

Eleventh Meeting of the Franciscan Teaching Sisterhoods. The theme of the congress was *The Holy Eucharist and Christian Unity*.

Among the papers enjoyed by those privileged to attend were the following: "The Ecumenical Movement in General," by Fr. Roger Matzerath, S.A.; "The Kerygmatic Approach to the Eucharist," by Bro. Isidore McCarron, O.S.F.; "The Eucharist, Bond of Christian Unity," by Fr. Sylvester Makarewicz, O.F.M.; "The Dogmatic Foundations of the Unity of the Church," by Fr. Sabbas J. Killian, O.F.M.; and "A Survey of the Eucharist as the Bond of Unity before the Council of Trent," by Fr. Berard Marthaler, O.F.M. Conv. Each of the papers was followed by a lively discussion in which the Sisters took part.

The presence at the meeting of the various black, brown, and grey habits, all worn by daughters of the one Seraphic Father, was a thrilling expression of the individuality in solid union which marks Franciscanism. Attendance by several Superiors General and Provincial was concrete evidence of their interest in furthering the knowledge of theology among their subjects. Yet, the sight of the many participants did remind one of the communities which were not represented, and the evident value of these meetings stirs the hope that attendance at them will continue to increase.

Papal Tribute to Franciscan

Speaking to an audience of two-thousand visitors on June 1963, Pope John reminded that it was the feast of the Holy Name, and assured them his own fervent devotion to "most beautiful and sweet Name of Jesus."

The Pope went on to praise the man who had been responsible for the spread of devotion, St. Bernardino of Siena. Expressing the fond hope St. Bernardino soon may be declared a Doctor of the Church, he presented a special challenge to Franciscans, reminding them of Saint's custom of inscribing the Holy Name of Jesus on a stone the base of a new building as an act of faith and love. A picture of the monogram designed and used by St. Bernardino appeared in the January, 1963 number of THE CORD. The symbol may be seen even today on some buildings in Siena and its environs. Testimony to the efforts of a fifteenth-century apostle of devotion to the Most Holy Name. The thought occurs that a twentieth-century Franciscan might take up the challenge of Holy Father by trying to bring private lives at least, to participate in this devotion, thereby continuing the work of our sainted confessor.

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL 130
BOND OF BROTHERHOOD
Fr. John Forest Faddish, O.F.M. 131
THE FRIAR AND THE LADY
Fr. Jeremiah Crosby, O.F.M. Cap. 138
DEVELOPING THE FRANCISCAN SPIRIT THROUGH READING
Sr. Mary Sheila, O.S.F. 145
WANTED: MORE CRITICAL CATHOLICS
Thomas Donnelly 151
MARY IN THE CAPUCHIN FAMILY
Fr. Linus Bertram, O.F.M. Cap. 156
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Symbol of the
real presence of God



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The WORD

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Good Morning, Good People!

May the Lord give you peace!

During this vivacious time of year, when "the song of the dove is heard in our land," the truly Franciscan heart cannot but thrill to the joyous melody of May. But yet more precious than song of the dove — or even of that jester, the mockingbird — is another seasonal air: our Lady's Litany of Loretto.

Perceptive souls will detect a more than casual similarity between these two sounds of May.

To the listener whose interest is exclusively ornithological, bird-song is the annual expression of natural instinct. He whose view of life centers upon man finds in the same melody a blessed balm for mankind. The man of faith both acknowledges and transcends these two horizons: to him the spring-song of a bird is explained ultimately by nature's unconscious hymn of worship to its Creator; it is the mystery of a living thing expending a small portion of its tiny life, throwing away a bit of its substance, to glorify Him who made it out of nothing.

It is not a distortion of truth, perhaps, to state that one may discern a similar division among those of us to whom May again brings the public recitation of the Litany of the Most Blessed Virgin. To the inattentive the Litany represents the mechanical repetition of the familiar phrases of the annual "May Devotions"; while no one, surely, would deny that the very attendance at this devotion has its value, yet a merely physical presence does leave something to be desired. More advanced souls will view the recitation of this beautiful prayer as the source of many graces, both for others and for themselves: the recurring plea to our Mother to *Pray for us!* cannot fail to bring our Lady's blessing down on her children. But, while fully conscious of the necessity and reality of the gift of grace even for the most perfect of men, we venture to assert that Mary's litany is, in its full significance, an act of glorification — of worship given to God through veneration of His Blessed Mother.

One acknowledges, to be sure, the implicit presence of repentance, thanksgiving, and petition in this prayer. But the formal nature of the Litany is that of praise. Recounting as it does the glories of Mary — those of the Old Testament and the New, her mighty prerogatives and little virtues, her historical deeds and mystical titles — it is the song of a child telling his mother all the things he likes about her, and out of sheer joy, glorifying God for what she is.

The Editors

Bond Of Brotherhood

Fr. John Forest Faddish, O.F.M.

The more one studies the Seraph of Assisi, the more one begins to perceive how God used him as an instrument of His divine wisdom. God seems to have given him the gift of understanding human nature, and to have shown him the best means whereby we may arrive at our ultimate goal. This becomes especially apparent as one studies his writings, and witnesses the manner in which he couples the various Christian virtues; e.g. in his "Salute to the Virtues" he says: "Hail, Queen Wisdom! May the Lord save you with your sister holy pure simplicity! O Lady, Holy Poverty, may the Lord save you with your sister holy obedience!" At first glance, one wonders what connection simplicity has with wisdom; yet a little reflection upon it will help us to see that the two must go hand in hand, if one wishes to remain a true follower of Christ.

In the sixth chapter of the Rule of the Friars Minor, we witness another instance of Francis' genius for coupling virtues. "The Friars shall appropriate nothing to them-

selves," Francis reminds us, "neither a house nor place nor anything. . . . This is the sublimity of the highest poverty which has made you, my dearest brothers, heirs and kings of the kingdom of heaven: poor in goods, but exalted in virtue." Thus Francis showed that it was his desire that Lady Poverty should strip the friars of everything they possess, but in return that it will make to them a gift of the only virtue which really counts — seraphic charity. He continues: "And wherever the friars are and meet other friars, let them show to one another that they are of the same household. And let one make known his needs with confidence to the other; for if a mother love and nourish her child of the flesh, how much more faithfully should one love and nourish his spiritual brother!"

If the first foundation of the Seraphic Order rests on **POVERTY**, the second is none other than **BROTHERLY LOVE** (*fraternitas*). The two are inter-related. The Franciscan who does not possess the spirit of poverty will be a selfish individual, seeking what is conducive to his own, rather than the common, good. Given over to self-seeking, he is hardly in a position to advance in brother-

Fr. John, Assistant Editor of THE **CORD**, is chairman of the retreat band of the Province of the Holy Name.

The Family Spirit

ly love. He will view everyone and everything not through the telescope of "YOU" but rather "I" and "ME". And when a Franciscan views life in this fashion, he gets nothing but a distorted vision of what the Franciscan life should be. If we were to scan the writings of the Poverello, I am convinced that nowhere would we find a more beautiful expression of the ideal of Seraphic Charity than in this chapter of the Franciscan Rule. It gives us a glimpse of the real Francesco Bernardino. Francis, as we all know, shied away from any titles of distinction and honor — he would have himself called nothing other than Brother Francis, the minister of the Lesser Brothers. And if Francis had a pet peeve, I do not think that I would be wrong in stating that it was his insistence upon "*fraternitas*". Anyone coming to join his little band of penitents had to become a "brother" to the group: he had to blend in with the whole, or he was sent away. In his First Rule Francis uses the term "brother" 104 times, and in the Rule of 1223 he uses it 47 times, and 12 times in his Testament. And let us not forget that if the day-to-day custom of addressing every member of the First Order (priests and brothers alike) as "Brother" has fallen into oblivion, we must still sign ourselves officially as "*Frater*" or "Brother". The official signature of the Minister General of the Order bears witness to this statement.

