

FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

Among its summer courses, the Franciscan Institute also offers scientific studies in Franciscan Spirituality. These courses are part of a series that cover the nature of the Franciscan way of life as well as the sources, development and influence of Franciscanism upon the intellectual and devotional life of the Church. Special attention is also given to Catholic Action and to the social interests and tasks of the Third Order Secular. Teachers are preachers, missionaries, directors of souls, novice masters and mistresses, and all who are charged with the education and spiritual formation of young religious or of the faithful in general should find these courses a great help in understanding more fully the richness of their Franciscan heritage and in imparting the Franciscan message to others.

The attention of those interested in Franciscan Spirituality is called especially to the following courses

Sources of Franciscan Spirituality
The *Itinerarium* of Saint Bonaventure
Readings from David of Augsburg
History of the Franciscan Order
Third Order Workshop



These courses may be audited or taken for graduate credit leading to the degree of Master of Arts. The complete schedule of the Franciscan Institute Summer Session, beginning July 3 and ending August 9, is as follows:

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| 725 | History of Franciscan Theology.
Part III: Duns Scotus. | 2 credits |
| | Eligius Buytaert, O.F.M. | |
| 630 | Franciscan Spirituality. Part II: Sources of
Franciscan Spirituality. Life and writings of
St. Francis | 2 credits |
| | Ignatius Donaghue, O.F.M. | |
| 630a | Readings from David of Augsburg | 1 credit |
| | Ignatius Donaghue, O.F.M. | |
| 605 | History of Franciscan Philosophy.
Part II: Duns Scotus | 2 credits |
| | Allan Wolter, O.F.M. | |
| 605a | Readings from Duns Scotus | 1 credit |
| | Allan Wolter, O.F.M. | |
| 540 | History of the Franciscan Order. Part 1 | 2 credits |
| 535 | Third Order Workshop. Nature, aim and importance
of the Third Order Secular, spirit and activities of
the Tertiary apostolate, mutual relations of the
Third Order and other Catholic organizations; in-
ternational coordination of Tertiary forces | 2 credits |
| | Gerard Fitzsimmons, O.F.M. | |
| 518a and b | Latin Palaeography of the 13th to 15th
centuries | 2 credits |
| | Gaudens Mohan, O.F.M. | |
| 505a | The <i>Itinerarium</i> of Saint Bonaventure | 2 credits |
| | Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M. | |
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FRANCISCAN INSTITUTE
St. Bonaventure University
St. Bonaventure, N. Y.

OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

Is it not strange that, while heaven and earth cannot contain the Almighty Who holds the universe in the palm of His hand, the earthly life of the same Eternal God should be completed in thirty-three short years, and that the course of this life should be contained within a few chapters written down by the four Evangelists? Written down, we might add, in a simple, plain-spoken, popular manner. But there is the Finger of God, which knows how to draw greatness out of smallness, grandeur and glory out of simplicity. For these nineteen hundred years Mother Church has pondered over these unadorned and unpretentious pages of the Holy Gospel, and, behold, what an overwhelming array of festivals, rites and devotions she has set up for the entire course of the ecclesiastical year. We are made to think of a small basket filled with greens and flowers, and lo, late in the day, busy and skilful hands have emptied the basket and made the altar look like an object of entrancing beauty. The basket is the Gospel; the altar, the calendar of the Church.

Being written for human beings, this ecclesiastical calendar concentrates primarily on those events and objects in the life of the God-Man that offer a special appeal to the human mind and heart. The Christmas cycle dwells lovingly on His birth of Mary the Virgin. Eastertide shows forth the struggle between death and life. Calvary recalls His bitter death. Pentecost, His life's work, the Church. His authority is featured in the Feast of Christ's Kingship. Our daily bread, the chief means of human subsistence, plays its part in the Holy Eucharist. Motherhood, so close to man's life and love, is revered in the numerous feasts of the Mother of God. The heart, the source of human weal and woe alike, comes to the fore in the devotion to our Saviour's Sacred Heart. And last of all, there is the blood in our veins, the life-spring, as it were, of our existence. No wonder that Mother Church throughout the ages should have instilled into the hearts of her children a fond love and devotion to the Precious Blood of our Lord, and that the beautiful Month of July should have been dedicated to this Devotion.

Blood is indeed an outstanding factor not only in the physical and moral life of the individual, but in all the history of the human race as well, from the most ancient monuments of primitive human script to the mountains of journals and literature that day after day fill our streets and homes. And since from the earliest dawn of human history blood has been looked upon as the fountain and sign of life, as the visible test of the noblest in man when he possesses it, even as his greatest calamity when he loses it, therefore, blood has

There is nothing so wholesome and uplifting in the spiritual life as abiding sorrow for our sins. It cleanses the soul; it strengthens all our spiritual faculties; it mellows our harsh and proud nature; it checks our temper in our passions; it evens the way to true sanctity. It is not necessary, and may be harmful, to remember individual or specific sins. In fact, Father Ignace remarks rather humorously that happy are those souls who have a poor memory because they can forget their sins. Be that as it may, we cannot afford to forget that we are sinners. Saint Matthew was a publican, that is, a sinner by the parlance of the day and, mind you, he kept this title to the end as if he were in this dubitable distinction.

