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CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



VOL. XII, NO. 3, MARCH, 1962

A Commentary on the Psalms:

Father Jerome A. Kelly, O.F.M.

Psalms 122 and 127

"One picture is worth a thousand words" says the Chinese proverb, and all poets agree. This is true of sacred poets as it is of profane poets. The Psalms, therefore, will be rich in imagery and figurative language. As illustrations of this claim I'm going to choose two from the group of Pilgrim Songs, which we have been considering.

The first of these, Psalm 122, is found in the Little Office at the beginning of Sext. Like most of the Pilgrim Songs this poem is a short one; it has only four verses, distributed equally into two strophes. The first one describes in figurative language the desperate circumstances in which the poet stands; the second one consists of his fervent prayer for deliverance from them. This pattern resembles one which appears frequently among the Psalms. Commentators sometimes refer to such Psalms as lamentations: poems in which the speaker humbly presents his complaints to God, offers reasons why God should help him, and begs God to do so. Although we may, therefore, think of Psalm 122 as somewhat of a lamentation, this is not the feature of it that I am going

to emphasize. I want to stress its use of imagery.

The first strophe opens with an expression of the poet's appeal to God:

*To you I lift up my eyes
who are enthroned in heaven.*

Nothing about the words reveals or even suggests the poet's reason for his action. He most likely intends them to tease our curiosity and so to provoke us into reading further to discover the cause of his conduct. What his words do reveal, of course, is a realization of God's transcendent dominion and of his own subjection to it. The strength of his conviction is discernible, I think, in his simple, stark statement of it.

The notion of dependence, implicit in the first verse, is the basis for the imagery of the second verse:

*Behold, as the eyes of servants
are on the hands of their
masters,*

*As the eyes of a maid
are on the hands of her mistress,
So are our eyes on the Lord, our
God,
till he have pity on us.*

Before we consider the image presented here, we should notice the structure of the lines. The verse is composed of three distichs,

the first two of which form a perfect synonymous parallelism. The third distich, when we examine it closely, turns out to be partly a repetition and partly an elaboration of the notion expressed in the first verse of the strophe. This relationship makes these two parts—seemingly quite unconnected—come together to reinforce the idea of man's submission to God.

The picture presented in the verse would be familiar to anybody acquainted with oriental home life. The servants of the household, men and women, some of them slaves, stand about the room, waiting to do the bidding of the master or mistress of the house. Their eyes are intent upon the hands of those they serve. Why? Because when the master moves his hand, they have to be quick to notice and to interpret his gesture. Does it beckon forward or wave dismissal? Does the hand point here or there to indicate a task that must be performed immediately? Does the master raise his hand as a signal of satisfied approval? Does the mistress lift an angry hand to strike her maid in punishment? In the literal sense of the word, the fate of these servants depends upon the hands they serve.

The picture, admittedly, is no full canvas. It is simply a sketch. That is, I think, the reason for its peculiar effectiveness. There are enough details to help us picture the scene but not enough

to help us picture it completely.

Our imaginations are nudged into wondering what feelings are reflected in these watchful eyes. Into wondering what sign these servants will see, what move these hands will make. It is a skillful poet who can thus keep us wondering about his picture until he puts the final stroke into it, the one which will complete it and satisfy our curiosity. This stroke comes in the final distich when we learn that the servants are looking for some sign that the master will have pity upon them and lower the hand he has raised in angry chastisement.

These final words of the simile reveal that God is actually the master whose angry hand is raised against his Chosen People and that they are the servants who are looking up to him in hopeful expectancy. The poet, of course, is falling back upon custom when he uses the human hand to symbolize God's power to punish man's misdeeds. David, for instance, in describing the suffering his sins had brought upon him, had cried out, *For day and night your hand was heavy upon me.*

(Psalm 31:4)

In his petition for relief he had used the same figure:

*Take away your scourge from me;
at the blow of your hand I wast-
ed away.*

(Psalm 38: 11)

The same figure, too, was used to depict the almighty providence of God:

*If I take the wings of the dawn,
if I settle at the farthest limits
of the sea,
Even there your hand shall guide
me,
and your right hand hold me
fast.*

(Psalm 138: 9-10)

One more point should be made about this final distich of the first strophe. I have already mentioned its resemblance to the first distich of the strophe. Do you think it would be pushing things too far to say that the poet intended this likeness between the opening words of the strophe—

*To you I lift up my eyes
who are enthroned in heaven—
and the closing words of it—
So are our eyes on the Lord, our
God,*

till he have pity on us—
to be a kind of frame for the picture which they enclose? You could say, then, that in this first strophe the poet has painted a picture, framed it, and set it before us for our contemplation.

What do we learn from contemplating it? That the Chosen People are confident that God will pity them and spare them further chastisements. Did you notice, by the way, that what started out as the utterance of one man becomes in the end the utterance of all the people? We could explain this change by saying that the poet is speaking as the representative of the people with whom he later associates himself. Or we might

say that, under the influence of his inspiration what started out as concern for his own welfare widens to embrace all those who suffer with him. The poem would thus be a reminder of the sympathy and love that must inevitably flood the soul of anybody who lifts his mind and heart to God. No matter, though, how we explain this passage from "I" to "us," we shall have to admit that it does make the poem a more appropriate hymn for groups of pilgrims to sing on their way to the Holy City.

The second strophe is the prayer occasioned by the circumstances in which the Israelites find themselves. It is the plea of servants to a master whose hand is too long raised in punishment. The opening words ring out like a cry of pain:

*Have pity on us, O Lord, have
pity on us!*

Then comes the reason for the appeal for mercy:

*For we are more than sated with
contempt.*

The imaginative word in the line is *sated*. It brings to mind people who have fed for so long on a monotonous diet that they have had more than their fill, and they loathe it. You have probably heard people say that they have had so much trouble that they are sick of it. That is the sense of the word here. Derision, mockery, persecution have been for so long the food of the Israelites that they are

sated, satiated, filled to weariness on the diet. Theirs is the mind of the poet who thus prayed to God: *O Lord of hosts, how long will you burn with anger*

while your people pray?
You have fed them with the bread of tears

and given them tears to drink in ample measure.

(Psalm 79: 5-6)

If you concentrate for a moment on the structure of this third verse—another example, incidentally, of progressive parallelism—you notice that it carries over from the second verse and repeats twice the essential word *piety*. Something similar is done to tie together this third verse and the final verse of the poem. Here is the fourth verse: *Our souls are more than sated with the mockery of the arrogant,*

with the contempt of the proud. This tristicl repeats from verse three the phrase *more than sated*. Further, the phrase *with contempt* in the third verse is echoed in the synonymous parallelism of the concluding distich of the strophe. So that, actually, the fourth verse contains not so much a new idea as a repetition and slight modification of an earlier one. Is this a deliberate attempt by the poet to suggest something of the intensity of the emotion that moves his prayer? You have certainly heard people who are deeply moved expressing themselves by repeating the same words and phrases. The

sad monotony of their words reveals the depth of their misery. They repeat over and over again the few exclamations that give their hearts relief. The second strophe of Psalm 122, with its varied repetitions, is intended, I think, to be this kind of utterance.