Being brothers, however, was not enough for Francis of Assisi. He wished that a family spirit would prevail among those who enrolled under his banner. He wanted his brothers to feel that they had the confidence and support of one another. This seemed all the more important to him, if he wanted them to be effective apostles in the world. Perhaps Francis was driven into the arms of the God of Charity by some of his contemporaries. Their conduct was anything but complimentary to those who were in possession of the Gospels, who were supposed to be followers of the God of Charity. As Francis listened to the rantings and ravings of these fanatical reformers, he must have been thoroughly disgusted with them. If indeed he had he would do it, but his manner would be that of the Divine Reformer who won over the world through love. Yet he knew equally well that before he and his brethren could win over the world, they must first be able to witness the fruition of love among themselves.

But Francis was not satisfied with any type of love for his brethren. He reminded them of the love of a mother for her children. You and I have perhaps witnessed the depth of a mother's love as we beheld her willingly giving up her life in order to spare the life of the child she

brought into the world. Wonderful though this love is, Francis would have a still greater love of his brothers; he would have a spiritual, supernatural love which transcends all material considerations and has but one goal in mind — the spiritual good of my brother Franciscan. Each of us could profitably examine his conscience in the light of this ideal, and I am sure we would find much room for improvement. How often are my actions regulated not by solid principles but rather by the principle of human respect. I find myself willing to compromise just to maintain my popularity among my brethren. And if I am a superior, do I ever really stop to think of the judgement that awaits me, and the answer I will make to my eternal Judge for the subject who could have been helped to greater goals, except for my personal indifference towards him? Indeed, all of us could stand being a little more generous with our love and our time.

This is why I feel that Francis was not the dreamer people often picture him to be. Francis was in touch with reality; hence, he foresaw that just as in any normal family difficulties are bound to arise, so would it be with the Franciscan family. Therefore he said: "And let one make known his needs with confidence to the other" It is the most natural thing in the world to turn to those closest to us for advice and help when we

need it. Yet is this not one of the paradoxes of nature, that often the last ones we turn to for help are those closest to us? But should it really be that way? No! Certainly, not according to Francis' way of thinking. The Poverello wanted his friars to feel that in their brother they had someone who was vitally interested in them as individuals. And this vital interest is nothing other than a manifestation of that spirit of Franciscan reverence for the dignity of the human person. Reverence demands that I accord an object the respect and attention that its inner worth demands. And when I behold a confrere, I begin to realize that here is a creature possessing a unique participation in God's life, the object of God's special affection which called him to a state of closer friendship with his Creator, through the Franciscan life. What my confrere does with his life will not affect my relationship with him. For my part, I must continue to see God's image in him.

In the tenth chapter of the Rule, speaking of the admonition and correction of the friars, Francis presents a beautiful picture which shows us that he always kept the image of his friars, as objects of God's special affection, in mind. Here he says: "And wheresoever there are friars who know and feel that they are not able to observe the Rule spiritually, they ought to and can recur to their Ministers. But the Ministers should receive

them charitably and kindly, and show so great familiarity toward them that they may speak and act with them as masters with their servants, for thus it ought to be, that the Ministers be the servants of all the friars." Here seniority is reversed, and Francis wants the superior to act with the subject as though the subject were his master and superior, and to listen patiently and attentively to what the subject has to say. Where could we find greater expression of reverence for the human person than in these words of the *Poverello*?

Individuality

Yes, we Franciscans must begin by being realists; we must learn to deal with beings as they were created by God. Francis never intended to have his followers cast in a common mold. He stood in awe before the human person, and felt that his mission in life must be to help this person become what God intended him to become.

Hence, when I regard my confrere, I shall see in him a creature formed to the image and likeness of God — gifted with a soul that defies destruction — and destined to live on with God forever in heaven. God loves this person and has arranged each smallest detail of his life. There must remain an element of mystery about this person — for his inner freedom may not be violated, and there are

details of his relationship with God which I could hardly glean from his external conduct. I must learn to cooperate with him in his freedom, whether I have authority over him or not. To be sure, this will call for a great deal of understanding, tact, gentleness, patience, delicacy, and even self-effacement. My confrere is free, and it is with a free man that I must work, both for his present as well as for his ultimate good. My relationship with him, therefore, is a serious duty for me, since I am responsible before God for the fulfillment of that duty. If I perform it well, then by the very fact that my confrere arrives at his perfection, I can feel that this is partly my work and my contribution to the good of the Seraphic family. And let's face it, we will never fulfill this obligation unless we put our best into this relationship with our fellow Franciscans.

This is the picture of every MAN, but especially of the MAN who is my religious CONFRERE, member of my religious family, bosom friend or pet aversion — be he who he is — one thing is certain — He is God's handiwork and a sacred mysterious world in himself, designed for perfection and for eternity where God is awaiting his arrival. A view other than this is an unrealistic one; it fails to take into account the deep reality of PERSON in any relationship. If only we Franciscans could begin to view our fellow-Francis-

cans in this light, attempting to understand them not in the light of MY make-up and MY personality, but rather in the light of the way God created and endowed them, what a new world would open up before us?

Program of Action

Let this suffice for the theorizing. I am sure many must be asking themselves by this time: How can we, twentieth-century Franciscans, implement the ideals expressed by St. Francis on charity in the sixth chapter of his Rule? Surely a whole treatise could easily be written on this question, but space demands that we confine ourselves to a few practical considerations.

1. **APPRECIATIVE ESTEEM OF YOUR NEIGHBORS' GOOD QUALITIES.** All of us are quick on the draw when it comes to finding fault with others, but we are seldom willing to admit their good qualities. Would not religious life be a rather drab existence if we all had the same endowments of nature? "Variety is the spice of life" we are told, and nowhere does variety work greater good than in religious life. For here you have a select group of individuals, brought together by a loving Providence, with special talents to give to God and souls, through the Church and the Franciscan Order. Take a group of novices or newly professed religious; witness their

enthusiasm, their zeal for souls. Project yourself, however, fifteen or twenty years hence, and I would wager that this once enthusiastic group, save for a select few, will have turned sour through disappointment or disillusionment, through misunderstanding. Most of them will be satisfied to coast upon the sea of indifference, and only a comparatively few will have turned their crosses into crowns. Why should this be so? Perhaps these few may have the misfortune of meeting up with a superior who is too accustomed to the limelight, and is unwilling to share it with anyone, let alone a subject. Or perhaps their own equals, motivated by a spirit of jealousy will help suppress the good they could otherwise do for God and souls. This must never be the case in the Seraphic Order. Francis had the ability to bring out the very best in each of his brothers, and we must cultivate this same ability. A helping hand, a word of praise given at the right moment, can serve to lift a person from the valley of despondency to the mountain of hope. And what have I lost in the act? Nothing! As a matter of fact, I have gained merit, and perhaps also the undying gratitude of him whom I have helped.

2. **SHARE YOUR LIFE WITH YOUR FELLOW-RELIGIOUS.** Your confreres in religion could make use of all the affection you can spare them. You need not fear

being too miserly here, for the only person you can cheat here is God, and this possibility diminishes and disappears if you love your neighbor for HIS sake.

We Franciscans were never meant to live as hermits. Francis wanted instead to have his friars receive the benefits (both spiritual and material) which life in common brings with itself. Hence our activities, and even the apostolate, must be regulated in such a manner as to allow some time for our fellow religious. Speaking to a group of hospital Sisters on April 24, 1957, Pope Pius XII reminded them that "you must guard against those things which take you away for too long or too often from the common life." It is not difficult to envision a religious to whom his work becomes of paramount importance, and who begins to withdraw by degrees from his community. Unless such a religious reorders his life, giving proper time and attention to his confreres, he is headed for almost certain self-destruction. My community is a necessity for me, and I for it. Recreation is not an appendage to the religious life; it is just as much a part of it as are prayer and work. And it can be equally meritorious if undertaken with the proper intention.

