

## FRANCISCAN REVIEWS

IN THE SPIRIT OF SAINT FRANCIS

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By Theodosius Foley, O. F. M.

Add interest to the classical verities of unity, coherence and emphasis, have the writing done by an experienced retreat master, and then turn the author loose on the topic nearest to his heart. Unusual success is evident in these fourteen conferences on the characteristics of Franciscan life. Father Theodosius' earlier book, "Spiritual Conferences" was directed to his own confreres of the Capuchin branch. Word of their excellence got out, and now he favors the Franciscan family by issuing this book on the Rule common to all of us. Whether you are of the First Order, the Second, or one of the many communities of Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order, these are the things you should be thinking and saying in your own spiritual conversations.

The words of the Rule, the words and thinking actions of St. Francis, are our charter of life. As the life of our holy founder is a mirror of Christ, so the Mirror of Perfection is peculiarly our device for achieving at once the following of Francis and the following of Christ. In the first conference, Fr. Theodosius emphasizes our need to apply the methods of Franciscan spirituality if we are to approach perfection within our chosen state of life: religious in the Franciscan life. With this we agree, and for this purpose does "The Cord" exist to fulfill a long-felt need.

"Growing up with Christ" is what the author calls the process of spiritual assimilation during which the act of spiritual union with Christ first takes place, then is intensified. Although none of us presumes that he possesses the sanctity of Francis, yet each of us has chosen to mould his spiritual life in the same way. We are convinced that God wants us to be His servants in this Order. A necessary corollary is that we live up to our and His expectations. The things which tend to divert us from our vocation kill or weaken that determination of purpose. Then it is that the renewal of our act of love for Christ brings us back to the Franciscan pattern.

Conferences are these, but in such a handy form. For we can take them up at any time for meditation, finding on these pages a mood for the moment. That is because the Rule goes back to the Gospel, the Friar Minor always being a disciple of the Master. As the Lord was the Exemplar

of how to act in each situation that the heart of men, so He also has a soul in a way of grace for each of the problems of religious life. "This is the Rule and of the Friars Minor namely to observe the holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This observance of the Gospel is the essence of Franciscan perfection. What is added to the Rule pertains to those facets of religious life which tend to bring perfection in its fulness, such as "living in obedience, without property, and in chastity." The three vows form the means by which we live the Gospel. Kept in the spirit of St. Francis and according to example, they are the manifestations of Franciscan perfection as projected by the Holy founder.

Poverty, chastity and obedience are the sole content of our life. Neither are the remaining chapters. Charity and hospitality united are the heart of the Franciscan life, at home, or in the world, whether he is at work or at prayer. Guidance in prayer is always needed, for how many of us wander through wasted periods of meditation? In every century our Order produced its Saints and Blessed, people of splendid prayer and fruitful activity; alongside them has produced Franciscans who mix up activity and prayer in such a way that prayer loses. Work we must do—the mixed life is part of the Franciscan tradition—but to divorce prayer from work and think that we can choose one or the other well but certainly not both, is foreign to the reality as well as the ideal. Father Theodosius shows us how to avoid "extinguishing the holy spirit of prayer and devotion."

Not at the beginning, nor at the end but in the middle, the heart of the book is an essay on the Franciscan standard of living. In spite of modern conditions of poverty and simplicity of life are dictated for us. There is nothing elaborate about our manner of living. As nearly as possible we children of the Poverello try to live as he and the first brethren lived. In plain surrounding, with little ado about material matters, we try to emulate that "spirit of holy prayer and devotion" to which St. Francis says "all temporal things should be subservient." So it has been, and so always will be.

Callicoon, N. Y. Fr. Anselm Hardy, O. F. M.

LETTER OF THE VERY REVEREND FATHER PACIFICUS  
PERANTONI, O. F. M., MINISTER GENERAL OF  
THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR, TO THE  
EDITOR OF THE CORD

IL MINISTRO GENERALE DEI FRATI MINORI

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Rev. Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M.  
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Reverend and dear Father,

The publication of the first issue of THE CORD, under the auspices of the Franciscan Institute, demands that we give expression to our gratification and complete satisfaction with its truly seraphic apostolate of promoting the knowledge of ascetical and mystical ideals and practise of Franciscanism. We cannot but bestow our wholehearted approbation upon that which, in every respect, fulfills the long felt need as indicated by you, and so adequately evidences a model instrument for Franciscan indoctrination.

Throughout the centuries the motto of the entire Franciscan Order has ever been *In Sanctitate et Doctrina*. The relation between sanctity and doctrine is more than a mere formality. One can say that here is an interdependence. Every soul sanctifying itself acquires some kind of knowledge, whether it be by way of infusion or that of experience. The more grace in the soul, so much the more intense is that knowledge and the fullness thereof. It is in this sense that we claim a doctrine as underlying the fine simplicity of our holy Father Saint Francis. The very numbers of saints, canonized and uncanonized, who are followers of the Seraphic Patriarch, indicate how vast and profound the Franciscan doctrine has become. This is not to say that the doctrine of the Poverello has changed or is changing with the times, but rather that his sanctity has been so dynamic that the force thereof is ever operative in the minds and hearts of those who pledge themselves to follow the spirit and letter of his holy Rules.