It is in the fourth verse that we are acquainted with the persecutions sustained by the poet and his associates. Since there is no certainty when this poet wrote his work, there can be no identification of the persecutions, no exact description of the contemptuous mockery vented upon the Jews by their proud and arrogant oppressors. It is highly likely, though, that the conditions referred to are those that existed in Jerusalem after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian Captivity. In his record of these days Nehemias remarks that when word of the rebuilding of Jerusalem "came to Sanaballat the Horonite, and Tobias the Slave, that was of Ammon's breed, and Gosem the Arabian, all was mockery and disdain" (Nehemias 3:19). The work went forward, however, and "great was the rage of Sanaballat when news reached him that we were rebuilding the walls, and cruel were the taunts he uttered against the Jews in his anger. There among his kinsmen, there before a throng of Samaritan folk, he taunted us: What are they about, these starveling Jews? Do they think we Gentiles will let them have their

way? Or do they think to handseal their work at dawn and have it finished by nightfall? From these charred ashes can they make stones to build with? Let them build, said his gossip Tobias the Ammonite; come a fox by, he will leap over all the stones they can put together" (Nehemias 41: 1-3).

At this very point, before going on to narrate the further troubles raised against the Jews by their enemies, as if he were "more than sated with contempt," Nehemias interrupts his chronicle and addresses God directly. The tone of his prayer and the feeling behind it are those of Psalm 122: "Mark it well, Lord God, how they turn us into a laughing-stock; on their own heads let the mockery recoil; exile and ignominy be their lot! Do not hide away their guilt; imperishable in thy presence be the record of the wrong they did, in flouting such a design as this (Nehemias 4: 4-5).

We cannot say that Nehemias and the poet of Psalm 122 were victims of the same persecution. What we can say is that they share the same attitude towards any and all persecution. The sufferings of the Jews were a punishment deservedly inflicted for the sins they had committed against God. This they always admitted, and the admission always brought them back to him with one prayer on their lips: "Have pity on us, O Lord, have pity on us!" On the other hand, they recognized always that the

afflictions meted out to them by their persecutors were an assault upon the Chosen People of God. Such assaults were a flouting of his eternal design for the salvation of mankind. Because of this outlook there were always two strands in Jewish prayer. One is expressed in the plea of Nehemias that God punish his persecutors; the other is expressed by the poet of Psalm 122, who calls, with repentance and confidence, upon the Lord for deliverance from his persecutors.

The second Psalm we want to look at is Psalm 127, the final Psalm at None. This poem, too, is a short one. There are six verses altogether, four in the first strophe, which describes the happy home of the just man, and two in the second strophe, which prays for the continuance of his happiness.

The structure of the first strophe resembles that of Psalm 122. A general statement is followed by a deft vignette, both of these parts being rounded out by a modified repetition of the initial statement. Thus you get the same impression of viewing a picture in a frame. The strophe opens with the announcement of the conviction that permeates the entire poem: *Happy are you who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways.*

The poet has already used a metaphor to depict those who live in conformity to the laws of God. They "walk in his ways." This figure was common enough among

the sacred writers. In praying for the grace to lead a holy and blameless life, David, for example, used the same figure of speech:

At dawn let me hear of your kindness,

for in you I trust.

Show me the way in which I should walk,

for to you I lift up my soul.

(Psalm 142: 8)

It is in words reminiscent of this metaphor, in fact, that the program for a good life is laid down in the first Psalm of the Psalter:

Happy the man who follows not the counsel of the wicked

Nor walks in the way of sinners, nor sits in the company of the insolent,

But delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on his law day and night.

(Psalm 1: 1-2)

The psalmist goes on to describe the reward of such a man. And to do so he employs another figure of speech:

He is like a tree

planted near running water,

That yields its fruit in due season, and whose leaves never fade.

(Psalm 1: 3)

I have spent time on Psalm 1 because its description of the just man and of the reward that comes to him follows a pattern somewhat similar to the one found in Psalm 127. The first verse of this latter Psalm, as we have seen, proclaims

the happiness of the man who fears the Lord and obeys his law. The three succeeding verses describe the rewards that will accrue to such a man. In the first of these verses, verse two of the Psalm, he is promised success and a measure of prosperity:

For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork;

happy shall you be and favored.

Behind this figure of the man sitting down to enjoy the fruits of his labor is a twofold assurance: firstly, that the good man will be blessed with the possession of the things that he needs and, secondly, that he will possess his belongings without fear of loss or deprivation. We may not sufficiently realize how such a prospect would certainly make a Jew happy unless we know how ardently every Jew yearned to be self-supporting and independent. All of them learned a trade in order to support themselves and to be no burden to anybody else. Saint Paul, you may recall so depended upon his trade of tent-making for his support that, in bidding farewell to the Ephesians, he could remind them, "I have never asked for silver or gold or clothing from any man; you will hear me out, that these hands of mine have sufficed for all I and my companions needed" (Acts 20: 33-34). Not that they were avaricious men, either. The degree of success and prosperity they worked for is explicitly

described in the request they made to obtain it: "For my state of life, be neither poverty mine nor riches. Grant me only the livelihood I need; so shall abundance tempt me not to disown thee, and doubt if Lord there be, nor want bid me steal, and dishonor my God's name with perjury" (Proverbs 30: 8-9). Every religiously-minded Jew, therefore, would consider himself happy and favored if it were promised him that "you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork."

In addition to material success, the good man will be favored with the joys of a happy married life. This is the promise of the third verse:

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine

in the recesses of your home.

I cannot help being reminded by these words of the comparison in Psalm 1 between the good man and "the tree planted near running water, that yields its fruit in due season, and whose leaves never fade." Here, though, the comparison is a more delicate one; it focuses attention upon the wife's vitality, gracefulness, fruitfulness, and loving dependence upon her husband. That she has modesty and dignity is suggested by the assurance given the good man that his wife will be "like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your home." He need not fear the disgrace brought upon a man by the kind of woman who "sits at her door, her chair commanding the city's height, and cries aloud to such as

pass by on their lawful errands" (Proverbs 9: 14).

As we read on, we realize that we are being conducted into those inner parts of the home where the members of the family live their lives in loving intimacy. We gaze on the group this good man was promised that he should see:

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine

in the recesses of your home; Your children like olive plants around your table.

The figure of the young olive trees, springing up around the parent tree, fresh and green and full of promise for the future, completes the picture. It needs only to be put into its frame. And this the poet does by repeating, with some modification, the thought behind the statement with which he opened the strophe:

Behold, thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord.

The second strophe is far less picturesque than the first one. It is, too, much more formal. The first verse—the fifth verse of the Psalm—is at the outset an invocation of God's blessing upon the just man.

The Lord bless you from Zion.

This is followed by a wish for the enduring welfare of the Holy City, with which the happiness and fortunes of the individual Jew were so intimately bound up:

*May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.*

Then comes the wish for longevity and the "crown of old age, when a man sees his children's children" (Proverbs 17: 6) :

May you see your children's children

Finally this garland of good wishes is closed with a blessing:

Peace be upon Israel!

There is here something like the kind of close we saw in the case of Psalm 124. The words "Peace be upon Israel!" seem to echo the liturgical blessing given by the priests and levites in the Temple. This entire second strophe, in fact, seems very much like the kind of blessing that the sacred ministers pronounce over one of the faithful. This quality and the fact that the first strophe, too, is so evidently addressed to the just man himself lend weight to the supposition that

we have here a Psalm that was used as a kind of liturgical prayer and blessing for the reception of pilgrims in the Temple. If this be true, then the Psalm as a whole evokes a picture of that solemn

moment when a pilgrim comes to the end of his journey and stands in the Temple itself to offer his sacrifice to God. His very being there is evidence supreme of his willingness to observe the laws of God. In face of such proof, what more fitting than that the priest who blesses him encourage and strengthen him to continue walking in the ways of the Lord? And how better could he do the task than by promising the happiness and favors this Psalm describes as the reward of those "who fear the Lord" and "who walk in his ways?"

