply is Saint Francis touched by the good tidings of salvation in Christ—salvation that is to be granted to those who are poor in spirit and humble of heart and who are conscious of their own sinfulness and who pray to God for mercy. Therefore Saint Francis calls himself the greatest of sinners and chooses

poverty not only because Christ was poor but also because poverty makes a man humble and simple.

The good tidings of the new man in Christ who is the child of the heavenly Father finds a joyful echo in Francis's heart. The poor and humble will be justified and they will be exalted to the sonship of God. How radically Saint Francis lived and loved his vocation as a child of God! Wherever he is, whatever he does, or however much he suffers, he never fails to feel himself wholly a child of God. In his holy simplicity he walks through this world as a young prince in the kingdom of his Father. For his Father's sake all creatures are dear to him—he calls them his brothers and sisters. Even the neglected stone on the wayside can inflame his heart to overwhelming joy and love because it reminds him of his Father. Especially, however, his love turns to those he knows as his brothers and sisters in Christ. He sees the image of his Father in every human being, and he cannot help but blame a Friar who had sent away a robber—a brother robber—without bodily and spiritual refreshment. With unbounded love he cares for the poor and the suffering. He even embraces a leper in defiance of his own natural revulsion, and immediately he experiences rapturous joy. Because of this love for the children of his heavenly Father, he calls his three Orders congregations of brothers and sisters, not of monks and nuns. For his children must be a family and they must have a love for each other greater even than that of a mother for her child.

The good tidings of the eternal heritage, finally, inspires in Francis a restless longing. Our true home is not here upon earth. We have a better home—the house of our Father, where there are many mansions prepared for us. This earth, therefore, with all its beauty, is gratefully accepted by Saint Francis as the work of his Father's Hand; but he cannot forget that it is only a stopping-place. His real home is where his Father dwells. Francis was homesick with longing for the eternal peace. He regards himself, according to the exhortation of Saint Peter—the exhortation that entered the Franciscan Rule—as a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth. To one who is homesick, the final call home cannot but be the dearest and sweetest of sounds. Thus Francis welcomes even his Sister Death.

This, we would say, is the Franciscan spirit. It is our task to live it, to realize it within the life of the three Evangelical Counsels. May our Holy Father Francis obtain for us the grace always to live in his spirit, so that the life of the Holy Gospel, the life of the Holy Gospel, may never cease to be our ideal, that we may always youthful and radical like him in the pursuit of this ideal, that we may start anew, as he himself did and exhorted his brethren to do: "Let us start today, for up to now we have made but little progress."

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M.

THOUGHTS ON THE DOGMA OF THE ASSUMPTION

For nearly a hundred years the sons of Saint Francis have prayed, studied and labored to add to the glories of Our Lady the dogma of her bodily Assumption into Heaven. It was Father Remigius Buselli, a learned and devoted son of our Seraphic Father, who started the movement in 1854, immediately after the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Late years have witnessed an immense activity on the part of the sons of Saint Francis, by promoting Marian Congresses throughout the world and by publishing scholarly works concerning this dogma of the Assumption. Throughout the history of the Order, from the days of Saint Francis himself to our own times our Lady's Assumption has been so integral a part of Franciscan belief and devotion that the words of Pius X: "To write the history of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is to announce the glory of the Franciscan Order" might very well be said in reference to the Assumption.

The Franciscan prayer-life is life in and with the Church. As the Church lives and prays, so lives and prays the Franciscan soul. And when the Church proposes to the faithful a new dogma as fruit of her contemplation, the Franciscan soul rejoices and hastens to embrace it and strives to comprehend its truth as the Church comprehended it. For the purpose of the Church in proclaiming a dogma is not simply to end a theological debate by the decision of a clear-cut sharp formula. A dogma is nothing more nor less than a declaration by the Church that she has comprehended more clearly, penetrated more deeply into the truth from which or, rather, which she lives.