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Doctrine without teachers to expound and inculcate it may be likened to the folly of stopping up the wells so that their location and use are forgotten. The terrain becomes barren. It is worth noting the way in which our holy Father Saint Francis with those whom he personally admitted into the profession. Not only do we have the historical record, but we also have the feeling, of the sense of responsibility which he conveyed to his first followers in regard to the great doctrine he was giving them. They were to pass it on primarily by example, and eminently, in any way the Providence of God would grant. Manifestly enriched as the doctrine of Francis has since become, the obligation towards it is all the more sacred and therefore must prevail among the followers of the Seraphic Patriarch today. Only in this way can the apostles of Franciscanism approximate the high ideals of the "Herald of the Great

Often do we reflect upon our heavy responsibilities as Minister General towards the spiritual daughters of our holy Father Saint Francis, both in the Second and Third Orders. These sentiments in part are revealed in the encyclical letters it has been our privilege to address to the Franciscan family. It is of great solace to know that our Friars are equally conscious of their Franciscan heritage and are striving to emulate the glorious tradition of our beloved Order in assuming the direction of souls striving for perfection.

To our beloved Sisters who have the grace of the seraphic vocation, give encouragement to cherish the doctrine that is of our holy Founders. In this regard, one can almost say that the true followers of Francis and Clare—above and beyond their obligations—have the right of preferring Franciscan methods and methods of sanctification. Though certain features of other forms of spirituality objectively may seem better in some respects, they will have fostered and nourished the seraphic vocation in quite the same way Francis practised had already triumphantly achieved.

It is significant that the name of THE CORD should designate your publication. No other symbol of Franciscanism is more declarative of the unity among Franciscans. And where that unity is concentrated upon the ultimate goal of personal sanctification, we know and we can assure you that it will bind us to God.

Imparting the Seraphic Blessing upon all the readers and contributors of THE CORD, we are certain that it will bring the *Pax et Bonum* of the Franciscan message.

L. S.

Sincerely yours in Saint Francis  
(m. p.) Fr. Pacificus Maria Perantoni, O. F. M.

The month of February is dedicated to the Passion of Christ. The reason for this is far to seek. This year, for example, the Sunday Quinquagesima and the three Sundays of Lent fall within the narrow frame of this month. In other words we are hurrying on towards the greatest solemnity of the Ecclesiastical Year, the festival of Easter; but before reaching Easter, we pass through the dark, silent and somber valley of Holy Week. Mother Church shows her maternal hand and, to be frank though not irreverent, she plays an ingenious game on her children by declaring eight full weeks as the preparation for the glorious Alleluja of Easter and in the same breath shrouding this entire period in the mourning garb of Prayer and Penance, to be lifted only at the vigil of the great feast itself.

Surely that is not the way we prepare for earthly celebrations; but then, the Lord's thoughts are not your thoughts; nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Is. 55, 8). The lesson is easy to gather and may be summed up in three sentences: first, *per crucem ad lucem*, which is the same as, "There is no crown without a battle"; the second, "On our present pilgrimage the way of the cross exceeds by far in merit the way of glory"; whence follows the third, "It behooves us, therefore, to meditate earnestly upon the Passion of Christ". The doctrine of the Cross," says Saint Paul, "is foolishness to those who perish, but to those who are saved, that is, to us, it is the power of God" (I Cor. 1, 18). These are mysterious words which require deep and prayerful thinking. Let us ask three questions: 1) What prompted God to choose the cross? 2) What should prompt us to carry our cross? 3) What is the meaning of the cross or, to speak more generally, what is the meaning of suffering to the Church and the world at large?

The first question is answered by our Lord Himself. "For God so loved the world," said He to Nicodemus, "that he gave his only-begotten Son" (John 3, 16). After the Tragedy on Calvary Saint Paul wrote these beautiful words to the Ephesians: "Walk in love, as Christ also loved us and delivered himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God to ascend in fragrant odor" (Eph. 5, 2). This truth needs no further proof; it is the A. B. C. of the New Testament writings. And even if we espouse the sublime teaching of Franciscan theologians, namely, that Christ would have come to earth even if Adam had not sinned, our thesis remains unaltered. In fact, assuming that He was to come as the King of Glory, and that because of humanity's dismal plight He exchanged the royal diadem for the Crown of Thorns, then in so doing He gave

us an even greater proof of His love for us. As it is, on Holy Saturday Mother Church rejoices, "O happy fault, which deserved to possess such and so great a Redeemer"; and the angelic choirs around the throne of God do not chant the ineffable hymn of Christ's Incarnation in a grand major key, as might have been intended, but in the mellow minor strains of the new canticle which was heard by Saint John on Patmos: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing" (Apoc. 5, 12).

A pious medieval painter was asked to draw a picture of the eternal Trinity of God in heavenly glory. He obeyed. The Father was seated on the throne and with Him the Holy Spirit. But on the steps the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity was kneeling, raising His hands in petition that He might descend to earth to redeem the human race. This may not be precise theology but the thought is beautiful, and if there was no inscription we would suggest the following: "And my delights were to be with the children of men" (Prov. 8, 31).

To the children of Saint Francis, who are groomed in the school of the Saviour's love and have patterned their entire spiritual life after the seraphic love of our Holy Founder, it is no effort to see in Christ's bitter Passion "the very great love wherewith he has loved us" (Eph. 2, 4). This is the reason why the devotion to the Passion of Christ has asserted itself as the keynote of Franciscan spirituality. No Franciscan may boast of his name unless he love Jesus Crucified.

Secondly, the straight and simple way to repay such love is to follow Jesus on the way of the Cross. In a certain Franciscan monastery, an ingenious superior had procured a set of beautiful chimes by whose sound the signal was given for all exercises. "See," remarked an old Friar, "our hardest tasks are made sweet by the call of heavenly music." It has often occurred to me that Mother Church uses the same method. The Preface is the most excellent canticle we have, says Saint Cyprian. Now, in the Preface of Lent Mother Church sings to us the advantages of fasting, and fasting may well be taken to comprise penitential exercises. "O holy Lord, Father almighty, everlasting God," the Preface runs, "who by fasting of the body dost curb our vices, dost lift up our minds, dost give us strength and reward; through Christ our Lord." That is to say, penance or suffering for the sake of Christ purifies the soul, raises it to God and higher things, and adorns it with virtue and final reward. We have learned this truth ever since we entered the Order which Saint Francis wisely to establish as an Order of Penance; and no further comment is needed.

