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Good Morning, Good People!

May the Lord give you peace!

One again God blesses us with the lovely time of year called May. Gentle and graceful and full of promise, like her for whom it is named, this month inspires within us a renewal of our devotion to Mary, the Virgin Mother of God.

In recent months, many words have been spoken and written by Catholic and Protestant theologians alike, concerning the doctrinal basis of this Marian devotion of ours.

Within the Church the present Mariological problem is, very fundamentally, that of locating and best expressing the place which Our Lady holds in God's economy of salvation: while all Catholics agree that her place is a preeminent one, they are currently disputing the precise nature of this preeminence and the context in which it can best be theologically expressed and developed.

Among those outside the Church, the Mariological difficulty is much more acute. Notwithstanding a gradually increasing interest in Mariological doctrine, many non-Catholics still consider the Church's teaching on Our Lady to be a real hindrance to Christian reunion.

We should like to suggest, by way of trying to understand the non-Catholic position, that the failure of Protestant theology thus far to solve the problem of Mary lies far deeper than Mariology itself. It should be remembered that most non-Catholic theologians today persist in viewing Our Blessed Mother in a doctrinal context which is not fully that of traditional Christianity.

"What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?" Many there are who do not know who Mary is because they are not sure who Jesus is. The key to understanding Mary is a clear grasp of the truth of the Incarnation. When one realizes that Mary's son is truly and completely almighty God, one then has a basis in reality for discovering her place in His divine plan, and for comprehending the supernatural prerogatives with which He has graced His mother. It seems to us that they labor in vain to solve the problem of Mary, who have not yet solved the problem of Jesus Christ.

The Editors

Our Lady and Vatican II

Alcuin Coyle, O.F.M.

Specialization in scholarship seems to be the order of our day, apparently as a necessary evil resulting from the breadth and complexity of all fields of intellectual inquiry. This situation has obtained in the area of theology for some time now in the form of seemingly self-contained tracts. Although there are certain advantages to this, the obvious drawback in this process of isolated analysis is the absence of a final synthesis.

The climate is only too evident in our theological teaching, both in our collegiate and seminary institutions, where it has been customary to take up in succession the various tracts which constitute the whole of theological investigation without allowing them mutually to fructify one another. One wonders if the tracts on the Church and on grace, to take only two

examples, might not have been richer if they had been written in closer continuity with Trinitarian theology and Christology.

Theological Integration

No theological area has suffered more from the baleful effects of isolated treatment than Mariology. Our Lady has been honored through an increasingly long series of privileges and titles, which all too often have not been integrated into the total picture of salvation history. Of late there have been many attempts to renew Mariology as part of the general renewal of Catholic life and thought. Quite naturally this re-thinking has been done with an eye to its undoubted ecumenical significance. One of the most promising and fruitful lines of discussion has attempted to establish a parallel between our Lady and the Church, as seen in its strict dependence upon Christology. This parallel, well-established in patristic thought, serves to illuminate mutually two key ecumenical problem areas — Mariology and Ecclesiology —

Father Alcuin writes about Vatican II out of first-hand experience. During the first two sessions, he served as one of the English-speaking secretaries of the council. A member of Holy Name Province, he is presently Professor of Canon Law at Christ the King Seminary, Saint Bonaventure, New York.

while at the same time it underlines the centrality of Christ as the focus of our salvation. We see revealed in this question the unity of theological thought, as well as the benefits to be derived from allowing one tract to throw light on another.

It is significant that at both sessions of Vatican II, many Council Fathers were determined to include the schema on our Lady within the central theme on the Church. For nothing has suffered more from this truncated Mariology than Marian devotion, which is not only an ecumenical bone of contention, but a cause of wonder to many within the church as well. It is of further significance that among the most outspoken for this move were the South American bishops, gravely concerned with the abuses of Marian devotion in their countries. They expressed the hope that the Council would correct certain tendencies of Marian devotion in countries that occupy the people with what is secondary and accidental, instead of leading them to the center which is the mystery of Christ.

Pope John XXIII

On October 4, 1962, a week before the opening of Vatican II, Pope John XXIII made a twofold pilgrimage: one to the famous shrine of Loreto, near

Ancona on the Adriatic Sea, and another to the tomb of Saint Francis in the Umbrian hill-town of Assisi. At both places he prayed for the success of the council, and at both he spoke of Our Lady. Pope John declared at Loreto: "O Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, we have come here this morning to invoke you as the first Star of the Council which is about to begin, as a propitious Light to our journey that turns hopefully toward the great ecumenical assembly which is a universal expectation."

In the plain below Assisi, there is another Marian shrine, the little stone chapel of Our Lady of the Angels, or the Portiuncula, which was so dear to the Poverello. Pope John, speaking at the tomb of Saint Francis, did not fail to make mention of this shrine in the very introduction of his address: "Venerable Brothers, Beloved Sons! Two shining names indicate the moment of arrival in Assisi and the central ideal of this city; as you enter the city, Saint Mary of the Angels; at the summit of the city, the Hill of Paradise, resounding with the name of Francis. O Mary, Queen of Angels! Here you show us the way to Paradise, which this hill marvelously symbolizes; and you inflame

a common enthusiasm for the celebration of the Ecumenical Council which wishes to be a true and great feast of heaven and earth, and of the angels, saints, and men: for your honor and the honor of your most chaste spouse Saint Joseph, for the honor of Saint Francis and all the saints, and for the praise and triumph, in souls and in peoples, of the Name and Kingdom of Jesus Christ, Redeemer and Master of the human race".