Hence, we may ask: What is the meaning, the purpose of this new declaration of an old belief? Unquestionably, of course, the primary intention of the Church is to honor the Mother of God; but in this there would seem to be a striking and purposeful calling of attention not simply to the dignity of Mary, but to the dignity of her human body.

Christ Himself has given sublime evidence of the dignity of the human body by His Incarnation, by the sacrament of His body and blood, and by his stressing the sanctification of the human body through the Divine indwelling, and He promised and proclaimed its ultimate destiny by His Resurrection and Ascension. Mary's Assumption was the first fulfillment of this promise, and the Church, in proclaiming this truth as dogma, opposes to both the neo-pagan

tempt and the neo-pagan worship of man's body the Christian ideal of reverence and sanctity out of respect for its eternal destiny. Our own age has distinguished itself for the perverse way in which it has asserted the corruptibility of the human body and denied its future glory. The horrors of modern warfare and concentration camps have rarely been equalled, even in the darkest days of history; and never has the human body been put to such shameful uses. With such deliberate contempt, never has it been degraded with such malicious pleasure, never has it been violated with such insatiable lust and cruelty.

If the powers of evil have succeeded in degrading humanity through abuse of the human body, the Church opposes these powers by setting forth in the serene splendor of solemn definition the challenge of Mary's Assumption. For she is the Queen who has crushed the serpent's head, and to her in every time of crisis the Church has turned for defense against the ancient enemy. "Rejoice, O Virgin Mary, thou alone hast destroyed all heresies in the world." In confessing the truth of Mary's bodily presence in Heaven we proclaim that the human body is holy, the temple of the Holy Ghost which demands chaste reverence, and that man's corruptible body will one day put on immortality, since the return to dust is but a stage in the process of reaching final glorification.

As children of the Seraphic Francis we have a twofold reason to rejoice in the definition of Mary's Assumption: first and above all, because it is a signal honor paid to her whom we love and invoke daily as Queen of the Franciscan Order; and secondly, because by implication the Church proposes to the faithful the traditional Franciscan ideal of respect for human dignity, of reverence for the human body, of realization of human destiny.

May the Holy Virgin who dwells in Heaven intercede for us on earth; and let us greet her with the hymn of our Seraphic Father Francis:

Hail, holy Lady, most holy Queen, Mother of God, Mary,
Who are ever Virgin, chosen from Heaven by the most holy Father!
Whom he has consecrated with the most beloved Son and the Spirit,
the Paraclete!

In whom was and is all the fullness of grace and all good.

Hail, thou, His palace!
Hail, thou, His tabernacle!
Hail, thou, His house!
Hail, thou, His garment!
Hail, thou, His handmaid!
Hail, thou, His Mother!

THE DEATH OF ST. ELIZABETH

*Written in 1232**By her Confessor, Conrad of Marburg, for Pope Gregory IX*

For two years before Elizabeth was entrusted to me, even during the lifetime of her husband, I had been her confessor. At that time I found her lamenting that she had ever bound herself in marriage and that she could not end her earthly life as a virgin.

Now it happened, just when her husband was with the Emperor at Apulia, that all Germany was afflicted with a great famine, so that many died of hunger. Immediately Sister Elizabeth began to show forth the power of her richly virtuous works. For, as all her life she had consoled the poor, so now she began, simply and plainly, to feed the hungry. She had a hospital built near her castle in which she received the sick and the weak in great numbers. To all who sought alms there, she granted generously the gift of her compassion, and not only there, but throughout the whole of her husband's domain; and she used up the revenues of his four principalities so completely that at the end she even had sold her jewels and all her precious garments for the good of the poor. She was wont to visit all the sick twice each day, in the morning and towards evening, and she herself undertook the nursing of the very ones whose diseases were most loathsome. Some she fed; for others she made beds; and still others she carried on her back; and many other services of love she rendered to all. And this, as it appeared, was not in the least contrary to the will and wishes of her husband of blessed memory.