But suppose God in His mercy has kept us from grievous sins all our lives. In that case we have all the more reason to meditate on the heinousness and enormity of sins because they caused bitter and excruciating pains to the Good Lord Who has sheltered us under the blood-stained mantle that Pontius Pilate placed upon Him. Then we have all the more reason to say the Rosary with its exquisitely beautiful prayer with its soul-stirring invocations, which was composed by one of the early Franciscan Saints and adopted by Saint Ignace of Loyola as the prayer of his choice. *Anima Christi, sanctifica me . . .* "So sanctify me, O Christ, sanctify me; Blood of Christ, inebriate me . . ."

With our left hand we beg for alms. May the Wound in Christ's left hand bestir us to the prayer of petition. For what shall I ask? Behold, the world is before you with all its iniquities, its evils, its needs and its manifold woes, both hidden and open. Ask for your own progress in sanctity, for the conversion of sinners and heathens, for the Church and its leaders and priests, for the afflicted and those in despair; for the Poor Souls in Purgatory. Remember that the Lamb of God was slain for all, and that you, being washed in the blood of the Lamb should share His divine intentions and ring the bell of the voice of your supplications to the far-flung corners of Christ's vast Empire. It is a wholesome practice at meditation, when you feel drowsy, distracted, weary, to look around in God's wide world and pray for each and every thing that comes to mind. It is time well spent.

Man starts his day's work on the right foot, for movement indicates will to do, and the will to make sacrifices. Sacrifice means self-conquest through suffering, and therefore it is the noblest word in the monastic dictionary. Through sacrifice and prayer the Religious makes up what is wanting in the efforts of the countless lagging and lukewarm members of Christ's Mystical Body. Meanwhile each act of sacrifice is a proof of our love for the Crucified. Oppor-

unities for sacrifice surround us day and night; they are never far to seek. The worldling hates and shuns them; he submits to all manner of self-imposed restraints and sometimes tortures, to avoid a small discomfiture or to bask for an hour in the sunlight of social glory. Society ladies, I assume without knowing, must spend hours and days of artificial torment in preparation for a social event, to make themselves appear what they are not. How happy our Religious, who always appear in state, who always take things as they come, who always deny themselves for the sake of Him who suffered for us. The spirit of sacrifice is the philosophical basis for our peace and contentment. This is what Saint Paul had in mind when he wrote: *For thy sake we are put to death all the day long. We are regarded as sheep for the slaughter* (Rom. 8, 36). From this Pauline hyperbole we should extract the kernel, which is to have always before us the Lamb of God Who takes away our sins.

When we look upon the Wound in the Savior's left foot, we think of that blissful state of mind which is called Resignation. It is one thing to bear self-imposed sacrifices; it is quite another, and far superior in merit, to accept with grace and love what God may send us. In fact, this perfect conformity with God's Will brings us up to the highest rung on the ladder of perfection. It is the state of a passive abandonment to the divine Will, and most acceptable to our Savior carrying the cross to Calvary. His life may be written in the words, Conformity to His Father's Will. He Himself coined the classical text: *I do always the things that are pleasing to him* (John 8, 29), which may serve as the surest way to perfection.

The Wound in the Savior's side opens an avenue to the unfathomable storehouse of ineffable spiritual riches, for it is the way to His Sacred Heart. It is difficult to choose among so much heavenly wealth. Let us single out the brightest gem, holy zeal. *The zeal for thy house*, we hear our Savior say, *has eaten me up* (Ps. 68, 10). But His language waxes stronger as He exclaims, *I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled* (Lk. 12, 49). This is the fire of zeal, and we must all be enkindled by its flames. We must become, each in his own way, apostles of zeal. "He who has no zeal has no love," says Saint Ambrose. For if love is the queen among the virtues, holy zeal is her crown. "What is the heart of an apostle?" asks the celebrated Cassiodorus. "It is," he continues, "a tiny tool; but it carries the world within; it reaches to heaven above; it comprises the entire universe." For the sake of the Precious Blood of our divine Master, let us become apostles of zeal.

New York

Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M.

MEDITATIONS IN PREPARATION FOR MASS

VI

Recolitur Memoria Passionis Ejus

Qui pridie quam pateretur, accepit panem in sanctas ac venerabiles suas. It was on the eve of His passion and death that our Lord instituted the Sacrifice of the Mass. On the night before their execution criminals are customarily treated to a good banquet. So also on the eve of His death our Lord partook of a meal, the Paschal supper. But it was not good food that comforted the Heart of Christ as the gloom of His sufferings cast their shadows before Him. No, it was rather the presence round that table of loyal and loving friends. Jesus took heart in the knowledge that tonight He was leaving them a means of His death, a means during the years to come of calling to mind His redemptive sufferings — and not only for these disciples but for generations to come. That is why He closed the celebration of His First Mass with the command, *Do this in remembrance of me* (Lk. 22, 20).