3. LEARN PATIENCE AND HUMILITY. St. Francis said: "Where there is patience and humility, there is neither anger nor loss

of composure." Where you have any given number of individuals taken from different racial and national backgrounds, from varying degrees and types of culture, you are bound to have some irritation. But we must not let the irritation assume proportions it should not have. Think of the oyster. When a grain of sand finds its way into its shell, the oyster moves over and makes a pearl out of the drab intruder. People, however, are not oysters, and when anything gets under their skin or on their nerves, the by-product is seldom a pearl. Yet we can turn these irritations and annoyances into pearls of great price for eternity by bearing patiently with them. To be sure, it may take a great deal of humility to remain patient under provocation, but it will spare us the misery of atoning for words we wish had never left our lips.

4. LEARN TO LAUGH AT YOURSELF. A Franciscan must never take himself too seriously. The egotist can never bear having anyone laugh at his efforts, even his failures, nor can he ever laugh at himself. But then we would hardly say that an egotist is an ideal Franciscan. We will learn to work faithfully, we all want to be successful in the work obedience assigns us, but if we make a mess of things, we won't be disheartened, but rather shrug our shoulders saying: "Well, I did it with a pure intention. I tried my very best."

Here again humility will be one of our greatest assets.

5. CULTIVATE A CHEERFUL SPIRIT. A smiling heart is always in order, even in the cloister. How often have I wished that those perennial reminders in our convent corridors could be changed to read "SMILE" instead of "SILENCE". Don't label me a heretic, please! A smile does not break silence, nor does it interrupt my union with God, but it does pay honor to God whom I see in my fellow-religious. A smile is contagious, it radiates cheer; a frown too is contagious, but it radiates only gloom and despair. And Francis of Assisi always reminded his followers that the only person entitled to be gloomy is one in the state of sin. Nothing pleased him more than a cheerful spirit. And let us not forget that a smile, the external expression of a cheerful spirit, springs not from the head but rather from the heart. Its essence is love. We will find that as our spirit of cheerfulness increases, so will our spirit of charity. We will develop into the optimists that Francis so much wanted every Franciscan to be.

Franciscan Bibliographical Index

Sister Mary Sheila, O.S.F., *Developing the Franciscan Spirit Through Reading: a Selective Bibliographical Index*, St. Gabriel's Hospital, Little Falls, Minn., 1961, pp. v, 100.

Sister Mary Sheila, O.S.F., of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, and author of the article on p. 145 of this number of the *THE CORD*, has performed no small service in compiling this partial index of Franciscana. Modest and unpretentious, the work "is merely selective, and is not, therefore, an attempt to present all of the available material on Franciscan spiritual thought" (p. iv). Nevertheless, the editors of *THE CORD* think that this work would be very valuable, especially to young Franciscans and those who train them.

Part I lists, and briefly describes the contents of, forty-five books (in English only), divided according to subject; Part II presents a subject-and-author index of pertinent articles drawn from nine periodicals. The work, comprising 100 pages, is mimeographed and bound in a soft cover; we have been unable to determine its price.

The Friar And The Lady

Fra. Jeremiah Crosby, O.F.M. Cap.

It was the summer of 1866. The Italian city of Genoa was suffering from one of its severest plagues in centuries. The cholera had swept down upon the seaport a year before, first cutting off the life-stream of a few people but, increasing now with the summer's heat, it mercilessly claimed its toll.

Terrified citizens fled the city as hunted men before the enemy. Shops were closed. Docks were deserted. Streets were empty, except for the bodies of those the cholera had claimed.

It was August now. And the cholera was at its height. The bishops had ordered special prayers and services to relieve the suffering, but still the cholera crept on, claiming hundreds of lives. It seemed that prayer alone was not what God wanted.

Up on the hill overlooking the city, in the peaceful chapel of the Immaculate Conception, a robust but tired friar clad in the brown Franciscan robe knelt in prayer. As he knelt there he came to realize what it was that God

wanted. Looking up at the image of his Immaculate Mother — that Mother who once had stood watching her Son lay down His life for His friends — Brother Francis Mary of Camporosso solemnly offered to lay down his life for his friends.

Our Lady interceded with her Son, who accepted the offering in a month. And today the simple Capuchin lay brother is known as the saviour of his city. It is for this reason, probably more than any other single act of the life which he spent for others, that the humble friar who offered his life to redeem Genoa from the plague was declared a saint by Pope John XXIII last year on the feast of Mary's Immaculate Conception.

Boyhood

The life of Francis Mary can best be explained in its relation to our Lady, for it was to her that he had consecrated his whole being. All the extraordinary grace which turned countless sinners back to God, all his powers of prophecy, of his heart-reading, of his continual union with God, can be understood only in relation to Mary, for it was to her that he accredited them all.

138

Mary had brought Christ into the world, and Christ had given her to all His members that she might be their Mother too, so that, through her, they might return to Him. It was only natural then, that Francis Mary would give himself completely to her as a child. She was simply his Mother.

Mary played the leading role in his life from its beginning. He was born in 1804 on December 27, the feast of St. John, the disciple to whom our Lord had given His Mother from the Cross. His parents were simple peasants who ran a small farm in the rugged countryside of the Italian Riviera.

In his early years, while Anselm his father tended the sheep in the hills, Maria his mother instilled in him ideals which he would carry with him throughout his life. During their free time the Croese family used to visit the many shrines to our Lady which dotted the countryside around their home in Camporosso. The most famous of these was the shrine of Our Lady of the Lake. Here that love for Mary typical of the Italians flowed over into their many acts of devotion. John used to watch them with all the wonderment of a growing boy.

In the evening after the work was finished, Anselm, Maria, John, and his two brothers and sister, would gather in their little home set high in the hills to recite the family rosary. It was not long before our Lady showed her approval

of this family custom, as well her predilection for "Little John."

One day when he was twelve, it happened that John was coming home from the fields when he came upon a group of young boys who were acting impurely. He too was at the age of great trial and, for a moment, stood motionless watching them. Before he was overcome by the same temptation, he suddenly felt his arm seized by what felt like an invisible hand which pushed him homeward. Later, when he was in religious life, he confided that the force was his Immaculate Mother, who had saved him from the occasion which otherwise would have sullied his purity.

John kept this secret to himself and returned to the fields. However, it was not for long. A year later he fell dangerously ill with a disease which the doctor could not diagnose. But he could diagnose its effect: it would be fatal.

The family immediately turned to Mary. Surely she who had guided them all these years would not abandon them now. They prayed to Our Lady of the Lake, entrusting their son and brother to her care. Almost miraculously, from the time they began to beg her intercession "Little John" began to feel better. They soon were able to carry him to the shrine to thank Mary for her wonderful gift. Within a few weeks he was back in the fields.

It was this cure which helped

to convince young John that Mary had a certain special love for him. It was only natural that he would show his love for her in return.

He used to gather his friends around him to tell them about the glories of his heavenly Mother. If there was time to spare, he would lead them on little pilgrimages to the many shrines and altars dedicated to the Mother of God in the area, much like children of our day go on hikes. On their way they would visit the sick, the poor, and the needy, offering them all the help that they could.

Vocation to Religious Life

When he was eighteen, he felt he was being called to join the Conventual branch of the Franciscan Order. Leaving home would be hard on his family — not to have his help in the fields nor his company at home, not to hear his voice at the family rosary — but this is what God wanted, and that was all that mattered. It was what Anselm and Maria wanted too.

After two years with the Conventuals, he began to wonder if this was really what our Lord and our Lady wanted him to do. One day while he was at prayer in the church of Our Lady of Grace, Mary presented him an actual grace which answered his prayer. He happened to notice a young Capuchin friar deep in contemplation before the Blessed Sacrament. This was what he needed; he was

called to join this branch of the Franciscan family.