LADY OF SPACE

Lady of space,
Clothed with the sun,
Born in God's mind,
Immaculate one!
Crowned with the stars,
The moon at your feet,
Mother and Mistress
Your praise we repeat!
Lady of sky-ways,
Queen of our race,
Flower of earthlings,
Hail, full of Grace!

Sister M. Josephine, O.S.F.

The Poor Man Before God

Translated from the French by Rev. Paul J. Oligny, O.F.M.

III

All the labour of man is for his mouth, but his soul shall not be filled. What hath the wise man more than the fool? And what the poor man, but to go thither, where there is life? (Eccles. 6, 7-8)¹

1. A well-known episode in the life of our Holy Father St. Francis will serve as the subject of our next meditation, namely, his first encounter with Lady Poverty.

The incident is considered to have taken place in the third year of his conversion, after the long year of captivity at Perugia, after the other long year of sickness which followed his release, after the failure of many unrelated projects, the most famous of which was the escapade for the Crusade which ended in Spoleta the following morning . . . Although Francis had already had a change of heart, he was still weak and irresolute and did not yet know the road to take . . . His companions, who were little concerned with mysticism, suggested that he try the diversion of their former boisterous pleasures.

He once more let himself be won over. He organized a feast, and as usual he was the provider and king.

Celano recounts this banquet and gives the impression that he is relying on his memory. He mentions that Francis' companions had eaten and drunk beyond moderation, and that their conduct, conversation, and loud mirth only accentuated Francis' disgust for such amusement. At the close of the banquet, they walked down the narrow, sloping streets of Assisi singing, rollicking, exciting dogs, calling out to the rare passers-by, and awakening the sleeping citizens.

Francis followed them, his burlesque scepter in hand, and unintentionally let them precede him, for he was absorbed in silent recollection.

Suddenly he stopped. His eyes were lost in a sky spangled in the clearness of the Umbrian night with a thousand stars he did not see.

How long a time, how many minutes or seconds did he remain rapt in this ecstasy?

"Hey! Francis. The lover. Are you dreaming about getting married? Their call, accompanied by their coarse laughter, brought him back to reality. Meanwhile, they had returned to look for him. As they

grouped around him in their usual rollicking way, he answered them in the same tone of voice: "Yes, And I am thinking of taking a Bride, one more noble and wealthy and beautiful than you have ever seen." Again, outbursts of laughter greeted his answer. It was all of a piece with what people were saying about him. Then, all made their way to the *pizzetta* where they parted company forever.

I

1. The noble and beautiful bride which Francis had seen on that clear night has been dubbed Lady Poverty. But we must decode her symbol.

The ecstasy had revealed to Francis the meaning of a truth which we all know but to which practically all of us are indifferent, just as he had been up to that time.

Francis had become conscious of his essential and absolute dependence on God; and, by way of contrast, of his absolute and essential poverty.

He had seen and understood, at once and without rationalizing, that *God is all*, while he, Francis, was *nothing*, except for what God wanted him to be, but nothing more than what God made him be;

that *God possesses everything*, while Francis possessed *nothing*, except what it pleased God to loan, give, entrust, and confide to him; that *God does all things*, while Francis accomplishes *nothing*, except what God in his generosity deigns to work in, through, and with him . . .

He had been caught up, penetrated, and transpierced by the revelation of his relationship as creatures to his Creator.

G. K. Chesterton has picturesquely expressed Francis' experience.

FRANCIS SUDDENLY SAW THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN.

A moment's reflection will convince us of the propriety of this paradox. Do we not picture to ourselves our antipodes in this strange situation? Antiquity and the Middle Ages, not knowing the law of gravity, claimed that it was impossible for men to live with their feet fall into the sky." No, the antipodes do not fall into the sky; they remain suspended there, just as we, the antipodes of the New Zealanders, are suspended without inflicting any injury on ourselves.

3. Francis would not, indeed, have thought of this comparison; but he was certainly not unaware of another which came from the pen of St. Augustine: *we are the beggars of God: we owe our very life to him.*

As a beggar of God, Francis looked upon himself as receiving life, breath, and all things from him. Emrapured both by the fullness

of God's love in his behalf which so universal a liberality gave proof of and by the plenitude of confidence in God which so complete a poverty demanded of him, he at once agreed to the complete renunciation of himself in God's behalf, from whom he had received being, movement, and life, in a word, everything that was necessary for the preservation, use, and perfection of being, movement, and life.

My God and My All! You are all to me; I then must and can hope that you will be ALL to me, and that you will be my all in time and in eternity . . .

II

4. We could have learned from the philosophers of the absolute and essential dependence of the creature on his Creator, of the dependence of that which does not exist on him who is and who gives existence, of the dependence of all things on the First Cause. Without rising to the knowledge of the origin of the world through creation, Aristotle concluded, from the existence of movable things, to their necessary relation to a Prime and Immovable Mover.

St. Paul, however, has taught us this truth in a more assuring way. You undoubtedly recognized his words in the expressions we used to set forth the truths which had taken such a convincing prominent position in the soul of the ecstatic Francis.

One day as St. Paul was talking with a great natural wisdom to the Athenians grouped around him on the Areopagus, he said: "God who made the world and all that is in it, since he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples built by hands; neither is he served by human hands as though he were in need of anything, since it is he who gives to all men life and breath and all things" (Acts 17, 24-25). He was talking of men to whom God gives life, then a rational soul, intelligence, and knowledge, in a word, everything they need.

"And from one man," the Apostle continues, "he has created the whole human race and made them live all over the face of the earth, determining their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands; that they should seek God, and perhaps grope after him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17, 26-28).

We, men, and everything in the world, have existence, activity, our *raison de'être*, and our end in God, through God, and in dependence on God.

* * *

5. Is it truly necessary to place so much emphasis on well-known truths? All of us surely know them. But as a rule not advert to them, anymore than we realize our paradoxical I

His consciousness of participating in the being, nature, and activity of God is the witness by the Holy Spirit to him of his own filiation as well as that of every creature. For in discovering his dependence, in accepting his indigence, in professing his poverty, Francis further discovered and recognized the universal brotherhood of creatures, which like him and with him received from God the Father being, movement, and life as an alms given to their intrinsic poverty.

III

8. Hello-Le-Voyant was struck and as it were dazzled by the place given to the poor man in the book of revelation, the Bible.

"When the poor man is mentioned," he says, "tremble, God is about to appear!" And why? Because the poor man wears his status as creature out in the open, and thinks not of dissimulating it.

His basic indigence in regard to God is manifested in his present dependence on his neighbor.

His material poverty is, as it were, the sacred acknowledgement of the universal need which makes creatures dependent on their Author.

Let there henceforth be no surprise at God's attentions to the poor man with which the Psalms and the Sapiential Books are so replete. We cannot cite hundreds of texts, but we give one which, as it were, summarizes them all.

The poor man is especially entrusted to the protection of God. "On you the unfortunate man depends" (Ps. 10, 14). God openly sides with him and the poor man has nothing to fear from God.

God listens, hears, helps, sustains, protects, delivers, cures, blesses, avenges, enriches the poor and the needy. He loves them!

Now, as we read the passages whence these words are taken, a face begins to appear, and its features gradually become clear. It is the face of him who merits the favors, the attentions, and the complacencies of God the Father: he who has warned us that on the Last Day we will be judged by our attitude toward the poor, the needy, the indigent, for he will say: "I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you covered me; sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me. . . . Amen I say to you, as long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me." (Matt. 25, 35-37, 40). To those who did not perform these corporal works of mercy, Christ will say: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did not do it for one of these least ones, you did not do it for me" (Matt. 25, 45).

The Poor Man is CHRIST JESUS.

