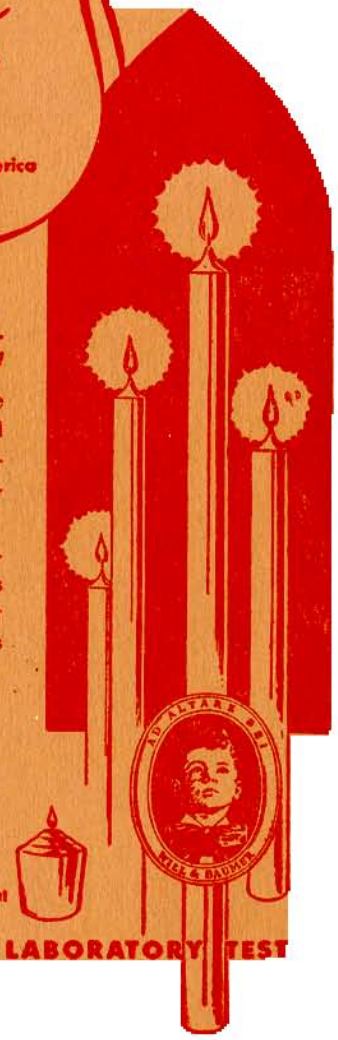

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A Commentary on the Psalms:

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PSALM 121

Anybody who chants the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary is bound to notice that certain Psalms are used twice in the course of the hours. Psalm 121, for instance, which is the third Psalm at Terce, is recited again as the third Psalm at Vespers. Suppose we try to discover what reasons we can for this particular double occurrence.

The reason for the appearance of Psalm 121 at Terce is fairly obvious. It is with this hour that we begin to use the group of Psalms to which has been given the name of "Pilgrim Songs"—Psalms 119 to 130. Quite logically, therefore, Psalm 121 follows Psalms 119 and 120 to round out the number of Psalms used in this hour.

The next question, of course, is why this particular Psalm should be repeated during Vespers. The reason for this repetition clearly has nothing to do with the position of the Psalm in the Psalter because the Psalms at Vespers do not follow any precise numerical order. The choice of Psalm 121 for inclusion among them, therefore, must be dictated by the subject matter of it. You can believe this when you examine a little the nature of Vespers.

Vespers may very well be considered an expression of thanksgiving. We have arrived safely at the end of another day's journey and we are grateful. We are grateful for that and for all the many gifts and graces of the day that have made it possible. This view of Vespers—that it is actually a prayer of thanksgiving—finds support in the fact that the hour comes to a kind of climax in the *Magnificat*, the hymn through which the members of the Mystical Body express their gratitude to God in the very words of the Blessed Mother.

Moreover, that we are singing Vespers together, here and now, at the close of *this* day, after having passed unharmed through all its dangers and trials, is, we like to hope, a forecast of our final arrival, safe and happy, at the end of all our days in "that holy city which is the new Jerusalem" (Apocalypse, 21:2). When you come to think of it, that is actually what we ask for when we pray the words of the Vesper Hymn: "Grant a life all spotless, Guide us in our journey, That on seeing Jesus, We shall joy forever." So you can say with perfect logic

that Vespers is intended to fix our minds, in gratitude and confidence, on the safe completion of this day's journey and on the happy close of life's journey. These are the circumstances that make the hour an ideal one for singing and for meditating upon the words of Psalm 121. A careful reading of the poem will, I think, support that statement.

The Psalm, we discover almost at the very outset, is the ecstatic utterance of a pilgrim whose journey to Jerusalem has at last come to an end. You are listening to him as he stands there just within her gates, completely overwhelmed by holy joy, pouring forth his feelings in a soliloquy that rises finally to the height of prayer. He calls vividly to mind that day on which his friends first began to plan their pilgrimage to this blessed spot and generously invited him to join their company and come along with them. He lives again the thrilling joy of that far-off moment:

I rejoiced because they said to me,
"We will go up to the house of the Lord."

Then came the long night marches in the white moonlight; the impatient pauses forced upon them by the heat of the day; the lack of comfort and of shelters; the fears, anxieties and dangers of the journey,

And now we have set foot,
Within your gates, O Jerusalem.

Journey's end! You can catch in his words the revelation of this pilgrim's awe and reverence as he gazes about on this most sacred of cities. You can sense his deep love for it, so strong and abiding that it forces him to linger on its name as he pronounces it—

O Jerusalem—
Jerusalem, built as a city
with compact unity.

Solid and sturdy the buildings stand, row upon row, all along the slopes that rise within the crown of walls that circles the mountains of Sion and Moriah on which the city rests. His admiration grows as he gazes. What a striking contrast, indeed, to the shabby little villages and humble towns through which he has made his long and tiresome way, this "foundation upon the holy mountains the Lord loves" (Ps. 86:1).

Scholars are not absolutely certain of the date at which Psalm 121 was written. If they could be sure, we should know precisely whether this pilgrim was speaking about Jerusalem as it stood in the triumphantly splendid days of King David or as it existed, hundreds of years later, when its glory was sadly diminished. This city was captured, as you know, by Nabuchodonosor and completely destroyed, Temple and all, in the year 587 B.C.; the inhabitants themselves, those of them who outlived the assault upon the city, were herded off to Babylon as captives. When the Persian King

Cyrus conquered the Assyrians and seized their capital city of Babylon, he permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem in the year 538 B.C. Foundations were immediately laid for a new Temple, and the building itself was finally dedicated in the year 515 B.C. The city itself began slowly to rise from its ruins and to grow again. Under the inspiration and the encouragement of Nehemias the heavy walls and ramparts were reerected around it. And then, at last, Jerusalem began to take on some of the glory it had known in days gone by. And this city, more than likely, is the Jerusalem, the very sight of which filled with the deepest joy the heart of the pilgrim poet who wrote Psalm 121.

You must be careful to recognize, however, that Jerusalem is something more to this man who loves her than a well-built and beautiful city. You discover as much from what he goes on to say in verses 4 and 5, which constitute the second strophe of his poem. Jerusalem is the divinely appointed center of the religious and the national life of God's Chosen People. "Never a city among all the tribes of his name, never a prince had he appointed over his people, till at last he chose Jerusalem, to enshrine his name there and David for his people's ruler" (II Paralipomenon 6:5-6). Thus had Solomon spoken to the people on the occasion of the dedication of the first Temple. And they were words to which this pilgrim would give the fullest assent. For him, too, Jerusalem is the home city of Israel.

To it the tribes go up . . .

those great family groups that glory in their descent from the twelve sons of Jacob whose name they bear. They are, indeed,

The tribes of the Lord,

whose forefathers he had guided into the Promised Land of Canaan, which Josue parcelled out among them, tribe by tribe, so that each one of them had its territory. Even before that victorious entry, God had laid down the conditions for the peaceful possession of the land: "When I have disposed the nations at thy coming, and given thee wide lands to dwell in, none shall invade them by treachery, as long as thou goest up three times a year to present thyself before the Lord thy God. Thrice in the year all thy menfolk shall present themselves before the Lord, the almighty God of Israel" (Exodus 34: 24, 23). For century after century, then, holy and devout men had been making the journey, which set the example for this pilgrim,

According to the decree for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the Lord.

But it was not for worship alone that pious Israelites had gone up to Jerusalem. They had gone there to seek justice as well. There were located the tribunals before which cases could be tried which turned

out to be too complicated or too difficult for judgment by the local courts throughout the land. In the days of the kings, the meting out of such justice was a royal function, and in the fulfillment of it the king would be assisted by members of the royal household. This is the fact that makes it possible to describe Jerusalem as actually the " centre of the nation's civil life as well as of its religious life." And this is the fact that the poet has in mind when he tells us that

In it are set up judgment seats,
seats for the house of David.