However, the practical issue which we are apt to miss is that in monastic life there is usually no need of looking about for unusual penances. They stare us in the face at every step and at every task. And because we overlook them, there arises the urge of seeking extraordinary penances and then allowing our daily work to gather the dust of common drudgery instead of lining it with the gold of salutary penance by a simple act of love and good intention. This makes for poor harmony in the life of a person who lives "in the courts of the King." In fact, there is no harmony at all, when we grumblingly rattle off, as it were, page after page of our daily assignment and then, in a solemn, mournful tone, start the *Miserere*. No, that is not the way of the saints and surely not the way of Saint Francis, who labored with his hands and suffered all for Christ's sake. In this way, as he confesses, "that which seemed bitter was turned into sweetness of soul and body for me." This is where Saint Paul's motto applies: "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (II Cor. 3, 6).

Our greatest aim in religious life is to attain the likeness of Christ. We cannot be like to Him in His miracles, His doctrine, His transcending personality; we can get close to Him in His meek and humble life, especially in His suffering. This is why Saint Francis adopted for his pattern the almost boastful words of Saint Paul: "Gladly therefore I will glory in my infirmities, that the strength of Christ may dwell in me. Wherefore I am satisfied, for Christ's sake, with infirmities, with insults, with hardships, with persecutions, with distresses. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (II Cor. 12, 9-10)—strong, we may add, by the spirit of penance.

During this season we should try to put more fervor into our daily prayers, especially into the Way of the Cross, which is the Franciscan devotion *par excellence*. We should not make the Stations as they are printed in the book or painted in pictures, but as reflected in our own lives. Make the practice real, personal, pointed. Episodes in our past illustrate each Station. The three falls remind us of our own falls: the sins of our youth, the sins in religious life, the habitual and begetting sins that still hang on. I knew an old Brother who could not move beyond the fifth Station, because like Simon of Cyrene he had come so late. With the twelfth Station, with Jesus on the Cross, we prepare for our own death. Thus from the cradle to the coffin we bear "about in our body the dying of Jesus" (II Cor. 4, 10).

In the third place, we observe that "the doctrine of the Cross" unfolds itself more and more as time passes on and as the world gains a more perfect understanding of the Mystical Body of Christ. Saint Paul puts his finger on a

vital truth when he writes: "I rejoice now in the sufferings I bear for your sake and what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ I fill up in my flesh for his body, which is the Church" (Col. 1, 24).

What does Saint Paul mean by saying that what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ we must fill up in our flesh for his body, which is the Church? Surely the Passion of Christ was of infinite merit; it offered superabundant atonement to the Father. What the Apostle means is that the members of Christ's Mystical Body must render their share towards its perfection. This body consists of human beings, of sinful wayfarers. Christ atoned for all, but not all accept His grace. Hence the solemn charge lies upon all the members to offer prayer and penance for the erring brethren so that the hope of Christ be fulfilled, namely "that he might present to himself the Church in all her glory, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5, 27).

This thought sets a new and glorious standard for all Christianity especially for Religious Orders. It is an invitation to participate in the work of Christ as the Head of the Mystical Body, which is the living Church or Kingdom of God. The nature of this participation is manifold and changes with the needs of the faithful, the specific aims of our vocation, and the varying moods of the Ecclesiastical Year, which is the expression of the mind and heart of the Church.

In order to appreciate our mission better let us go to Calvary's height where the Saviour breathes His last. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church explain to us that, as Eve was taken from the body of Adam in Paradise, even so did the Bride of Christ, our Holy Church, flow from the Saviour's bleeding side on Calvary. It is a beautiful simile which clearly indicates that our Holy Church must bear some of the marks and traits of her divine Founder. Let us and see how during that last agony seven words fall from His dying lips and how His precious blood trickles from His five wounds.

Prayer and Penance—these are the two marks that the Church has inherited from her Founder; that have characterized His Mystical Body for all the centuries. They are the two heavenly sisters which have beckoned to holy wise virgins, as the Prophet says, to "leave the cities and dwell in the rock like the dove that maketh her nest" (Jer. 48, 28)—and that rock is Christ. We kneel daily and hourly before the Eucharistic King present in the tabernacle; to atone by prayer and sacrifice for the world that strolls and staggers with heedlessly, helplessly, hopelessly.

Prayer and Penance: the former beseeches God to increase our love; the latter proves to God that we love Him. If prayer is the greatest power in the world to obtain God's love, then Penance is the strongest proof to the world that we possess God's love. Both have a long history; both stemmed from Calvary; and both have followed the Church in her path as she wended her way amid joy and sorrow, amid triumphs and defeats, through the long corridors of time.

In prayer the soul speaks to God; in Penance she surrenders her whole being, chiefly by her external senses, to God's will, in imitation of the five bleeding wounds of her Saviour. Why did the Master appear to Thomas with His open wounds? To show that these marks shall memorialize for all eternity His great love for mankind. They are the only things made by human hand in heavenly glory. He also bears them that they might be a constant reminder for His faithful servants on earth that, as He had done for them, so they must do for Him.

And here is the solution of the great mystery of evil, of pain, of suffering in this world. The philosophers of old sought to unravel this mystery, but they failed. Holy Job in beautiful rhythmic language seeks an answer but, because he had not a vision of Calvary, his answer comes in groping, hesitating accents. Saint Peter, our first Pontiff, has the true answer when he writes: "Unto this, indeed, you have been called, because Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you an example that you may follow in his steps" (I Pet. 2, 21).