When, after the death of her husband, You, Holy Father, decided to entrust her to me, she asked me whether, in striving after the highest perfection she might not gain greater merit as a solitary, or as a nun, on in some other state of life. At length her soul became dominated by this one desire which, with many tears, she besought me to grant: that I should permit her to beg from door to door. But when I harshly refused to allow this, she answered: "Then I shall do that which you cannot hinder me from doing." And just on Good Friday, when the altars were being stripped, she laid her hands upon the altar of a chapel in her city which she had given to the Friars Minor and in the presence of several Friars she renounced her parents and children, her own will, all the splendor of the world, and everything that Our Lord in the Gospel (Matth. 19: 29) advised His followers to renounce. She wished also to renounce all her possessions, but in this I restrained her for two reasons: first, because I wished her to be able to meet her husband's debts, and secondly, because I wished her to give alms to the poor from what would come to her as a widow.

After these days, she was still of the opinion that the bustle of the world and the pomp and splendor of the country in which, during the lifetime of her

and, she had lived so magnificently, might tear her away from her high lives; and for this reason she followed me, though against my wishes, to Marburg, which lay on the utmost boundary of her husband's domain. There in the city she built herself a hospital and took care of the sick and the infirm. Of the most wretched and contemptible of these she seated at her own table, and when I rebuked her for this, she told me that she received through them special graces and humility, and, as an undoubtedly most prudent woman, she described to me her former life and said she must seek to heal the past by contrary things in the present. But I made her understand that, would she indeed become perfect, she must do away with all unnecessary servants and content herself with but three persons: a lay brother, to take care of her business affairs, a pious but exceedingly ugly girl, and a noblewoman, a widow, who was deaf and ill-tempered. And this I advised so that through the girl she might increase in humility, and through the ill-tempered widow she might be exercised in patience. Then, while the maid prepared vegetables, the mistress might wash the dishes, and vice-versa. Among others she took to herself a crippled boy who had neither father nor mother, and who suffered from a continuous flow of blood. To discipline herself, she had him sleep at night in her own bed, and she endured much trouble on his account, for she had to carry him in her arms as often as six times during the night, sometimes oftener, to let him take care of his natural needs. The bedding, which was frequently soiled—as is bound to happen with such sicknesses—she washed with her own hands. When the boy was dead, she took a leprous girl under her care, without my knowledge, and concealed her in her own house. She tended the girl with every human service and to the extent that she humbled herself not only to feed her and bathe her and make her bed but even to loose her shoes; and she earnestly bade her servants to take care lest she be reproved for this. But when nevertheless I found out, I struck her—God forgive me—most severely, for I feared she might become infected. Then, after I had brought the leper girl away and had been summoned to a distant place to preach, she took in a poor boy who was completely covered with scabies and had no hair on his head; and she set about to heal him of the scabies with washings and medical treatments—from whom she had learned all this I do not know—and this boy sat at her bedside when she died.

Leaving out of consideration these works of practical love of neighbor, I never seen, I confess before God, a woman of deeper devotion. Many men and women often saw that when she came forth from prayer in the morning, her face was wonderfully luminous and streams of light, like sunbeams, radiated from her eyes. When, however, as frequently happened, she was in ecstasy for several hours, for a long time after she would take little nourishment.