He received the brown habit of the Capuchins on December 17, 1825. The superiors had decided to give him the name of the Order's founder, St. Francis. In addition to this, John asked that he be given the name of his heavenly Mother. They consented. From now on he would be known as Brother Francis Mary of Camporosso.

Profession

The year in novitiate flew by quickly; his profession signalled the beginning of a new type of life: the apostolate of continuing the work of the redemption and sanctification of souls. On December 28, 1826, he was assigned to the Monastery of the Immaculate Conception in Genoa. Here, under Mary's maternal guidance, he would spend the rest of his life. And from here, through the grace which comes through her, he would continue the work of her Son in saving souls.

As he did at the time of every important event in his life, Francis Mary received permission to visit the shrines of our Lady before he began his new work. There was the Church of Our Lady of Guardia, the Church of Our Lady of Acquasanta and, finally, the Church of Our Lady of Grace where Mary had first given him the gift of recognizing his Capuchin vocation. In his visits here he

displayed those Marian characteristics which would remain with him the rest of his days.

His simple devotion to the Mother of God has something different from that of other saints. He seems to have had an inner feeling of the abiding presence and power of Mary all about him. "She is the Mother of Divine Goodness," he often said. He gave himself to her as a child to a Mother. This affected his words, his devotion, and his whole manner of acting. It was simply childlike, full of confidence and abandonment to her maternal care.

Francis Mary first ministered to the sick in the infirmary, but after three years the superiors, aware of his evident holiness and prudence which was even then apparent, appointed him to the task of questor.

The Capuchin questor was a familiar sight to the Italian in those days. One often saw the brown-robed man with a plain wooden Rosary hung from a white cord going about the cities from door to door begging alms for the bodily needs of the community. Questing was difficult for Francis Mary. His inwardness, lack of learning, and natural simplicity produced a natural fear of the work. Yet, this was the work of holy obedience; and hadn't our Lord said that we are like His Mother when we do the will of God?

After a few years questing in the

hills around Genoa, the job seemed to be too much for him. He had great temptations to ask to be relieved of the position, that he might spend more time in the solitude of the monastery. But then he thought of our Lord, and how He never hesitated to do the task assigned to Him. He left the matter in the hands of his heavenly Mother.

Mary then showed what happens when her children trust in her care. Not long after this severe trial, Francis Mary was called into the superior's room where he heard the decision he once had dreaded: he would be sent to the city to quest. This is what God wanted. In his humorous way he accepted, saying, "I am good for nothing, but I am prepared for anything!" The next forty years gave him the chance to be prepared for anything.

Our Lady's Questor

Life in Genoa can be viewed from many angles: from the houses of the worker-families, where simple faith was the rule; from the mansions of the rich up in the hills, where one found a good deal of complacent pride; from the shacks around the docks inhabited by the rough sailors, whose hearts were frequently assailed as their hands. Francis Mary came to them all. But he was not alone. He brought his Mother along with him, and, as he fingered her rosary while trudging

along the streets, it was she who gave him strength to carry on.

Before he left the monastery each morning, Francis would visit the chapel of her Immaculate Conception, begging her to guide him through the day, offering all his labors to her. Leaving the chapel, he went about the city, returning spiritual favors for the people's material offerings.

It was not long before the tall, dark, and austere lay brother became the center of attraction. People felt drawn to him, sensing his union with God. The poor welcomed him with open arms. The pride of the rich melted in face of his humility. He was the only one who was allowed free access to the great docks of the city.

The word of his holiness quickly spread: tales of immediate cures, stories of hardened hearts being read like a book, even accounts of prophecies fulfilled were heard. Soon they began calling the quiet, unassuming friar who walked about their streets praying his beads, "*Il Padre Santo*, the holy father."

Inwardly he would cringe at the name. And he would try to stop them, saying, "I am not a priest; I am a lay brother. And," he would add with a touch of comedy, "I am not holy; I am a great sinner." Nevertheless, the name stuck. And that for good reasons.

Once a ship was nearing the port of Genoa loaded with men and

supplies. However, before it reached the harbor, a violent storm lashed down upon the panic-stricken sailors, who knew that they would perish.

In the midst of the shouting and turmoil, the captain shouted out, "Men, if Christ doesn't save us now, we'll all go down to the bottom. Let us pray to our Blessed Lady and to the *Padre Santo* that at least our lives might be spared." The sailors quieted down a bit and began to pray.

Suddenly above the ship a brilliant light appeared, surrounding the figure of a Capuchin friar. He was kneeling with arms outstretched in the form of a cross. His eyes were raised to heaven as though beseeching our Lady to have mercy on them. The vision lasted only a few minutes, but when it left, it took the storm along with it.

The sailors came to the Monastery of the Immaculate Conception after they landed, to thank their benefactor. When he came out to them he answered their words of praise, saying, "No, my dear men, it was not I who saved you that night; it was our Blessed Lady. All that I remember is that while I was in prayer that night, I seemed to see a ship in danger of being wrecked. I prayed to our Lord, that, for the love of His Mother, He might save the poor unfortunate sailors from their danger. So you have to thank our Lord and our Blessed Lady, not

this poor lay brother."

The response was always the same: Go thank our Lord and Lady.

"Go and pray to Our Lady of Grace," he would say to those who asked for favors, "and tell her that I sent you." Invariably their request would be granted. It was the gospel all over again. The blind saw. The lame walked. . . .

All the miraculous wonders which he worked never sullied his humility. His childlike simplicity was such that in the midst of paeans of praise, he would feel no pride at all. After all, he reasoned, hadn't he asked our Lady to do it?

The mystical aura which surrounded him kept him above the pride of worldly concerns that he might penetrate their spiritual qualities. When people praised him, he merely passed it on to Mary. He reasoned that she was all-powerful. Thus he put into practice the *Memorare* of St. Bernard which he loved to pray throughout the day: "never was it known that *anyone* who fled to thy protection was left unaided."

Often the strong and muscular friar would return to the monastery in the evening completely exhausted. Many times he would carry home much less than he had received. Like his father St. Francis, he had given his alms to those less fortunate than himself. However before he could go into the peace and solitude of the cloister,

he would have to comfort and console the crowd of people who waited in the courtyard for his return. There, beneath the statue of the Madonna, he would listen to their endless litany of troubles, sorrows, and requests.

When he had finished listening to the people, he would enter the Church, now dim with the shadows of a setting sun. While votive candles flickered patterns on the walls, the weary friar knelt alone at the feet of his Immaculate Queen telling her of his day's work and forwarding all the people's requests to her hands.

In 1866 the people's requests were all the same. Virtually the whole city besieged him to beg our Lady to deliver them from the cholera. Francis Mary had done all he could to console families who stood by helpless while their loved ones died. He had prayed fervently to our Lady that the scourge might pass. But, just as it took her Son to save the world, it would take another victim to save Genoa.

Death

One night when he was with the brethren discussing the crisis, he said quietly, "My dear brothers, I want to put an end to it all and go back to God. Pray for me that I may obtain this grace." A few nights later he solemnly offered himself to God in front of the altar of the Immaculate Conception. It was at this time that God revealed to him that He had

accepted his offering, and told him that he would die in a month.

Francis now made his last pilgrimage to the shrines he loved so dearly, asking our Lady to guide him in his last few days on earth.

On the 15th of September he was sent to bed with a serious illness which soon was diagnosed as the cholera. He was given Holy Viaticum and then asked for one final request: that he might die in the oldest and roughest habit in imitation of the poverty of Christ and Mary.

To those who asked him to pray to our Lady for a miracle, Francis would say, "If God wants me, I must go. May God's holy will be done. If He accepts my sacrifice and calls me, I am well content." God was calling him. On the 17th he received Extreme Unction. While the prayers for the dying were being recited by the brethren surrounding his bed, with his last

breath he whispered the names of Jesus and Mary. These, his last words of farewell to the earth, were his words of greeting in heaven.