Like a golden thread this thought runs through the length and breadth of the history of the Church Militant, from Calvary to the present day. The Cross adorned with the brilliant rubies of the Saviour's blood is seen by the Christians in the arena, in the catacombs, on the dreary sands of the southland, among the lofty forests of the north, on every isle, in every clime where our missionaries have preached the Holy Gospel and shed their blood in its defense.

In these latter days devout people often ask the question: look at Europe, at Asia, behind the Iron Curtain, where thousands of innocent people, men, women and innocent children and even consecrated persons, are committed to the most inhuman tortures, to slave labor, to sufferings that defy all description: how is it that a just God permits these horrors? Has the Church no help or answer? Are the prayers of millions not heard? Where is Divine Providence? Saint Peter gave us the answer: Christ suffered "that you may follow in his steps"; and St. Paul adds, "for his body, which is the Church."

New York

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O. F. M.

from the "Chronicle" of Salimbene.

Blessed John of Parma was born of noble parents in that northern Italian city. Before entering the Franciscan Order he received university education, and afterwards taught theology in the Universities of Paris, Bologna and Naples. In 1247 he was elected Minister General and held that position until 1257 when he resigned, with the recommendation that Bonaventure of Bagnorea be elected in his place. For five years he lived in the hermitage of Greccio. He died in Camerino in the Apennines while on his second journey to Constantinople to attempt a reconciliation of the schismatic Greeks with Rome. During his life and after his death he was known alike for great learning and saintliness. Pope Pius VI beatified him in 1777; his feast is celebrated on March 20.

Salimbene di Adamo was not only a contemporary of John but also a fellow citizen of Parma, and, as he says, a most intimate friend. This interesting Friar spent his religious life in some of the most important convents of the Order. Since he kept a voluminous diary, which has come down to us as the Chronicle of Salimbene, he is a valuable source for early Franciscan history. He wrote his diary not for himself but, as he tells us, for his niece, Sister Agnes, a Poor Clare nun. It is in this familiar and personal narrative that we find some inspiring glimpses of the seventh Minister General of the Friars Minor.

#### THE APPEARANCE AND VIRTUES OF BLESSED JOHN OF PARMA

"He was of medium stature, tending more to shortness than to height. His limbs, were well formed; he had a good complexion, and he was sound and strong, able to bear the labors of walking and of study. His was an angelic countenance, gracious and ever cheerful. He was free and liberal, courtly and charitable, humble, meek, kind, patient; devoted to God, a man of prayer, pious, gentle, and compassionate. He celebrated Mass daily, and so devoutly that those who attended felt some of his own grace. He preached so fervently and well to the clergy and brethren that many of his hearers were moved to tears as I often witnessed. He was fluent in speech and never stumbled. His learning was very great, since he had been a good grammarian and a Master of Logic in the world; and in our Order he was a great theologian and disputant. He taught the *Sentences* in Paris and for many years was lector in the convents at Bologna and Naples. When he passed through Rome, the brethren were wont to make him

which or dispute before the Cardinals, who considered him a great philosopher. He was a mirror and an example to all who saw him, for his life was full of honor and saintliness, and of the highest morality. He was beloved of God and men.

#### HIS HUMILITY: THE PAPAL BED.

"Somewhat late in the evening at this place [a castle in Tarascon which the General and eleven Friars were visiting], when we had said Compline and the beds had been assigned to the guests to sleep in the same house with the General, he went out into the courtyard to pray. But the brethren feared to go to bed until the General had first come to his. When I saw their distress, for they were murmuring over the fact that they wished to go to bed and couldn't—nor the bed-places were lighted brightly with tapers—I approached the General. He was well known to me and we were very intimate, because he was from my country and the closest of neighbors. When I found him praying in the courtyard, I said, 'Father, the brethren are wearied from the journey and wish to rest from their labor; but they fear to go to bed before you do.' Then he said to me, 'Go and tell them for me that they may sleep with the blessing of God.' And I did that. However I decided to wait for the General in order to show him his bed. When he came in from his prayers, I told him, 'Father, you are to lie in that bed over there which has been prepared for you.' And he said to me, 'Son, a Pope could sleep in that bed which you are pointing out to me; Brother John of Parma will by no means lie in it.' And he lay down in an empty bed that I was hoping to use. So I told him, 'Father, may God pardon you, because you have taken the bed which I had thought to use, since it has been assigned to me.' And he said, 'Son, *you* sleep in that Papal bed.' And when according to his own example I would have refused, he said to me, 'It is my firm wish that you lie there, and this do I command you.' And thus I had to do as he commanded.

#### NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS

"On another occasion, when he was General and wished to take a moment of leisure, he came to the convent of Ferrara, where I had lived for seven years. And noticing that always the same brethren were invited to eat with him . . . he came to realize that the Guardian was a respecter of persons, and this displeased him. So when Brother John somewhat later was washing his hands for supper, the Brother who was to serve him asked the Guardian, 'Whom shall I invite?' The Guardian responded, 'Take Brother James of Pavia and Brother Avanzio and this one and that one.' Now these four had already