When finally the time of her death drew near, and as she was still in good health and I was stricken by a rather severe illness, I asked her how she would manage her life after my death. In answer to this question she foretold to me with all certainty, her own death. On the fourth day after this conversation, she fell ill, and when she had been sick more than twelve days—it was on the third day before her death—she denied entrance to all persons of worldly position and even the nobles who frequently came to visit her she refused to admit. When they asked why they were thus shut out, she said to those who were sitting at her bedside that she wished to think about the severity of the Last Judgment and of her Almighty Judge. Then, after Matins on the Sunday before Marburg mass (November 16, 1231), I heard her confession, but she had nothing to confess of which to accuse herself that she had not often confessed already. And when I asked her how she wished to dispose of her goods and furniture, she replied that whatever could still be considered her personal property belonged to the poor, and she bade me divide among them everything she had except the wretched garment she was wearing, for in that she wished to be buried. At this, toward the first hour, she received the Body of the Lord, and then in the Vespertime she spoke much about the best things she had heard in sermons and most especially about the raising of Lazarus and how the Lord wept at his awakening. And when, through these words, several religious men and women were moved to tears, she said: "Ye daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me but for yourselves." Then she was silent; but, though there was no movement of her lips, the sweetest sounds were heard to issue from her throat. And when those at her bedside asked her what it might be, she asked if they also had not heard the singing voices. She lay, then, from twilight on, as if filled with heavenly joy and showing signs of the deepest emotion. Then, at the first cock-crow, she said: "Behold the hour is at hand in which the Virgin gave birth. With all devotion she recommended to God those who watched at her bedside and then, as if in the sweetest sleep, she passed from life. When they heard of her death, monks of the Cistercian Order and many other religious of the neighborhood came to the hospital where she was to be buried. However, because the devotional mood of the people required it, she remained unburied until the following Wednesday, and truly, without any sign of death save the pallor; her body was as soft as if she were still alive, and it gave forth a pleasant odor. On the very day after her burial, God began to work through His handmaid. For at her grave a Cistercian monk was healed of a brainsickness which had afflicted him for more than forty years; and he swore to this in my presence and before the Pastor of Marburg.

She died on November 16,¹ in the twenty-fifth year of her life.

¹ Actually on the 17, in the first hour after midnight. Conrad follows the manner of reckoning days from sunrise to sunrise.

THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

The Franciscan family is by far the largest in the Church of God. Were one interested in quantity, he could line up astounding figures to indicate the multitudes of Christian men and women that look up to Francis of Assisi as their father—First Order, Second Order, Third Order Regular, Third Order Secular. However, our interest at the moment is: Why should there be such a thing as a Franciscan family, and why did the Franciscan movement ever get started and then continue in strength through seven centuries down to our own times? Whatever the answer, it must be looked for in what is called Franciscan spirituality. Still, that answer merely brings up another question: Why is there a distinctively Franciscan spirituality at all?

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

If our outlook upon the world in general and the Church in particular were more thoroughly supernatural, we should the more readily and the more surely take the correct view of matters like the one before us. In theory, we are quite willing to accept the proposition that God's providence is constantly in operation; in practice, however, we are often crassly materialistic in our judgments, and our primary reactions are just as often those of naturalists or rationalists. Perhaps this may be explained to some extent by the very human inclination to what is material and by the practically pagan atmosphere that we breathe; nevertheless, reason and Revelation both tell us that the great and good God is interested in His world and actually takes care of it in accordance with His holy purposes—all the way from the sparrow's fall to the ascent of a human soul to the Beatific Vision.

And if Divine Providence is thus all-inclusive, most surely God is interested in and takes good care of His Church. The Son of God became Man, lived on this earth for some thirty-three years, taught men and women what to believe and how to live, then suffered and died; and all this led up to one, grand, majestic end, namely, the establishment and enduring confirmation of the vast society, the worldwide organism, that we call the Catholic Church. As a matter of course, we must notice that Christ intended the Church to be an uninterrupted and everlasting expression of His love for the Blessed Trinity and for human beings. The Church, therefore, is the really important thing on earth for God Himself, as it is the really important thing for men and women, giving Him perfect honor and glory and dispensing happiness and even eternal happiness if they are of good will and faith. Once we admit

this, ours should be a vivid realization that every evil which befalls the Church must have at least God's toleration, while every good that comes to it has His sanction and blessing and direction. If anywhere, the words of Léon Bloy are verified here: "Everything that happens is adorable."

Now, high among the good things within the Church must be reckoned the Religious Orders and Congregations. There is, then, not the least rashness in affirming that each and every Congregation or Order, Regular or Secular, which is formally approved by the Vicar of Christ comes into existence for a simple reason that Almighty God wishes it; each and every such Religious group is part and parcel of Divine Providence. It is inconceivable that formal Papal approbation in so important a matter should be given except under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit. With modifications, the same should undoubtedly be said concerning what are called Diocesan Congregations, particularly when they follow a Rule promulgated by the Holy See—the Rule of the Third Order Regular, for example.