There is a special quality about this second strophe that we must take notice of: it is not so concerned as the first one was with the physical appearance of the Holy City. The poet seems now to dwell more on what Jerusalem symbolizes, on what it is and on how much it means to a truly religious man who comes to it with deep faith and real love. Such a man—and I do think surely that this pilgrim was such a man—such a man would perfectly understand and agree with the words of the poet who composed Psalm 136:

If I forget you, Jerusalem,
may my right hand be forgotten!
May my tongue cleave to my palate
if I remember you not,
If I place not Jerusalem
ahead of my joy.
(Psalm 136: 5-6)

There is a strong resemblance, by the way, between the structure of Psalm 136 and that of the Psalm that we are considering. Both open rather abruptly with the depiction of an episode in the life of the poet, move along into a kind of reverie occasioned by this episode, and climax in a prayer that seems to be the very logical outcome of the thought and the feeling that have been at work in the poem. The difference between the two poems, however, is much more marked than the likeness. There is a fierceness, almost, about the prayer that closes Psalm 136, whereas kindliness and love characterize the prayer that closes Psalm 121. We can very easily discover these qualities of the latter Psalm by reading carefully the final strophe of it, which comprises verses 6 to 9.

The strophe is a prayer for peace and prosperity and all good things, very much in the spirit of the words with which Saint Francis of Assisi greeted his fellow men, *Pax et Bonum.* The people for whom the poem was first written would most likely have enjoyed a play on words in the Hebrew that we miss. They would have been struck by the similarity between the words for "peace" and for "prosperity", *shalom* and *shalvah*, and the name of Jerusalem, *Jeru-shalem*, which means "vision of peace" or "foundation of peace." We can at least remark one thing, however, that they would have noticed: this prayer is

threefold. The thoughts of the pilgrim turn first to the Holy City itself:

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!
May those who love you prosper!

It seems almost as if, standing inside the gates, the speaker lets his gate sweep to either side, following the rugged line of the great walls that reach out to embrace the city . . .

May peace be within your walls . . .

noticing the houses that border the streets before him, the buildings standing side by side, gray and silent in the dim morning light . . .

prosperity in your buildings.

Within these walls, sheltered by these buildings, dwell his brethren, relatives, and friends, who are privileged, as he is not, to live their lives within the confines of the Holy City. He thinks of them and prays once more:

Because of my relatives and friends,
I will say, "Peace be within you!"

And finally his thoughts turn to what sets Jerusalem apart from all the cities of the world and gives it a unique preeminence among them. Only of this one city has God said:

Sion is my resting place forever;
in her will I dwell, for I prefer her.
(Psalm 131: 14)

And lifting his eyes to Mount Sion, gazing full upon the Temple, the holiest spot on all the earth and the object of his journey, he whispers his final prayer:

Because of the house of the Lord, our God,
I will pray for your good.

As we listen to this third strophe, to its final words especially in which the pilgrim prays for the *good* of Jerusalem, we sense something about them that distracts our thoughts, makes us wonder what it is that they suggest so subtly. And then it comes clearly to mind: that last journey that Christ made to Jerusalem! Saint Mark in his gospel helps us to picture so vividly the band of pilgrims who made the trip with Christ, the twelve Apostles, some of the disciples, and a few of the holy women. "Jesus was walking on in front of them, and they were in dismay, and those who followed were afraid. And again taking the Twelve, he began to tell them what would happen to him" (Mark 10:32) at the journey's end. His words were ominous. Their impact seems to have been dissipated, however, by the exultant reception given Christ as he approached the gates of Jerusalem. His own thoughts and feelings, nevertheless, were in strong contrast to the excited jubilation which swirled about him. As he drew near and caught sight of the city, "Jesus wept over it and said, 'Ah, if thou too couldst understand, above all in this day that is granted to thee, the ways that can bring thee peace. As it is, they are hidden from thy

sight . . . and all because thou didst not recognize the time of my visiting thee" (Luke 19: 41-44).

As your mind dwells upon the scene, you can find yourself wondering whether, at that very moment, Christ recalled the visit he had made to Jerusalem so many years before when he was a boy of twelve. Whether he remembered the joy that had filled his heart when Mary and Joseph had first said to him, "We will go up to the house of the Lord." The journey nearly done, how thrilled he must have been when at last there broke upon his sight the vision of the Holy City, far off, brown and gray and white and golden in the sunlight, a diadem upon the mountain tops. How like the sentiments of the poet of Psalm 121—though infinitely richer than these could ever be!—were those that flooded his soul, when he finally stood within the gates of Jerusalem. Who could better know the meaning of its history from the ancient moment when David had wrested it from the Jebusites to make it the city of the Living God? Who more worthy than the Prince of Peace to say and to mean, "Peace be within you"? And where, ultimately, in all that populous city was the Son of God more likely to be found than "sitting in the Temple, in the midst of those who taught there, listening to them and asking them questions; so that all those who heard him were in amazement at his quick understanding and at the answers he gave"? Is not this the very point of the reply that he made to Mary and Joseph when they questioned his conduct: "What reason had you to search for me? Could you not tell that I must needs be in the place which belongs to my Father?" (Luke 2: 46-49).

We may say with certainty that Psalm 121 recreates for us the thrilling experience of an unknown pilgrim to Jerusalem. But it is surely something more than a mere flight of fancy to claim that this experience is one which Jesus shared and, in a certain sense, lifted to the divine level. So that the Psalm, without ceasing to be the expression of the mind of an unknown poet, becomes at the same time an expression of the mind of Christ. Both of these, Christ and the poet, we must try to remember when chanting this Psalm, are to be our models, therefore, on our journey to each day's close. Thus inspired we shall joyfully and gratefully mean the words we say:

I rejoiced because they said to me

"We will go up to the house of the Lord."

And meaning these words every time we utter them will insure our safe arrival finally at "the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God," journey's end for those "who are written in the book of life of the Lamb" (Apocalypse 21: 10-11, 27).

II

OUR LADY POVERTY

For you know the graciousness of our Lord Jesus Christ—how, being rich, he became poor for your sakes, that by his poverty you might become rich. (2 Cor. 8,9)

We have seen that for our Father Francis poverty is a universal, basic, fundamental virtue, or better still a fountain virtue whence, as from a spring all spiritual activity flows. Or if we prefer, it is the centralizing viewpoint whence he considers the work of God. That was the conclusion of the first meditation. To that was added the point that St. Francis adopted poverty as a means of acquiring all the riches of time and eternity. He did this not for any motive, however valid and compatible with his personality, but to *imitate Jesus Christ.*

1. He did not do this because he theoretically understood that poverty enjoyed an essential priority over all other virtues; nor was it because he submissively accepted a human tradition concerning poverty based on philosophers or on the Fathers of the Church. Neither did he ingeniously see in poverty the reforming for the evils of his time. His embrace of poverty was solely a matter of love.

Rich though he was, Christ made himself poor for us. Francis vowed to live a life of indigence because he desired to do so, because of the need he felt to conform himself to the object of his love. He wanted to follow Christ in all his ways, and to the extent in which he could. Looking beyond the indigence of the things to which Jesus reduced himself during his mortal life, Francis saw the more profound and radical renunciation of which indigence is but the sign: "Christ Jesus, who though he was by nature God, did not consider being equal to God a thing to be clung to, but emptied himself, taking the nature of a slave and being made like unto men. And appearing in the form of man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even to death on a cross" (Phil. 2, 6-9).

That is to say, in so far as the poverty of the human mind allows us to conceive it and human words to express it, Christ, stripped of self, of his human person in favor of the Person of the Word, renounced his condition as God which he could lay claim to and his condition as a free man which he could accept in order to make himself like unto

the most miserable of us, like unto a slave without civil rights, like unto a convicted and executed criminal. Francis pierced this mystery.

Naked, he followed the naked Christ.