washed their hands and were standing ready behind the General's back, had clearly perceived from the first. Wherefore, in ardor of spirit and inspired by the Divine Spirit, he took up the parable and began to cry, 'Ye Take Brother James of Pavia, take Brother Avanzio, take this one, take one! *Take ten stripes for thyself.* That is a mere goose's song.' Those who had been invited were confounded and ashamed, and the Guardian no less so. He said to the Minister, 'Father, I was accustomed to invite these to be my company because I consider them to be more worthy.' But the Minister replied, 'Does not Scripture to the praise of God say that *He made the little and great and takes equal care of all?* And does not the Lord say, *Let the children come to me?* And Saint James says that *God chose the poor in the world.* And the Lord Himself said in Luke 14, *When thou givest a dinner or supper, do not invite thy friends, or thy brethren, or thy relatives, or thy neighbors, lest perhaps they also invite thee in return, and a recompense be made to thee. But when thou givest a feast, invite the poor.*' (I heard all this because I was standing nearby.) Then the serving Brother asked, 'Whom shall I invite?' The Guardian replied, 'Invite whom the Minister shall direct.' And the Minister said, 'Go call the simpler brethren of the convent, because this is an undertaking wherein all the brethren know how to bear the Minister's company.' The serving Brother therefore went to the refectory and said to the lowlier and simpler brethren who rarely ate outside the refectory, 'The Minister General invites you to supper; I command you in his name to go to him immediately.' And so it was done.

"For whenever Brother John of Parma, as Minister General, came to some new convent of the Friars Minor, he wished the lowlier brethren to eat with him, or that all eat together . . . Thus Brother John of Parma was no respecter of persons nor did he have a private love for any. He was most courteous and gracious at the table, so that if different types of good wine were placed on the table he would have equal portions poured for all, or he would have all the wine poured into one great cup that all might drink in common; and for this he was considered most courteous and kind.

#### HELPING IN COMMON TASKS.

"Whenever the bell sounded for the cleaning of vegetables and herbs, Brother John of Parma, Minister General though he was, would come to the workers of the convent and labor with the other brethren, as I often saw with my own eyes. And because we were good friends, I said to him, 'Father, you are doing what the Lord taught us in Luke 22, *Let him who is greatest among*

*become as the youngest, and him who is chief as the servant.*' 'So it becomes me to fulfill all justice,' he replied, 'that is, perfect humility.'

#### TAKING PART IN COMMUNITY EXERCISES.

"He was also accustomed to attend the Divine Office day and night and especially Matins and Vespers and the conventional Mass. Whatever the Chanter proposed upon him he immediately undertook, whether it was beginning the psalms, reading the lessons, singing responses, or saying the conventional Mass . . . On Holy Saturday the chanter imposed on him the last prophecy and he immediately went and sang it. What further shall I add? He was a man full of good works.

#### HIS WISDOM AND REPUTATION

"There were many who loved him. Among them was Master Peter the Spaniard, who became a Cardinal, and later became Pope John XXI. Being a great dialectician, logician, disputant, and theologian, he sent for Brother John of Parma, who had like qualities . . . The Pope wished therefore to have him with him at all times in the Curia, and thought of making him a Cardinal, but was prevented by death from carrying out his plan . . .

"Pope Innocent IV also loved Brother John as his own soul; and when Brother John went to him, the Pope received him with a kiss. And the Pope planned to make him a Cardinal, but death forestalled him.

"Likewise Vatatzes, Emperor of the Greeks, hearing of the sanctity of the Minister General, Brother John of Parma, sent to Pope Innocent IV asking that Brother John be sent to him, because he hoped that through him the Greeks would return to the precepts of the Roman Church. And while Brother John was there Vatatzes loved him so much that he wanted to give him many gifts. But Brother John, after the example of Daniel, refused them all . . . When Vatatzes saw that Brother John did not wish to receive anything he was impressed by his good example.

#### INCIDENTS AT GRECCIO

"But after his resignation Brother John went and dwelt in the hermitage at Greccio, where Saint Francis at Christmas had once made a replica of the crib. While he was living there, two wildfowl, somewhat like large geese, came and made their nest under the desk where he was continually engaged in study.

They laid their eggs there and raised their brood; and they lay nor did they become alarmed.

"Very early one morning Brother John called one of his pupils and he wished to say Mass. The pupil answered that he would go to Mass since he was very sleepy he fell asleep again. Afterward he was ashamed of his drowsiness. And coming he found Brother John at Mass and a student in surplice serving him. When Mass was over he left without a word. Now that same day Brother John said to him, 'I am blessed, son, because today you served reverently and well.' The student answered, 'God gave me much consolation in today's Mass because of your Mass.' Brother John told him, 'Father, forgive me, because when you called me, I thought that I could not come immediately; and when I did come I saw you serving you. I know that there is no stranger in the house; and I thought that the brethren whether he had served your Mass, and each said to me, 'Brother John told him, 'I thought it was you. But whoever it is, may be blessed, and may our Creator be blessed for all his gifts.'

"Many other good deeds I saw and heard and know of Brother John at Parma, who was Minister General, and they would be well worth relating here I fall silent about them for brevity's sake, and because I know of many matters that must be related, and because Scripture says in *Praise not any man before death.*"

*St. Bonaventure University*

*Fr. Geoffrey Br...*



Love is not love

If it is not crucified.

*Bl. Cresc...*

Too many in our days who want to seek wisdom and learning," Brother John said to his Brothers, "that happy is he who out of love for the Lord makes himself ignorant and unlearned." Today many of us who are devoted to the pursuit of higher studies are prone to dwell with melancholy on these words of our Seraphic Father. At times we are troubled by problems and perplexities and conflicting obligations. I have attempted to echo the cry of Jacobone da Todi: "O Paris, thou hast made us suffer." Fundamentally of course, the difficulty for us lies not in whether we should study, *may study*—Rome settled that question many centuries ago—but in *how* we can reconcile our vocation of evangelical simplicity with the necessities and demands of modern education.