Despite all this, it is not improper to ask: Why should there be so many Orders and Congregations and such different kinds as history shows in the past and in the present? The answer should come without the least hesitation. For every one of them the all-wise God had, or has, a special purpose, an exact defined task to fulfill. Under pressure of changing circumstances that task, as humanly conceived at the time of institution, may come to need modification; however, the modification, when canonically brought about, would seem to emphasize rather than to lessen the Providential character of the institute. Moreover, it is perfectly plain from ecclesiastical history that each such Order or Congregation, at least partly because of its special work, has its own more or less special way to sanctifying its members and of leading to salvation and holiness the men and women that happen (Providentially, of course) to come under its guiding influence. In other words, by the Providence of God each properly approved Order and Congregation becomes a distinct school of Christian spirituality or finds the place suited to it within one already established, each school having its special ideals with regard to the supernatural life that is earned for and given to the world by Jesus Christ.

To be sure, the existence of these schools does not mean that the *essence* and the *principles* of Christian living ever change, for they are as constant as the mind of God. It does mean that the Holy Gospel is wide enough to embrace not alone varying degrees of personal perfection but also differing *attitudes* toward certain phases of Christianity and, as a result, *accidentally differing* ways of living it. It would take this article far beyond its appointed limits to illustrate

the matter satisfactorily; but in the light of the past it is unquestionable that the very variety within the One, Catholic, and Apostolic Church contributes to the richness of Christian living and to the welfare of Christian souls, the various schools making up a beautiful mosaic of spiritualities, each of them thoroughly Christian, and, what is much more important, all of them providing means of genuine inspiration and pertinent means to holiness. Objectively, one kind of spirituality may be superior to another; however, when any one of them has been instrumental towards filling our catalogs of Saints and Blessed and enriching our Martyrologies, that is proof enough of its healthy, sanctifying influence upon Christian living.

Still, it were a serious mistake to stress distinctions in spiritualities to the neglect of their basic and essential unity. And it is a matter of fact that none really stands alone, none is completely independent as a form of Christian life: each in the course of time has been enriched by contact with others; which means that each one is capable of evolution in the sense of development.

On the other hand, apparently not all Religious communities are meant to be permanent. Some, having done the work assigned to them by Providence, have disappeared altogether; others exist today, it would seem, only to keep alive the memory, and thus some influence, of their former glory. But there are many that continue strong, vigorous, and youthful after centuries, evidently because they are still needed in the Church; undoubtedly it were better to say: God still desires them as special instruments for His special purpose. Here we may apply with peculiar force the words of Jesus Christ: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain." (Jn. 15:16).

THE MYSTICAL BODY

For a second argument we may look to the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, with the concept restricted to the Church on earth. It is a very appealing argument, yet a thoroughly theological one, to show that Religious are in duty bound to form their souls and regulate their lives in accordance with the ideals of their own community.

Of course, it is merely going over familiar ground to point out that the men and women of God's Church constitute a single, unique, supernaturally vital organism. In the figure used by Christ Himself, the Church is a living vine; in St. Paul's figure it is a living body. If, on the one hand, we may not overdrive the *metaphors*, on the other we must not forget the fact that the Church is a

living organism, with Jesus Christ as its living Head and the Holy Spirit as its vivifying Soul: the Church is a living supernatural society, both visible and invisible, possessing a much deeper unity than any purely human society.

It is worth noticing here that modern biology, with its insistence on a vast multitude of cells in the higher organisms, each cell enjoying a measure of independence yet all coordinated and subordinated into a single plant or animal, has made it possible to carry the analogies of Christ and St. Paul farther than the Fathers of the Church or the Scholastics were able to do. We cannot pursue the details here; Monsignor Benson has done so, and beautifully, in his *Christ In The Church* (B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis, 1926, pp. 14, ff.).