I

2. This mind of Francis appears expressly in his personification of poverty as a lady of chivalry. One could be mistaken and see in this but an asthetic game, the fantastic inspiration of a troubador. But the exact opposite is the truth. Poverty for Francis is a *Person*, a concrete living person; the very opposite to an abstraction, to a theoretical yet sublime but cold virtue. This Lady Poverty is a poor man: it is the Poor Man, Jesus Christ, just as later on it is the Son of God whom Blessed Henry Suso loved under his biblical name of Wisdom. And even if Francis saw in Lady Sister Clare the most expressive incarnation of his ideal, Francis yet loved and served poverty as a living person.

Posterity has left us an undeniable proof of the realistic, concrete nature of Francis' love for poverty. This document is dated "the month of July, after the death of the Father" (1227). Its title is: *Sacrum Commercium. B. Francisci cum Domina Paupertate.* Its author is a "Brother John," very likely John of Parma, who was Minister General of the Order from 1247 to 1257.

The work is considered to be an exquisite allegory. The banquet at the close of the feast is comparable to the historical meal offered in the Portiuncula to St. Clare by St. Francis, and which ended, as we know, in ecstasy.

There is a total and deliberate lack of poetry in the arrangement of this marriage festival. The demanding Lady whose espousals are being celebrated amidst nothing which does not bear her stamp, namely, indigence and penury. She is presented with a broken fragment of a vase in which to wash her hands, there being no whole one. For a towel, a Brother offers her the end of his tunic. The only thing to eat is a little mouldy bread laid out on the grass and a few rustic herbs, no tablecloth, no knife, salt or wine, or cooked foods. She is extremely happy with this, congratulates her hosts, and begs them to continue in this wise to be strictly faithful to her.

It is clear that this distinguished Lady, whose nobility and dignity the first cantos of the poem solidly establish, does not have the pliability of a theory which can be bent to every whim. She lays down a way of life in which everything is prescribed according to the law of chivalrous love. To plight one's troth to her, means to renounce one's own projects, one's own plans, to enter into hers, and from this there results a renunciation of one's own mind.

To hope for favors from her one must refuse to weigh oneself

down with visible goods so as to be able to go in all alertness in quest of invisible goods. It is to subordinate the possession and use of material things to the acquiring of invisible goods. And this is can only mean a renunciation of one's heart.

To wear her colors of humility and patience is to to renounce one's self-esteem, the fear of suffering, and the desire for enjoyment.

* * * *

3. Each school of spirituality, that is, the concept which each religious family forms of its worship of God, accentuates one aspect of the inimitable fullness of Christ, one trait of His ideal physiognomy, one virtue of His inexhaustible holiness, and this becomes its own distinguishing mark, its center of spiritual unification. the theme of its meditations, the method of its action.

St. Augustine recommends charity as the road to the interior life. He traced four stages of this virtue which are the four ages of the soul: birth, adolescence, maturity, perfection. But he gives to the soul, as its manner of growth, humility.

St. Benedict counted twelve degrees through which humility leads the soul to *peace*, which is union with Christ in charity. But all the virtues accompany it, as the following enumeration shows. 1) fear of God, 2) abnegation, 3) obedience, 4) silent patience, 5) frankness, with one's superior, 6) contentment, 7) humility, 8) faithful participation in the common life, 9) silence, 10) moderation of laughter, 11) reserve in speech, and 12) modesty of behavior. If we were to study the texts of this Saint, which we have tried to summarize in one word, we would find that these degrees are neither independent nor opposites. We would find them interrelated, as the sign of the thing signified.

St. Bernard had begun by adopting and commenting on the twelve degrees of Benedictine asceticism. Then, he summarized it all in humility, and set against it the twelve degrees of pride. Finally, he outlined the means of perfection: prayer, meditation, examination of conscience, sound judgment, spiritual direction (St. Benedict's frankness with one's Superior) and all this as a means of attaining charity.

Later, St. Ignatius fixed three degrees of humility which amount either to conformity to the will of God or abnegation of our own will as the foundation of all perfection.

In short, all of them end with charity obtained through humility. The theological virtue of Charity, a gratuitous gift, is not acquired. God pours it forth into the soul because of the immense love with which he loves us. But he does this in the renounced soul, stripped of self, emptied of self, in the humble soul, that is to say, the soul that lives in the spirit of poverty. Humility grooves the bed of charity. The

degree of charity in the soul is proportionate to its humility. Now in humility, the emptying of the old man, St. Francis saw an aspect, but only an aspect, of poverty. Indeed he was greatly inspired.

Poverty is more comprehensive than humility, St. Ambrose tells us. It is likewise more loving. For if it rids one of self, it is in view of a greater fullness, according to the text of this meditation: "Being rich, he became poor for your sakes, that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8, 9).

II

What, then, is poverty?

4. It is a state relative to the necessities of earthly life in which one is incapable of providing for oneself. It is the situation of a person who lacks the things he needs and who cannot procure them for himself.

The need may be more or less felt, the need more or less urgent, the difficulty of providing for oneself more or less insurmountable. Consequently, there are various degrees of poverty.

Let us state, to begin with, that the average man is sure of his daily subsistence and that he is capable of setting aside some modest provision for the near future. The economy of divine providence presupposes the daily request for the bread of each day. "Therefore do not be anxious, saying 'What shall we eat?' or 'What are we to put on?' . . . for your Father knows that you need all these things . . . Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow; for tomorrow will have anxieties of its own. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matt. 6, 31-34).

Our Lord certainly does not lay a snare for those who lack the necessities of life, nor does he intend to recommend laziness, nor canonize want of foresight. For nothing is more instructive than the ingenious activity of the sparrow procuring its food. Nothing is more moving than the tenacity of a blade of grass reaching for the light and for those people who are starving, it suffices that he substitute himself for them by condemning the hardness of heart of those who starve them: "I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat" (Matt. 25, 42) . . . As regards the lazy, the Apostle Paul, faithful interpreter of the teaching of the Master, says without equivocation: "We have heard that some among you are living irregularly, doing no work but busy at meddling. Now such persons we charge and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ that they work quietly and eat their own bread" (2 Thess. 3, 11-12).

Consequently, the counsels of our Lord must be understood and can be observed only when there is question of a normal situation, of an average state of affairs.

5. This average state of affairs, called mediocrity—the *honestas* of the Latin—could be described as the decency which befits the living conditions of every human being, living conditions which St. Thomas describes as practically necessary for piety and salvation. With more than this, a person is tempted to do without God, and with less there arise many preoccupations which might induce man to turn away from God.

This mean which takes moderate joy in the current day, and at the same time provides for the foreseen needs of the near future is, we might say the dividing line below or above which all conditions of human life can be grouped: below, poverty, indigence, destitution; above, ease, abundance, superfluity.

We shall briefly define these.

Poverty presupposes the absence of ordinary comforts, discomfort sometimes, and insecurity for tomorrow..

Indigence (*indu* in, within *egere* to need) suffers from privation, often lacks what is even necessary.

Destitution lacks everything.

Now, for the other side of this imaginary line.

Ease lacks nothing; it is sure of tomorrow.

Abundance, riches, is unconcerned about even the distant future.

Superfluity could, without any inconvenience, suffice for several.

6. According to our text: "He became poor for your sakes, that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8, 9), Christ chose indigence. The Vulgate text reads: "propter vos egenus factus est, ut illius inopia vos divites essetis," which could be translated "for you he became indigent, although rich, so that he might make you rich through his poverty."

During his hidden life, if he was poor, Christ nevertheless kept what might be called a social standing. He had a city, a home, a trade. He belonged to the tribe of Juda, of the family of David. He led a regular day of work, rest, and prayer, just as his parents and fellow-Jews did. In fact, he, together with Mary and Joseph, serve as a model to men who belong to the working-class and who have no special vocation, that is, those who make up the majority of human society.

When he entered upon his mission of salvation, he rejected all the humble security of his former way of life. He agreed to lack the necessary things. He made himself *indigent*. Without the charity of the women who followed him, he would have become destitute. He avoided privation only by accepting dependence.

We can and ought to imitate our Lord in his hidden and normal life. However, without a special calling from the Holy Spirit, we are neither permitted nor would it be possible to attempt to follow him

in his apostolate and his Passion. Now, such was the case with Francis.