The Mass is truly a beautiful reminder of our Lord's suffering and death. In it we see the bread and wine separated, picturing for us the separation of Christ's Blood from His Body when He died on the Cross. At the Offertory when we raise up the chalice (as well as several other times), we must be reminded of Christ on the Cross. Frequently the Sign of the Cross is made during the Sacrifice. And at the Consecration those significant words are repeated, *pridie quam pateretur . . .* Surely the priest cannot easily forget the passion of His Savior during Holy Mass. And surely our hearts must fill with sorrow and tender compassion for those sufferings. Neither will there be boundless gratitude for that Divine Lover, Who gave up His life that we might live unto God.

But the Mass, as every Catholic knows, is more than just a memorial supper calling to mind the passion and death of Christ. It is actually a renewal, in different form, of the same death on the Cross. For we have the same priest, namely, our High Priest, Jesus Christ. And He offers the same Victim, Which is His Sacred Humanity. Only this is an unbloody offering. The Mass is the prolongation through time and space of the redemptive death of Christ on the Cross. It is the means by which the faithful of the twentieth century can participate in the sacrifice which Christ offers in His name. It is the great means by which the blessings and graces of the Sac-

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of the Cross are brought to the people of today. No priest should ever forget that he is helping our Lord to renew the awesome Sacrifice of the Cross.

The Sacrifice of the Cross was the important climax to a life of labor and sacrifice for the salvation of men. The preaching and miracles, fasting and prayer, were preludes to this great Sacrifice. So also with the priest. All his labors and prayers must center around the Mass. His preaching and instruction ultimately tend to make Catholics, who will believe in Christ and come to participate in the Christian Sacrifice of the New Law. Children must be baptized before they can really assist at the Holy Sacrifice. Sinners must be absolved before they dare partake of the Communion of the Mass. The Gospel must be explained and molded into the practical life of the faithful, else the grace of the Mass remains sterile. It will require sacrifices on the part of the priest, therefore, to make the Mass the powerhouse of good that it must be for the people. These sacrifices he will make willingly, saying with Saint Paul, *I rejoice now in the sufferings I bear for your sake; and what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ I fill up in my flesh for His body . . . the Church* (Col. 1, 24). Yes, the priest will make those sacrifices gladly, if his morning Mass recalls vividly the Sacrifice made by Christ. *Do this in remembrance of me.*

VII

A Pattern to the Flock

Saint Luke relates an occasion in our Lord's life when *it came to pass as He was praying in a certain place, that when He ceased one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray'* (Lk. 11, 1). What reverence and devotion, what loving joy must have radiated from the praying Jesus to have prompted that spontaneous desire for imitation! Saint John the Evangelist also records for our instruction a significant phrase of Jesus concerning His audible prayer at the raising of Lazarus: *Because of the people who stand around, I spoke* (Jo. 11, 42).

These passages from the Gospels call our attention to a phase of our Lord's life and character that might easily be overlooked. Jesus prayed frequently and devoutly and with becoming gestures in order to give a good example to His followers. He really wishes to edify and inspire others to pray like Him. Of course, He warned us against those hypocrites who pray only *in order that they may be seen by men* (Matt. 5, 5). He wants us all to *worship the Father in spirit and in truth* (Jo. 4, 23). But, presupposing our prayer to be sincere and

genuine in the sight of God, Christ wants it to be also a source of edification to our neighbor.

Our Lord, therefore, put His greatest prayer, the Holy Sacrifice of Mass, into external form. In instituting it, He raised His eyes to heaven, broke and distributed the bread, saying: *This is My Body . . . do this in remembrance of me.*

Yes, *do this in remembrance of Me.* Our Savior does want us priests to offer the Holy Sacrifice with the same intentions He had. We must *have the mind of Christ* in this matter also. Thus the audible prayers, the visible rites and ceremonies that make up the Mass of the Roman rite, all become means for fulfilling our Lord's command, *Do this in remembrance of me.* They are divinely approved symbols by which we teach holy truths to human beings. They are bright flags by which the priest signals his message to the assembled multitude. They are beams of light by which the spirit of prayer and devotion reaches itself to countless onlookers.

No priest should deceive himself into thinking that he is not worthy while he celebrates Holy Mass, or that the laity do not observe the manner in which he does it. That is precisely what he is there for — to be their leader and guide in the worship to God. How often the people remark about a priest's manner of celebrating Holy Mass. "He says Mass like an angel." "The manner of him inspires me with reverence." That is what they should be able to say concerning every priest.

It does require effort and attention to fulfill this high purpose of the Holy Sacrifice. To study the rubrics carefully, to practise them diligently, to do so ourselves often, does not come easy. Yet it is only by precision in the rubrics, by reverence and devotion in our attitude at Mass, that we can hope to be to ourselves a *pattern to the flock* (1 Pet. 5, 4). Our attitude at prayer, especially at the community worship of Holy Mass must be such as will inspire the faithful to pray with us in spirit and in truth.