Council Patroness

The Second Vatican Council opened under the auspices of Our Lady on October 11, 1962, commemorating the truth of the divine motherhood defined at the Council of Ephesus in the year 431. At Ephesus the Church proclaimed that Mary is "Mother of God" and prevented the followers of Christ from dividing Him into a human and divine person. Since the time of the Council of Ephesus Mary's universal veneration within the Church has been undisputed and incontestable. In the testimony of the first two centuries, Mary was more an object of theological speculation than of liturgical or personal devotion. Yet, the way in which this difference emerges lends itself precisely to demonstrating her position in the economy of salvation, thereby

providing an explanation for the tremendous growth of her veneration in later times

When the present Council opened, and as it continues, "Christians are divided over the person of the Virgin Mary and have been for centuries." A large portion of the Christian world finds itself unable to accept the Mother of Jesus as the spiritual mother of the Church. Yet, Pope John continued to regard Our Lady as the patroness of Christian unity. Noting that the first session had begun and ended on feasts of Mary, namely, her Motherhood and her Immaculate Conception, he said that "these coincidences ... make us realize that the Church's historic events invariably take place beneath the kindly influence of Mary's motherly protection."

Pope Paul VI

Likewise, Pope Paul, proclaiming his dependence on the intercession of Our Lady explains, "We cannot think of anyone who is more concerned for the Church than the Mother of Christ, for Mary was present to the Church, not only when it was born from the pierced side of her Son, and not only when it was inaugurated at the coming of the Holy Spirit on the first Pentecost, but Mary has been present to

the Church through all the centuries: present to the Church making progress at every time."

On another occasion, speaking to several thousand members of Marian congregations meeting in Rome shortly before the second session, Pope Paul explained that it is in the history of salvation that we find Mary. "All Catholics are children of Our Lady," he said. "Their piety for Mary should reflect this common membership in the family of the children of God, always by the habitual signs of the centuries-old worship devoted by the Church of Jesus Christ to the Mother of the Saviour."

He cautioned them to avoid excesses in Marianism. "Avoid everything that sets one apart. Seek rather, that Marian devotion which is the best insured by tradition, as it has been transmitted to us since the beginnings through the prayers of successive generations of Christians in the Orient and Occident." "Mary," he continued, "is for everyone the source of true beauty. But where will you find Mary? Surely it is not in exaggerations, nor in sentimentalism, nor in the abuse of deductions aiming towards bombast and hyperbole, nor in novelty. . . . When all is said and done, you will find Mary if you take

scrupulous care to place her within the whole of the Christian mystery."

Conciliar Discussion

The question of our Lady's position in the Christian dispensation and in the structure of the Mystical Body played an important part during the discussions of Vatican II. The Council Fathers attempted to express the fulness of the doctrine as far as it enters into the balanced perspective of the Church, and at the same time to place the veneration of Mary in its proper relation to the adoration of Christ. During the discussion, two diverse methods or ways of understanding the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Church emerged.

In the conciliar debate immediately prior to the vote on the proposed schema "*De Beata Maria Virgine, Matre Ecclesiae*," Cardinal Santos (Manila) and Cardinal Koenig (Vienna) were commissioned to defend their respective divergent opinions on the role of Our Lady in the Church. These widely publicized speeches, expressing unalterably opposed positions, became two of the most significant documents delivered on the floor of the council-hall during the second session. The discussion dealt with the ques-

tion whether to treat the doctrine of Our Lady independently, or as a part of the principal document of the council, the schema "*De Ecclesia*."

Cardinal Santos

The Cardinal from the Philippines, defending the necessity and propriety of treating of Our Lady in a separate schema, proposed summarily four main arguments:

1) A separate schema would indicate the eminent dignity and singular place of Our Lady in the Church. As a member of the Church, Our Lady is singular, since she is associated with the bringing forth of this Church; likewise, as a member, she has the singular vocation to sanctify. According to Cardinal Santos, Mary is the cause of growth in holiness, both by meriting together with her Son the grace of redemption for all, and by causing the application of graces to those who are to be sanctified.

2) The particular role of Our Lady places her "in some way above the Church." Her function is essentially different from other members in the Church, since she cooperated in the redemption and the realization of the Mystical Body. Moreover, her singular preservation from sin establishes a difference in her redemption

from other members of the Mystical Body, not only in degree but also in kind.

3) The Blessed Virgin is co-redemptrix of mankind, and the mediatrix of all graces in the Church. This close relationship between Christ and His Mother does not permit one to reduce Mariology to Ecclesiology.

Finally, 4) Catholics and non-Catholics anticipate a new and complete synthesis on our doctrine of the Blessed Virgin.