Our holy Father St. Francis chose extreme indigence, but in so doing he obeyed his personal vocation as the imitator of Christ, a literal imitator. And to Francis was reserved, if not explicitly promised, the stigmata, a divine seal, as it were, authenticating and crowning his efforts.

Like unto his Master, vowing himself to want, he likewise vowed himself to depend on his neighbor.

7. Privation and Dependence: The common characteristic of these three stages of poverty is *privation*, that is, a need felt for things which are considered to be more and more necessary and numerous. But since a poor man cannot provide himself with these things, he is forced to fall back on the aid of someone else in order not to suffer excessively or to die. Thus he becomes dependent on the charity of others.

Just as privation calls for patience and endurance, that is, steadfastness in sorrow, so dependence preaches humility, subjection, and obedience. Now, it is by this "generation of virtues" that poverty can acquire a sanctifying value. By themselves, privation, even to the point of destitution, and dependence to the point short of slavery, do not make a man pleasing in the sight of God. They could make him a sinner if they breed vices instead of begetting virtues, such as envy, hatred, and wrath. Christ did not bless material poverty, but poverty of spirit or freely desired poverty.

This is what the Wise Man prayed for:

> Two things I ask of you,
> deny them not to me before I die:
> Put falsehood and lying far from me,
> give me neither poverty nor riches;
> provide me only with the food I need;
> Lest, being full, I deny you,
> saying, "Who is the Lord?"
> Or, being in want, I steal,
> and profane the name of my God. ((Prov. 30, 7-9)

8. Just as we distinguished, from the economic and human point of view, three degrees of need, so we distinguish, from the asectical and divine point of view, three kinds of poverty according to desire and spirit: material poverty, literal poverty, and spiritual poverty.

Material poverty is that practiced by beggars. In itself, it has no moral value. From the viewpoint of salvation and perfection it may be a voluntary obstacle if the poor person deliberately sins through envy or blasphemy, or it may be involuntary if the person lacks sufficient time to pray, to be instructed, to acquire and practice virtue.

And it was with this meaning in mind that we spoke of a normal estate of affairs, as being necessary for the spiritual life. Material poverty becomes meritorious when sanctified by poverty of spirit.

Literal poverty, also called evangelical poverty, is that poverty which religious persons vow to live. It consists in the voluntary abdication of the goods of this world. It is good and meritorious in that it facilitates poverty of spirit. Literal poverty is to the poverty of spirit what the sign is to the thing signified, what sacramental matter is to its grace. The value of literal poverty lies only in the spirit of poverty which it fosters.

This is only right, for the voluntary abdication of useful things is *impractical* outside an organization which sustains the individuals vowed to observe it. The history of the first Christians shows that the general handing over of their possession in favor of the poor reduced these people to a state of indigence bordering on destitution, and that they lived only by the alms collected by the Apostles from other Christian communities.

In like manner, religious live on the goods of the religious community to which they belong, if it has any. If not, then they live on the alms given to the community. It is therefore necessary that the rich make the practice of poverty possible.

Now are those rich people who support indigent religious, that is, who make it possible for them to pursue perfection, excluded from the beatitude? No, because it is their spirit of poverty which gives all its value to the indigence of the religious and to their vow of poverty.

III

9. Poverty of spirit or of desire, the poverty of love which Christ blessed is poverty of affection (poverty of the heart, of the will), which gives value to the "effective" poverty (poverty of things) of indigents and of religious. It, too, has the twofold stamp of the privation and dependence of actual poverty.

It bears the stamp of privation because by giving alms a rich man deprives himself. An alms taken from one's superfluity, an alms which does not cause privation nor inconvenience to the giver, does not deserve to be called a spiritual work (Mk. 12, 43).

It bears the stamp of dependence because by detaching his heart, the rich man recognizes his dependence on God both as regards the possession and the use of his fortune. He is God's steward and deputy. He is likewise dependent on his neighbor whose interests he administers and whose necessities he serves.

Spiritual poverty also must give value and enliven the literal poverty of a religious as prescribed by his Rule. The latter must feel deprived,

he must voluntarily seek privation. He must use the things placed at his disposition only with submission and dependence.

Now this dependent use—coming under the virtue of obedience—is very penitential, and likewise causes privation. Those who criticize the poverty of religious have no idea of the perpetual restriction which it imposes on them. "Religious lack nothing," so they say. By "nothing" is understood anything of a rather strict necessity which they themselves undoubtedly would not be content with. Even in the midst of a "collective luxury" and of "riches" which communities are reproached with (if these censures are well-founded in some cases), not to dispose of anything, not to use anything without permission and without control, is a mortification whose acuteness is known only from experience, more especially since this dependence is concerned with small objects, all others being excluded from the use of religious.

10. Spiritual poverty is almost impossible, impractical for a person living in destitution. At least, it calls for a heroism which the Church has canonized in its poor saints. And God is not obliged to grant this heroic grace in a general way in order to make up for the egotistic hardness of the rich. On the other hand, this same poverty is likewise almost impossible and paradoxical for the rich; for money grips its owners, stifles the affections, blinds the soul, and hardens the heart.

Woe to you rich!

Twice Sacred Scripture proclaims that a rich man who has compassion on the poor deserves the blessing of God.

Happy is he who has regard for the lowly and the poor;
In the day of misfortune the Lord will deliver him.
The Lord will keep and preserve him;
He will make him happy on the earth,
and not give him over to the will of his enemies.
The Lord will help him on his sickbed,
he will take away all his ailment when he is ill.
(Ps. 40, 1-4)

And we read in the book of Sirach:

Happy the rich man found without fault,
who turns not aside after gain!
Who is he, that we may praise him?
he, of all his kindred, has done wonders,
For he has been tested by gold and come off safe,
and this remains his glory;
He could have sinned but did not,
could have done evil but would not,
So that his possessions are secure,
and the assembly recounts his praises. (Sirach 31, 8-11)

* * * *

11. Poverty exacts a continual effort of renunciation from everyone—the beggar, the religious, and the rich.

Renunciation of what one has, of what one is, even of his reason for living, of his goods of wealth, his goods of body, of his senses, of his soul, of his own value, and even of his life in order to let Christ, Christ's thoughts, desires, and motives, live and reign in him, to seek nothing but the glory of God, the salvation of souls, the fulfillment of all divine work.

It exacts privation and dependence. Before God, such a soul will be humble, confident, attentive, and abandoned; before one's neighbor, it will be kind, docile, and obliging; before creatures, it will be detached, discreet, in the use of creatures, grateful to and praising God; with one's self, it will be free and joyful . . .

Such was our Father St. Francis in his imitation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. His ecstasy over poverty took this direction; he considered himself dependent on God and in God for all and everything; but he also knew that he could expect everything from God and in God.

Poor in spirit, he possessed the kingdom of heaven; even while on this earth he shared in God's mastery over things and men. And this mastery is still his.

O Patriarch of the poor, pray for us, your children, at least because of the indigence of our spiritual life! Obtain that we may bear the stamp of the Poor One in spirit, which is to possess without attachment and to suffer privation without regret, the one proving the other.

* * * *

12. This is the poverty which our holy Father took as the Lady of his chivalry, namely, the exacting ideal of an unsatiated love.

Just as to please his lady, the knight went from exploit to exploit, so does Francis want us to progress from virtue to virtue, from victory to victory. The height to be attained is *charity*, that is, concretely, conformity with Christ to the point of identification. It can be accomplished by a continuous effort or renunciation of ourselves in favor of him who must ever be *All in All*. Amen.

In Christ Jesus Our Lord

Valentine M. Breton, O.F.M.

(*Translated from the French by Michael D. Meilach, O.F.M.*)

III. BODY AND SOUL

(*Continued*)

In the preceding meditation, we considered the *supernatural* and *ascetical* principles of our Franciscan spirituality. Here we are going to discuss its *psychological* principle, which is no less imbued than the others with the realism so characteristic of Francis. Basically, it can be stated this way: Since the body and the soul of man form a complete unit and are intimately joined into one substance, actions of the spirit have their effect upon the body and those of the body also effect the spirit.