Almost immediately, wonderful signs began to be worked through his intercession. The first came within minutes. When the doctor came to examine his body, all the signs of the cholera had disappeared. Within a few days they had completely vanished from the whole city.

As the miracles of Francis Mary increased, so did the devotion of the people. They, especially the people of Genoa, have been instrumental in proclaiming the story of their *Padre Santo* to the world.

It really is a very simple story. It's a story that could happen to anyone who would play his part in it as Francis Mary played his. It's just the story of a friar and a Lady. And it's all about surrounding his bed, with his last

Developing The Franciscan Spirit Through Reading

St. Mary Sheila, O.S.F.

From time to time over a period of years, various Franciscan leaders have raised their voices to call for a more complete realization of the original spirit of the Seraphic Father in the lives of his followers. They have re-emphasized the essential need for instilling in Franciscan novices and clerics a deeply-rooted Seraphic spirit. They have urged all who deal with the formation of both men and women religious to re-examine the strength and vitality of the genuine Franciscan spirit as it exists in their charges. They have attempted to stimulate an intensified reaffirmation of the Franciscan vocation in all those who, of whatever age or sex, wear the habit and cord of St. Francis.

Thirteen years ago, the Rev. Philoheus Boehner, O.F.M., noted theologian, philosopher, and co-founder of the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University, expressed grave concern over the

apparent lack of understanding of their vocation on the part of Franciscans in general. In the first number of the then newly-founded magazine, THE CORD, Father Philoheus pointed out the factors preventing religious from becoming truly Franciscan:

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

It is a deplorable fact, and one that has been brought to our attention time and again by the Ministers General of our Order that all too many of us seem but dimly aware of what our vocation as Franciscans requires of us. Apparently we do not understand with sufficient clarity and penetration what it means to live

Let those who are appointed to be over others glory in that superiority only as much as if they had been appointed to the task of washing the feet of their brothers; and the more their distress at losing their superiority would outweigh their distress at losing the office of washing feet, so much the more are they placing their soul in grave danger.

—St. Francis' *Words of Admonition, IV.*

Librarian at St. Gabriel's School of Nursing in Little Falls, Minn., Sr. Sheila came to our notice because of her compilation of the Bibliographical Index described on p. 137 of this number of THE CORD. Sr. is a member of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception.

and think and act in the spirit of our Seraphic Founder and Exemplar.

... The matter should not be dismissed lightly. A religious who fails to reproduce in his own life the ideals laid down by the rule of his Order must realize that he is in grave danger of falling utterly in his vocation. As Franciscans we are bound to live according to the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi... for if our spiritual life bears no resemblance to that of our Father, we must fear to be cut off from the rich heritage promised to his true sons and daughters. . . .

We owe it to ourselves to understand the origin and genius of our vocation as Franciscans and to develop our interior life according to that distinctive kind of asceticism traditionally fostered in the Order. Failure to do this very often results in a hybrid type of spirituality that must of necessity prove ultimately sterile and fruitless.¹

While the concern expressed by Father Philotheus was largely directed to members of the Order in general, he was at the same time particularly disturbed by the apparent lack of a true spirit of Franciscanism among the many religious members of women's branches of the Order, most of whom he described as being "hardly distinguishable by their spirit from members of other congregations."

In this context the phrase, "hybrid type of spirituality" is

deserving of particular attention. Spiritual formation programs are being emphasized today more than ever, owing to the increased demand that religions be able to meet the spiritual and intellectual challenges that confront them in all spheres of their apostolic work. Great emphasis has been placed on the Sister Formation movement in the past several years. Much credit is due to those zealous organizers who have so successfully launched a project to give Sisters the spiritual and intellectual training they need. But for Franciscans there is a very real danger that they may, in their enthusiasm and zeal for this program, lose sight of their own "Franciscan Formation Movement" launched over seven-hundred years ago, and which, if followed out consistently, will truly form them into replicas of Francis — other Christs. It is relative to this point that prudent consideration for avoiding a type of "hybrid spirituality" might be given.

How then, shall we approach a truly Franciscan spiritual development program?

Since it is through reading and study and reflection that the major part of intellectual and spiritual formation takes place, it goes without saying that there is a vital need to give special attention to fostering and developing a love for Franciscan reading. "We become what we read." Therefore the Franciscan who undertakes to intensify

his own vocation has the need and obligation to study all aspects and phases of his Franciscan way of life as it is portrayed by solidly formed Franciscan masters, in order that he may grow in and deepen his appreciation of the life he has embraced. And such an appreciation will gradually and eventually ripen into a profound understanding and mature love.

That there has been some lack of emphasis on the need of applying this means to incite Franciscans to greater heights of seraphic perfection has been felt for some time. Father Cyril Piontek, O.F.M., addressing himself to the subject of spiritual direction, asked the questions:

Is it not a fact that we are but eager to follow the dictates of ascetical writers outside the Franciscan family? Is it not true that our Franciscan libraries are filled to the brim with works of other than Franciscan Spiritual Masters?²

And in 1948, in his encyclical letter, *Divina Providentia*, the former Minister General of the Friars Minor, the Very Rev. Pacificus Perantoni, O.F.M., wrote to the friars in a similar vein:

As far as possible to him, every friar should apply himself to reading notably the works of men in whom our Order has produced its greatest masters — first of all, of course, the books of St. Bonaventure and Bl. John Duns Scotus—in order to whet their mind and add force

to it in the pursuit of fruitful meditation, cultured address, and blamelessness and piety.

In emphasizing the need for recourse to Franciscan sources, Father Pacificus reinforced the observations made earlier by Father Cyril; he further added, however, that it was not his intention to disparage the works of writers of other Orders, many of whom were noteworthy for their contributions, but merely to make it clear that:

... their genius in spiritual matters generally differs in incentive from that of our authors, inasmuch as it does not lead straight to the heady waters flowing from our Seraphic well-springs. Yes, it is possible that their writings may gradually alienate less wary souls from the spirit of St. Francis, or diminish or modify that spirit. We must therefore keep carefully in sight and give prudent consideration to the characteristics which distinguish the genuine way of life from the rest.³

We often hear it said that Franciscans have not produced as notable contributions to spiritual literature as have members of other Orders whose works have skyrocketed to fame or become classics. Yet, is such an attitude validly in keeping with a follower of St. Francis, a man who stressed simple truth rather than profound erudition—who placed the emphasis on the approach of the heart

above that of the intellect? St. Bonaventure, when preaching under pressure of his other many duties as Minister General of the Order, apologized for what he felt to be his own lack of eloquence by saying that "light is as pure coming through a badly painted window, and meat as tasty even if served in a wooden dish."⁵ And along the same lines spoke Thomas a Kempis, whose masterpiece, the *Imitation of Christ* is strongly suggestive of the Franciscan spirit:

... A simple book of devotion ought to be as welcome to you as any profound and learned treatise; what does it matter whether the man who wrote it was a man of great literary accomplishments? Do not be put off by his want of reputation; here is truth unadorned to attract the reader. Your business is with what the man said, not with the man who said it.⁶

Nevertheless, the past several years have seen the increase in the publication of noteworthy additions, to some of the great works previously contributed by members of the Order. Notable among these is the work of José de Vinck, whose translation into English of the works of St. Bonaventure is making publishing history both within and without the Order. Added to this achievement is the work issuing from some of the leaders of the Order among Europeans: Cajetan Esser, O.F.M., Leon Venhny, O.F.M. Conv., Martial

Lekoux, O.F.M., and Valentine Breton, O.F.M., to mention but a few. Among American Franciscans worthy of mention are Theodosius Foley, O.F.M. Cap., Ildore O'Brien, O.F.M., Marion Habig, O.F.M., Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., and Allan B. Wolter, O.F.M.