However, granted that Christian men and women are the individual cells that make up the organism that is the Church, just what is the position of the Orders and Congregations? Marianus Müller gives a well reasoned answer in *Gotteskinder Vor Dem Vater* (Herder & Co., Freiburg im Breisgau, 1938, pp. 252, ff.). Briefly, it is this. Here and there in the course of history a certain cell in the Mystical Body of Christ, like a St. Benedict, a St. Dominic, a St. Francis of Assisi, a St. Ignatius of Loyola, was endowed by the Holy Spirit with a specialized and gratuitous gift; by virtue of this special gift the particular Christian cell became impregnated with a new type of spirituality, together with the power to evolve, by uniting with other cells, into an altogether *new organ*—for the general well-being of the whole Body of Christ and its predestined growth. Each such new organ in the Church, that is, each new Religious family, has thus its own special work, its own special manner of functioning, and therefore its own way of life, yet ever coordinated with, and subordinated to, the life and development and activity of the whole Body, the Church of God. Here, then, is real and vital unity plus real and vital variety (all the "brilliance of order" that a St. Augustine might ask for): one Body, distinct organs, multitudinous cells, yet distinctness of character, distinctness of work and function, and all harmonized in the unity of Christ and His Holy Spirit.

The conclusions are very practical. To the degree in which Religious families fail to retain and develop their God-given character in personal spirituality and in exterior work (if such belong to their way of life), the Church of God, the Body of Christ, will be lacking not just in beauty but also in effectiveness, while the individual Religious will lose their right to those special graces that quite as a matter of course are needed for the fulfillment of their special vocation. Furthermore, should the Orders and Congregations as such lose their characteristic marks, they would likewise lose all reason for their separate

existence—there would be no need for distinct Religious communities; but, if the recorded history of the Church has meaning, that would suppose a complete change in the economy of Divine Providence.

PIUS XI

Of themselves the two foregoing closely allied arguments are quite enough to answer the question, why there should be and actually is a Franciscan spirituality. However, for the sake of emphasis it may be well to add the evidence of authority.

On March 19, 1924, Pope Pius XI issued an Apostolic Letter, *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, which was addressed "to the Supreme Moderators of the Orders of Regulars and of the Other Societies of Religious Men." Though his words are addressed directly to Religious men, the message is applicable to women as well.

The Holy Father insists upon the role of Divine Providence both in assigning special kinds of work to the different communities and in determining the *peculiar character* that must set off the members of one community from those of another; indeed, he links up *special graces* with fidelity to their special work and character. With regard to this latter point his words deserve earnest consideration:

"If they (that is, the members of a particular Religious community) wish to partake abundantly of the graces that proceed from their special vocation, let them look upon their Founder and Father as their example. And those will certainly not stray from what they have begun who show in themselves that character which he wished to see impressed upon his community. Wherefore, let the brethren, as most dutiful children, direct their efforts and thought to this, namely, that they guard the honor of their Father by fulfilling his precepts and admonitions and likewise by drinking in his spirit; for, as long as they walk in the footsteps of their Founder, they will not fall away from their vocation: 'Their children for their sakes remain forever' (Eccli. 44:13)."

This paragraph is a summary of all that the present article wishes to convey; it would form a solid basis to establish the whole question of particular spiritualities: membership in a particular Religious community is a special vocation, bringing with it special graces; fidelity to the formal duties and to

the special character that derive from such membership means perseverance in the Religious life, it is demanded by an "esprit de corps," and it is guaranteed of the continued success of the entire community.

THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY

What, then, of the Franciscan family, the Franciscan Order and Congregations? Granted that the good providence of God explains the origin and permanence of Religious communities and their position on the Mystical Body of Christ, there must have been a very special reason why the Franciscan family was allowed to take a place within the Church, especially at a time when, according to the Church authorities themselves, there were already in existence various well-functioning Orders of men and of women, more especially when, almost to the moment, the Dominican Order was about to start out on its magnificent march through history. The great God must have had some special work for it to accomplish, some special spirit to foster, and a special message to give to the world. By its nature this thought refers primarily to the First Order of St. Francis; however, with proper modification yet in essential content, it is applicable also to the Second Order and to the Third Order, Secular as well as Regular—each in its own way looks to Heaven for its mission, a Franciscan mission; each finds in Divine Providence and the Mystical Body its whole reason for existence; and each has in Franciscan spirituality the way it must live the Christian life.

To put it into one word, Franciscanism (a harsh enough word for so gentle a thing) is part of the divinely founded and divinely directed Church, informing a definite organ in the Mystical Body and having therefore a purpose and character all its own, a vital function, a directive spirit, a gentle but energetic attitude towards life in general and towards the "spiritual life" in particular—all of it willed and determined by a loving and all-wise God, all of it to be realized through Christ our Lord, and all of it emphatic and distinctive.

Now add to this Francis' assurance that his Order of the Lesser Brothers, and presumably the entire Franciscan family, would last until the very end of things on earth, and you are on the road to gauging correctly both the possibilities and the responsibilities of twentieth-century Franciscanism; more than that, you will most likely appreciate also the responsibilities and possibilities of *American* Franciscanism—but the very first responsibility is to know the complete meaning of what is often so carelessly called "Franciscan spirituality."

Fr. Philibert Ramstetter, O. F. M.

FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

Indulgences To Be Gained Upon Visiting The Principal Oratory Of The House

The Sacred Penitentiaria has granted a seven year extension to a previous grant whereby, in Franciscan convents of all three Orders that do not have a church or public oratory, the Indulgences attached to churches may be gained by visiting the principal oratory of the house. Dated April 28, 1950. *Acta OFM*, LXIX, 123.

This applies to practically all indulgences for which a visit to the church is required, e. g., certain indulgenced prayers said daily for a month make a plenary indulgence available under the usual conditions, of which visiting a church is one. The usual convent chapel would meet the requirements of "principal oratory."

However, the Portiuncula indulgence is subject to some special conditions, to be discussed in a later issue.

Cause Of

Blessed Beatrice De Silva Resumed

Bl. Beatrice de Silva was beatified on July 28, 1926. She had founded, before her death in 1490, the Conceptionist Order for the purpose of professing, defending, and propagating the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her cause has now been officially resumed by a decree from Rome, dated Feb. 26, 1950, with a view to possible canonization. Since her beatification, her reputation for sanctity, a new increase in popular devotion and public veneration, a reputation for miracles attributed to her intercession and merits, and the advantages of the faithful invoking her, have all

increased to such an extent, that she has been proposed as a worthy candidate for the honors of canonization. The Holy Father has approved and appointed a Commission to proceed formally with the cause. *Acta OFM*, LXIX, 165-167.

The New Edition Of The Opera Omnia of John Duns Scotus

The first two volumes of the Vatican edition of the complete works of John Duns Scotus arrived recently at the Franciscan Institute. The volumes were presented to the Institute by Very Rev. Charles Balic, O. F. M., President of the Scotus Commission responsible for their editing.

Volume I contains 329 pages of introduction presenting a thorough investigation and presentation of all matters concerned with the text of the *Ordinatio* of Scotus. It continues with the text of the Marian Doctor, viz., the Prologus to the *Ordinatio*, (237 pages). Volume II continues the edition of the *Ordinatio*, through its first two distinctions (465 pages). To each page of text is appended an elaborate critical *apparatus*. To the text of each volume is appended an Index of Names, and Index of Authors, and a General Index to the text proper. A means of easy concordance with other editions is likewise supplied.

In a word, nothing is left undone to render these first two volumes of the works of Scotus a tribute to Catholic Scholarship in general and Franciscan scholarship in particular. The edition is handsomely bound in brown half-leather, folio size, and elegantly printed in the Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis.

