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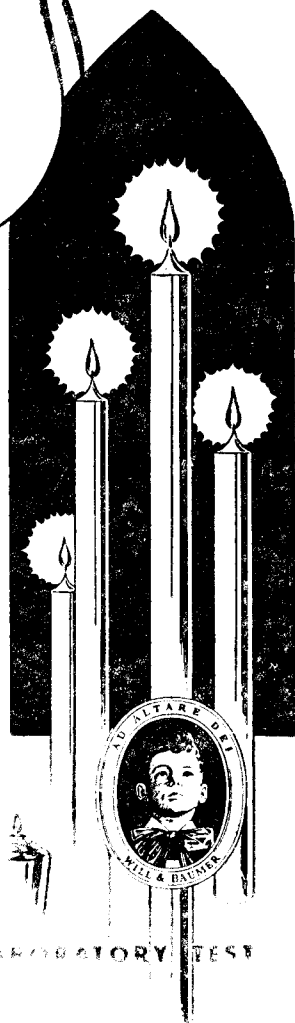
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MONTHLY FRANCISCAN
OF SPIRITUAL DOCTRINE

JANUARY 1941

WITH DEAD IN HAND

by Zachary G.

THE FEBRUARY AND THE MARCH

Richard G. G.

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Good Morning, Good People!

May the Lord give you peace!

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. Surely, never has a more momentous or sublime truth been so simply expressed. Almighty God Himself, Saint John tells us, has assumed our human nature and come to live with us. Despite the truly tremendous significance of the event which they record, his words possess a peculiarly human intimacy. But then, this is the inspired word of God, and God bends down in revelation to speak the language of men.

The Evangelist employs no cold, abstract phrases to tell us what has happened. He does not say that the Word assumed human nature, or took unto Himself man's condition, or united humanity and divinity hypostatically. No, these terms — accurate as they are — are the explications of theological science; John is writing a message for all men. In the strikingly beautiful Jewish idiom of his time he tells us that Jesus became flesh — warm, vibrant, living human flesh. And like a two-edged sword the dramatic expression anathematizes both those who despise the flesh as something evil, and those who glorify it as the only good.

The Greek version of the second part of his announcement has the same ring of familiarity: "... and He set up His tent among us." For the shepherd people of old the figure must have been laden with vivid connotations. For anyone familiar with the Book of Exodus it brings to mind how, centuries before, Jahweh had erected His tent among the Chosen People, and signed His presence there in the pillar of the cloud. Surely we can suppose that Saint John selected the expression advisedly, conscious as he was that it describes the incarnate Sacrament of God's love for men.

Our own Saint Francis must have loved this passage from Saint John's Prologue. He must have rejoiced at the familiar humanness of it, exulted in its being so pregnant with Christ. Is it possible, do you suppose, that as he put the finishing touches on the first Christmas crib at Greccio, this incomparable lover of Jesus was thinking what a completely charming and effective way this was to demonstrate to the people of that region exactly what Saint John had meant?

The Editors

With Head in Hand

Fr. Zachary Grant, O.F.M. Cap.

Foolishness marks the followers of Christ. From the day our Savior with blood-stained eyes looked out from the cross upon the world of prudent men and challenged, "Come, follow me!" untold thousands of fools have turned their backs on the "eat-drink-be merry" philosophy of life and steadfastly carried their crosses unto death. Among the greatest fools of all were Francis of Assisi and his early followers.

At the same time that Saint Francis himself was journeying in Syria and Egypt where he was to stand in the very presence of the Sultan Malek el Kamel and make brave but fruitless attempts to win over the Moslem leader to Christianity, five Franciscan friars were preaching in Morocco in the open streets, defying death by

denouncing Mohammed and declaring Christ to be the Son of God. After several imprisonments, and as many unsuccessful attempts to drive them from the country, the Miramolim, Abu Jacob, lost patience. He had them seized and tortured. They were finally brought into his presence and given the chance to renounce Christ and accept Mohammed. Weak from hunger, their bodies racked with pain from their gruesome ordeal, the five friars — Berard, Peter, Accursius, Adjutus and Otho — boldly proclaimed their loyalty to Christ. In a burst of anger Abu Jacob leapt from his throne and held aloft his huge scimitar "Then, die!" he cried — and with five hard strokes the Mohammedan split their heads and gave to the Franciscan Order its first martyrs.

The year was 1220 on January 16 when the first Franciscan blood flowed in testimony to Christ. Saint Francis himself did not learn of the deaths until he had returned to Italy from the Holy Land for the Chapter of Pentecost in 1221. When he heard the news, he

Besides fulfilling his duties as Assistant Master of Novices in the Capuchin Province of Saint Mary, Fr. Zachary is a part-time professor of theology, lecturer, and retreat-master out of St. Lawrence Friary, Milton, Mass. In the present article Fr. draws a practical lesson for our times from a meditation on the Protomartyrs of our Order.

joyfully exclaimed: "Now I can truly say that I have five Friars Minor."

Francis had personally sent these friars to Morocco. At the famous Chapter of Mats in 1919 he selected six friars, four priests and two lay-brothers, to proceed to this Moorish stronghold across the sea from Spain. The superior was Vitalis, but he took sick on the way at Aragon, and the small group went on to Portugal under the leadership of Berard. They stopped at the friary in Alenquer. Here for several months they prepared for a mission which would be a fulfillment of the gospel injunction to go as sheep among wolves. For the most part, aside from spiritual and physical strengthening, the preparation consisted in the study of the Arabic language and in allowing their beards and hair to grow according to the style of the Saracens. Having received suitable clothing from Princess Sancha, sister of King Alfonso and royal patroness of the friars at Alenquer, Berard and his band set out for the Moorish city of Seville in Spain.

Without any attempt to be cautious and, in fact, quite boldly, the five immediately began to preach Christ at every opportunity, even outside the

chief mosque of the city and in the very court of the king. Their attacks on Mohammed as a false and deceitful teacher were not graciously received, and they soon found themselves imprisoned. Only the intervention of the king's son preserved them from beheading.

Even in the prison tower the friars would not be idle. They proclaimed Christ from the windows to the crowds beneath. In an attempt to silence them, the Moslem leader had them cast into dungeons. Soon after, he ordered them expelled from Seville. Having discarded their secular clothes and resumed the religious habit, the five set sail for Morocco.

But their lesson had not been learned very well. Berard and his companions began once more to declare openly their Christian beliefs and Christ's supremacy over Mohammed. Before long they were taken before the Miramolim, Sultan Abu Jacob. He was basically a peaceful man and, without punishing them, sent them away with orders to cease preaching. He gave them into the custody of a Christian, Dom Pedro, who was the brother of King Alfonso of Portugal and who captained the Mohammedan army. But the friars would not be stilled, and

Dom Pedro was directed to take the five missionaries from the country and see them home. He had them brought to the seaport of Ceuta. To return, they were told, would mean death.