This principle explains why the spirit of prayer moves a person to kneel and why kneeling moves him to pray. In fact, kneeling not only helps *him* to pray, but it even constitutes a silent sermon on prayer—it arouses devotion in those who watch him.

The efficacy of the liturgy is certainly due at least in part to this principle, for the various ceremonies are intended precisely to dispose the soul for inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Thus light or darkness, silence or chanting, solitude or the pomp of assembled multitudes all provoke appropriate responses in man's sense faculties, and through these faculties they affect his heart. Thus too the formula or "letter" of prayer arouses the spirit of prayer and the prayer of the spirit.

That the Apostles knew this law of human activity is evident from the rules St. Paul gave for the prayer meetings of the Corinthians, the Ephesians, and the Colossians (I Cor. 12 and 14; Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16). And St. James wrote in the same vein: "Is one of you unhappy? Let him fall to prayer. Is one of you cheerful. For him, a psalm" (James 5:13).

Pascal also had this principle in mind when he exhorted his contemporaries to undertake an interior conversion because their conduct showed their need for it. Those scholars of our own day who lack Pascal's insight are offended at such an approach, but why? Certainly this is the way children are trained; they have to be formed from without because they have as yet no "within" which can be reached by reasoning. We force upon them habits of civility, good

manners, and obedience to prepare their souls for the convictions which will come later. In this way we communicate to them our own life-experience; only later will they be able to use that experience in working out their own solution to the riddle of life. If we have taken care to inculcate the proper external habits, it will be easier for them to form the corresponding inner convictions when the time comes.

With the aid of this psychological principle, we can learn an important lesson from the life of our Holy Father. Let us consider one incident in particular which is related by Celano and has to do with one Brother John, who was among the first to follow Francis (*Vita Secunda*, 299).

Francis, according to his biographer, was very fond of John and wanted to have him with him all the time—an arrangement which pleased John no end, for his one desire, his one aim in life, was to be like Francis in everything.

In fact, to achieve that goal John would imitate his master's every attitude and action. When Francis walked, John would use the same gait; when Francis stopped, John stopped. When Francis coughed, John coughed. When Francis raised his eyes to heaven, John did too. He united his own sighs to those of Francis, and when he could, his tears also.

In short, John copied Francis exactly in everything he did. Francis could not help noticing this, of course; so one day he asked his enthusiastic young disciple why he acted that way.

"I promised to do whatever you did," answered John, "and it would be dangerous for me to leave out anything."

Delighted with his friend's simplicity, Francis nevertheless pointed out to him that so literal an interpretation was unnecessary, that it would be enough to observe the Gospel with a righteous heart and sincere good will.

John must have heeded this advice, for it was not long before God took him to Himself; with him, as with the Wise Man, "early achievement counted for long apprenticeship" (Wisdom 4:13). Francis evidently had no doubt that he went straight to heaven, for he would often refer to him as "Brother Saint John."

Much has been said about John's kind of childlikeness. In our own day the Little Flower's example has given it a greater importance than it had ever before enjoyed—you might even say she has made it the "fashion" in spirituality.

But it was our Lord Himself who said: "Unless you become like little children again, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). And it was this crowning perfection, this candid simplicity

in faith and in works, that He had in mind when, "filled with gladness by the Holy Spirit," He prayed: "Father, Who art Lord of heaven and earth, I give Thee praise that Thou has hidden all this from the wise and the prudent, and revealed it to little children" (Luke 10:21; Matt. 11:25).

Brother John, then, was not altogether wrong in his manner of imitating Francis, for his literal interpretation was based upon the psychological principle of psychosomatic interaction. When he imitated Francis' life in every minute detail, he really meant to attain the *inner holiness* he so admired in Francis; when he copied Francis' attitudes and actions, he really sought to confirm his very *soul* to that of Francis.

Francis himself, moreover, had followed the same course of action in imitating his own Master, Christ. When he reproduced Christ's every action and attitude, he really sought to share in Christ's inner dispositions—*to partake of His very life*! Francis imitated Jesus to identify himself with Him; and he identified himself with Him by docility and self-abandonment in order to imitate Him more perfectly.

In the Gospel, on the Cross, in the Host—everywhere Francis saw Christ humble, meek, suffering, doing good, and rejected. Then, with the spontaneity of true love, he copied Christ's poverty even to destitution; he shared Christ's sufferings by a voluntary crucifixion, and he made Christ's humility his own by an unparalleled self-abnegation.

But let us not look upon Francis as already haloed with the glory of his success. Let us go back to the very beginning of his conversion; let us see him scoffed at, taken for a madman, made a target for the jeers and the stones of his countrymen.

For Francis took the Gospel literally. At the Portiuncula, on the Feast of St. Mathias, he listened as the priest read it to him: "Do not provide gold or silver or copper to fill your purses, nor a wallet for the journey, no second coat, no spare shoes or staff; the labourer has a right to his maintenance" (Matt. 10:9-10).

"Have I understood you right?" he asked the priest. "That is exactly what I want to do."

And he went about it without delay; he threw away his staff, his purse, his shoes, and his money. Then, when his first companions joined him shortly afterwards, he bade them do the same; truly, it can be said that he built his Order upon an "apostolic" foundation.

From the outset, of course, the worldly-wise, who knew how to interpret Scripture so as to empty it of everything jarring to nature, took it upon themselves to criticize Francis for his "overly-literal"

imitation of Christ.

Now, we do not begrudge the worldly-wise their own interpretation of Scripture, but after all, we love our Founder; we have confidence in his holiness as well as in his common sense; we know that Jesus has ratified his spirituality with the stigmata. How can we possibly regard Francis' imitation as any kind of "externalism"?

Let us take a closer look at this accusation of "literalism," and in doing so let us take care to distinguish a *literal* imitation from a *literalist* one.

The person who imitates Christ in a literalist way thinks that the letter of the law is all-important; what counts as far as he is concerned is the gesture, the posture, the formula—never the meaning, the intention, or purpose of the law.

The Pharisees were literalists; they thought they were pure when they had washed their hands, even though their hearts remained full of avarice and lust. The members of the Sanhedrin were literalists; they took great precautions not to enter the profane dwelling of Pilate lest they be defiled on the Pasch, but they had no qualm about their hatred of Jesus. Our Lord patiently and gently warned his hearers against this narrow and false interpretation of the Law (Matt. 6:16ff; Is. 58:1-9).

But this was not Francis' spirit; Francis knew as well as his critics did that the letter kills and the spirit gives life; that it is not the action, but the intention which pleases God. But he also knew that grace is never refused to men of good will, even though they have no clear idea of their own capabilities; and he knew too that body and soul form one unit and cooperate in the service of God.

In no way can his literal imitation of Christ be called valueless, then, for it was practiced *according to the spirit:* it had nothing in common with any kind of dead formalism or literalism. This is further confirmed by the question he asked the priest at the Portiuncula. When the latter had finished reading the Gospel, Francis immediately made sure he had understood correctly; he immediately asked the priest how our Lord's words were to be interpreted. As far as Francis was concerned that poor priest at the Portiuncula was the Teaching Church, and Francis simply would not act without submitting his interpretation to the control of the Church; his way of life must be not only generous, but genuine as well. And that is what saved him from literalism—he sought the Spirit.

Other examples are easy to find in the course of his life; he renounced his patrimony under the aegis of Bishop Guido; he took up his apostolic vocation and form of life under that of Innocent III; he set up

his Order under that of Cardinal Hugolino; and he promulgated the divinely revealed Portiuncula Indulgence under that of Honorius III.

Hence his imitation of Christ could afford to be literal. He could afford to set up a counterpart to each of Christ's characteristics and to implement each lesson Christ taught. For he always did so *according to the Spirit*; his imitation was guided at all times by the spirit, and he always took care to find out the traditional interpretation of the Gospel events as given by the Fathers, Doctors, and theologians of the Church.