Particularly in the realm of periodical literature there is a developing quality, both in content and method of presentation. Ascetical, dogmatic, and moral literature of sterling worth is being presented around the calendar in the following monthly publications such as this review, *Franciscan Herald and Forum*, and *Friar*; the quarterly journals, *Round Table of Franciscan Research*, *Franciscan Studies*, and *Priestly Studies*; and the annual reports of the Proceedings of the Franciscan Educational Conference. Too much emphasis on the value of these latter volumes cannot be made. For over 30 years they have appeared, covering the phases of study undertaken by members of the various groups of friars in all problems of current as well as historic interest, featuring doctrinal, social, cultural and philosophical topics.

Franciscan publishing efforts, too, have been redoubled, with St. Anthony Guild Press, Franciscan Herald Press, and that of the Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure serving as outlets for some of the finest in Franciscan reading materials. Offerings of the recently established Franciscan Book Club

have been invaluable, also, in placing before Franciscans as well as the general reader outstanding and notable publications steeped in the Franciscan tradition.

Several independent friar groups have established publication houses: the clerics of the Santa Barbara Province of the Friars Minor; the Graymoor Press of the Friars of the Atonement; the Franciscan Publishers of the Province of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and the publication ventures of the Conventual Friars of both the Province of Our Lady of Consolation and of the Province of the Immaculate Conception.

An informative and informal publication issued to Franciscan librarians "now and then" provides much helpful material as to source and availability of recent Franciscan literature. This lithographed periodical, the work of the library section of the Franciscan Education Conference, is produced through the Provincial Library of the Friars Minor of Pulaski, Wisconsin, under the editorship of the Rev. Donald Bilinski, O.F.M. In addition to covering the most recent publications in major areas of Franciscan interest, this brochure, the *Franciscan Librarian Contact*, also publishes addresses given on Franciscan reading and literature at various Franciscan organizational meetings, as for example those given at sectional meetings of Franciscans at the time the term *Christocentrism*, the

national Catholic Library Association conference.

The Franciscan who is convinced that he can never know sufficiently the many and varicolored facets of his particular type of vocation will have an intense desire to fill himself with all that pertains to that vocation. He will regret that he has only one short lifetime to satiate himself with the abundant spiritual literary treasures which are his means to achieve a more perfect knowledge and love of Christ, as well as as to provide him with clear cut guidelines for re-producing them in his own life.

But he can make a start. He can learn to know his Franciscan life through and through by extensive reading and reflection on all phases of its teachings. He can fill himself to the brim, fret of all, with a knowledge of the life and virtues of St. Francis which, after all, forms the center of the entire school of Franciscan theology and philosophy. He can learn to know and love the doctrines which this Franciscan school has formulated. He can develop a love for the practice of those special virtues peculiar to the Franciscan. He can inform himself on the devotions which were so dear to St. Francis, and try to make them his own. He can make his study the lives of all those who expressed the ideals of St. Francis in their own lives. And since the whole of the Franciscan life may be summed up in

earnest seeker will learn the total-spirit of Christ.

ity of this Franciscan life by immersing himself in the source of the Christocentric viewpoint, the Gospels—*The New Testament*. And in the light of that gospel picture of the Christ-life, further illuminated for greater clarity by the study of the various lives of Christ, the Franciscan will be stimulated to reflect in his own life, at least some small beam of light. Since knowledge leads to love, and love is never passive, there can only be one consequence: a renewal of the endeavor to portray in the individual life, as far as possible, the spirit of St. Francis which is the

spirit of Christ.

The soul thus cultivated in the garden of Franciscan thought will ever be looking in whatever material comes to hand for the extension of these truths that comprise his particular sphere of spirituality. And once that spirit has been deeply rooted and firmly implanted, he will "find tongues in trees, books and running brooks, sermons in stones and good in everything." He will be led, then, to seek all that will enrich and extend and intensify his wisdom and knowledge, and to reject all that does not further his search for Christ after the manner of St. Francis.

¹ "Pax et Bonum", v. 1, n. 1 (Nov., 1950) p. 1-3.

² "The Director of Souls," *Report of the Franciscan Educational Conference*, Report of the Eighth Annual Meeting, v. 8, n. 8, (November 1926), p. 237.

³ Quoted from *Guidance Through Franciscan Spirituality*, Report of the Proceedings of the 29th Annual Franciscan Educational Conference, v. 39, (1948) p. 341.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Quoted in *To God Alone the Glory*, Sister Mary Bernetta Quina, O.S.F.: Maryland Newman, 1962, p. 213.

⁶ Knox trans., N. Y. Sheed: 1960, Bk. 4, Ch. 5, p. 23.

⁷ *As You Like It*, Act. II, sc. 1, 1.16.



If you were so clever and wise that you possessed all knowledge and could interpret every language and could make the most clever investigations into heavenly things, you could not glory in all these talents; for one single demon has known more about heavenly things, and even now knows more about earthly things, than all men taken together. . . .
—*St. Francis' Words of Admonition*, V.

Wanted: More Critical Catholics

Thomas Donnelly

For those of us who have been given the grace of intimate and conscious participation in the life of Holy Mother Church, these are thrilling times in which to be living. We Catholics have been aware for some time now that during the last two or three decades, the Holy Ghost has been stirring the Mystical Body of Christ to something akin to a renaissance. And one of the results already accomplished by the Vatican Council II is the extension of this awareness to the world at large, compelling it to confess that the Church is still very much alive.

While this resurgence probably was prompted in part by the moral goodness of Christ's faithful—who can say what graces were merited for the Church by that Christian heroism so common in recent years?—yet it has been experienced primarily in the intellectual realm. Its principal characteristics are a renewed interest in God's revelation to His children, and an awareness of the current needs of mankind.

This is the first part of an article concerned with some dangers encountered in reading theological literature today. The conclusion will be printed in the June number of THE CORD.

More specifically, we are presently experiencing a lively revival in the study of theology and its cognate sciences. Without going into detail here, we may generally characterize the trends of this renewed study as follows: dogmatic theology manifests a growing concern for the very source of revelation, and a desire to come to grips with the actual human condition; moral theology stresses the importance of positive Christian life motivated by charity; spiritual theology displays an interest in both doctrine and the findings of natural psychology; the disciplines pertinent to Sacred Scripture are enriched by recent developments in philology, history, and archeology; the science of liturgics acquires new doctrinal depth.

In each of these disciplines there appears a double preoccupation, one with the sources of God's revelation, the other with the life of God's people. The ultimate task of theology is to effect and sustain a union of these two, by so clarifying revelation that it provides a solid foundation for supernatural life. In the light of this, one can easily understand why the environment of the present revival of studies is the Mystical Body of Christ. A theologian is one who works, although at times somewhat

remotely, to bring the revelation of Christ the Head to His mystical members, in order that their life in Him may become more intense.

The renewed effort on the part of theologians to fulfill their task has been matched in a remarkable manner recently by a very enthusiastic reception on the part of a large segment of the faithful. Their eagerness to possess the fruit of the theologian's studies is attested to by their attendance at lectures, participation in study-groups, and

— perhaps most evident of all — reading of serious religious literature. Nor is their task a merely passive one; happily, they continue to assume an active role by pressing the theologian toward an application of revelation to the problems which arise in their everyday lives.

In brief, our generation has been blessed with the privilege of witnessing and engaging in a renewed effort by the Mystical Body in its task of continuing the mission of the Messiah. "I came," Jesus said, "that they may have life, and have it more abundantly" (Jn. 10:10).

Necessity of Prudence

One is aware, of course, that the swiftness with which this tide of theological investigation has engulfed us has caused some apprehension and introduced many tensions. The complexion of the familiar and rather comfortable landscape has been considerably

altered of late. But the Divine Advocate is still with the Church, as He will be until the end of time.

To close one's eyes to truth on the grounds that it leads one into unfamiliar or uncomfortable surroundings would be to frustrate His enlightening influence. Rather than occasioning a wringing of hands, then, the present theological effort should summon up our joyous applause.