But this did not stop them. Back they came to Morocco, were expelled once more and again returned. The Christians were fearful that such insolence would bring the wrath of the Sultan on the entire Christian population of Morocco. Therefore, Dom Pedro took them with him wherever he went, even on military expeditions. But the persistent friars managed to escape his surveillance and preached openly again in the market places. Captured once more, they were put into a dungeon and left to die of starvation. But after twenty days they were found to be alive and healthy.

This miracle induced Abu Jacob to release them, but he sent them to the coast once more for embarkment home. On the way, they came across a company of Moorish soldiers in the desert who were weak with thirst. Berard miraculously produced water from the dry earth. Because of this they found a welcome with the soldiers, so they confidently returned with them to the capi-

tal. But the Moslem leader was not pleased, and they were soon back in prison, this time to be tortured. Among other things, they were rolled naked over beds of glass throughout the night. In the morning five were summoned into the presence of Abu Jacob — left there as martyrs. They were as they lived, fools for Christ.

Futility seemed to plague the efforts of the early friars to establish missionary headquarters in lands outside Iberia. The Chapter of Pentecost 1217 had sent missionaries beyond the Alps into France and Germany, but for the most part they were treated indifferently, and many times with disrespect and open contempt. Mostly this was due to a mistaken idea that they were heretics, and the friars, ignorant of the language, could do little to protect themselves. Even Saint Francis' expedition with twelve friars into the Holy Land with the Crusaders did little or nothing to convert the Moslem, although his presence was beneficial to Christian armies. Looking at the early missionary effort through a critical eye, we might properly conclude that the friars were a bit too simple. The methods they used

unrealistic and antagonistic more than helpful, and their unrealistic and antagonistic more than helpful and their hopes for great conversions were foolish.

Yet, from our vantage point we also conclude that the military crusades against the Mohammedans were also a failure, although we know that they effected by their very difficulty a certain unification of Christian Europe; the stubbornness of the Christian armies in the face of great odds inspires us still. So too, judging the missionary efforts of the friars by their failure to achieve their essential intention of converting the infidel would be a mistake. For we do know that further attempts in future years at missionary conquest of the Moslems did attain some success, and permanent mission stations were established among them. Nevertheless we cannot help but wonder at the foolhardy attempts to "put their heads through the wall", walking brazenly into the very jaws of death.

Only with the vision of faith can we possibly consider their actions as prompted by Christian prudence, remembering what Saint Paul declares in First Corinthians: "For the doctrine of the cross is foolish-

ness to those who perish, but to those who are saved, that is to us, it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the prudence of the prudent I will reject.'" And he adds: "The foolishness of God is wiser than men!"

Berard and his companions cast aside all dictates of human prudence. Ignorance of what to expect in the land of the Moslem could be accepted as an excuse for their failure in Seville, but with that experience behind them they pursued the same tactics in Morocco. To explain their actions we might say that they were prompted by a motive other than the hope of converting the Saracens, e. g., martyrdom, or else their compulsion to fulfill their missionary ideals was so strong that it would brook no delay and set aside any inclination to try more cautious methods. A combination of both is the greater possibility. Nevertheless we are tempted to conclude that these men were just set on dying for their faith, and they intended the shortest route to that goal. They went to the Moslems, so to speak, with head in hand.

Since Berard and his companions were among the primitive friars, Berard having re-

ceived the habit from Francis himself in 1213, we can expect them to show forth an essential characteristic of the Franciscan ideal. They are known only for the fact that they became missionary martyrs, indeed the first martyrs — or protomartyrs — of the Seraphic Order. The simple approach to their vocation characterized all the early brothers, and each in his own way reflected the image of his father Francis. In Francis we have the embodiment of the Franciscan ideal, one as sublime as the Son of God Himself, who is its image. The early companions of Saint Francis were unique individuals — Bernard, Jupiter, Leo, John, Maseo, Rufino, Giles, Sylvester, and the rest — each a reflection of his father, but none encompassing the entire Francis. So too they all share the Franciscan ideal, yet each points up in particular only one aspect of it. Berard and his fellow martyrs show forth the missionary aspect of Franciscan life.

Francis had no doubts that his Order was called to "preach the Gospel to every creature." He began preaching in Assisi even before Bernard of Quintavalle joined him. Then the brothers numbered only eight he sent them two by two into

the other districts around Umbria. As early as 1212 he decided to travel to Syria to preach to the Moslems, but circumstances prevented him from reaching his destination. The personal efforts of Saint Francis for such an apostolate for himself as well as the other friars gives ample evidence that missionary endeavors among the infidels is at least part of the Franciscan way of life. Yet we can even go further and declare that the apostolate of the foreign missions is the highest form of the Franciscan vocation.

"This is the rule of the Friars Minor", Francis wrote, "namely to observe the holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ." And the literal imitation of Christ's mixed life of prayer and apostolic work has generally been considered the essence of the Franciscan vocation, in short, Christ's own example before the world. He was indeed the foreign missionary par excellence. He "left His native land" to preach the truth to an alien people. Although God, He "went native" and assumed the form of man, becoming like unto him in all things save sin. The Apostles He sent into all the regions of the world, though their combined efforts in Palestine might

have brought that entire nation to Christianity. "As the Father has sent Me I also send you." The missionary is indeed "one who is sent." Christ and the Apostles were certainly sent. So too must be the Friar Minor.

And the crown of martyrdom would be the final approval of the Franciscan missionary's work, since Christ and the Apostles ended their careers by violent death. Berard and his companions seem to have thought that approval should be sought quickly. It seemed to be of more concern to them than the conversion of the infidel.

Martyrdom brought them the glory of heaven, as they told Princess Sancha of Portugal to whom they appeared at the moment of their deaths to tell her of their victory. And when Vitalis, the superior they had left behind, learned of their martyrdom, he died in rapture. That they would die for Christ in their efforts to convert the Moslem was expected. This, then, manifested the true spirit of Saint Francis, whom Celano describes as "burning with the desire for martyrdom" in relating his first attempt to travel to Syria in 1213.

When we consider the conduct of our Seraphic Father and the early brethren toward the

spreading of the Gospel to foreign lands — the first Order to include such activity in its apostolate — there can be little doubt that a Franciscan is a missionary in the same sense as were Christ and the Apostles. This is what Francis meant by the gospel-life. Bishop Hilarin Felder in his *Ideals of Saint Francis* makes mission work an essential element of the Franciscan vocation. Hence the friar who is in *no way* a missionary lacks an essential note of his vocation — and is in effect no Friar Minor though he wear the habit.