* * * *

The concept of a spirituality based completely upon the imitation of Christ did not originate with Francis, of course; the Apostles and the Fathers had always seen in the imitation of our Lord the very essence of Christian life. But it is no less true that a new application of this truth had to be made in the time of Francis, because the divine Model was no longer a living and vital force in the faith and devotion of the people as He had been in former times. No longer was it sufficient to tell the faithful that Jesus had left them His own example that they might follow in His footsteps, in order that His image might appear to them, luminous and captivating. For with the passage of centuries the spirit of the world had begun to make inroads upon Christian souls; it had succeeded in blurring the image of the divine Model and in vitiating its efficacy. Christian people had to be taught all over again to know, understand, and meditate on each word and action of our Lord—to see in each instance an example and a grace for themselves.

St. Bernard had set about this task of re-education with his monks; now Francis and his followers were to spread the same message among the faithful. The *Meditations on the Life of Christ* by Brother John of Calvoli are a good example of their style of preaching, for these meditations are far more characteristic of popular piety than are the tracts of St. Bonaventure with which they had long been joined. Each event, each seemingly insignificant detail of our Lord's life is related there and its meaning and lesson are explained—no longer only for the sake of dogmatic clarification as in the case of the Fathers, but for the sake of practical application in the lives of the people.

Thus the traditional imitation of our Lord became literal and explicit in St. Francis. And yet this literal application of the Gospel has always looked to the Spirit. Literal, but not literalist—indeed, spiritual throughout—it is the Franciscan method of imitating Christ. We have yet to see its sources and its fruits.

(To be continued)

St. Francis of Assisi's Attitude Toward Money*

***Father Bruce Malina**, O.F.M.*

The obvious and primary source from which to draw any and all attitudes of St. Francis of Assisi is his writings. Hence in this paper, we shall endeavor to set forth what the writings of Francis tell us about his feeling toward money, then what his writings do not tell us, and finally why he says what he does say. Our conclusion will be: Francis was not very much interested in any sort of money problem; yet he was very interested in the problem of money.

A. What St. Francis tells us about money in his writings.

If we consider the number of St. Francis' writings in proportion to the number of times he speaks about money, our obvious conclusion will be that he speaks about money rather infrequently. The only documents specifically treating of money are the saint's two Rules. If we consider them in their historic sequence, we find a certain evolution of thought with regard to money as well.

The first mention of money is to be found in the Rule of 1221 (*Regula non bullata*), and this in the 2nd chapter where Francis directs those wishing to live the life of the Friars Minor to sell what they have and then give the proceeds to the poor, if they can. This directive clearly indicates that the Poverello did not consider money as something evil in itself, sinful in itself, as though any contact with it would render a person magically and automatically unclean. The context of this directive indicates that money alms to the poor were a common practice in Francis' day since money is more easily divisible and less perishable than donation in kind. This directive is repeated in the Rule of 1223, chapter 2.

Further on in the same chapter of the Rule of 1221, Francis insists that his Friars receive no money at all, either themselves or through anybody else. Then in chapter 8 of this same Rule, the Saint sets down the great prohibition of money binding on his Friars. The basis for this prohibition here is the Gospel prohibition to beware of all attitudes of wickedness and avarice and to refrain from the worries of this world and the cares of this life. Yet in one instance Francis does allow the receiving of money—specifically in the instance of the manifest need of sick Friars. This exception deals with particular

situations in which only the use of money can offer aid or relieve the problem. Aside from this exception, the context of this chapter indicates that poverty, as Francis understood it, rejects money as a sign of a person's drive to possess things, the drive to security through avarice. Hence rejection of money is part and parcel of poverty; Francis compares it to stones and dust, obviously evaluating money in relationship to God and not in relationship to economics.

Chapter 9 of this Rule leaves judgment of manifest necessity open to individual Friars, not to superiors alone. Further, chapter 14 states the Gospel text so important to Francis at the outset of his living in penance: "Take nothing for your journey, neither bag, nor purse, nor bread, nor money, nor staff . . ." Yet in this chapter, which authors consider a basic part of the primitive Franciscan Rule in its survey of the Gospel life, there is no furher development of the theme of money. Hence the absolute prohibition of chapter 8 indicates a certain development of thought concerning money. If this is so, then at the very outset of his brotherhood, Francis placed no particular emphasis on the prohibition of money.

With the new Rule of 1223, the one which now binds the Friars Minor, there is apparently a greater severity with regard to money. Chapter 4 of this Rule expressly states the prohibition of money absolutely and thoroughly. It offers two new items, however: firstly, in no case (not even for the sick) are the Friars to take money; rather they are to take recourse to people outside the Order and ask them to furnish the needed items. Secondly, only superiors have the right and duty to judge a given necessity and subsequently ask for required items solely for the Friars' needs.

In this change of perspective, Francis obviously is moving to curtail abuses as he saw them. To help his Friars live the Gospel, live without the dangers of money, Francis shifts the responsibility by taking money worries out the hands of his Friars and putting them into the hands of seculars or spiritual friends. But the problem arises—will the Friars always find a sufficient number of people willing to give them what they need when they need it? Francis does not seem to have foreseen this problem.

In chapter 5 of this definitive Rule, finally, Francis sets down the prohibition of receiving money once again, with no particular emphasis. And with these few texts, we exhaust the number of times Francis refers to money in his writings.

Obviously, it is extremely noteworthy that there is no further mention of money either in Francis' Testament or in the remainder of his writings. Considering the urgency with which the Rules treat this point, the silence of the Poverello is more than surprising. Should we not expect a matter so close to the heart of Francis to be at least hinted at in various ways in the saint's letters and written admonitions? But such is not the case with the prohibition of money.

B. What St. Francis does not tell us about money in his writings.

First of all, Francis does not tell us that money is evil, or the root of evil; that money should never be touched because otherwise it might turn into a snake, or any such magical idea involved in touching money. The idea of money as evil in itself is the work of later biographers of St. Francis. To take one example, we might note how Thomas of Celano treats this "problem." When he describes Francis' early days with his first friars, Celano shows us Francis giving out money with Friar Bernard of Quintavalle upon his conversion. Then, when the future Friar Sylvester insists on being paid for the stones Francis used in repairing his churches, the Poverello personally paid him a great amount of money. But when we read Celano's second biography under the title "Examples against money," the biographer lists four unconnected incidents in which money becomes tantamount to dung, an evil charm, and finally the devil himself. This attitude is that of Celano, not that of Francis.

Secondly, Francis did not seem concerned about disobeying his new Rule of 1223 when dealing with "spiritual" friends. Though he renounced his superiorship, the Saint would have recourse to people to buy things not only for the needs of the Friars (as the Rule allows superiors alone), but also for the needs of other people. And, since they remind him of Christ, the Saint would often have people buy lambs for him, and then the Saint would set the creatures free. Obviously this is not a case of manifest necessity as outlined in the Rule.

C. Why does Francis speak of money as he does.

To begin with, Francis stumbled upon the idea of rejecting money under God's inspiration. The random opening of the Gospel text taken out of context offered him basis for his new way of medieval Gospel life. To understand what Francis was rejecting when he rejected money, we should look into what money meant to the person living in the Middle Ages.

In the 9th to the 12th centuries, things were evaluated in terms of money, it is true, but money itself played a lesser role because the economy of the times was agrarian. Each kingdom or state had its own money minted, and the value of money fluctuated greatly. Barter was the more common mode of economic life, since trading did not involve most of the population. However, about 1200 A.D. money

became the means of indirect exchange, hence of purchase, even as it is today. It likewise became the measure of value of all things. That is why people sought it—it was of stable value (*denarius grossus* of Venice), it gave impetus to the rise of trade and it acquired a stable means of exchange. It was during Francis' lifetime that this change took place gradually in Italy. The shift moved from an agrarian economy to a money economy.