Unfortunately, the task is not easy. There is even danger of developing a fanaticism toward study that can deprive us of great spiritual benefit. Some of us are devoted through a course of study with eyes fixed grimly on the vow of obedience and on nothing more. Others among us, spiritual descendants of Brother John, perhaps, take refuge in an attitude of suspicion or contempt for the knowledge we are obliged to acquire. Still others among us confess to a timorous reluctance as to the ultimate end and value of it all, and a vague fear that our studies may prove a hindrance to our spiritual progress. But all such attitudes, understandable though they are, must be recognized as basically incompatible with the spirit of love and reverence that has traditionally distinguished the highest Franciscan scholarship.

The Franciscan ideal of embracing the Holy Gospel knows but one goal—total surrender of self to God. Thus the one and ultimate end of all our striving for knowledge is union with God in love. Saint Bonaventure emphasized this point before an academic gathering at the University of Paris. In his beloved Bernard of Clairvaux, he defined the aim of all our learning:

There are those who wish to know only to know: and this is idle curiosity.

There are those who learn and wish to know in order to be able to show it off: and this is base vanity.

There are those who wish to know in order to vend their knowledge for money or honors: and this is base greed.

There are those who wish to know in order to edify others, and this

There are those who wish to know in order to be edified; and this is prudence.

And to these words of Saint Bernard the Seraphic Doctor added:

Knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies. Therefore charity must be yoked with knowledge so that a man may have at the same time knowledge and charity, in order to fulfill the words of the Apostle: Being rooted and grounded in love, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and the breadth and the height and the depth, and to know the charity of Christ, which surpasses knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Divine love then is to be the goal of all our learning. For Bonaventure knowledge without love is reduced to insignificance. He is serenely unimpressed by those who extol learning for its own sake, or by those who glory in it for the honor of the human spirit, or by those who pursue it in the name of human progress. The Seraphic Doctor would qualify those who seek knowledge for such reasons simply as seekers of mere terrestrial wisdom.

Unquestionably Bonaventure loved knowledge and respected those who possessed it. Had not our Seraphic Father himself urged his Brothers to "honor and venerate all theologians . . . as those who minister to us spirit and life." Furthermore, Bonaventure clearly recognized the need of intellectual activity for the fullest development of the human personality. "As the body without nourishment loses its power, beauty, and health," he writes, "so the soul without insight into truth becomes dark, deformed, and unstable in everything. Hence it needs to be refreshed." On the other hand, he despised indulgence in the contemplation of truth merely for the sake of intellectual delectation. This Aristotelean ideal of speculation as an end in itself he found something not only despicable but downright pernicious. Commenting on Aristotle's remark that it is a great joy to know that the diameter is asymmetrical with the side of a square, Bonaventure remarks rather caustically: "The pleasure is to let him eat it;"<sup>2</sup> In fact, it is this very seeking of knowledge for its own sake that Bonaventure finds symbolized in the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. It is this that leads the soul away from the Tree of Life—knowledge which has its ultimate end in God—and from the true delights of divine contemplation to which knowledge, rightly directed, inevitably leads.

<sup>1</sup> *De donis Spiritus S.* Coll. IV, 23-24.

<sup>2</sup> *Hexaemeron* XVII, 6-7

For to eat of the Tree of Life is to be refreshed by these illuminations, so that a man may seek nothing but the understanding of truth, the affectation of piety, the delight of sweetness, and the solace of contemplations. But when a man forgets these things and takes delight in curious searching, then he wants only to know. And from this arises the pride of vanity, since he despises others; and from this in turn follows contentious debate, for he believes himself despised whenever anyone proposes an objection; and always he is ready to strike against those who withstand him. Thus true life is taken away from a man.<sup>3</sup>

If this danger is avoided, however, there can be nothing to fear from the pursuit of learning. With the emphasis on unctio, on the affective transformation of speculation and knowledge into love, Saint Bonaventure is entirely in harmony with the spirit of our Seraphic Father.

There is little doubt that what displeased Francis in those of his Friars who desired to be learned was the pride of intelligence, the perversion of knowledge. He most vehemently did not wish his sons to cover themselves with the glory of learning so as to be sought for and esteemed by men. "For if you were so clever and wise," he admonished, "that you possessed all science, and if you knew how to interpret every form of language and to investigate heavenly things, you could not glory in all this, because one demon has known more of heavenly things and still knows more of earthly things than all men . . ." <sup>4</sup> But Francis also understood that to seek truth purely and simply in order to draw closer to God is also a cultivation of the spiritual life, and that pure seeking of truth must, by its very nature, exercise a strengthening and cleansing influence on man's entire moral being. A man ever in search of truth and ever disposed to accept it wholly will not easily fail to recognize the truth about himself; and self-knowledge is one of the first steps toward perfection. A mind open to all truth is a mind open to all good. If Saint Paul speaks of the "holiness of truth" it is because holiness in the will is a fruit of truth in the mind; because only the full disposition for truth is the full disposition for holiness. Bonaventure expressly states that Francis "wished the Friars to study, provided they first practice what they teach. For to know much and to taste little, what does it profit?" <sup>5</sup> Or, in the classic formula of Duns Scotus: "It would be of little value to contemplate God if, in contemplating Him, we did not also love Him." <sup>6</sup>

*Hexaemeron* XVIII, 3.

*Admonitiones*, V

*Hexaemeron* coll. XXII, 21.

*Op.* III, d. 18, 2. 3., n. 15.