Yet Francis himself did not expect or want all his friars "to go among the Saracens or other infidels." In the twelfth chapter of his Rule he demands something extra of the individual friar ("moved by divine inspiration") and a distinct fitness on which the Minister Provincial was to pass judgment. Therefore, it is not meant for everyone who professes the Rule of Saint Francis to leave his native soil to work among the heathen. Yet, since the missionary vocation is, according to the Capuchin *Statute of the Missions*, "eminently contained in the vocation to the Seraphic Order", each friar must reflect in whatever apostolate he is assigned to, the missionary spirit

of Saint Francis and Saint Berard, i. e., he must consider himself "as one sent." Ideally, then, the candidate for the Seraphic Order should have some hope, or at the very least lack all reluctance, for foreign missionary work.

One such candidate who entered the Order to do missionary work was directly inspired by the martyrdom of Berard and his companions, namely, Saint Anthony of Padua. Yet it was not as a foreign missionary that he attained the perfection of the Franciscan life. Anthony was living as a Canon Regular of Saint Augustine at the Monastery of Santa Cruz in Coimbra, Portugal, when the bodies of Berard, Accursius, Adjutus, Otho, and Peter were brought by Dom Pedro for burial. Upon seeing them he was seized by the inspiration to go where they had been and seek martyrdom

also. Anthony received permission to join the new Order at the friary in Coimbra, from which he set out for Africa soon after. But sickness took his strength, and he had to return. His ship was blown off course and landed in Italy where the friars were assembling for the Chapter of 1221. Anthony attended. It was not long after that he began his preaching career throughout Italy, and was assigned by Saint Francis to be the first Franciscan lector of theology. Yet it was the desire to be a missionary that led him to the Order.

Little else can be said of Berard and his companions. As missionaries they accomplished little. As Franciscan missionary martyrs they gave invaluable insight to future generations of Friars Minor into the depths and subtleties of the Franciscan vision of life.

Greater than all graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost which God gives to His friends, is the gift of denying oneself and, for the sake of Christ's love, of suffering pain, injury, disgrace, and distress. For, in the other gifts of God we cannot glory, because they are not our own but God's, whereas in the cross of trial and suffering we can glory, for it is our own.

SAINT FRANCIS

The Tertiary and the World

Raymond G. Gorschboth, T.O.S.

Recently, during the pre-dinner conversation of a reputedly well-informed group of dinner guests, someone mentioned a current news item which implicitly involved an evaluation of the moral standards of contemporary America. Almost immediately the host steered the conversation away from this trend with the remark, "Let's not talk religion."

This is not an isolated case. Incidents similar to this one are routine in the life of today's American Catholic.

Negative Exclusivism

This flight from even the discussion of topics with mere overtones of a religious nature points up one of the aspects of the Catholic layman's present environment: society's negative attitude toward any semblance of religious influence on one's daily life. For it is a fact of American life that, although

it is considered socially acceptable — even desirable — to belong to a religious group for Sunday service, yet the use of religious precepts as criteria for social behavior is generally resisted, and — as most of us in the world have experienced — the introduction of religion as a topic of conversation is frowned upon.

In the business world, in industry, in the labor unions, you find the same thing. You are informed that things like the divine sovereignty, or the use of Christian principles as guides to collective bargaining, are out of place here. That sort of thing, you are told, is reserved for the church. And you recall sadly how, not so very long ago, the Nazis demanded that the Catholics of their nation confine their activities to the church.

Positive Pressure

Side by side with the negative exclusion of religion, there is a positive pressure which challenges the spirituality of the Catholic layman. This is the all-pervading, ever-in-

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sistent force of today's materialism. The materialistic viewpoint has provided our modern society with what is virtually the only generally accepted standard of living: SUCCESS, which is defined by the materialist as wealth and all the trappings that are its natural consequence.

The pressure exerted by materialism is genuinely positive. Thus, by no means content to allow the Christian virtues of poverty and humility to pass quietly from the modern scene by default, or to die silently from lack of interest and practice, the philosophy of materialism has declared active war upon them. In our times, the most thoroughly organized, most richly financed, most intelligently directed effort in the history of civilization is dedicated to the proposition, and to its acceptance by all, that a second car of higher horsepower, a larger house in a stylish neighborhood, or a new household appliance in decorative colors will provide "instant happiness," and can be purchased on an easy installment plan. Today's ad-man, employing every means and technique of modern communication from his pulpit on Madison Avenue, preaches the doctrine of materialism with incredible success.

The Treadmill

The general effect of this concerted effort to create a desire (and consequently a market) for material goods, is that it uproots a man from his normal situation, and imposes upon him a condition that is artificial.

Thus, to the Catholic business man promotion may mean the purchasing of a new home; the new home brings with it the pressure to join the country club; the club yields valuable contacts; the contacts bring in new business; and new business means a better job. The new job, in turn, produces a higher salary, the extra car, the swimming pool — and new pressure. A new set of standards is thrust upon the man. His boss sums it up: "You were brought here because you were supposed to have contacts; so perhaps it isn't exactly ethical; that's how a business is run."

It is with great concern that the Catholic layman must view his newly acquired status. He may very well be forced to make the agonizing decision to give up his new standard of living for the sake of his very salvation. Or, in the case of the less conscientious, the prospect may be merely an unending cycle of new luxuries, new

pressures, new requirements. For what? leading where?

Similarly, the raise which the Union has secured for the Catholic laboring man permits him to buy the boat he has always wanted. He soon discovers, however, that the boat's operation costs more than he had estimated. He finds himself in the front rank of workers demanding new pay increases, even though, as a matter of fact, his new hobby has led him to cut corners on his working hours and decrease his productivity. All too soon the financial pressure becomes so great that his new leisure time, instead of being enjoyed, is used up working a second job in order to meet payments on the boat.

Whence Happiness?

And so another is caught on the treadmill, being forced to run faster and faster by the increasing rhythm of the gong stroked by the idea-men of the advertising agencies. And the theme of the dance, the chant of the caller, the carrot on the stick, is happiness! Let us sell you happiness! The history of man's existence is the story of man's quest for happiness. The laborer is wont, perhaps, to view the life of his colleague in business as the ultimate in

happiness: he has wealth, position, reputation. But if these bring happiness, it must be asked, what is the businessman seeking? When does he get off the treadmill and say, "Now I am happy"? How much of the world's property, wealth, and adulation does one have to gather to be happy? What does one have to own? What must one accomplish? What does happiness cost?