FRANCISCAN INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS

PHILOSOPHY SERIES

1. *The Tractatus de Successivis Attributed to William Ockham*. Edited by Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M., Ph. D. Pp. xi-122
2. *The Tractatus de Praedestinatione et de Praescientia Dei et de Futuris Contingentibus of William Ockham*. Edited by Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M., Ph. D. ... Pp. xi-139
3. *The Transcendentals and Their Functions in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus*. By Allan B. Wolter, O. F. M., Ph. D. Pp. xvi-191-Index
4. *Intuitive Cognition. A Key to the Significance of the Later Scholastics*. By Sebastian Day, O. F. M., Ph. D. Pp. xiii-217
5. *The De Primo Principio of John Duns Scotus. A Revised Text and a Translation*. By Evan Roche, O. F. M., Ph. D. Pp. xvii-153

Price \$2.00 for each volume. To Subscribers of *Franciscan Studies* or
Franciscan Institute Publications \$1.50

HISTORY SERIES

1. *Three Saints Lives*. By Sister M. Amelia Klenke, O. P., Ph. D. Pp. Lxxvii-123

Price \$2.00 To Subscribers to *Franciscan Studies* or
Franciscan Institute Publications \$1.50

MISSIOLOGY SERIES

1. *Imperial Government and Catholic Missions in China During the Years 1784-1785*. By Bernward Willeke, O. F. M., Ph. D. Pp. xiv-218

Price \$2.25. To Subscribers to *Franciscan Studies* or
Franciscan Institute Publications \$1.80.

2. *The Negotiations Between Ch'i-Ying and Lagrene, 1844-1846*. By Angelus Grosse-Aschhoff, O. F. M., Ph. D. Pp. v-193

Price \$2.00. To Subscribers to *Franciscan Studies* or
Franciscan Institute Publications \$1.50

THEOLOGY SERIES

1. *The Doctrine on The Holy Eucharist According to Ockham*. By Gabriel Buescher, O. F. M., S. T. D. (To appear soon)

FRANCISCAN INSTITUTE

ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY

SAINT BONAVENTURE, NEW YORK

EMMANUEL

(Monthly Conference)

"Neither is there any other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh them as our God is present to all our petitions." (Dt. 4, 7).

Moses, who had witnessed the miracles God had worked to free his chosen people from the bondage of Egypt and bring them into the Promised Land, could truly utter these words. The ten plagues of Egypt, the opening of the Red Sea, the feeding of the multitude for forty years in the desert of Sinai, the pillar of fire to lead them by night and the cloud to cover them from their enemies and from the burning heat of the sun in the day—these were proofs positive that the God of the Israelites was indeed a living and a merciful God, a God who was very close indeed to His people. But how much more truly are these words of Moses fulfilled in us, God's chosen people of the New Testament. In His dealings with the Jews, God was merciful and kind. He was the God of power and of miracle, but He remained the Invisible One, the All-Pure, the Unapproachable. To see even one of His Angels was, according to the Jewish way of thinking, an omen of sudden death for a mere human. Nazareth and Bethlehem changed all that.

Mary trembled, yes, at the approach of the Angel, but his words strengthened her and she gave her "fiat" in a steady voice. The prophecy of Isaias was that instant fulfilled; the Invisible God of Heaven had at that moment come to dwell amongst us. He became "Emmanuel", "God with us". *Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis*'. The moment of the Incarnation is the central point of human history; all the previous centuries looked forward towards it with hope; all the generations that have since come, look back to it with joy and thanksgiving.

The manger of Bethlehem is for us the symbol of God's infinite condescension, of God's infinite Love; it was the resting place of the newly born Divine Babe and the cradle of humanity's new lease of spiritual life and hope. The thunder of Sinai is replaced by the angelic song of "peace" in Bethlehem. The lightning of Horeb is now the heavenly light of the Shepherds' field; the burning bush which no one dared approach has become the stable to which even the lowly shepherds are invited. "The old order changeth, yielding the place to the new".

Vol. I no. 2 Dec. 1950