I am the Vine, you are the branches (Jo. 15, 5). Yes, at Mass even more than elsewhere we must be branches on the vine of Christ. We must bear fruit like His. We must live and pray as *other Christs*. Which means that we must celebrate Holy Mass in a manner that will inspire reverence and devotion in others. *Do this,* He says, *in remembrance of me.*

Columbus, Nebr.

Fr. Martin Wolter, O.F.M.

THE FRANCISCAN LITTLE FLOWER

In the great medieval struggle between the Papacy and the Empire, Viterbo was no minor battlefield. Alternately ruled by the Ghibellines, under the patronage of the Emperors and the Teutonic nobles, and by the Guelphs, who were the common people loyal to the Holy See through their communes, it was in a constant state of political turmoil. Into the chaotic social environment that was the necessary concomitant of this condition was thrust a little peasant girl who might have lived and died a half-starved, forgotten victim of man's greed for power, had not God chosen her for a special mission.

She was born in the spring of 1234. Her parents were John and Catherine — her earliest biographers give them no family name; and when she was baptised in the little parish church of Santa Maria in Poggio they gave her the name, Rose.

Almost from infancy, this child showed signs of loving God very much. When quite young she would often be found in some out-of-the-way place, praying, as she said, that God would help her to live for Him and do no wrong. As she grew older, she seldom took part in the activities of other children. While they played their little games, she would find her way into some church, most often the church of San Francesco, and there assist at divine services or kneel in silent prayer. It is said that in these early years she was very fond of the birds, and they of her. They would fly down to light on her head or shoulders or in her lap, and contentedly eat out of her hands the crumbs or other food she could find for them. She was happy in the company of these little brothers of the air; and they would trill their sweet songs in response to her laughter. Innocence found her playmates in these innocent, trusting little creatures of God.

But even as a child her concern for her poor townspeople was evident. In the sieges that Frederick II laid to Viterbo, his army devastated the fields so that the Viterbans had very little grain except what they could obtain elsewhere. As a consequence, the poor of the city were starving, and Rose frequently went without her own meals to give her food to hungry children. As the need increased, she gave more and more of her time to feed the poor. Although her parents were of the common people, they owned their own home and seemed to be a little better off than the average of their class. Rose did not hesitate to beg food from her mother and the neighboring women; and, when this did not suffice, she even took secretly what she did not think was needed in her home that she might be able to help those in such dire need.

In Viterbo the sons of Saint Francis were welcomed in the church of Giovanni Batista. But, shortly after their coming, Pope Gregory IX gave the site near the Piazza della Rocca where they built the beautiful church of San Francesco. This is the church to which Rose frequently found her way. These friars came to preach penance, as they had throughout the whole of Italy. They did it so effectively that all who would listen to them were brought to realize that penitential practices in satisfaction for sin were a necessity of Christian living. Little Rose took this doctrine to heart. She not only fasted but she might have food to give poor children, but she wore a hair shirt and scourged herself and submitted to other penances to satisfy God's anger for the sins of those who were trying to pervert the good people of Viterbo.

It must be remembered that Rose was hardly six years old when Viterbo again surrendered to Frederick II in 1240. The Ghibellines of the city called him back when he was already disposed to take refuge in Puglia to leave the States of the Church alone. And with him came the heretical Patari, a sect who rejected the sacraments, preached against the sacredness of marriage and family life and were infamous for destroying shrines and pillaging churches. The influence of these Patari was soon felt, not only in the upper classes who welcomed any excuse for throwing off the Church's restraint on their licentious lives, but even among the poorer, less instructed classes. And Rose, with her precocious mind and the extraordinary grace God gave her, was long in realizing what was happening to her people.

When she was seven years of age her parents permitted her to turn her room into a little oratory. There, for two or three years, she lived her life in prayer and penance, until her slender body could stand it no longer and she fell into serious illness. For fifteen months intermittent fever racked her frame. But through her long drawn-out days and sleepless nights she never heard to utter a complaint. The smile that constantly lighted her features was the wonder of all who saw her. She had evidently taken her sickness too much for part of the price she must pay before God would hear her prayers. Finally a few days before the feast of Saint John the Baptist, she came to such a pass that her family and neighbors gathered about her bed to pray for the end.

But the soul of the emaciated little girl seemed to be immersed in God and presently she began to speak to someone she was evidently seeing in vision. As she afterward related, she spoke to one of the virgins who were the forerunners of the great apparition she was about to enjoy. Soon she exclaimed

to those near her bed, "Behold, the Mother of God comes to her handmaid. Tell us go to meet her." And, springing from her bed, she fell on her knees to receive the Most Holy Virgin with humble reverence. Our Lady raised Rose up in a tender embrace that completely cured her illness. Then she told her why she had come: "Put on your best dress, and make a pilgrimage to the churches of San Giovanni Batista, Santa Maria in Poggio, and San Francesco. There you shall be received into the Third Order of Saint Francis. After this, return to your room and pray, awaiting the call of God. When it comes go out into the highways and preach penance. Freely and boldly reprehend all vice; confirm in their Catholic faith those who are wavering; lead the misguided back to obedience to the Holy Father; defend with all your strength and at any cost the rights of the Church against the attacks and fury of the heretics." This was the mission for which God had brought her into the world and now preserved her from death, and He sent the Queen of Heaven to tell her of it: to be a lay apostle, to work always and perseveringly for the cause of our Catholic faith no matter what trials and tribulations might befall her.