These are questions which the thinking layman frequently asks himself, and which are sometimes asked of the Catholic by his neighbors. For these questions the world has no answers. But if it cannot tell him what brings happiness, neither does anything which it offers by way of material gain allow him to get off the treadmill of materialism at a destination point marked "Satisfaction" or "Happiness". The path to happiness must lie, therefore, in another direction.

Man and His God

Man tries very hard to achieve happiness in this life. But frequently he tries to do so without God. Turning from the very Source of all happiness, he puts his love and trust in material things, and so misses the mark. Experience teaches us that nothing creates

— neither riches, honor, glory, reputation, power, pleasure, nor knowledge — is capable in itself of adequately satisfying our basic desire for happiness. But so many of us fail to learn the lesson, and our daily existence becomes a grim and dogged striving to squeeze a few drops of quickly evaporating happiness out of these things. And when the short-lived happiness is gone, it frequently leaves behind only frustration, heartbreak, and pain. Thus, by leaving the Source of happiness out of his life, man turns that life into a nightmare of searching for something he can never find. The life he desired to fill with happiness becomes in fact nothing but miserable existence.

This is not at all what God has in mind for the prince of His creation. He does not decree that we spend a glum existence here on earth. He has not created us in His image to wander in bleak despair through a vale of tears. Granted certainly that life has its difficulties, the God who loves us means for us to be happy, even here, working out our salvation.

The point is that in order to find here on earth the amount of happiness that God wants us

to have, we must keep things in proper focus. It may be necessary for us, if we are going to keep God in our lives as the true Source of happiness, to give up some of the enjoyment offered by the world. In a word, man is not made to be happy, and incidentally to be with God; rather, he is to attain to happiness here precisely because he lives with God. For on earth, as in heaven, happiness consists ultimately in union with God.

The union of grace between man and God here on earth is a union of love. We are shown how to love God by Jesus Christ. Through the teaching of the Church which He founded, and in which He lives, we are instructed as to how we should know God, and from knowing Him we come to love Him. In return for the love that we give to God, Jesus gives us His love and His peace. If we cooperate with His grace, and try to imitate Him, we then begin to see the things of this world with the eyes, as it were, of God; to see them as they really are, without all the trimmings; to see them as Our Holy Father Francis saw them, in all simplicity. Viewing the things of the world in this divine light, we acquire a capability not possessed by the worldly: that of

distinguishing the important things from the trivial. Happiness enters into our life only when we can do just that.

It is the possibility of attaining happiness through union with God, then, that distinguishes man from other creatures. The necessity of acknowledging this has been stressed by Father John L. McKenzie, S. J., who describes this close relationship between God and man:

The dignity of the human person and the values of human life rest on a belief in the inner worth of the human person, a worth which consists in this, that there is a kinship — if we may use the word — between man and God that is not shared by the lower animals. Otherwise man is typed in the organic cycle of birth, nutrition, and decay, and there is no hope more foolish than the hope that he can escape from this cycle. For there is nothing except God outside this cycle (The Two-edged Sword, Milwaukee, Bruce, 1956, 107).

The man, therefore, who would overlook union with God as the source of human happiness, fails completely to see the true meaning of human life.

Degree of Union

Beyond the mere statement of the fact that happiness can be attained on this earth through union with God, there is another topic of discussion which is pertinent here. This concerns man's evaluation of the measure of happiness attainable by him on earth. Through the ages, man has been occupied by a consideration of the possibility of achieving a more perfect union with God.

There are those who, in order to seek a more intimate relationship with God, enter the religious life. Striving to divest themselves of the world's distractions, they achieve union with God through the vows of religion. The vocation to which they are called enables those who embrace it enthusiastically to gain a large measure of happiness here on earth.

For the majority, however, this withdrawal from the world does not constitute a practical option. Not only can they not leave the world, but they may not. For it is the duty of their vocation to remain in the world, carry out God's will there, and help fulfill His promises in that area. This duty was pointed out by Cardinal Suhard, Archbishop of Paris, who wrote that, "The laity

have an irreplaceable work to do. They have their own witness to bear, their special problem to solve, and reforms to bring about, for all of which they are solely responsible" (cited in Donald J. Thorman, *The Emerging Layman, Doubleday, Garden City, 1962, 15*).

The greater segment of the Catholic population — those who remain in the world fighting its pressures, meeting its requirements, resisting its blandishments — is not excluded by its vocation from also attaining to happiness through union with God. While the Church provides the means to cope with the frustrations encountered in the world, and a guideline through the jungle of the market place and past the showcases of materialism, these are not the most important gifts of this good mother to her children. In addition to helping the layman thread his way through life, Mother Church gives him, especially through her sacraments, the capability of reaching a very intimate union with God. This union becomes for him a powerful weapon in negating and neutralizing the pressures of the material world in which he is immersed. But, more than this, it affords him the possibility of achieving here on

earth a high degree of genuine happiness.

Unfortunately, this awareness of life in union with God is not universally shared by Catholic laymen, for the Church does not always mean all that it might to everyone. According to Christ's intention the Church is certainly meant to be a guide to ultimate salvation; in practice, it serves that purpose for many Catholics. But many of the faithful fail to realize that here and now, at this moment, the Church provides them with a living union with God. These are what one might call "juridical Catholics," who understand that the Church is Teacher, but forget that she is also a life-giving Mother; these are the "eschatological Catholics," who believe indeed that the Church represents the means of getting ultimately to heaven, but seem to be unaware that she actually gives them divine life already here on earth. So many of us fail to grasp the notion that we are, in very reality, living members of the Mystical Body of Christ. Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Mystici Corporis* is a very clear exposition of the truth that the Church as a visible body is not only a juridical society, but far more than that — it is the very

body, the mystical body, of Jesus Christ. By its very nature, then, the Church is not only a teacher instructing us how we shall finally save our souls; she is the living Christ, mystically present in our world, and the fount of that supernatural sustenance which, even here in this life, provides us with spiritual happiness.

Consequences of This Failure

This failure on the part of so many Catholics to grasp and exploit the fact of their union with God has dire consequences. It is the tragedy of our time that in the midst of so much pressure from the world, the Catholic layman takes away from the Church so very little by way of assistance for his life.

Too often does the Church become for these unfortunates something akin to a political party, a social club, an organization whose strength in numbers brings satisfaction to its members, but which furnishes them with little strength in return.

Too often one encounters the minimal Catholic, who puts in his hour a week at Holy Mass, makes his Easter duty, and occasionally attends his favorite novena. Failing to appreciate what the Christian life is, Sun-

day Mass becomes for him "that hour" to be endured: the Gospel is unintelligible, the sermon a respite from kneeling, and the rest of the Mass an interval before release.