It may be objected of course, and validly, that what has been said thus far in regard to learning has been limited in application to the sacred sciences. Our great Franciscan scholars would have no difficulty in assigning the same value, if not the same degree, of value to modern secular studies as to sacred studies. Truth is always truth. All true knowledge, according to Duns Scotus, which reaches the real intelligible is nothing less than a re-thinking of the divine thoughts, and, as such, a sharing in the divine knowledge. This is application of knowledge pertaining to every field of human learning, to all arts and sciences. For example, to know that a triangle has three angles because it shares in the perfection of God since it has this particular function in the universe—this is to know a triangle in a nobler way than to know it merely through its analysis as a triangle.<sup>7</sup> In the same way, with the same reverence and consciousness of God as the source of all truth, we may approach the study of a great literary masterpiece, a symphony, the structure and functions of the human body, a law of linguistics, a chemical formula. Even in those fields of study which have much to do with the vices and frailties of human nature, truth is still the goal of our searching, and truth is always God. To receive truth wherever we find it, to accept it with reverence as a manifestation of divine perfections, is to form our mind according to the mind of Christ.

The reason, perhaps, why some of us are a little fearful of secular studies is that we have difficulty in recognizing truth. "It comes to few to attain truth for eternal reasons," says Scotus, "because few have real understanding of truth in itself (*intellectiones per se*)." There is a simile in Saint Augustine of a man standing on top of a mountain with fog below him and pure air above him. Scotus explains this simile as a man who grasps the quiddities not by superficial concepts but precisely as in themselves they really are. The man is on top of the mountain in so far as he knows truth in virtue of the uncreated intellect. Truth is above him; imperfect concepts of truth are the foggy air below him. This is a lofty height to which Scotus would lead us, and most difficult of attainment. Yet once we have learned at least to see all truth as coming from God and leading to God, or, in other words, once we have learned to think with the mind of Christ, we should find it no problem to turn our intellectual activities to the profit of our soul.

Saint Bonaventure himself so perfectly exemplified the ideals of the Franciscan spirit of study that it might be well to quote, in closing, these beautiful lines from his *De reductione artium ad theologian* (26):

<sup>7</sup> I Ox. 3, 4, 5, a. 23.

<sup>8</sup> I Ox. 3, 4, 5, a. 22.

And this is the fruit of all the sciences, that faith be built up in all, God be honored, the moral life be ordered, and consolations be drawn from the union of the spouse with her Beloved. This union takes place through charity, to whose attainment the whole purpose of Sacred Scripture and consequently every illumination descending from above are directed; for without charity all knowledge is vain.

(to be continued)

Princeton, N. J.

Sr. Frances Laughlin, S. M. I. C.

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Blessed is the servant who does not regard himself as better when he is praised and extolled by man than when he is reputed as mean, simple, and contemptible: for what a man is in the sight of God, so much he is, and no more.

✠ ✠ ✠

Blessed is that servant who is raised in dignity not by his own will and who always desires to be beneath the feet of others.

✠ ✠ ✠

Blessed is the servant who bears discipline, accusation, and blame from others as patiently as if they came from himself.

✠ ✠ ✠

Blessed is the servant who, when reproved, submits mildly, obeys modestly, confesses humbly, and satisfies willingly.

✠ ✠ ✠

Blessed is the servant who is not prompt to excuse himself and who humbly accepts shame and reproof for sin when he is without fault.

*Admonitions of Saint Francis*

*According to Saint Bonaventure*

For a true Franciscan this earthly life is but a time of nostalgic longing waiting for eternity. In the spirit of our Holy Father Francis he listens to the admonition of Saint Peter: "Beloved, I exhort you as strangers and pilgrims (I Pet., 2, 11), and his entire life is directed toward the final goal of existence—the possession of God forever. A man whose heart is filled with yearning for home keeps his mind set on reaching home as quickly as possible and he uses every available means to insure a safe journey. He has no time to waste in idleness and delaying entanglements. Whatever may jeopardize the speed and surety of his homegoing he shuns as a potential hindrance to eternal happiness. Thomas of Celano says of our Seraphic Father Francis: "He hastened to leave this world, this exile of wandering."<sup>1</sup>

Hence, a Franciscan must avoid the danger of wasting time in any kind of idleness, which, besides being a proximate occasion of sin, is a hindrance to his homegoing.

He must also be watchful of how he uses his time, avoiding whatever tends to suffocate the spirit of prayer and extinguish in his soul that beautiful virtue of homesickness for eternal life, which is an aspect of hope. Hence, the next point of our examination will be:

#### NEGLIGENCE IN THE USE OF TIME.

Saint Bonaventure does not intend that we ask ourselves merely whether we have wasted time, but also whether we have made good use of it, whether we have disposed of it well. Therefore we should first ask ourselves:

Did I waste time? It is true, of course, that we are usually kept so busy with the assignments given us by our superiors that we have no time to waste in downright laziness. We should be grateful that this is so because it protects us from one of the worst enemies of the soul, the vice of idleness, "the cesspool of all vices." Nevertheless it is profitable to ask ourselves whether we have worked lazily or carelessly, or in a manner that approached idleness; whether we have wasted time in taking unnecessary rest, or in idle talking, or in being busy about nothing; whether we have been too much concerned about our health, perhaps even using a real or imaginary illness to avoid assignments we do not like.

<sup>1</sup> Celano, *Vita sec.*, p. II, c. 124 (165).

Since time is so precious we must also examine ourselves as to how efficiently we have arranged and disposed of our time. There are some people who are very busy and concerned about many things and yet seldom, if ever, accomplish anything of value. They are like children, constantly changing their interests and occupations. Our daily routine is intended to be a safeguard against this kind of behavior, and a certain regularity even within the performance of the tasks assigned to us will be of great help. Let us, therefore, examine ourselves as to whether we perform our regular duties—negligently, or efficiently and prayerfully? Have we slipped into the habit of postponing burdensome tasks until the last minute when it is impossible to do them well? We should, however, understand that adherence to order and regularity does not mean enslavement to routine. Obedience and charity will prevent our becoming petrified by an inhuman orderliness."