To don the garb of the Third Order in those early days meant to assume a life of real penance, a life of self-sacrifice for one's own sins and the sins of others. But to take this step by such an explicit command of our Blessed Lady meant that Rose was destined to give the rest of her poor little life without reserve for her people. When the Guardian of San Francesco clothed her in the rough habit and cord of penance, the eyes of those who witnessed it were wet with tears. No longer did they see a little peasant girl in her festive dress. They saw in that coarse robe a figure filled with a great purpose, whose eyes shone with holy determination. The realization of the arduous task that had been entrusted to her had in truth transformed her soul.

In her own small way she had prepared for this. Ever since she had been able to find her way to the church of San Francesco, she had listened attentively to the sermons and instruction of the sons of Saint Francis. Her soul had been inflamed by their words; her memory had retained their words with clearness and tenacity. Even in these early years, she had tried to communicate to other children, to her family, to neighbors and friends the light and warmth with which her own soul was suffused. And she spoke with such earnestness that the hearts of her hearers were often moved; speaking to them, she seemed more like an angel than a mere child.

But now the hour had struck. Crucifix in hand, she went boldly forth into the streets and plazas of the city. Her clear voice soon drew a crowd about

to hear what she had to say. Like the Franciscan Friars themselves, whom were then not priests, she made no pretense of learning or oratory. Baring her own soul's love for God and for them, she spoke to them in terms of "vices and virtues, punishment and glory", of our Lord's suffering and death, the beauty of our faith, the fatherhood of Christ's Vicar on earth. With these themes she fascinated her hearers and conquered their obstinacy. Converting many of the most stubborn heretics and the most hardened. The more people heard from her, the more enthusiastic they became. They were confirmed in their virtuous lives; the weak took courage against heretics who were trying to pervert them; the churches were again crossed by factions that had been set against each other in the strife between Church and State were brought to peace. That one simple little girl of the common people could have effected such a change, was surely a sign that God was with her.

It was this very success, however, that brought persecution upon her. The Patareni began their war against the little missionary by spreading rumors intended to spread hatred of her among the people. Soon, under the indifferent eyes of the imperial authorities, they broke out in hostile demonstrations, heckling her and creating clamorous disturbances among her auditors. But the saintly girl carried on her mission without fear, answering them charitably when she felt it her bounden duty, but more often paying no attention to them. Seeing that their tactics were of no avail, the Patareni went to the governor and told him that all the people were following this simple maid and, if something were not done to stop her preaching, the imperial authorities would be overthrown and driven from the city. The governor decided that the only way to prevent such a revolt was to get rid of Rose, and wrote to the Emperor asking confirmation of this decision. Frederick, enraged that a girl of the common people should defy his authority, ordered that she and her family be exiled from Viterbo. When this order came the governor lost no time in executing it. In spite of her father's plea that without shelter or resources they could easily perish, a band of soldiers escorted them to the city gate that very night, before the people could learn of it and rise up in their defense, and told them that if they attempted to return, or to comfort their friends in the city, their punishment would be more severe than it was.

Once out of the city they turned their faces toward Soriano, ten or twelve miles away through the foothills of Monte Cimino. The Pope ruled there, surely they would find some good souls ready to shelter and help them. Yet the parents were fearful of the outcome, not so much for themselves as for

the girl; stumbling along the road in her bare feet at night with no clothing but her rough habit, she might find the journey disastrous. But Rose proved a consoling angel, encouraging them to trust in the Lord who would not abandon them. As they began to climb into the mountains, the road became more difficult. It was winter, and in some places snow completely covered the ground. At last they could go no farther; they had to huddle together in what shelter they could find and pray for the light of another day. At dawn they plodded on to Soriano. At first the townspeople took them for pilgrims caught in the storm and left in the mountains. But when they learned that Rose was the girl of whom they had heard such great things, they gladly found them shelter and food.

As soon as they were settled, Rose resumed her apostolate of good. Her words, as ever full of spirit and conviction, aroused a great wave of religious enthusiasm. Faith became stronger, piety deeper; and with it love for the Church and for the Holy Father. Some who had been misled by the Ghibellines and were suspected of heresy acknowledged their errors, moved to the truth by the simple, clear arguments and the modest penitential life of this amiable girl. From Soriano she returned as far as Vitorchiano, whose people had also heard of her great work and received her with every sign of joy and veneration. Here she found that, because of its nearness to the city, the heretical ideas of the Patareni had infiltrated into many families. She attacked their heresies as she had at Viterbo itself, and succeeded in bringing a good many of the common people to realize their mistake and become again obedient children of the Church. But there were certain partisans of the Emperor who stubbornly refused to give up their false notions. They were led by a bold, crafty old hag with a wily tongue in her head, seemingly inspired by the devil himself. Rose reasoned with her and treated her with the utmost kindness, trying to get her to repent her sins and turn back to a decent Catholic way of life, but to no avail. In the end she submitted to the ordeal of fire, had the villagers build a great bonfire in the plaza, into which she walked without harm; and from the midst of the flames she exhorted the old lady to renounce her infidelity and accept the saving faith of Christ. At this the poor old soul was moved. She abjured her heresy and turned back to the Church as did many of her followers overcome by this evidence of divine intervention.