Even for those for whom Mass is a real spiritual experience, its effects often end at the Last Gospel. So little is carried away and used in daily living. Else, why is it so difficult to differentiate between a Catholic and non-Catholic in society? How do they differ? They seem to find the same smut amusing, the same corruption acceptable, the same lack of charity normal, the same materialistic goals desirable. Because so many of us restrict our religion to the weekly hour, we derive no lasting help or comfort from it. We do not allow it to enter into and influence our lives. And, being unmarked by it, we merit nothing for ourselves and provide no beacon for those outside the Church.

Lay Spirituality

In discussing the possibility of attaining to true happiness in this life through a life of union with God, we have seen that this blessing is clearly offered to the layman as well as to the religious. Unfortunately, however, a great majority

of those who live in the world miss out, because they fail to grasp the complete concept of the life offered by the Church.

The next question is obvious: *why* do they fail to grasp it? Why have so many Catholics failed to realize that Christianity is essentially a living in union with God, and an application of the effects of that union to one's relations with other men?

A good many of our contemporary Catholic writers answer that the reason for this failure is that the Church has developed so little direction for the layman in order that he may progress supernaturally in a spirituality which is uniquely his own and adapted to his peculiar needs. The superb training for life provided by the world has not at all been matched, they say, by the Church. In the development of principles and practices of supernatural growth, there has been, according to them, a concentration on religious life and consequently a gross neglect of spirituality for the layman. They claim that the practices recommended to non-religious for their supernatural growth represent a spirituality which is remote, to some extent foreign, and frequently unrealistic for the modern layman.

I am inclined to disagree with this explanation. When one looks into the recommendations which modern authors suggest for the development of a lay spirituality, one finds that they are describing something that has in fact existed in the Church for over 750 years — the Franciscan Third Order Secular. Offering to the layman a spirituality which can be adapted to any walk of life, Saint Francis founded this branch of his Order precisely to sanctify people living in the world, and to sanctify society through the tertiary. It is here that the layman will find a way of life which bridges the gap between the completely professed religious and the slightly committed layman.

The Third Order

What Saint Francis offers the layman through the Third Order is a school of religious discipline which admirably and exactly fulfills the need of which we were speaking above, viz., an awareness of one's union with God and of one's influence on society. You will not, of course, find the tertiary brother or sister in choir chanting the divine office; his or her choir — the place for praising God — will be the transit bus or the kitchen.

Nonetheless, the complete and conscientious observance of the Rule makes the tertiary a person completely dedicated to God in the World. For the member of the Third Order Secular walks truly in the footsteps of our Holy Father Francis, the perfect imitator of Christ. Putting the gospel into practice in his own particular everyday life, he is a living witness to the wonderful good news that Christianity is indeed living the life of God on this earth.

The Franciscan's approach to God is simple and direct. Unencumbered with complex systems and lengthy exercises, it goes right to the heart of things. It is for this reason that it is Christocentric. In the person of Jesus Christ, human nature and divine nature are wonderfully and uniquely joined. The man Jesus therefore serves as our model as we live the life of God in which we share. Jesus shows us how to live in union with God; and our own Saint Francis makes plain to us, step by step, how we are to imitate Christ.

The Way of Love

What is it that prompts the tertiary to strive for union with God in the world? What is it that constrains him to

live voluntarily in the spirit of the Evangelical Counsels? It can be only that generosity, motivated by love, which is so typically Franciscan. To be a follower of the Seraphic Saint is to be a lover, as Our Lord Himself is said to have asserted:

"My daughter," He one day said to St. Margaret of Cortona, the Franciscan Magdalen, alluding to her entrance into the Third Order, "by granting you the grace to enter the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi, I have placed you in the garden of my love." "And why," replied the Saint, "do you call the Third Order of St. Francis the garden of your love?" "Because," Jesus made answer, nowhere in the whole world do I find an assembly of souls where there is more love!" (Do You Know?, publ. by Franciscan Capuchins of India, 1939).

Tertiary Life

This Christ-like love of God which the Franciscan tertiary strives constantly to sustain in his life is reflected also by his love of neighbor. It is here that the lay follower of Francis, directly involved as he is in the world, can exercise the Seraphic virtue of love very practically and concretely. It is here that he attempts to implement in his daily life the

gospel concept of love set down by Our Lord when He said, "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: that as I have loved you, you also love one another. By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13: 34f).

Basically, it is the constant practice of this evangelical love that separates the authentic tertiary from those about him. This charity unconsciously permeates the personality of the tertiary, resulting in subtle changes in his attitudes. These changes, stemming from, and summed up by, his love for all mankind, are the mark of the tertiary.

This path of love is particularly marked for the layman, for among Franciscans only the lay tertiary is truly and completely in the world; it is he, then, who most often has the opportunity to influence the world with acts of love. Every day he is required to recommit himself in the way of Saint Francis by giving that full measure of his love to all with whom he comes into contact. In the modern world, this opportunity is uniquely his.

Further, in this repeated commitment — and through it — he is gradually joined more

closely to God, and consequently attains to a greater measure of spiritual satisfaction and happiness. Thus, the Church, which provides him with the divine life which is union with God, is not for him a tolerated interruption in life's treadmill. It becomes, rather, the most important element in this layman's life. And he, in turn, becomes more intensively the Church's instrument, its image, and its herald. As Pope Pius XXIII described it,

The faithful, and more particularly the laity, are stationed in the front ranks of the life of the Church, and through them the Church is the living principle of human society. Consequently, they especially must have an ever clearer consciousness, not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church (Mystici Corporis, cited by Thorman, The Emerging Layman, 14).

The way which Saint Francis has set down for the tertiary is neither a modified religious discipline, nor a matter of rubric and ritual. It is a way of life — rather, a way of *living*, in the sense that we have spoken of above — in which the Franciscan tertiary consciously enjoys a living union with God and, according to his state, directly extends

that life into his particular milieu.

Gospel Counsels

Motivated by Seraphic love, and intensely aware of the divine life within him, the tertiary cannot be content with observing only the precepts of God. His spirituality is that of the gospel, whose counsels are therefore his rule of life. While his vocation does not commit him to an observance of the vows professed by his religious brothers and sisters, his attitudes are informed by their spirit.

In his daily life it is the love of his neighbor that demands the tertiary's jealous care for his neighbor's good name. It is this love that will not allow him to take unfair advantage of his neighbor's foibles or lack of knowledge in the ruthless competition of life. With this greater love for the rights and aspirations of his neighbor, success in its materialistic sense becomes also less important to the tertiary. This relieves him of some of life's pressure, and provides him with the opportunity for a practical application of holy poverty in the world, whose wealth he views constantly in the perspective of eternity.