We must also be careful to distinguish between waste of time and abuse of time, for it is not uncommon to find a religious using time for everything but the one thing necessary. It is certainly an abuse of time for a religious to plunge indiscriminately into activities which, however important they may seem, have nothing to do with the ultimate goal of his vocation. To be sure, whatever we do in the name of the Lord and for His greater honor and glory is good, and the time spent in such activity is well used. But to deliberately engage in worldly pursuits, or to concern ourselves with the affairs of others under the pretext of working for the glory of God, is definitely an abuse of time. We must also be careful not to become so busy that we have no time to think of God, or so distracted that our spirit of prayer is seriously impaired. And if we are obliged by obedience to engage in purely worldly occupations, we must be careful to sanctify our work by the spirit of prayer.

On the other hand, we must avoid extremes. Some religious have an erroneous conscience on this point. For example, if a religious is told by his superior or by his superior to rest or to enjoy a period of relaxation, he is definitely not wasting time by doing so. On the contrary, he is fulfilling the will of God as expressed in the Fifth Commandment, and if he sanctifies his rest and relaxation, this time of inactivity is well spent for eternity. Besides, such periods of rest can be well used for prayer or spent in the company of Christ in meditation. If we are ever disturbed about such enforced "idleness," let us ask ourselves honestly *why* we are disturbed. Is it not, perhaps, because we fear the possible uncharitable judgments of others, or because our pride has enslaved us to work? For a religious, there should be no problem at all in realizing that a time of idleness or of convalescence is a time of grace and that in virtue

of submission to the divine will and to obedience such inactivity is as labor.

There is another aspect to be considered in regard to the use of time in our relations with our fellow-religious. As Franciscans, we should respect the time of others as well as our own and avoid anything that might cause them to waste their time. Accordingly, we should examine ourselves as to whether we have disturbed others by unnecessary noise, by inopportune or prolonged conversations, by intrusions, by negligence in keeping appointments. One single religious intrusion can cause the entire community a great loss of time through carelessness or lack of consideration. To cause another to lose time is moreover a serious sin against charity.

We must also consider our neighbor from the point of view of our own time. Do we make an honest effort always to have time for others? To spend time in the service of others, in acts of genuine charity, is certainly meritorious. How often do we say to those who ask us a favor: I have no time? It may perhaps become a habit for us to refuse requests on the pretext of being too busy? It is a peculiar fact that usually the very persons who have no time for others, who repeatedly complain of having too much to do, are seldomly the outstanding examples of industry. Let us remember that our Lord always has time for each and every one of us. It is really a divine virtue to have time for others.

Superiors, especially, should bear in mind that they are not wasting their time when they listen to the needs and complaints and sorrows of their subjects. The seemingly little affairs that concern them. They have the splendid example of St. Bonaventure as a guide in this. Once, after having visited one of the houses of the Order, he was followed by a certain lay-brother who had been unable to see him. Bonaventure was already outside the city when the brother finally overtook him, but the Seraphic Doctor immediately sat down by the roadside and listened kindly and patiently to his long rambling talk. After the saint had comforted the brother, his impatient companions reproached him for having wasted so much time. Bonaventure however met their reproaches by quoting the rule which says that the minister must be the servant of all.

Time is precious, but to a Franciscan it can never be precious in a purely secular sense. Time is God's gift, to be gratefully received and wisely used on our pilgrimage to our Father's home.

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Francis is twofold: it consists in prayer on the one hand, and activity on the other. Prayer takes care of the inner man; activity controls his exterior. The happy blending of the two makes for perfection, for happiness, cheerfulness and peace. This writer recently saw a Sister sitting quietly in a dispensary. She was over eighty; her sight was dim, her hands feeble; but she was still able to put pills in a bottle. And, mind you, every pill was accompanied with a fervent prayer. It was a glorious ejaculation. God bless her, and God bless those who may be cured by the use of sanctified pills.

The fourth petal is Charity. Without it, as we all know, our whole life with its meditations, aspirations, and resolutions is in vain. Love of God and charity towards our neighbor are like two parallel lines: if either one deviates, the whole system falls to pieces. Charity must always be our last resort when things go wrong and when our daily burden weighs heavily upon us. *Propter honorem Domini Nostri Jesu Christi* (for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ)—that is the bright star in the distance which illuminates the path, no matter how dark, uneven, tortuous, distressful it may be. The convent is Christ's Mystical Body in miniature. Do not expect thanks, not even from those of your own household. If you do, you may be sorely disappointed, for you have forgotten the Householder who hired you and holds the key to your eternal reward.

The fifth and last petal is the spirit of prayer; in other words, the Good Intention. It puts our whole spiritual life in a nutshell. Make your work a constant prayer. If you fail to do this you are like the farmer who had spent hours and hours loading grain on his wagon. The wagon was loaded and it was time for the market, but the horse had gone astray and could not be found in time. Perhaps we should say the donkey had gone astray, for this animal would have proven a more suitable companion for the man who, like Saint Peter, had worked all day but gained nothing. Like Saint Peter, let us say before every task and at every stroke of the clock, "Upon thy word," that is, for the honor and glory of God, I shall do this work; and you will not forfeit a great reward.

May Saint Joseph, the sweet Patron of this month, teach us the sublime and noble art of sanctifying, consecrating, and dedicating our daily work, with all its burdens, hindrances, disappointments to the glory of God and in abiding loyalty to Christ our Head and Saviour.

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O. F. M. ✓

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