9. Chapter 3, No. 9 of my book the *Meditation of Jesus Christ*

treats of how, in truth, from the first moment of his existence, the God-man, Jesus Christ, seeing himself completely dependent on his Father, but enriched and blessed without any merit of his own and without anyone being able to merit for him, responded to the munificence of God by the complete gift and abandonment of his created being to the wishes and interests of God. Moreover, in order to imitate God's liberality toward him, he forewent the immunities and prerogatives which the Incarnation entitled him to that he might thus be able to suffer and die for our salvation. Let us consider also that only the God-Man could push self-renunciation to the point of renouncing so to speak his right to a human personality in favor of God in the second person of the Holy Trinity.

We can therefore say: the Poor Man is Jesus Christ who, being rich, "became poor for your sakes, that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8, 9).

* * *

10. Whether in his ecstasy Francis ever had this insight into this mystery we do not know. Furthermore, it matters little. But who would deny this man who betrays in all his religious concepts a prodigious genius, one moreover irradiated with the splendors of the Holy Spirit, who would dare refuse him having known and understood what his disciples learned from his lessons and drew from his examples?

He saw Jesus Christ poor, and followed him.

He heard Jesus Christ say: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be given to you besides" (Matt. 8, 33).

He saw the example of the Apostles: "Behold we have left all and followed thee" (Matt. 19, 27). He heard Peter, their leader, repeat with the Psalmist:

Cast your care upon the Lord,
and he will support you (Ps. 54, 23).

That would have sufficed to make him embrace poverty, to disentangle himself from all that could weigh him down in his pursuit and search. Furthermore, he discerned that the sincere and true attitude of the creature before God was:

humility which impoverished the creature,
and confidence which enriched it,

God owing it to himself to honor the trust placed in him.

Over and above the example of Christ, we might still find an example of this humble and confident, sincere and blessed attitude in Mary, the Mother of the humble and the Mother of the poor. Meditations

on her *Magnificat* would show us the ecstasy of her indignance and poverty.

But let us limit ourselves today to what we have understood and enjoyed of the poverty of her Son Jesus and that of their servant Francis.

Following these examples, let us resolve to be poor before God, in dependence and privation, but rich in humility, in abandonment, in unshakable and victorious confidence. For what does the poor man have more than others, if not that he can run to the place where he knows Life dwells? Amen.



BLESSED JOSEPH

Blessed Joseph, David's scion,
Husband of the Virgin pure,
Be our Father and Protector,
Lest temptations us allure.

Jesus made thee Foster-Father,
And obeyed thy ev'ry word;
None e'er asked thy intercession
And could say he was not heard

When the cruel and wicked Herod
Sought the Holy Child to kill,
Thou didst take Him and His Mother,
Since it was the Father's will,

Flee to foreign land of Egypt
In the darkness of the night;
From the dangers of our exile,
Lead us home to Heaven's light.

Fr. Marion A. Habig, O.F.M.

Felician Foundress Upholds St. Francis' Love For The Eucharist

Sister Mary Jacinta Szczygielski, C.S.S.R

INTRODUCTION

The religious mind must forever return to the primary truths of the faith. The Christian aim is to live to the fullest possible extent the life outlined in the Gospel. St. Paul, the great expounder of the divine life of man, defines it with these or equivalent words—Christ is our life!

God through His divine Son had lifted us up to Himself so that we might enter and share the joy of His life. The merits of the Incarnation and Redemption brought forth the fruit of the Eucharist. Our divine life comes to us then through the passion and death of Christ, through faith and the sacraments. The Blessed Eucharist, above all other sacraments is the center of our religion and worship, of our dogmas, the point of convergence of the other sacraments, the perpetuation of Christ's presence among men, the continual sacrifice, the memorial of Christ's passion, and the cause of the unity of the Mystical Body of Christ. Consequently, the science of spirituality naturally revolves around the sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ since in this sacrament we become partakers in the divine nature and divine life.

"The God Man," writes Scheeben, "... necessarily becomes a sun for the entire world, a sun which draws all creatures to itself in order to shed over them all the beams of the divine goodness and glory that are concentrated in itself, in order to confer the riches of the Trinitarian communication upon the whole world, and thereby also to admit the world to participation in the Trinitarian unity."¹ Accordingly, the Eucharist is the eminently good gift which contains the God-Man by which myriads of Christians down through the ages have found it to be the potent factor by which they became Christ-like.

The purpose of this thesis is not to elaborate a theological treatise on the dogmatic teachings of the Eucharist. Treasures of learning have been poured out by the noblest of intellects such as Origen, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Bonaventure, as well as by the contemporaries, St. Pius X, Abbot Vonier, and Thomas Merton. It may rather be considered as a commentary or humble account of two individuals

who nourished themselves on the Gospel message, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:34). St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of a great and flourishing Order and the Servant of God, Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska, the foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice of the III Order Regular of the Seraphic St. Francis were two souls, among so many, without doubt, who beheld the Son of God under the Eucharist veil. Through the medium of the Eucharist they maintained a vigorous spiritual life and obtained an insatiable energy for their zeal for souls.

The first chapter therefore, explains the importance of the Eucharist in the economy of spiritual life. No life of prayer, no holiness of life, can be maintained without this sacrament—much more the religious life. The aspects of this sacrament are briefly mentioned as well as its effects.

In the second chapter the facts of the Holy Eucharist in the life of the Poverello, who contemplated the Eucharist in the shadow of the Cross, are related. Hence, reference is made to his early biographers and his own letters.

The third chapter gives a biographical sketch of Mother Angela Truszkowska. It is based primarily on Sister Mary Bronislaws Dmowska's life of Mother Angela. However, several other books were consulted as well as the *Writings of Mother Angela*.

The last chapter is an exposition of Mother Angela's love for the Eucharistic King. As a true follower of St. Francis, the Eucharist was engendered very generously in her own life. Contemplating the Eucharist in the Heart of the Immaculate Mother, Mother Angela heard the cry of reparation from her Eucharist Spouse. She beheld the Eucharist as the School of spirituality. This thought is embodied in the words of the Felician motto, "Omnia per cor Mariae ad honorem Sanctissimi Sacramenti."

CHAPTER I THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EUCHARIST IN OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Since the object of this thesis is to emphasize the driving spiritual force of the Eucharist in the lives of two individuals, it would be necessary to acquaint the reader with some of the basic concepts governing this sacrament. To evaluate, however, the importance of the Eucharist in our spiritual life properly, one would have to devote more than a single thesis to this subject. The scope of its importance is so vast since it is the "... living epitome of the whole Catholic creed."¹

¹ Pope John XXIII, "The Eucharistic Bread". *The Pope Speaks*, VI, No. 1, (Winter 1959-60), p. 92.

It is built not just on a theological supposition, but primarily on dogma, the Christian Mysteries of our Faith, the Trinity, Incarnation and Redemption. As stated in the Introduction, the writer does not have any intention of delving into theological argumentations, therefore, to bring about a relative understanding only salient factors must be considered.

The Fruit of the Incarnation, the Eucharist

In order to have a clear idea of the full force and significance of God's supernatural union with man in the Eucharist, the Incarnation ought to be considered since it is the presupposition and explanation of the Eucharist. Just as the power and operation of the Holy Spirit brought down the Son of God into the womb of Mary, so too, does this same power manifest itself in the Eucharist.