The tertiary's conscientious

fulfilling of his secular responsibilities out of the motive of Christian charity results necessarily in his obedience to his employer and to all civil authority — not begrudgingly, but willingly, in the spirit of Saint Francis.

Moreover, since nothing is more incongruous with the love of another than providing the agency for his moral corruption, the tertiary considers himself his brother's keeper and the protector of his virtue. This is so whether the agency take the form of invitation to his body, mind, imagination, or whether it be just the implied acceptance of immorality signified by silence.

In this way, the holy virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience are practiced by the tertiary in the world, according to his own state, but in the spirit of Saint Francis. From these manifest commitments, the profile of the Franciscan tertiary emerges: he is of the world, yet different from other men.

Our World

The Franciscan principles by which the tertiary lives are perennial. It is his duty to adapt them for application to the particular time and place in which he lives. What does the Franciscan tertiary bring

to our own society? Perhaps the most pressing problems of our world, burdened as it is with the cult of self, concern the unreserved Christian acceptance of, and respect for, the rights of one's neighbor.

This paramount problem of our own times is most aptly formulated by Father James Meyer, O.F.M., who confronts modern man with the following questions:

In God's name how can people call themselves Christian, and be prigs and snobs? How can any Christian regard himself as a privileged class, to be served and to gather in the emoluments of human endeavor, regardless of what is his fair share and what are the rightful aspirations of those dependent upon him?

How can any Christian dare to keep whole classes of people from using the same public carrier with him, the same hotel, the same section of the city; and how can a Christian discriminate against such classes as to place and price of labor or trade; and how can a Christian bar them from his school and hospital — his very church — when the common divine Savior of both enters the very heart of both?

And finally, how can Chris-

tian people descend to depths where their snobbery becomes positively obscene, and they presume to say who and what class of people shall be born and what classes not? (Social Ideals of Saint Francis, Herder, St. Louis, 1948, 42).

It is for the tertiary, within his own community, in his own way of life, to answer these questions with a resounding "They cannot!" It is for him also to promote Christian social principles, both by taking his place in the vanguard of activities and by drawing others to them through the example of his life.

It is worthy of note here that, allowing for the guidance of ecclesiastical authorities, these problems belong *uniquely to the layman*. For it is he who must undergo the profound social changes and even economic pressures which are attendant upon the carrying out of Christian principles in these areas. It is here, then, that the Franciscan Third Order has the capability of making a real and important contribution to our society, by instilling Catholic laymen, for whom its holy founder envisioned it, with an awareness of the divine life within the human soul and a realization of man's consequent obligation to man.

In the Third Order there is offered to the Catholic layman, amidst the mechanized metropolises, through the streets filled with gleaming, overpowered status symbols of materialism, above the din of the commercials, past the billboards, the launchpads, the beauty-parades — a path to God well-worn by the feet of many centuries; a path of love; a path old, but uniquely adaptable to all times; a path of dedication wonderfully suited to those who remain in the world; a path to sanctification in a world that makes sanctification difficult: the way of Saint Francis, perfect lover of God.

Heralds of the King

Fr. Augustine McDevitt, O.F.M.

Anyone familiar with the life of our Holy Father Saint Francis must surely have been charmed by the vignette which describes that great-hearted lover of God striding through the forest, proclaiming that he was the Herald of the Great King. So essential is it, in Francis' mind, to witness God by one's example and word that his three Orders are indelibly sealed with a missionary character; every true Franciscan is, according to his own state in life, a missionary from God to the world, a herald of the divine King.

In the incessant life that is the Blessed Trinity, the divine

Son is eternally generated by the Father, and the Holy Ghost eternally proceeds from both Father and Son as from a single fountal Agent. So also in time, as Jesus Himself tells us, is the Son sent to men by the Father, while the Holy Ghost is sent into the world by both Father and Son as by one Sender. Theologians speak of these temporal appointments of the Son and Holy Ghost as their *missions*.

The Incarnation, which is the visible mission of the Son, is therefore a reflection in time of Christ's eternal generation. In the history of salvation, other men had been given oth-

er missions by Almighty God. Having chosen the Jewish people as His very own, God selected from their midst certain men, whom He appointed to the mission of witnessing Him before their fellows: prophets, who would teach the people truths about God; kings, who would direct and guide the people in the way of God; priests, who would offer man's worship to God and bring God's gifts to men.

Having been appointed to these offices by God, these men of the Old Testament represented Him authentically to His people: where the emissary is, there also is the sender virtually present. Yet, their mission was imperfect, a mere pledge of the work of The Anointed One who would come to be God's plenipotentiary witness to mankind. The divine mission of Jesus the Messiah fulfilled that pledge in a unique and infinitely superior way. For Christ embodies all of these separate offices in Himself: He is the Truth, the Way, and the Life. In the case of His mission, moreover, the emissary not only represents God, virtual-

ly present in him by the divine authority vested in him; in the marvelous Hypostatic Union, the human emissary is God. Mission finds its perfect expression in the Incarnation.

By reason of the Catholic's incorporation into Jesus Christ, this mission of bearing witness to God before men is extended to him. The sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation establish him in relation, respectively, to God and men. By Baptism he is made to share, by adoption, in Jesus' divine sonship; Confirmation converts this sonship to mission. A son of God by Baptism, the Christian receives at his Confirmation the capability of being a mature brother of Jesus, contributing to God's plan of salvation by sharing actively and publicly in Christ's mission to mankind.

Participation in Jesus' mission is thus an integral part of Catholic life. The fact that Saint Francis so emphasizes it in his particular spirituality attests once again the remarkable insight which the Seraph of Assisi possessed into the mystery of the Incarnation.

The Threefold Epiphany of Jesus

Saint Bonaventure

Thou that sittest upon the cherubims, shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasses. — Ps. 79:2-3.

In the text we have quoted, David the Prophet foretells the longed-for manifestation of Christ following His birth. His words imply two things: in the verse, *Thou that sittest upon the cherubims* he intimates the sublime grandeur of Christ, the most glorious infant, according to His eternal divinity; when he says, *Shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasses* he alludes to His gracious appearing in assumed human nature. It is as if the Prophet were saying, "You who hold dominion over all the heavenly spirits in virtue of the excellence of supreme glory, now shine forth through these three men to all others, especially the Gentiles, by showing forth the humanity which You have assumed."

We notice, then, that these words express the Prophet David's prayer that just as the Son of God, the Word of the Father, far excels all creatures, both angelic and human, according as He sits as Lord of all above the heights of the heavens, being inaccessible LIGHT, invincible POWER, and priceless SALVATION, so also He may deign to shine forth to men in these three facets as the Word Incarnate. And this is precisely what He has done. Today He has manifested Himself as the splendor of eternal light, as the Word of immeasurable power, and as the salvation of human nature.