The result was that money now was used as a universal norm for value. The superficial Christianity of the Middle Ages found it rather easy to treat money as though it were a person, and to treat persons as though they were things of economic value alone—much as we do in our own secularistic age. Everything has money value, including people. We speak of people being worth so much money, their productive value, etc.

A further result of this way of thinking and acting is that all ownership is judged in terms of money value; and stable money value is viewed as the basis for power and security—the more value a person has in terms of money, the more he has to say in enacting laws, in judging others, in ruling a country or city, in deciding the better interest of people. By the sixteenth century this idea of judging all things in terms of money was even applied to religious poverty—money or lack of it became the standard of whether a person follows Christ's poverty or not. In my estimation, such a procedure is rather ridiculous. Why?

Poverty as Francis understood it, has nothing to do with dollars and cents. Poverty means recognizing that God is the Lord of history and living one's life in total recognition of this fact, following Christ's footsteps. Stable money value coupled with human egoism would have us believe that the rich, the "haves," are the lords of history, and that we, in turn, should live in accordance with the money we have or do not have. Instead of taking our directives from the living Lord of history, God, we take our cue from the rich and measure our successes in terms dictated by the rich. If we but realize that only God is the Lord of human history, then money becomes tantamount to dust and stones—it is a good, convenient means of exchange, but not a measure of ultimate and universal values. With his rejection of money, especially toward the end of his life (as mirrored in the Rule of 1223), Francis wants to reject the security and the delirious feeling of power that comes with having and owning money. Money opposes poverty only because money would have us walk the way of the great of this world and not the way of God who alone is the Lord of men.

That our observations are correct can be borne out on three accounts.

First of all, on March 17, 1226, the Holy See granted a dispensation to the Franciscan missionaries in Morocco to use money because, as the document specifically states, the economy of Morocco was then a money economy, not an agrarian one. Francis was alive and head of the Order when his document was published. Yet he did not raise a voice of protest against it in his Testament, written after this said dispensation. It seems that money was the only way of solving the problem in this instance. The Friars in Morocco were poor to begin with; their sole purpose for going to such a heathen land was to bear witness to Christ there, to help others realize that God is their Lord, not world values. Hence they possessed what Francis called "poverty." Money was necessary and proved to be no obstacle.

Secondly, by 1223 a money economy took hold of nearly all of Italy as well. St. Clare wrote her Rule for sisters that year, basing herself on Francis' Rule of 1223, leaving out everything incompatible with the life of her cloistered sisters. And we might note that she dismisses Francis' prohibition of money as well as the need of recourse to spiritual friends. She likewise allows money to be brought into the cloister to take care of the needs at hand. No one will deny that Clare really understood St. Francis' concerns. It would seem that the change in economic circumstances, unforeseen by Francis, was the reason for Clare's action in this respect. Furthermore, the total poverty of Clare and her sisters would find no obstacle in money.

Finally, there is a gloss on chapter 8 of the Rule of 1221 telling why Francis allowed his friars to take money for the needs of the sick. The unknown author states that Francis allowed them money because "they did not give a tinker's damn about money and continually chased after poverty and were so enthusiastic about it." This poverty, as I mentioned, has nothing to do with dollars and cents. It means being totally intent upon emptying one's egoism and living always with the recognition that *God* is the Lord of human existence, not the rich or the powerful. This of course requires a lack of ownership, since ownership involves the ever present menace of making oneself lord and not God. It likewise involves sticking to the essentials of life rather than to superfluity, since superfluity would woo man's heart away from his Lord and back to selfishness.

I think these three instances indicate that poverty is the key to the use of money. If our sole intent is serving the Lord God alone, not ourselves, then money motives would not enter our plans. Our economic

situation demands the use of money, as St. Clare seems to have seen. But to use money as though it were merely a means of exchange, and not the almighty measure of all value in life, then one has to first possess the attitude of poverty as I have defined it. Otherwise a dispensation to use money will be taken as a dispensation from poverty, and poverty itself will continue to be measured in terms of dollars and cents.

*The data of this paper have been culled from the following sources:

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S. Verhey, O.F.M., *Der Mensch unter dem Herrschaft Gottes*. Dusseldorf, 1960.

REPENTANCE

I shall not be
Disappointed or discouraged
By my weaknesses and falls.

May they serve
Only to remind me
That I must rise in haste
And run into Your arms,
My God.

Hold me!
Quiet me!
Just let me rest here
In Your arms.

Sister M. Baylon (Zamboni), O.S.F

Early Sources for the Life of St. Francis

Father Byron A. Witzemann, O.F.M.

(*Continued*)

Philipps or Little Collection

In 1910 a grand source for stories on St. Francis came to light. It was brought to the eyes of the Franciscan world by A. G. Little in the Philipps Codex.

The book may be divided into four parts: 1. the two Rules, with papal and other expositions along with commentaries such as those of John Peckham, St. Bonaventure, the Five Masters, and John Olivi; 2. the *Actus*; 3. excerpts from the *Speculum Perfectionis* and other collections; 4. another version of the *Actus*, and 6. a collection of miscellanea. Perhaps the most important part of the study is to be found in the second and third section. All together it contains 230 pieces of Franciscan information. Moorman thinks that it contains some of the original "*Rotuli*" of Brother Leo, if so, it is of great importance. It was compiled about 1400.

A description of the manuscript can be read in the *Collectanea Franciscana*, Vol. I (British Society of Franciscan Studies, Vol. V).

St. Anthony in Rome Codex

At the end of the 13th century another collection of Franciscana stories was made. This is now in St. Anthony's in Rome, whence its present name. It has three parts. The first contains the *Life of St. Francis* by St. Bonaventure; the second deals with Bartholi's *Tract on the Portiuncula Indulgence*; the third and most important is a collection of 95 Franciscan anecdotes, few of which are found in other sources. It quotes the writings of St. Francis, and the *Legenda Vetus*, namely, *Celano II*, as two of its main sources.[9]

A description of this manuscript can be found in the *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, Vol. XII, pp. 321-357. The text for the most outstanding part, namely, the third section, is printed on pages 358-440.

The Conformity of St. Francis to Jesus Christ

[9] A 15th century Franciscan sermon on the Portiuncula Indulgence, recently acquired in manuscript at St. Bonaventure University was reported in the *Cord*, X, No. 1, Jan. 1960. p. 14.

From 1285 to 1390 Friar Bartholomew of Pisa was engaged in writing his most famous work *Liber De Conformitate Vitae Beati Francisci ad Vitam Domini Jesu.* It was in this year of 1285 that he finished compiling a similar work entitled *Opus Conformitatum B. Virginis cum Christo.* The *Conformity of St. Francis to Christ* was approved by the General Chapter of 1399 and was so well received that the Ministers of the Chapter gave Bartholomew a habit worn by St. Francis.

This book of 1200 pages is a storehouse of Franciscan history up to the end of the 14th century. In three books, containing 40 'fruits' or chapters, the author points out the conformity of the life of St. Francis to that of his Ideal, Jesus Christ. He compares the virtues of St. Francis with those of Christ, showing how perfectly Francis was Christ-like and lived a Christ-life. Some of the comparisons are: how Francis, like Christ, was foreseen in the Bible and in early writings; how both Christ and Francis practiced humility; how crowds followed Jesus and also St. Francis in his three Orders; how Jesus gave a law and Francis wrote a Rule; how Christ had disciples and sent them out to preach, and thus did St. Francis.

It is a fairly reliable source for Franciscan history and, to some extent, even critical. A few of his sources which he lists are: *The Writings of St. Francis,* Thomas of Celano, St. Bonaventure, *Three Companions, Mirror of Perfection* and a *Legenda Antiqua.* Some of the stories he perpetuates seem improbable. He also has a "spiritual" view in regard to poverty. In reference to Elias, he does not play up to him, and often interprets his actions with St. Francis in the light of his later fall.