But, while we welcome this renewal of the effort to understand God's message more completely and effectively, nevertheless it seems to us that it is necessary at this time to remind ourselves of the grave obligation of prudence incumbent on those who are involved in it.

As we stated above, the study of theology in and by the Church involves both professional scholars, whom we may group together here under the name *theologians*, and the Catholic faithful, whom we may call *laymen* in order to distinguish them, not from religious or clergy, but from the professional theologians. Now, each of these plays a dual role: the theologian searches out the meaning of revelation and presents it to the faithful; the layman helps to stimulate the theologian in his search by expressing his needs, and also utilizes the fruits of the theological quest. We shall not concern ourselves here with discussing either the needs of the faithful or the theological method

of the scholar. We are interested, rather, in the other aspect of their dialogue, scil., the communication of the results of study by the theologian to the layman. It is precisely here, we are convinced, that an admonition to prudence is most urgently demanded.

No one will deny, certainly, that the communication of all truth is a solemn trust, calling for honesty, objectivity, and clarity on the part of the one who gives, and openness and understanding on the part of him who receives. In the modern encounter between theologian and layman, the necessity for those virtues is highlighted by two considerations, one perennial and the other proper to our own times.

The first, and more obvious, consideration is that the doctrine which is transmitted is a part of the body of those truths which Almighty God has seen fit to grant to man: it is contained, either formally (immediately) or virtually (through the mediation of extraneous human knowledge) in divine revelation. The fact that this truth is the word of God increases the necessity of the presence of the above-mentioned attitudes in those who deal with it.

The consideration proper to our own times is this: the very circumstances in which the modern theologian speaks to the layman demand these attitudes with an urgency perhaps never before present in the Church's long

history. Our modern media of communication, especially the press, have drawn writer and reader into a high degree of mutual accessibility. One has only to browse through a Catholic book shop or library to be impressed with the vast production of — and implicit demand for — books and periodicals on theological subjects. Today, more theologians are addressing a larger number of laymen about a greater variety of subjects than ever before. While this phenomenon, like the theological revival which it accompanies, is to be gladly acclaimed, it should also serve to remind us of the need for prudence on the part of both theologian and layman. This communication of doctrine is effected in various ways — in lectures, sermons, study-groups, parish bulletins, and the like; while implying the necessity of responsibility in the use of all these media, we speak expressly here of the most common means of communication, scil., the formal publication.

Writers and Readers

Those who publish works dealing with theological subjects should be aware that their positions are finding their way these days into the hands, not only of fellow theologians, but also of a large segment of the Catholic population at large. Inexperienced as most non-theologians are in the subtleties of the theological

sciences, they are apt to draw conclusions which can be genuinely harmful to their pursuit of perfection. While the existence of this danger surely does not warrant a cessation of research in theology itself, nor even a suppression of the publication of the theologian's results, it most certainly does impose upon him the obligation of being circumspect in the diffusion of his findings in publications available to the general public.

On the other hand, the reading layman should keep in mind that the number of writers in the theological field has swelled recently to vast proportions. This means that, according to the normal course of things human, there will be found a number of authors who are not particularly well-qualified in the subjects about which they write, as well as a number of others who are not especially prudent in the way in which they present their message. Consequently, it is very necessary for the Catholic layman to remember that the ability to put a book together, or the presence of the *imprimatur* on a work, in no way guarantees that the doctrine contained therein is doctrinally sound in every respect. We think, therefore, that in the presence of the veritable torrent of information currently flowing from theologian to layman, there is incumbent on the former a judicious tact, and on the latter a great deal of discernment. In a word, there is an urgent need today, among

both scholars and laymen, of a critical attitude toward the public discussion of theology.

Dangers

Unfortunately, this important tact and discernment are not always in evidence in the present-day dialogue. As a result of its absence, many a person sincerely intent on using modern doctrinal literature to aid and direct his progress in the supernatural life has come out of the experience confused or even injured. While this can conceivably happen to anyone, there seems to be a special danger here for the young. This may be caused by youth's natural predilection for the novel; it could also be true that they do, in fact, read a greater number of recent works than do their elders; possibly the reason lies in the fact that they, being less sure in their personal convictions, and not yet fully cognizant of the entire scope of theology, are more impressionable than more mature readers.

It seems certain that their susceptibility to danger is heightened by the nature of the theological revival itself, which does indeed represent the general adoption by theologians of a fresh approach to Catholic doctrine. There has certainly been an abandonment of that post-Reformation view which inclined to the polemic, the external, and the juridical, for a more positive, profound, and vital-

istic exploration of the divine message. This change in viewpoint — accidental, to be sure, but nevertheless very real — has inspired some to commit themselves exclusively to the new, and consequently to disregard the old as completely outmoded. Ideas begin to appear to be of value simply because they are new. What began as a genuinely honest devotion to truth turns gradually into crass gullibility, leaving the reader quite susceptible to perplexity and harm.

The preventative for this susceptibility is the acquisition and development of an attitude which is truly critical — not in the sense

of fault-finding, but in the sense of making prudent and discriminating judgement of the statements which one reads. The modern Catholic can be aided mightily in his pursuit of perfection by the vast literary output with which we have been blessed. Cautioned, however, by the awareness that some doctrinal literature is being published with something less than complete responsibility, he should approach it armed with the sword of keen discernment. In the second part of this article, we propose to discuss some of the more perilous pitfalls, and some specific attitudes which may help readers to avoid them.

(To be concluded)



... If you were handsomer and richer than all others, and even if you could perform wondrous things like putting the demons to flight, all such things could be harmful to you, and do not belong to you at all, nor can you glory in them.

—St. Francis' *Words of Admonition, V.*

Mary In The Capuchin Family

Fr. Linus Bertram, O.F.M. Cap.

Anima Franciscana est anima

Mariana. Yes, the Franciscan soul is a Marian soul. This is so true that the author of *Seraphic Spirit and Life* says: "The Franciscan who is not devoted heart and soul to his most heavenly Mother cannot flatter himself with the thought that he is a true follower of St. Francis nor of his saintly confreres."¹

"For Francis of Assisi, to live was to love. For that reason seraphic love characterized his every act. In fact two loves, which basically are one, wielded a tender tyranny over him: devotion to Christ and devotion, with and because of Christ, to Mary."² "Because of Christ, to Mary."³ "Coming one with Jesus, he felt in himself all the love of the Child Jesus for his Mother; he loved her with the very heart of Jesus. And since his heart had identified itself with the heart of Jesus, the love of Jesus for Mary was his love, and his love for Mary was the very love of Jesus."⁴ As Celano relates of Francis: "He loved the Mother of the Lord Jesus with a love that cannot be described, because she had made the Lord of majesty our brother, and through her we have

obtained mercy."⁵

The Portiuncula is in reality the symbol of Francis' love for Mary. In commanding us to keep the small chapel, he was telling us never to leave Mary.

My sons, see that you never leave this place . . . For this place is truly holy and the home of Christ and of His Virgin Mother. Here when we were few, the Most High increased us. Here He enlightened the souls of His poor by the light of His Wisdom. Here He inflamed our wills with the fire of His love. Here whoever prays with a devout heart will obtain what he asks for, and if he offends, he will be more heavily punished. Therefore, my sons, hold this place worthy of all reverence and honor as truly a dwelling place of God which is uniquely cherished by Him and by His Mother.⁶

His love for Mary was not based only on her Divine Maternity, but also on the fact that Mary shared the poverty of Christ, and thus became a model for the Friars Minor.⁶ Once at a dinner a friar mentioned how poor the Blessed Virgin had been on Christmas Day when she gave birth to the Savior. This was enough to affect Francis strongly. He arose instantly from the table, seated himself on the bare floor, and finished his frugal meal amid bitter tears.

156

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MARY IN THE CAPUCHIN FAMILY

157

Francis felt that no praise could be too great for Mary "because she bore the Lord in her most holy womb."⁶ *Ad Jesum per Mariam* has ever remained an essential trait of Franciscanism. His deep love for Mary could not help but be self-communicative.