Thus, in the fullness of time, came the Son of God, the Word Incarnate, and dwelt among us. The visible habitation of Christ among men gave the world the most obvious opportunity to cultivate friendship with God. Jesus Christ said one day, anticipating the ignominy of the Cross, mindful of what the Cross was going to earn for Him: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself." (John 12, 32). These words, indeed, are a fitting description of the effect of the Bread of Life and of all the treasures which it contains. Christ still abides in our midst with the same Flesh and Blood, the same Soul and Divinity. It is the same Christ who ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of the Father. Briefly, the Incarnation and the Redemption did not cease, leaving people of the future to benefit by a single act; its work is continued in the Blessed Sacrament. This is true of the Sacred Species reserved in the tabernacle, but more so for the one communicating. The words of Father Merton are an expression of this thought.

The love of the Father for the Son burst forth from within the mystery of the Trinity and made itself known outside of God when the Father gave His only begotten Son for mankind. In the Incarnation, the love of the Father for the Son reached out to embrace mankind in the same unity of Spirit in which the Son is united with the Father. Jesus, in turn dying on the Cross, manifested at the same time His love for the Father and His love for mankind: for it was at the same time the Father's will that He should die for us. In the death of Jesus on the Cross we see the One Love which is God and we see the Three Divine Persons of love, one another, and we are ourselves caught up in the bond of love, the circuit of mutual giving, which unites them with One Another.²

² Thomas Merton, *The Living Bread*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956), p. 52.

In the Eucharist, Jesus abides both as the living God and a living man. Therein is the same Christ born in Bethlehem, the "Son of Mary and Joseph", the miracle worker, the preacher, the prophet, the same Jesus who always went about "doing and healing all", the victim of Calvary. As Megr. Gay states:

The earthly life of Christ, although ended centuries ago, with regard to its temporal evolution and exterior form, still remains fundamentally in the Eucharist since it will always retain its essential qualities, its intimate origin, as well as its intrinsic beauty and infinite virtue and incomparable characteristics.⁸

During the historical setting of the Last Supper, Christ with His own sacred hand brought forth the "gift of God." The hour of His Passion was drawing near, He fulfilled the promise that He had made to his disciples by instituting the great mystery of the New Covenant. Blessing the bread He said to his Apostles: "Take, This is My Body (Matt. 14: 22)," "This is My Blood of the new covenant (Mark 14: 24)." Following these words our Lord added, "Do this in remembrance of me (Luke 22: 19)," thus granting the Church, through the priest to ever continue the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass by the power of the Holy Ghost. The wondrous words of consecration ever continue the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption as the Council of Trent teaches, the "Mysterium fidei." Abbot Vonier, in his book, adequately expresses this point:

With regard to this Sacrament the Church is not in the attitude of one who worships something extraneous, something superimposed upon her life, something that is so high up in the sphere of the supernatural as to be far beyond her reach. No, the mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ is in the very bosom of the Church, there it takes place as the Incarnation took place in the bosom of the Immaculate Virgin.⁹

In the Eucharist, then, the Incarnation is extended to each member of the Mystical Body. Father Scheeben explains that in Communion "... the Logos may, as it were, become anew in each man, by taking the human nature of each into union with His own," coinciding, therefore, with the mystery of Incarnation.

The Eucharist, a Means of Sanctification

Before speaking particularly about the Eucharist as an agent of

⁸ Aloysius J. Willinger, C.S.S.R., *The Eucharist And Christian Life*, (Paterson, N. J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1949) p. 79.

⁹ Anscar Vonier, O.S.B., *The Collected Works of Abbot Vonier*, II. (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1952), p. 113.

⁵ Scheeben, op. cit., p. 486.

our incorporation in Christ, it would be best to retrogress to the starting point. Primarily, it must be remembered, the Passion of Christ was the price paid for our divine life. Logically, it is called the juridical reason for our incorporation in the Divine Life. Secondly, all the sacraments radiate the charity of the Cross. St. Augustine, commenting on the words of St. John, "A soldier opened the side of Christ, (John 19: 34)" replies: "The Evangelist used an intentional word when he wrote 'aperuit' that is, opened, and not 'pierced' or 'wounded' or another word, to signify that the opening was the gate of life through which issued the sacraments, without which access cannot be had to the true life."⁶ Thus, the birth of Christ in us has its beginning with the sacrament of Baptism, often called by theologians "the door to the other sacraments." The Angelic Doctor would have us understand that Baptism alone will not bring about the perfect man. St. Thomas clarifies himself in the following manner.

He tells us that the Eucharist is the 'consummation of the spiritual life and the end of all the other sacraments' since all the sacraments merely prepare us for the reception of the Eucharist, and this means that they lead us up to the sacred reality which the Eucharist alone can effect in us: perfect charity, consummate oneness in Christ. To say that all the sacraments culminate in the Eucharist is not to say, merely that they are rites which serve as preliminaries to the one great rite, the mystery of the cult. It means above all that the other sacraments give us some part in the charity of Christ, to fulfill certain particular needs of our own souls or of the souls of others, but that the Eucharist gives us the fullness of His charity, incorporates us perfectly in His Mystical Body, which lives by charity and enables us thereby not only to receive charity directly from Christ our Mystical Head, but to rejoice in the life stream of Charity which flows through the whole organism from one member to another.⁷

The Doctor of Aquin again emphasizes, beyond doubt, that the importance of the Eucharist in Christian life lies in the fact that it is designated to the pre-eminent means in the divinization of man. The Angelic Doctor relates his proposition:

The Damascene affirms that the human nature of Christ acted as an agent of the divinity and therefore participated in a measure in the operation of divine power. How is it that Christ should cure the leper by merely touching him? It was the contact of Christ that instrumentally caused the cure. Therefore, this instrumental efficacy which it had for corporal effects, the Holy Humanity exercises also in the spiritual order. Hence the Blood of Christ, poured out for us, had ablutinary effect on

⁶ Willinger, op. cit., p. 41.

⁷ Merton, op. cit., p. 137.

sin. He 'washed us from our sins in His own Blood': we were justified by His Blood. The Humanity of Christ is the instrumental cause of justification, a cause that is applied to us spiritually by faith, and corporally by the sacraments. Therefore the most perfect of the sacraments is that which really contains the Body of Christ, namely, the Eucharist, the end and consummation of the rest.⁸

Pope John XXIII, in his address to the Eucharistic Congress at Munich, quotes the words of St. Thomas as a complement of his own opinion, bearing in mind the given fact; namely, the Eucharist as a foremost factor in the sanctification of man. "This sacrament has a great and universal usefulness. Great because it produced in us a life that is spiritual now and that will be eternal. And universal, because the life which it confers is not just the life of one man, but taken in itself, the life of the whole world."⁹ The words of our Lord confirm St. Thomas' argument: "I am the Living Bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eat of this bread he shall live forever, and the Bread that I give is My Flesh for the life of the world. (John 32: 35)" Our Lord again reminds us and thus summarizes that the Holy Eucharist is a means of sanctification:

Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you. He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood abides in Me and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. This is the bread that has come down from heaven; not as your fathers ate the Manna and died. He who eats this bread, shall live forever. (John 53: 59)

The Three Stages of the Eucharist and Its Effects

In the Eucharist there are two fundamental elements—the sacrament and the sacrifice. The threefold stages of the Eucharist are: Holy Mass, Holy Communion and the Real Presence. Each flows naturally from the other, yet holds its proper place in relation to the other, each retains the essential factor called for, namely; faith, and each helps us to live a full, well-integrated Eucharistic life. The three aspects of the Eucharist can be discussed from various viewpoints. In this thesis we are only concerned about each in a general way and in relation to the object of this thesis: the supreme medium of attaining personal sanctification

The *Sacrifice of the Altar* brings to mind the words of St. John, "Greater love than this no man has, that one lay down his life for his

⁸ Willinger, op. cit., p. 43.