For He reveals Himself today:

—as LIGHT, by means of the extraordinary appearance of the shining star (Mtt. 2:2). Of this revealing we can say, *Obviously great is the mystery of godliness, which was manifested in the flesh, was justified in the spirit, appeared to*

"A sermon preached by Brother Bonaventure in the convent of the Dominicans at the University of Paris, when the feast of the Epiphany fell on a Sunday" (Omnia Opera, Quaracchi ed., IX, 165a - 166a). Tr.: A. M.

angels, was preached to Gentiles, believed in the world, taken up in glory (I Tim. 3:16);

— as POWER, by means of the instantaneous transformation of a natural element: *This first of His signs Jesus worked at Cana of Galilee; and He manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him (Jn. 2:11);*

— and as SALVATION, in His beneficent sanctifying of the water of regeneration. As John said, after Christ had been baptized, *That He may be known to Israel, for this reason have I come baptizing with water (Jn. 1:31).*

So then, Christ has appeared to us today as TRUTH by diffusing light, as MAJESTY by exercising power, and as KINDNESS by sanctifying water for Baptism.

Moreover, it is according to this same threefold way that He reveals Himself spiritually to all those who dispose themselves through His coming into their mind. And here He is revealed to us:

— as LIGHT, by means of very clear revelations: *Search for wisdom, and she shall be made known to thee (Eccles. 6:28);*

— as POWER, by means of miraculous operations: *The Lord is a firmament to them that fear him: and His covenant shall be made manifest to them (Ps. 24:14);*

— as SALVATION, by means of amiable familiarities: *The mystery which hath been hidden from ages and generations, but now is manifested to His saints (Col. 1:26).*

But because Christ Jesus reveals Himself not to all, but to those only who conform themselves to Him as they should, we must point out that He manifests Himself:

— by very clear REVELATIONS only to those who believe faithfully: *We are happy, O Israel: because the things that are pleasing to God, are made known to us (Bar. 4:4);*

— by miraculous OPERATIONS only to those who hope confidently: *He hung up Nicanor's head in the top of the castle, that it might be an evident and manifest sign of the help of God; this is Christ, who hangs up the devil's head, by taking away his power, etc. (2 Macc. 15:35);*

— and by amiable FAMILIARITIES only to those who love fervently: *He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him* (Jn. 14:21).

Now, of those about whom we are here speaking,

— they who BELIEVE faithfully are signified by EPHRAIM, which means "the fruit-bearer"; *without faith, it is impossible to please God* (Heb. 11:6).

— they who HOPE confidently are signified by BENJAMIN, which means "son of the right hand," for they have fixed their heart there, *where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father* (Col. 3:1);

— and they who LOVE fervently are signified by MANASSES, which means "forgetfulness," for they, forgetful of self and of the world, have submitted themselves completely to the obedience of Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 10:5).

The first of these offer the GOLD of lucent understanding, inasmuch as they are truly believers;

the second offer the INCENSE of trust which rises aloft, inasmuch as they truly hope;

and the third offer the MYRRH of carnal mortification, inasmuch as they are dying of ecstatic love.

It is according to all these things that He was adored today by the Magi, who offered to Him a threefold gift.

Finally, it is in this same threefold manner that He will present Himself also on the day of judgment:

— as LIGHT, to all in general, regarding both persons themselves and their consciences: *For all of us must be made manifest before the tribunal of Christ...* (2 Cor. 10:5);

— as POWER, to all the evil ones in a terrifying way, with both wrath and punishment: *God shall come manifestly...* (Ps. 49:3);

— and as SALVATION, to the just, who will have been longing for Him, in both benevolence and glory: *And Israel was made the manifest portion of God* (Eccles. 17:15).

Racism— A Franciscan Response

From the time of its very inception the authentic Franciscan spirituality has concerned itself not only with personal sanctification, but also with the correlative mission of injecting the good news of the gospel into the blood stream of society. A classic example of this is the social impact of the Third Order during the Middle Ages.

Today's Franciscan tertiaries are well aware of their mission to their contemporaries. In America, 1964, they have been addressing themselves energetically to the problem of race relations and the promotion of racial justice.

On November 10 of last year, at a luncheon in New York City, the North American Federation of the Third Order of Saint Francis awarded its 1963 *Peace Medal* to the Baptist minister, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., for his leadership in the non-violent battle to vindicate the social and civil rights of our Negro brothers.

It is to the everlasting credit of the Third Order of Saint Francis that it thus became the very first Catholic group to recognize formally the work of this courageous American. In

his acceptance address Dr. King stated, "I have received many awards since I have been engaged in this struggle, but this is the first time I have had the great satisfaction of being given one by a Catholic organization."

The presentation of this award is very fitting. Those who are familiar with Dr. King's principles and the spirit of Franciscanism have been impressed with their similarity. THE CORD takes this opportunity to commend the tertiaries of North American for this application of the Franciscan spirit to one of our nation's most urgent and painful problems, and to ask God to bless their future efforts in this field with great success.

At the same time, we are happy to report that for some time now this same Federation has been engaged in the formulation and development of its own program, which it calls *Action for Interracial Understanding* (AIU). Its officers have recently drawn up and circulated the following statement, which we present in its entirety.

The Third Order was founded by Saint Francis not only

to enable laymen to strive after Christian holiness, but also to bring that holiness to the rest of the world by apostolic action. As the Third Order *Constitutions* specify, "It is the duty of the Third Order, as a leaven of gospel perfection put into the world, to give stability and strength to Christian life within the Church, and to maintain and spread Christ's kingdom by setting before others a pattern of genuine holiness (Art. 4); and also, "With great sincerity they shall show themselves to be true Christians and Franciscans... by promoting peace among members of the different social classes" (Art. 74).

Today, as our beloved country approaches the point of ultimate strain in the matter of race relations; as our Negro brothers justly become more outspoken in their demands for the rights which, though given them by God, are denied by their fellow men; as our white brothers, perhaps suddenly frightened by the forceful unity of the Negro demand, are tending to react violently against an essentially non-violent movement; as the non-violent movement itself tends to become violent at any moment; as the racial crisis reaches the point of no return; as

the threat of race war approaches the declaration of war; we feel it necessary to remind all members of the Third Order of their obligation to be peacemakers in the spirit of Saint Francis, and hence to request them to enter the present racial conflict quickly, effectively, and decisively, that they may "seize the mantle of leadership from the racist and agitator" (Statement of the Bishops of the United States, 1958), by bringing love where others have strewn hatred.