Like seeds lavishly scattered about, these spontaneous manifestations of child-like fondness for Mary on the part of Franciscans have blossomed unto consummate loveliness in his spiritual children. Love for Mary in the Franciscan Order is thus at once a cherished heritage and an accepted challenge, because this devotion, so dear to the heart of its Founder, has engendered in his numerous progeny a filial gratitude and an incentive to imitation.⁷

True to this heritage and challenge, the Capuchins have always had a deep devotion to Mary, especially under her title of the Immaculate Conception. As Fr. Cuthbert Gumbinger, O.F.M. Cap. states: "Though they had able defenders of Mary's great privilege, yet, the special characteristic of their devotion was their silent prayer, and their fervent example, which enkindled among the faithful a filial trust in the Virgin conceived without sin."⁸

We can see the truth of this fact in the great number of monasteries and churches of the Order dedicated to Mary Immaculate.⁹ As the great Gothic cathedrals were the silent prayer of the people of

the Middle Ages, so too were these monasteries silent sentinels voicing the devotion of the Capuchins to their Queen.

But much more than the monasteries do the the lives of the Capuchin saints voice their deep inner devotion to their Mother. From the Apostolic Doctor, St. Lawrence, down to the Order's newest saint, Francis Mary of Camposso, Our Lady has been the guide leading them to the Light and Life which is Christ. Francis had given the heritage and challenge; they have accepted it.

St. Lawrence of Brindisi

St. Lawrence of Brindisi was not unaware of this rich spiritual legacy when he entered the Capuchin Order. Devotion to the Mother of God was the most outstanding factor in his life. "It was a chain of love which linked his heart and soul inseparably to heaven."¹⁰ He attributed all the successes of his life, of his priestly career, to Mary. He never began a task unless he first entrusted everything into her hands. In his many travels with his companions, the conversation usually centered about Mary and her privileges.

Apart from the time set aside for the recitation of the divine office and meditation, Lawrence was accustomed to turn upon his favorite topic: the dignity, the sweetness, the virtues, the intercession of the glorious Virgin Mary. His

choice of words was always dignified, always full ofunction, and modified by tenderness. . . .¹¹

Mary's name was ever on his lips; reciting her Office; saying the rosary; greeting others with "Praised be Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary!" Blessings were given with the name of Mary in each.

Despite his already great love of Mary, Lawrence endeavored to grow in her love, and this in a special way by giving her to others. His sermons were never so eloquent as when he spoke of her privileges. "In his private conversation, in his cell, in the cloister, in choir, he spoke ever of the Mother of God, exhorting, urging all those who came to him to praise, to venerate, to love Mary, to have recourse to her in every need."¹²

His great *Mariale* proves beyond doubt that Lawrence the scholar was as Maricoentric as Lawrence the saint. One thought impregnates all his writings: the sublime dignity of Mary in her Divine Motherhood. The following words which he himself wrote could well characterize his whole life: "Oh, how happy is he who lives under the protection of the Virgin Mother of God."¹³

St. Felix of Cantalice

Devotion to the Mother of God also shone forth in the life of St. Felix of Cantalice.

Before Christmas he used to go round to the houses of his richer acquaintances, and say,

"Have you prepared a room for your expected guest? And when they, being or feigning to be astonished, asked to whom he referred, he would reply, 'Why, who else could it be but that great Lady, who is about to give birth to the Saviour? Make haste and prepare a room where she and her Son may dwell.'¹⁴

He would spend whole nights at prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and the altar of Our Lady. One night Mary came to him, and placed the infant Jesus in his arms. There for a few moments he spoke with Love Incarnate before returning Him back to Mary.

When questioned about how he could pray so well without going to a book for meditation, the Saint replied that he was possessed of a breviary which consisted of six letters, five being red and one white, namely, the five sacred wounds of our blessed Lord, and the holy Mother of God. 'If,' added he, 'I had the grace to understand these six letters perfectly, I would not yield to any doctor or theologian of the first rank. Pray to God and his holy Mother that I may understand better.'¹⁵

St. Conrad of Parzhaim

Mary Immaculate played a major role in the life of St. Conrad. She it was who brought her devoted son to the heights of sanctity and union with Christ. As a young boy he recited the rosary daily on his way to school. As he grew, he found great delight in visiting

Marian shrines near his home. He joined the Confraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the conversion of sinners, and constantly wore Our Lady's scapular. Before he entered the Capuchin Order he made this resolution: "I will always endeavor to have a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and will earnestly strive to imitate her virtues."¹⁶

And keep the resolution he did, especially after he entered the Order. What joy was his when he was sent to the shrine of Our Lady of Altoetting. Here it was that he could be found almost every morning for forty years serving Mass at Our Lady's altar. While serving, he held intimate communication with Mary and her divine Son. On one occasion a witness testified: "I noticed how his glowing interior devotion became manifested exteriorly. As he knelt at the altar, rapt in prayer, glowing balls of fire seemed to proceed from his lips and rise upwards to the miraculous picture of Our Lady."¹⁷

This humble Capuchin Brother is perhaps known most for his devotion to the Immaculate Conception by his continual recitation of the Little Crown. He did much to spread devotion to Mary under this title. Mary on her side would not be outdone in generosity. His tongue and the finger around which he constantly wore the chaplet have been saved from corruption.

Worthy of note is Brother Con-

rad's practice of the True Devotion to Mary according to St. Louis de Montfort. While not only wearing the scapular of Our Lady, St. Conrad gave thousands more of these scapulars to the pilgrims who visited the famous Bavarian shrine. Truly his whole life radiated Mary.

St. Francis Mary of Camporosso

Marie Croese was very careful to nourish a childlike devotion to Mary in each of her children. Devotedly the family recited the rosary each day. For John Croese, youngest in the family, this was the beginning of a life dedicated to Mary. He who would one day bear the name Francis Mary placed himself entirely in his Mother's hands from his earliest years. When he was twelve, Mary forcibly took him into her hands to keep him from an occasion of sin.

What joy was his when he became privileged to bear her name on entering the Capuchin Order. What greater happiness followed when he was sent to the friary of the Immaculate Conception. Here, in the only friary to which he was ever sent, he constantly sang the praises of his Mother.

Daily on his questing tours he would visit the shrines dedicated to Mary in and around Genoa. Those who asked him for help he directed to Mary. On one occasion he told the mother of a child suffering from a tumor in her leg: "As I see you have such confidence

in the Blessed Virgin, go and pray to her in the church of the Magdalena and tell her that the poor lay brother Francis has sent you."¹¹⁸

The child was cured.

During the tragic cholera epidemic which swept over Genoa in 1866, Francis Mary gave himself untrudgingly to help the sick. On one of the last days of his novena for the feast of the Assumption, he knelt before the altar of the Immaculate Conception and solemnly offered his life to God that the epidemic might cease. God accepted his gift, and shortly after his death the epidemic subsided.

We have seen that in Francis, love for Mary and love for Christ were one, and that he loved Mary

with the very love of Jesus, since he had so identified himself with Him. Because Francis realized that to seek Christ without Mary is to seek Christ in vain, he entrusted all of his sons to Mary. In giving us the Portunucula he truly gave us Mary. In this way, devotion to Mary has come down to the Capuchins as a glorious heritage and a great challenge. It was Lawrence who took up this challenge and championed the glories of Mary, both in his life and writings, at the dawn of the Capuchin era. Lawrence and all the other saints of the Capuchin Order stand as guides for us, pointing out the way to Mary the Beacon, who in turn leads us to Christ the Light.

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- 2 Sebastian Falcone, O.F.M. Cap., "St. Lawrence of Brindisi: Marian Saint and Scholar", *Franciscan Educational Conference*, Vol. XXXV, p. 121-142. Washington, D. C., 1954. Hereafter cited as F.E.C.
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