The Latin text for this source is printed in the *Analecta Franciscana,* Vol. IV and V (Quaracchi, 1906, 1912)

This monumental work of Bartholomew stands as a source of early Franciscan history and a source for understanding Franciscan Spirituality—conformity to Christ.

Conclusion

With the prodigious work of Bartholomew of Pisa we bring to a close our study of the early sources on the Franciscan Friars. We end here because after Bartholomew's work, there is very little which is added to our knowledge of the early Franciscan life. All that is of historical importance in the life of St. Francis is found in the works of the 13th and 14th centuries.

The End

Tenth Annual Meeting of Franciscan Teaching Sisterhoods

***Father Irenaeus** Herscher, O.F.M.*

The Tenth Annual Meeting of Franciscan Sisters Educational Conference was held at Lourdes Convent, 5531 S. Karlov Ave., Chicago, Illinois, November 24-25, 1961, during the Thanksgiving holidays. Over 500 Sister Delegates gathered from the Eastern and Mid-Western States to consider this year's theme: "Franciscan Financial Administration."

The two-day convention was opened with a High Mass sung by the Very Rev. Ernest Latko, O.F.M., president of the Franciscan Educational Conference, under whose auspices the gathering was held.

The delegates were welcomed by the Provincial of the Chicago Province Mother M. Benjamin, S.S.J., who introduced the Mother General of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Third Order of St. Francis: Rev. Mother M. Dionysia, S.S.J., whose keynote address was read for her by Sister M. Leonia, S.S.J. (Rev. Mother was nursing a cold.)

"Franciscans bound by the vow of strict poverty," she declared in her prepared statement, "discussing *Financial Administration* might be viewed with suspicion—as being out of joint with the spirit of their Founder. Today, however, we are living in an age of new dimensions.

"To provide for the steadily increasing and staggering cost of education so necessary to carry on the Apostolate of the Community; to secure assistance in erecting necessary housing for a growing community; and to participate in the works of charity undertaken by the Church, is a difficult and pressing financial problem of this present era . . . We are fortunate in being able, like St. Francis, to look to the Church and her representatives for guidance in this dilemma. We who are gathered here today, are beneficiaries of the finely tempered thinking of the F.E.C. who discussed this subject last summer," she concluded.

The first Paper was devoted to "The Attitude of St. Francis of Assisi toward Money," and was prepared by the Rev. Bruce Malina, O.F.M., of West Chicago, now on the Missions in the Philippines. He set forth what St. Francis thought about money, what he said about it, and what he did not say about it, and finally why he said what he did say about it.

A scholarly and well documented Paper "The Historical aspects of Franciscan Money Management" was presented by the Very Rev. Raphael Huber, O.F.M. Conv., S.T.D., of Rensselaer, N. Y. In it, he outlined the development of Poverty among the First Order Franciscans, and showed how various families of the Poverello present slightly varied interpretations of the Franciscan Ideal, all of them approved by Holy Mother the Church.

Sister Helen Marie, O.S.F., of the College of St. Francis, Joliet, Illinois, led the discussion which followed, and drew attention to the fact that there was a similar development of the Franciscan ideal among the Poor Clares, members of the Second Order of St. Francis. She concluded that "Community poverty is both the root and the fruit of individual poverty."

The afternoon session began with a general assembly at which the Rev. Urban Wiethe, O.F.M., of Cincinnati, Ohio discussed: "Purchasing: Centralized or Localized?" This very practical subject elicited a number of questions from the floor. Sister M. Catherine, O.S.F. of Peoria, Ill., was discussion leader.

Sister M. Aniceta, S.S.J. of Cleveland addressing herself to the college section, outlined the procedure of a Fund Raising Campaign conducted without professional assistance. In her paper entitled "Fund-Raising—A Community Project," she showed how Franciscans can retain the spirit of St. Francis by not being ashamed to ask for alms, and by assuring the giver that giving is a great privilege. Sister M. Laudiose, C.S.S.F., of Chicago, was the discussion leader and brought out additional practical hints for those planning a "drive" or campaign.

The Elementary School section heard an inspiring Paper on "Poverty and Spirituality," by Sister M. Marilyn, O.S.F. of Wheaton, Illinois. The High School section was treated to a practical paper on "Franciscan Adaptation in Financial Administration with special emphasis on the High School." This was presented by Sister Muriel, O.S.F., of Joliet, Illinois. She said: "It is our challenge to keep the spirit of St. Francis while adapting to modern economic conditions."

"I firmly believe that if Our Holy Father St. Francis were with us today, he would heartily endorse the application of Fra Luca Pacioli's invention of Double-Entry bookkeeping, with all its important features, in our Franciscan educational institutions," she said. "To apply Franciscan ideals to financial administration would be as nearly as possible to 'put on the mind of Christ' in any given situation, just as Francis did."

The library section was treated to another practical discussion on the subject of "Budgeting in College, School and Convent Libraries," by the Rev. Jovian Lang, O.F.M., Quincy (Ill.) College librarian.

The afternoon session was closed with Solemn Benediction given by the Most Rev. Cletus F. O'Donnell, D.D., Vicar-General and Auxilary-Bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

The second day of the conference was opened with a High Mass offered by the Very Rev. Juniper Cummings, O.F.M. Conv. S.T.D. of Chaska, Minn., vice-president of the F.E.C. This was followed by an Open Forum on "Canon Law and Financial Problems."

The Very Rev. Donald Wiest, O.F.M. Cap. J.C.D. of Marathon, Wis., was chairman of the panel which included the following members: Sr. M. Annella, F.S.P.A., LaCrosse, Wis.; Sr. M. Clarissa, S.S.J., of Chicago; Sr. M. Joyce, O.S.F., of Manitowoc, Wis.; Sr. M. Olivia, O.S.F., Indianapolis; and Sr. M. Theresa, O.S.F., of Joliet, Ill. This proved one of the most lively sessions. Members of the audience took an active part in the discussions, presenting some of the typical problems and questions regarding financial matters and Canon Law.

The afternoon session was opened by Sister M. Laura, S.S.J., of South Bend, Ind., who presented a paper on "Practical Business Problems of Religious." Sister M. Patrick of Winona, Minn., led the discussion which followed.

Summaries were then read of the various sectional meetings held the previous afternoon. In response to popular request, the open forum discussions of the morning session were continued.

The two-day conference was then brought to a close with Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament, given by the Very Rev. Ernest Latko, O.F.M., S.T.D. president, assisted by members of the Executive Board, which met during the sessions to discuss time, place and topic of next year's Franciscan Educational Conference.

BROTHER LEAVES

Oh we're falling, falling to earth;
Lost forever our slender living grip.
Softly, faintly, gliding, sliding,
swinging downward.
Twisting, turning, gracefully settling,
On Brother Earth.

We're rising, climbing,
On gust of chilly wind;

Sinking, descending, returning earthward,
Once again.
Now rolling, spinning, wheeling,
Moving from door to door;
As if to say 'good-bye' to friends, long known,
We'll see no more.

Happily, joyfully, we're hopping,
Skipping along busy streets;
Mingling and rustling in the crowds.
Merrily dancing, singing, clinging,
Hugging to people's feet.
Seeing a-near, those known only a-far;
Looking up, instead of down.
All so different, all so new,
So dream-like, so beautiful.

But life is departing, fleeing so fast.
Color no longer shining, glistening,
In noon-day sun. Life's evening shadows,
Creeping nearer, covering us all,
With its mantle of darkness.

They're coming; raking, sweeping,
Gathering into baskets; taking us away.
No escaping, no hiding; Brother Wind is still.
No one to carry us to safety;
Forlorn and neglected.

Pushing, squeezing, huddling together,
Like homeless men. While Brother Fire,
Blazing, flaming, anxiously awaits us.
Into his arms we go; no weeping, no crying,
No mourning among us.
Glowing, sparkling, chanting and singing;
Returning to our Creator,
God's will accomplished.

Porangatu, Goias, Brazil
Frei Cormac Neal McDonnell, O.F.M.