On December 13th, 1250, Frederick II died. Almost immediately, the power of the Ghibellines in Viterbo was overthrown, the imperial officials and soldiery were driven out and the heretical Patareni with them. The way thus being cleared, Rose and her family decided to return. When the Viterbo

heard of this they were filled with joy, for they had grieved deeply in exile. On the day they were to come, the people turned out in crowds to meet her at the city gate, and with shouts of exultation they led her through the strewn streets to her home. She and her family had been driven from their home in disgrace like common criminals; she returned to it in triumph as a conqueror. Yet all this applause only confused the poor girl. God had given her a mission. In carrying it out as best she could she felt that she had only done her honest duty. Now the mission was over, and she was glad to get back to the privacy of her little room to resume her life of prayer and penance.

Gradually a great dream was born. She came to realize that a virgin could live much more securely in the cloister under obedience to a superior than she can in the world following her own will. There was a monastery of Poor Clares in the city, that of Santa Maria delle Rose, where she could find peace striving for the ideals of Saint Francis which had always inspired her. She went to the abbess and asked to be admitted, but the abbess did not agree with her plan. She told Rose that she had too many nuns now and her room to receive any more. Rose must have been disappointed at this refusal, but she accepted it calmly, and with a wry smile remarked prophetically, "you are not pleased to take me into your community alive, it may not displease you to seek me for it dead."

She took this rebuff with the same patience she had shown in her refusal to return to her little room, no longer a divine oracle to her countrymen but only a young girl trying to live out her life as she thought God would have her live it. The next year or more was spent in prayer, while she helped her mother with the household duties and did what good she could among her relatives, neighbors and friends. Finally, however, the rigorous penances she continued to practice so weakened her already overworked body that she fell seriously ill. This time it was the end for which she had longed and prayed, and she knew it. With a song of gratitude in her heart she prepared herself for the Last Sacraments. After they had been administered, she joined as best she could in the prayers for the dying. In the midst of them she gently closed her eyes and started out on that last great journey to the true and blessed home of her Spouse in heaven.

From the day of her death, divine favors began to shower from heaven through her intercession, like the falling petals of the rose. Devotion to her increased until her words to the Abbess of Santa Maria delle Rose came true: the good nuns sincerely repented of having rejected her and wished with

in their heart that they now had her body in their monastery. Strangely, Rose in heaven was as eager as they that their wish be fulfilled, but the time to effect the transfer was slow in coming. At length, in March, 1257, five years after her death, Pope Alexander IV came to Viterbo to establish his residence. One night he had what he thought was a dream. Our Little Flower appeared and said to him: "Just as it has mercifully pleased the Divine Goodness to give me a place among His faithful handmaids in heaven, so it is now His will that the pious desires of those on earth be fulfilled. He has commanded me to tell you, His Vicar on earth, know that my body is to rest among the Poor Clares, with whom in life I had so eagerly desired to live."

She appeared to him a second and a third time before he became convinced that the transfer of her body was God's will. He notified the Poor Clares to have a suitable tomb prepared. They received his order with the greatest jubilation and set about complying with it immediately. And in due time, with the approval of four cardinals of the Papal Court, several bishops and other prelates, and all the clergy of the city, he went to the graveyard of Santa Maria in Poggio and had her body reverently exhumed and carried in solemn procession to the monastery of Santa Maria delle Rose. There it was enshrined in a beautifully ornate tomb, a fitting resting place for the remains, still incorrupt, of this wonderful Little Flower who in life could find no rest, not even among these consecrated virgins. It was September 4th, 1257, the day on which we now keep the feast of Saint Rose of Viterbo.

The foolish things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the wise; the weak things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the strong; that no flesh should glory in His sight. The monastery where human prudence could find no room for Rose alive opened wide its arms to receive her dead. She gave a permanence to that monastery which it might never have had without her. As soon as she was canonized its very name was changed to that of Saint Rose. And, from the time of her transfer, her tomb became a shrine not only for Viterbo but for all of Italy. This Franciscan Little Flower really has coruscated with miracles, many, varied and great. Few indeed who have invoked her worthily have not been heard. Through the centuries her fame has spread throughout the whole Catholic world. Such is the little peasant girl who, had she not answered God's call, might have lived and died a forgotten victim of man's greed for power. May her petals fall on many another good pious Catholic girl inclined to give her life to God.

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EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

According to Saint Bonaventure

All members of the Franciscan family profess a life of penance. The Rule of the Third Order Regular expressly states that the "brothers and sisters of this fraternity are called the Order of Penance," and that "they should carry the cross of mortification, as becomes true penitents." It is therefore in harmony with the Franciscan spirit that Saint Bonaventure should place penance a special point in his examination of conscience. Every true follower of the Seraphic Francis should frequently ask himself the question:

WAS I NEGLIGENT IN DOING PENANCE?