⁹ Pope John XXIII, "Divine Life in the Eucharist", *The Pope Speaks*, VI, No. 4, (1960), p. 334.

friend (John 15: 13). "The significance of the Mass is the mystical immolation of Christ. The Sacrifice of Jesus on the hill of Calvary appears daily on our altars. Christ, the Victim continues His first, and only offering. On the Cross He was offered in a bloody manner, while in the Sacrifice of the Mass, He is offered in an unbloody manner under the appearance of bread and wine. Through the hands of the priest He offers Himself anew to His Father with all the love He once offered to Him on the Cross. The Mass, therefore, becomes the central act of Christian worship. The mystical immolation takes place by the separate consecration of the two species of Bread and Wine. The sacrifice is then completed by the priest and faithful who receive Holy Communion. The Crucified Christ offers His immolation as supreme adoration, thanksgiving, petition and expiation on behalf of the Mystical Body, and Divine Life flows from the cross into the bosom of mankind.

St. Augustine calls the Eucharist "the one and only sacrifice of our salvation."¹⁰ The Sacrifice of Calvary and the Sacrifice of the Mass have the same purpose, the obtaining of supernatural life for all mankind. Bishop Willinger aptly describes the equal supernatural value of each:

"Hence both sacrifices have the same supernatural value: that of the Cross flows directly from the merits of Christ, while that of the Mass emanates from the Cross. The latter is the well of life that issues from the sacrificial act in which Christ immolates Himself in a bloody manner; the former is the current that carries thwart the centuries; the life obtained through the unique oblation of Christ."¹¹

Since the Holy Mass is a school of sacrifice those attending may readily offer themselves as co-victims with Christ. Spiritual writers remind us that Christ is only our Victim and Mediator in proportion as we offer ourselves with Him on the altar, thus we may say we become partakers in His life of immolation.

Considering therefore, that the words of Consecration bring about the mystical separation of Christ's Blood from His Body thus constituting the sacrifice and at the same time making Him present upon the altar, it is necessary to uphold that Christ in the Eucharistic Host is the Victim. Every Eucharistic soul, therefore, must strive to lead a life of immolation by an active participation in the Mass. In this way the purpose of the Incarnation is fulfilled for all things are being returned to God in Him, with Him and through Him. Consequently, the Mass is Christ's supreme gift and legacy to the Mystical Body of

¹⁰ Willinger, op. cit., p. 111.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

the Church. The Mass is the possession and inheritance of every Catholic. A prayerful eucharistic life of praise, expiation, thanksgiving and impetration unfolds itself each day in the unbloody sacrifice of Mass. Above all, it is a manifestation of God's love. Father Merton expresses his concept of the eucharistic sacrifice in the following words:

It is clear, therefore, that in order to appreciate the full meaning of the eucharistic sacrifice, we must remember that the Mass, by making present the great redemptive mystery of the Cross also by that very fact manifests, in mystery, the agape which is the secret and ineffable essence of God Himself. What we behold at Mass is the very reality of God's own love. And we enter into the reality. We are enclosed in the embrace of the Holy Spirit of Truth and Love, the bond which unites the Word and the Father. We become able to unite ourselves with the Word in the great act of sacrificial love by which He bore witness on the Cross to His love for the Father and for us. And at the same time we unite ourselves—in the very heart of the Mystery—with the eternal love by which, as Word, He offers His endless 'sacrifice' of praise to the Father in the depths of the Holy Trinity.¹²

The *Eucharist* as the sacramental food and the pledge of our future life incorporates us within Christ in a glorious and mystical union. Pondering on what is actually received in Holy Communion St. Bonaventure replies:

Certainly that Sacrament would be desirable even if only the most noble flesh (of Christ) were given as food; but not rather three most precious courses are placed as if on one plate; the flesh, which is sweet; the soul, which is sweeter and nobler than the flesh; the divinity, which is the sweetest. Scripture says (Wis. 16, 20): Thou didst feed thy people with the food of angels, and gave them bread from heaven, having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste. What wonder? This is He (1 Pet. 1, 12) on whom the angels desire to look. If the sight delights so much, how much the taste! Behold, the Banquet of the table of Christ.¹³

Mass and Holy Communion are not to be separated, since it is one single action. Holy Communion is the perfect climax of the Mass because its meaning and its fruits are completed by Holy Communion. The same Eucharistic Christ, the Victim of the Cross, Who had first been offered to God, is later received by the communicant. Christ was not satisfied with having made Himself present on our altars but also becomes the permanent Victim for our sins in the Mass. He comes to our hearts and gives Himself to us under the sacred species of bread

¹² Merton, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

¹³ Dominic Facin, O.F.M., *Spiritual Exercises According to Saint Bonaventure*, trans. Owen A. Colligan (St. Bonaventure, N. Y., 1955), p. 283.

and wine, in the substance of His mysteries and the plenitude of his graces.

The fundamental idea of nourishing the soul as one nourishes the body characterizes the Eucharist as the "Bread of Life." Father Scheeben depicts this parallel, he also implies that the pre-eminent effect of Holy Communion is our incorporation in Christ, thus completing the Mystical Body.

What feeds and nourishes us in the Eucharist is properly the divine energy of the Logos inhabiting Christ's flesh. But if, in order to give us life, the Logos unites His body to us in so astounding a fashion, we must conclude that He unites His divinity to our souls in a way that resembles the union of His flesh and blood with our bodies. Our partaking of the God-man's human flesh and blood is the real sacrament, that is, the sign and instrument signifying our reception of the flesh and blood of His divinity, if I may so express myself.

What meat and drink are to the body, that the light of truth and glory, and the fiery torrent of love are to the soul. The human flesh of Christ corresponds to the brilliant aura of glory that suffuses Him in His divine nature, and His human blood corresponds to the river of life and love that gushes forth from His divine heart.¹⁴

The close union of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ reaches its climax in the sacrament of the Eucharist. The grace of charity is augmented and the Church's unity is made strong. This thought is exemplified in the encyclical letter of Pope Pius XII on "The Mystical Body of Christ."

Through the Eucharistic Sacrifice Christ our Lord wished to give special evidence to the faithful of our union among ourselves and with our divine Head, marvelous as it is and beyond all praise. For here the sacred ministers act in the person not only of our Saviour but of the whole Mystical Body and of everyone of the faithful. In this act of sacrifice through the hands of the priest, whose word alone has brought the immaculate Lamb to be present on the altar, the faithful themselves with one desire and one prayer offer It to the Eternal Father,—the most acceptable Victim of praise and propitiation for the Church's universal needs. And just as the divine Redeemer, dying on the Cross, offered Himself as Head of the whole human race to the Eternal Father, so 'in this pure oblation' He offers not only Himself as Head of the Church to the heavenly Father, but in Himself His mystical members as well. He embraces them all, even the weak and ailing ones, in the tenderest love of His Heart.