Specifically, we request all Third Order members:

1. To participate in demonstrations against discrimination with the specific goal of preventing the demonstrations from straying from the non-violence aims;
2. To mingle also in the crowds which seek to repulse the demonstrators, in order to channel their violent reaction into non-violent directions;
3. To keep uppermost in their minds that their goal in both of the above requests is to be peacemakers seeking to prevent violence;
4. To have printed up for distribution during demonstrations (as well as for private recitation) copies of the Third

Order Prayer for Interracial Understanding;

5. To refrain from patronizing all businesses and organizations which practice discrimination;

6. To write to their Congressmen in support of the civil rights bill now pending before Congress;

7. To prepare their neighbors for acceptance of this bill, and all other legislation enacted by Federal, State, or local governments;

8. To open up as many jobs as possible for Negroes in businesses which the individual tertiaries may conduct;

9. To influence unions to which individual tertiaries belong, to end discriminatory practices;

10. To join a neighborhood Fair Housing Practices Committee, or to form such a committee where one does not exist;

11. To form an Action for Interracial Understanding unit in each fraternity of the Third Order as quickly as possible. (Contact for this: Ralph E. Fenton, Executive Director, AIU, 575 Neponset Street, Norwood, Mass. 02062)

12. To offer indulgences gained through daily work and other means for those souls who are being detained in Purgatory for sins of prejudice, thereby enlisting the aid of those who are in the best position to understand the evils involved.

The first step in meeting any racial problem is to treat all men and women as persons, without reference to patterns of difference. But forgetfulness of God (which is the defect of secularism), and preoccupation with the physical (which is the effect of materialism), prevent this first step. They cause us to lose the view of man as God sees him. Thus, we grow insensitive to His image in every man, yet that image is the ultimate ground of mutual respect.

— U. S. Bishops' Statement, 1963

Hand-picked by God

Sr. M. Thaddine, O.S.F.

By Way of Preface

These essays are written primarily for women dedicated to the service of Christ in religious orders, living the communal life, and observing the holy vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Alarmed by the present dearth of vocations to the religious life, and even moreso by the recent increase in defections from original dedication, the writer humbly proffers a welcoming hand to those who find it hard to leave the fleshpots of this world. More especially, she pleads with those who, having embraced the religious life, now find themselves in doubt, as it were, and "swinging the convent gate," hardly knowing on which side to dismount. These especially weak, trembling, and inse-

Sister M. Thaddine, of the Hospital Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis, holds a Master's degree in Psychology and teaches in the nurses' training school of Saint John's Hospital, Springfield, Ill. Every other month during 1964 THE CORD will publish one of a series of six essays by Sister on religious Sisters.

cure hands she would clasp firmly in her own and say, "Stick it out, Sister — it's worth it!"

As one grows older in the religious life and drinks more and more abundantly of the Living Waters, the yoke becomes sweeter and the burden lighter indeed.

Hold fast, Sister, and come. Let us go on together, that we may dwell in the house of our Lord forever.

I. HAND-PICKED BY GOD

Look about you, my dear Sister. All of these women you see — all dressed alike in the religious habit, even as you are dressed; some short, squat; other tall and angular; some severe of expression, others serene and peaceful-looking; some quiet of demeanor, others gay, boisterous; Jewish, Polish, French, Italian, Irish, Negro and Oriental — these Sisters are your Sisters. Look long and hard, Sister. These are your Sisters, hand-picked by Almighty God to dwell in the Lord's house with you forever.

HAND-PICKED BY GOD

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These, Sister, are your Sisters — cross or crown.

In your own personal family, your own parental home, you had nothing to say when those blessed events, your brothers and your sisters, arrived. They were born into your family, and that was that. You couldn't just take them or leave them, reject or accept them. They were just as much a part of the family tree as you were, and you either loved them or tolerated them, just as they did you.

When anything in your own personal family went wrong — when brother Al got a ticket for speeding, or when Dad tarried too long at the corner inn, or your sis, Marge, had been reported by the good neighbors as having been seen smoking cigarettes at the school picnic — you took these family peccadilloes and hid them under the mantle of charity. You didn't carry on a whispering campaign about Al, or Dad, or Marge. You discussed them, of course, at home, in the privacy of the family circle; you prayed over them and forgot them. They didn't cause you to harbor any hatred or jealousy or bitterness. If anything, they brought the family closer together.

Remember how Mom would

hold up her hands and say, "Look at these ten fingers, my children. Should I hurt the smallest or the biggest, the pain is just the same. So it is with you. You are all alike to me."

So now, dear Sister, you've transferred from one family to another; a far bigger family. Do you still retain those old family principles of love, charity, and togetherness?

Do you recall when you first made the decision to enter the convent? You shopped around a bit to select just the right place for you. You wrote to several communities, and daily watched the mailbox for replies. Remember that one convent? They sent you a great big, thick letter which looked so very business-like and professional. It almost made you weak to open it. One sheet listed the things you were supposed to bring along just in case you decided on that particular congregation. Some of the things that were listed were spoons and forks, knives and napkins, tablecloths and napkin-rings. It's a wonder they didn't ask for the dining-room table! Dad said they did this so that in case you got kicked out, you'd have what it takes to set up housekeeping. Well, at that point, your feeble light of vocation began to flicker

fast, but, thank God, it did not blow out.

You finally found the community of your choice; or let us better say, perhaps, that God showed you the right congregation for you by His special graces. It was pretty hard to leave the old family home, wasn't it, Sister? Mom said nuns slept on straw mattresses and ate nothing but turnips. Brother Al said you could never construct and consume the three-story dagwoods you were wont to build. Dad said he'd give you just six weeks in the nunnery.

Did you persevere, my Sister, just to prove that you could take it?

The morning you left home! Can you ever forget it? There were butterflies in your stomach, and you felt sick and trembly all over. Then, when the train crawled out of the depot at 2:00 a. m., and your family and friends were crying and waving at you from

the platform, you nearly retreated, Sister. But you didn't. God's grace was working again. You waved back, and though the tears blinded you, Sister, you smiled. And it seemed that through the misty, wet tears and the dim station lights, you could see little flaming crosses, like the kind you see when you stare at the candles on the altar. They *were* crosses, Sister. God's crosses. In retrospect these crosses, Sister, could well be those new Sisters, hand-picked for you by Almighty God to help you gain merit and grace, and to live in union Him forever.

Do you love these hand-picked Sisters of yours as you cherished your own flesh-and-blood sisters? Do you overlook their faults and differences, and hide these with the mantle of charity as you did in your parental home? God gave them to you, dear Sister. They are the crosses which will win you the crown — just as you are to them.

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