We know from the words of our Savior that without penance there is no hope of salvation. If penance is demanded of every Christian, still more is it demanded of a religious and above all of a Franciscan. But in order to understand clearly in what particular manner we are obliged to do penance, we must first consider the meaning of the word, which, unfortunately or otherwise, admits of several interpretations. For our present purpose it will suffice to consider but two of these interpretations; penance as conversion, and penance as mortification.

The basic religious meaning of penance is conversion. It is the equivalent of the Greek word of the Gospels, *metanoia*, usually, though somewhat inaccurately, rendered by the word, repentance. In any case, it means a change of mind and heart, a turning of the whole man in a new direction, to God, away from the things of the spirit, away from the former life of sin and worldliness. It means a fundamental revision of the judgments of the old man concerning himself and his deeds, and the outlook of the new man in Christ. It means sincere regret for having offended the paternal heart of God and a firm determination to arise, with the prodigal son, and return to the father's home, saying: *Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee* (Luke 15, 18). It means a complete break with the past and a new start in and with Christ. It means, especially for the children of Saint Francis, a clean break with the worldly life of the past and the beginning of a new life according to the teaching based on the Holy Gospel.

With this in mind, let us ask ourselves the following questions: When I entered the Order, did I really make a clean break with the past and begin a new life in Christ? Did I wholly and radically turn away from the world with all its promises, blandishments, and pleasures, and did I give myself utterly — mind, body, heart, my whole personality — entirely to the Lord?

Must I admit that my so-called religious life is in reality only the continuation of my former life in the world, transparently disguised by the religious garb and by the exterior observance of a few religious forms? This is certainly the case if we are trying to live an easy life in the Order; if we are making no effort to adjust ourselves to the ideals of our community; if we are indifferent toward the perfect fulfillment of the promises of our religious profession; if we are careful to avoid doing any more than is strictly required of us; or, worst of all, if we continue in the religious state for purely selfish reasons, such as security, or prestige, or natural advantages. This lack of penance or conversion, however, may be present in the soul in less easily recognizable forms. The most dangerous and most subtle of these forms is a kind of spiritual slumber in which no appreciable effort is made toward beginning a new life. This, sad to say, is the case with many a religious. They have never made or attempted to make a real break with the past, either during the novitiate or at any time thereafter. If we are victims of this noxious lethargy, let us beg God to send us the means whereby we can be aroused and awakened and converted to Him, that we may really begin to live in Him. Recall the conversion of Saint Francis. He tells us in his Testament: "The Lord granted me to begin my conversion in this wise; that, whilst I was in sin, it was exceedingly bitter to me to see lepers. But the Lord took me among them and I exercised mercy toward them. And that which had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of body and soul." Francis broke with the past when he won the greatest victory a man can win — the victory over himself. Francis encountered Christ when he kissed the leper's hand. Let us ask ourselves if we, too, have not encountered Christ at some time in our life, and how we responded to that encounter. Did He come to us in the silence of the novitiate? during a painful illness? while at prayer, or while making a retreat? through the reading of an inspiring book? If we can truly say that once we met Christ and answered His call to follow Him to a new life, can we also say that we have continued in that life of penance? Or must we confess that we became negligent and fell back into that dangerous somnolence of worldliness and easy living?

Intimately connected with penance in the sense of conversion is penance in the sense of sorrow for sin. We are all obliged to repent of our sins; yet we must also firmly believe in the forgiveness of sins duly submitted to the sacred tribunal. In the life of most religious there are relatively few grave sins — sins of such malice and vileness that contrition must be inevitable. Mediocrity, even in sin, is our common characteristic. Consequently, it is easy for our slumbering soul to forget that we have offended God in the past, to be unaware that

we are still most shamefully abusing His goodness and love. Our Father Francis could never forget his sins. The thought of his past and present failures caused him to weep bitter tears of repentance. We, as religious, as children of our Seraphic Father, should have a deeper and clearer knowledge of the malice of sin, of the terrible injustices we commit against God, our Creator and our loving Father. Let us then ask ourselves: Do I sincerely detest my past sins, and do I at times recall them, not to become frightened by them (scrupulous persons, who are forbidden by their confessor to recall past sins, must strictly obey), but to be humbled by them and moved to do penance? Do I do this for this express purpose — to urge the soul to humble repentance — that Bonaventure formulated his plan for examination of conscience. For how can we begin to comprehend the mercy of God and His infinite love, if we do not realize how much we have offended Him?

And this leads us finally to the Sacrament of Penance. Primarily, it is the Sacrament of the forgiveness of sin, but it is also the sacrament of constantly renewed conversion. Here we may ask: What does confession mean to me? Is each confession a new start, or only a matter of weekly routine? Do I approach the confessional with the deep conviction that I am a poor sinner, that I need the mercy of God, and that I must do my utmost in order to amend my life? Do I make sincere efforts to arouse deep contrition of heart, or at least contrition in mind and will?