The Sacrament of the Eucharist is itself a striking image of the Church's unity, if we consider how in the bread to be conse-

¹⁴ Scheeben, *op. cit.*, p. 524.

created many grains go to form one substance; and in it the very Author of supernatural grace is given to us, so that through Him we may receive the Spirit of charity, in which we are hidden to live now not our life but the life of Christ, and in all the members of His social Body to live the Redeemer Himself.¹⁵

In the Eucharist we also perceive the unique mission of the Holy Spirit who is the bond of union between the Father and the Son. The Paraclete unites and sanctifies the new Adam. It is His distinctive work to create ties between the Creator and creature, between God and us. A truly great gift, the Holy Eucharist mediately contains the Holy Spirit Himself with His essence and power. This mission of the Sacrificer is beautifully explained by Father Scheeben:

Although the Holy Spirit is sent by the Son and comes to us in the Son, He is, by the strongest of all appropriations, also the channel through which the Son is brought to us. As the aspiration terminating the Son's love, He urges the Son to deliver Himself up to us in the Incarnation and the Eucharist. As the flame issuing from the mighty ardor of the Son in His work of sanctification and unification, in the womb of the Virgin He brings about the origin, the hypostatic union, and the resulting holiness of the Son's human nature, and in the Eucharist effects the conversion of earthly substances into the Son's flesh and blood. After the hypostatic union and transubstantiation have been wrought, He lives on in the Son's flesh and blood with His fire and His vitalizing energy, as proceeding from the Son, and fills the sacred humanity with His own being to sanctify and glorify it. Particularly in the Eucharist He glorifies and spiritualizes the Son's human nature like a flaming coal, so that it takes on the qualities of sheer fire and pure spirit. Straightway He makes use of the Eucharist as an instrument to manifest His sanctifying and transforming power to all who receive it and as a channel to communicate Himself to all who receive it and feast upon it. The body of Christ, as a spiritual gift which God presents to us and which we offer in sacrifice, has its origin from the fire of the Holy Spirit; it is permeated and encompassed by the Holy Spirit, who so transfigures and spiritualizes it that both the fire and the coal which the fire pervades with white heat seem to be one and the same object; and, finally, it is flooded with the Holy Spirit, thus yielding up His fragrance in sacrifice, and His vitalizing energy in Holy Communion.¹⁶

Before discussing the various effects of Holy Communion another observation is necessary. It is proper to note that we draw divine life and Christianlike transformation from this sacrament in the same degree

¹⁵ Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, (Washington, D. C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1943), p. 50.

¹⁶ Scheeben, *op. cit.*, pp. 529-530.

in which we are worthy prepared. The will must consciously yield itself to divine action. St. Bonaventure exhorts:

... this Sacrament does not have efficacy in anyone except in one worthy approaching; ... for he who approaches worthy to the Sacrament does not return empty ... according to the amount of good will and according to the greatness of life and holiness, the valuable effect is attained. For according to the way in which one approaches Christ under this Sacrament, so also according to that disposition Christ shows Himself with the gifts of His grace; that is, (he shows Himself) greatly to the great, moderately to the mediocre, slightly to the ingardly, unfavorably to the wicked.¹⁷

The Seraphic Doctor prompts all to receive worthy. He enumerates several supreme advantages, thus producing an incentive:

'Therefore, one who approaches worthy to the Sacrament of the altar does not return empty,' rather, many the graces 'there are, which those are wont to receive in this Sacrament who approach worthy.' 'For manifold is the effect of the Eucharistic Bread.' 'In this Sacrament faith is increased, hope is raised up, and love is aroused.' 'For the Eucharistic Bread delights the mind, strengthens virtue, lengthens life; and 'in those communicating worthy, the Lord infuses consolation. Those evil inclinings, removes the love of the world; and He renders them secure on the day of judgement.' 'And this Sacrament confirms for action, elevates for contemplation, disposes for revelation of divine things, animates and inflames for a contempt of the world and for a desire of heavenly and eternal goods.'

'For one who approaches worthy receives these four effects of grace from the Sacrament. Because there the rational part of the soul is illuminated to know the highest truth. For he who frequents this Sacrament with fervor of devotion from day to day advances in illumination of mind. Secondly, there the appetitive part is aroused to seek the highest good; for one who approaches worthy to this Sacrament is delighted inwardly more and more. Thirdly, the irascible part is fortified to root out every evil. Fourthly, man is mortified to the world in order that he may see in accord with God.'¹⁸

Pope John XXIII enumerated the fruits of the Eucharist in his radio broadcast at the closing of the Sixteenth Eucharistic Congress in Italy:

If only all Christians would better understand the Holy Eucharist and partake of it more worthy and more frequently! Abundant fruits of harmony, of peace, and of spiritual perfection would then ripen in the Church and in the whole world. Many problems which trouble modern minds would be more promptly and effectively solved, thanks to a feeling of

¹⁷ Facin, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 284-285.

sincere and perfect brotherhood which would restrain the individual from taking dangerous initiatives and would strengthen his refusal to compromise with the forces of evil and the temptations of this world.

True devotion to the Eucharist helps man achieve loyalty, righteousness, and moral uprightness, regardless of personal sacrifice, in his efforts to bring about the common good. We do not hesitate to affirm that rulers and their subjects will remain prey to natural selfishness and discord unless their laws comply with the Sacrament of the Altar as true and inexhaustible source. We must realize that the Eucharist promotes not only the good of the faithful communicants, but also, according to the Angelic Doctor, the common spiritual good of the whole Church, which is substantially present in the sacrament.¹⁹

The Eucharist also grants us spiritual exhilaration bestowing upon us a spiritual joy and jubilation. This is eloquently expressed by Jungo:

It is the fervor or ebullition of charity, which makes the heart dilate and flow over into the senses in acts not only of necessity, but also of supererogation (just as under the pressure of heat the cup of water expands and overflows), producing an ineffable joy of spirit through the satisfaction of the good that is done and the alacrity with which it is done. From this fervor which the Eucharist opportunity excites, issue both rapture and sweetness, and the reason seems to be that such delight is naturally consequent upon the love and the perception of the presence of that which is loved.²⁰

The Eucharistic hymns of St. Thomas—*Pange Lingua*, *Lauda Sion*, *Verbum Supernum*—are an expression of such joy.

The *Real Presence*, the third stage of the Eucharist is often described by theologians and spiritual writers as the folly and excess of the Eucharist. The Church always believed that Christ is permanently present in the Eucharist as long as the species of bread remain and, therefore, demand our adoration. The custom of reserving the Holy Eucharist in a sacred place dates back to the early history of the Church. Our late Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, in his address, "The Liturgical Movement" clarifies the devotion to the Real Presence. His Holiness stresses the need of unity between Holy Mass and the "worship of adoration" offered to the God-Man reserved in the tabernacles.

... an awareness of their unity is more important than a realization of their differences. It is one and the same Lord Who is immolated on the altar and honored in the tabernacle, and Who pours out his blessings from the tabernacle. A person who

¹⁹ Pope John XXIII, *op. cit.*, *Pope Speaks*, VI, No. 1, pp. 93-94.
²⁰ Willinger, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

was thoroughly convinced of this would avoid many difficulties. He would be wary of exaggerating the significance of the one to the detriment of the other, and of opposing decisions of the Holy See . . . There is question not so much of the material presence of the tabernacle on the altar, as of a tendency to which we would like to call your attention, that of a lessening of esteem for the presence and action of Christ in the tabernacle. The sacrifice of the altar (by some) is held sufficient, and the importance of Him who accomplishes it is reduced. Yet the person of our Lord must hold the central place in worship, for it is his person that unifies the relation of the altar and the tabernacle and gives them their meaning.²¹

In a radio message of Pope John XXIII to the International Eucharistic Congress at Munich, His Holiness completed his sermon with a beautiful prayer to the Eucharist. Within this prayer we find the sentiments of the Holy Father who places the strength of the apostolate and the hope of all spiritual life and salvation in the Real Presence.

... Make us hunger and thirst more and more for you, living in the Tabernacle, as in a tent pitched in the middle of the Church militant; so that, led by your light and inflamed with your life, we may successfully pass through the trials of the desert of this world and eventually come to the place you promised to the redeemed human race, to the happiness of heaven and life without end.²²

The same thought pervades His Holiness' message to the pilgrims in the "Eucharistic Movement of France," April 16, 1960.