The second principal meaning of penance is mortification, which, in spiritual life, is closely related to the idea of conversion. Atonement for sin is a necessary consequence of *metanoia*, of putting off the old man; and, in religious striving for perfection, it is of basic importance. Christian mortification has four primary purposes: to atone for sin; to strengthen the will; to gain self-control by a severe discipline of the passions and inclinations; to make sacrifices for others in order to atone vicariously for their transgressions and obtain for them the grace of God; and, finally and principally, to participate in the Passion of Christ and thus supply in the Mystical Body what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ.

In order to avoid possible confusion, let it be understood that we are now considering extraordinary works of penance. Although a good religious will not consider extraordinary mortifications as totally out of place in his life, he will always submit such practices to the judgment of his superior or confessor. Extraordinary penances performed without the sanction of obedience may prove worthless and even harmful. Here, however, let us consider

those ordinary kinds of mortification, which are so easily overlooked and yet are so salutary because they are so seldom, if ever, vitiated by pride or self-love.

The perfect observance of the vows offers the basic form of mortification for the religious. There is ample scope here for penance in every degree of rigor, and we should never fail to include the penitential aspect of the vows in our examination of conscience. We may ask ourselves such questions as these: Was I negligent in making use of the opportunities of mortification offered by the vow of poverty? Am I always satisfied with whatever is allotted to me, or am I demanding, insistent, querulous, until I get what I want? Do I give way to childish whining or sarcastic murmuring when faced with the hardships and privations of poverty? In the refectory of a certain monastery I once read the beautiful verse: *Si non est satis, memento paupertatis*. (If it is not enough, remember poverty.) Let us ask ourselves: Does the remembrance of my vow make me content with little, even if the little is not quite enough to satisfy the demands of nature? Does the remembrance of poverty urge me to voluntary self-denial? Do I practice the mortification of poverty in regard to my room, my clothing, my food? In regard to using things? to saving things? How many opportunities for self-denial are offered by the vow of obedience. Do I obey promptly, even in slight matters, without criticizing, protesting, rebelling? Do I make of obedience a sacrifice pleasing to God? Concerning the vow of chastity, do I gladly sacrifice the urge for affectionate companionship and natural love without seeking cheap compensations? Do I willingly bear the cross of loneliness consequent upon the life of celibacy?

Acts of self-denial can be grouped in a similar way upon the various aspects of community life. Many saints have confessed that their greatest penance was to live in a community, and few of us would ask why. We do not select our companions in the religious life; we have to bear with all our confreres — persons of different character, different ambitions, afflicted with various faults quite different from our own. Our fellow-religious, even the saintliest, can hurt us and wound us severely, though perhaps unconsciously or unwillingly. To practice patience under the trying circumstances of community life is certainly one of the most meritorious works of penance, better far than any laceration of the body. In fact, to fulfill the law of Christ means just this — to bear with others and to suffer them patiently for love of Him. (Gal. 6, 2) Let us, therefore, ask ourselves if we willingly accept the cross of living with others in charity, or if we are careless about the feelings of others, too sensitive about our own; if we shun those we dislike; if we give way to impatience by words, looks, or actions.

There are certain acts of self-denial, such as those we have mentioned above, that we can never be dispensed from so long as we live the religious life. There are others, however, from which we may be dispensed if there is a valid reason. These are chiefly the physical mortifications commanded by the Church or by our Rule and Constitutions. It is true that in mortifying the body we must also be guided by the Fifth Commandment, and for that reason we may lawfully seek dispensations when there is question of endangering health. But we must always be on guard against the tendency of our nature to seek sensual gratification under the cloak of physical weakness or ill health. We may, therefore, profitably look into the reasons for our dispensations, and ask ourselves: Have I been too lenient with myself in seeking dispensations? If I am not able to perform the prescribed penances, such as fasting, do I zealously mortify my body in other ways? Do I use opportunities to mortify myself in little things at table? Do I keep custody of the eyes? Do I correct my posture? Have I sought dispensations not because I was physically unable to perform the prescribed penances, but simply because I did not like them? In case of doubt regarding the legitimacy of seeking a certain dispensation, we may always abide by the decision of our confessor or superior. Obedience is better than sacrifice.

We should also carefully examine ourselves in regard to the special mortifications imposed or recommended by our Constitutions and Customs. Among these are the little practices, such as asking for penance for minor transgressions; following the daily routine; rising promptly in the morning and retiring in the evening at the appointed time; punctuality; joyful and prompt response to the call of the bell; joining the Community in prayer and singing rather than following private devotions; taking part when the entire Community is asked to share in some common project of work or recreation. All these are little things, to be sure, but, if the true spirit of penance animates us, that spirit flowing from love of God and desire to do something for Christ and to suffer with Him, we will find countless opportunities for meritorious self-denial.

We must keep in mind, however, that it is not the act of penance as such that is of value, but rather the spirit of love that animates us in performing it. To be negligent in the spirit of penance is equivalent to being negligent in the very essence of our religious vocation.