... The Eucharist is always our Shepherd—Pastor noster—no longer suffering, but still hidden from our eyes, and sometimes forgotten even by those who believe in His real presence. He is the eternal source of living water—*fons aquae vivae*—whence each can draw the strength to surmount daily hardships, the courage to profess his faith firmly, generosity in the exercise of love and service for his fellows.²³

His Holiness Pope John places great stress on Eucharistic visits. He believes they will stimulate Christian virtue and procure hosts of saints. . . . In addition to the solemn celebration of Holy Mass and the general communion of different groups of the faithful, is a Eucharistic Congress anything other than a long and fervent 'visit to the Blessed Sacrament'? Now you must have observed, as we have, that in our day many souls neglect this touching practice of Catholic life, which is so dear to pious souls and

²¹ Martin Wolter, O.F.M., "The Liturgy of the Blessed Sacrament", *The Cord*, VII, No. 7: (July, 1957), p. 199.

²² Pope John XXIII, *op. cit.*, *Pope Speaks*, VI, No. 4, p. 335.

²³ Pope John XXIII, "Eucharistic Movement of France", *The Pope Speaks*, VI, No. 3, (Summer 1960), p. 292.

which consists in recollecting oneself in silence at the foot of the Tabernacle in order to restock one's soul with God's gifts. There are even some who, led by ideas foreign to traditional piety, seem to look upon this practice as of minor importance.

It is our fond wish that all participating in the congress at Lyons return to their homes convinced of the excellence of this practice and strive to make it appreciated and loved by others. Pause for a moment and think of the long hours which St. John Vianney spent in the beginning of his pastoral life, alone in his church before the Blessed Sacrament; think of the outpourings of faith and love of this great soul at the feet of his Master, and of the marvelous fruits of sanctity which he and so many others received as a result of these ardent Eucharistic prayers. There is no doubt that a flood of graces would descend on your families and on your country if more and more souls, enlightened and supported by the example of their shepherds, would become docile pupils in the school of the holy Cure of Ars. . . .²⁴

In concluding this chapter we may say that through the personal presence of the God-Man in each and every tabernacle of the world, Catholic worship is always constant, faith is made stronger. His living power from the tabernacle is made manifest in the lives of men, and hope is guided amid life's torments. The beacon light and pathway to the heavenly Father is mapped, Christ is the tabernacle and the companion of the wayfarer.

Father Faber's words succinctly draw this chapter to an end. They envelop the three stages of the Eucharist and are also a fitting exaltation for God's greatest gift to mankind,—the Eucharist, the indispensable element in the economy of spiritual life.

Thus all nature, angelic, human, brute, and inanimate, is gathered to the feet of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. The Blessed Sacrament is the King of nature, and the government is upon His shoulder, and His Name shall be called Wonderful, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace; and His empire shall be multiplied, and of His peace there shall be no end. What shall I say any more but that one other truth in which is our beatitude? With unutterable joy, with a complacency so worshipful and vast, a jubilee so inconceivably above all natural raptures, the Person of the Word has united this Sacred Humanity to the Divine Nature in Himself, that His Human Nature is anointed and flooded with the torrents and abysses of uncreated perfections; and Creation enters in beneath the veil, and the Creator has a created Nature, and takes intimate part in His own Creation.

There in the Blessed Sacrament is the actual living accomp-

²⁴ Pope John XXIII, "Blessings of the Eucharist", *The Pope Speaks*, VI, No. 2, (Spring 1960), p. 192.

ishment of that tremendous mystery, the source of all our hopes, the fountain of our joy, the eternal blessedness of every elect soul of man. What should we be, if God were not made Man? If the sun fell from the heavens, it were less dismal ruin, than if Jesus had never been, if the Word had never assumed our human nature to His Divine. How is it we can ever distract ourselves to think of earthly things? Are not all thoughts gathered into this one thought? Do not all lights go out in this light? What are all truths but pale satellites to this, shining only with a borrowed radiance from the Word made Flesh, the light that lighteth every man that is born into the world? All worship therefore be to the King of nature, dwelling amid His subjects in the lowly guise of the Sacramental Veils!²⁵

²⁵ Frederick W. Faber, *The Blessed Sacrament*, (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne Ltd., 1865), p. 402.

PAX ET BONUM

Through every street he goes today,
He greets his friends along the way.
In gentle tones you'll hear him say—
"PAX ET BONUM"!

I see that peace within his eyes
Not given to the worldly wise,
When even to the birds he cries—
"PAX ET BONUM"!

O humble friar, always know—
You do bring peace where'er you go;
For like St. Francis you bestow
"PAX ET BONUM"!

As a bearer of peace, he standing by
When the time has come for me to die,
Listen then, to my feeble reply—
"PAX ET BONUM"!

Elizabeth Metzger, *Tertius*

BOOK REVIEW

Inside a period of one month, two pamphlets were issued from the presses of St. Anthony's Guild in Paterson, New Jersey. The uneven quality of these two short publications is so striking as to seem deserving of some mention here.

BONAVENTURE VS. MODERN THOUGHT, by Liam Brophy, Ph.D., professes to set forth the thought of the Seraphic Doctor as an article for "modern thought" (Existentialism and Marxism). Regrettably, it does not achieve its purpose. There is much rhetoric about Bonaventure's metaphysics of light and the "inverted Franciscanism" of the Existentialist. The cheerlessness of contemporary thought as opposed to the gladness of Franciscan thought is much remarked, but little is done to explain the Franciscan thought. Too much space is devoted to the quarrel over poverty among the early Franciscans and to the sources of medieval philosophy; too little is given to the typically Bonaventurian insights into God, man, and the universe. What might have been a valuable, popular exposition of the Seraphic Doctor's genius and the pertinence of his message to the modern situation emerges, unfortunately, as a statement of generalities.

The author is guilty of several un-scholarly slips. He identifies Robert Grosseteste as a Franciscan and describes his *De libero arbitrio* as the definitive statement of the Franciscan doctrine concerning human liberty. He, furthermore, remarks that Bonaventure "accepted and elaborated the characteristically Franciscan doctrine that God would have become man even had Adam never sinned." This bland assumption that Bonaventure accepted the doctrine of the absolute primacy and predestination of Christ suggests that the author has misinterpreted the philosophical and theological thought of the man who wrote, "*Præcipua ratio Incarnationis videtur fuisse re-*

demptio humani generis . . ." The author is also guilty of a misuse of the communication of idioms in his remarks on the "Divine Humanity."

These several errors, taken singly, may appear trivial, but, in a work that aspires to popularize the thought of the great Seraphic Doctor, they constitute an unfortunate lapse and do disservice to the cause of Franciscan scholarship.

In sharp contrast to the pamphlet reviewed above is **CHRIST YOUR KING** by Michael Meilach, O.F.M. Although the format and cover of this work are not so attractive as that of the former, the quality is quite superior. It deals with the doctrine of the absolute primacy and predestination of Christ. The work is divided into three sections. The first deals with the Scriptural basis of the doctrine; the second presents a survey of the doctrine's development over the past seventy years; and the final section contains an invaluable exposition of the devotional ramifications of Christ's primacy. Two appendices conclude the work, one containing an historical footnote to the famous Act of Consecration to Christ the King, and the other containing the Mass and certain prayers in honor of Christ the King.

The pamphlet is unpretentious, popular yet profound. It is written with sincerity, conviction and simplicity. Its unpretentious style enhances and brings out its deep doctrinal and devotional content. Its clarity and unction make it a valuable source for religious and preachers seriously interested in imbibing and communicating their Franciscan heritage. Here is a highly recommended little work on a much misunderstood doctrine. The correct understanding of it seems important enough to demand at least a thoughtful reading of a truly inspirational booklet: **CHRIST YOUR KING** is a "must" for the Franciscan.
M. K.