Cardinal Koenig

Cardinal Koenig, on the other hand, offered historical reasons for integrating Marian theology into the schema on the Church, citing scriptural and patristic texts which warrant the parallel between Our Lady and the Church. A reflection on Our Lady as the most perfect model of what the Church is, has a logical place in the schema on the Church. The Viennese Cardinal argued that the Church as "the people of God" is the central theme of the council. Therefore, if we regard the Church principally as "the people of God," then Our Lady belongs inseparably to the Church. By reflecting on the Blessed Mother in the context assigned her by God, we would learn to appreciate more deeply the value and relevance of Marian doctrine.

Mary and the Church enjoy a similar relationship to Christ; both are the fruits of the redemption, and the means to salvation. As the Church is the fruit of the redemption of Christ, and as such is chosen by Him as means of salvation for others, so also was Our Lady a fruit of the redemption, and as such appointed as a means of grace in the history of salvation. And because Mary was the fruit of Christ's redemption in a unique and sublime way, she also was an instrument of grace for humanity in a very special way. Just as the Church is the fruit of the redemption actually cooperating with Christ, so Our Lady actively cooperates with her Son in faith, hope, charity, and intercession, thus extending and perfecting the mission of the Church.

Finally, Cardinal Koenig insisted that Mariology has been separated too much from the other branches of theology, and by integrating the teaching of Our Lady into the schema *De Ecclesia*, our understanding of both the Church and Our Lady would become richer and more profound. In this way Catholics would be better instructed on the rule of Mary in the great mystery of the Incarnation, lest they neglect the essentials of our faith, and find them-

selves lost in the accidentals of secondary devotions.

Decision

Before the vote was taken on October 29th, the acting president for the session, Gregorio Cardinal Agagianian stated: "No vote on either side can be constructed as constituting any lessening of the dignity of the Blessed Virgin or any diminishing of her preeminent role in the Church." The Council Fathers voted 1,114 to 1,074 to include the declaration on Our Lady in the schema on the nature of the Church, rather than introduce the separate schema proposed by the Theological Commission.

In the press conference that followed, it was pointed out that the two currents of thought manifested in the voting concerned only two different methods of giving due importance to the Blessed Mother, neither of which detracted in any way from her dignity or prerogatives. Each of the schools of thought was convinced that its method was the one which gave more importance to the position of Our Lady within the Church. From the voting itself, with the majority being carried by only a slight margin, one can see that the Council Fathers as a body were perhaps hesitant or

even undecided as to which method would give more importance to the role of Our Lady. Certainly the discussions in the sessions to come will bring forth a new development of both method and doctrine, with the common purpose of a better understanding of Our Lady and the Church. The mystery of the Church will be more fully exposed in the Marian mystery; and conversely, as our understanding of the ecclesial mystery deepens, so too will our appreciation of the mystery of Mary.

Mary and Unity

The ecumenical movement as well as the Mariological era have developed under the guidance of the Spirit of truth and under the direction of the magisterium of the Church. Popes John and Paul, in convoking Vatican II, have graciously invited non-Catholics to reunion, and have repeatedly stated that one of the main purposes of the council is to bring about the fulfillment of the ardent desire of Christ, that all may be one. Placing the council under the heavenly protection of Our Lady, the pontiffs have prayed with the Church that through her powerful intercession, the activities of the council may be brought to a successful conclusion. For the

Church is well aware that a proper spirit of ecumenism can be effectively achieved under the patronage of her in whom the Lord is eminently pleased, and who is the mother and most efficacious source of true unity. For as those outside the Church come to know and recognize Mary, they will recognize the Church of Christ.

A Balanced Approach

Basic doctrinal differences do exist between ourselves and Protestants with regard to Mariology. These differences should be set forth clearly, so that a way and method may be found toward a useful dialogue. On our part, we must candidly admit that there have been at times exaggerations and abuses both in regard to doctrine and to cult. However, in our desire for a dialogue we must not minimize the place of Our Lady in the Church. We must indicate how the humble "handmaid of God" has her position only in relation to Christ and to God. In this way we shall be able to show them that just as she illumined the primitive Church by her presence and strengthened it by her prayers, she now also brings help to the Church militant, especially toward the union of all the faithful whom Christ commended to her beneath the

Cross in the person of the apostle John.

The tract on Mariology today must be treated with the ecumenical movement in mind, not that the teaching itself should be modified — for the teaching must always remain the same — but that the method and manner of explaining it should be guided by ecumenism. Regarding the dogmas of faith and the truths sanctioned by common consent and the magisterium of the Church, Catholics must be as careful about asserting the truth and defending it as they are in not giving offense to non-Catholics.

Conclusion

Catholic theologians are presently asking for a scientific explanation on the place of Our Lady in the Church and how the Marian doctrines are contained in the sources of revelation. Protestants, on the other hand, are hoping that the council will explain how the Marian doctrines are deduced from Scripture, and especially that it will proclaim in clear

terms that the Blessed Mother is entirely subordinate to and dependent upon Christ, the one Mediator. Finally, it is hoped that the council will clearly propose what the Church teaches concerning the mission of the Blessed Virgin, her privileges and her cult. Every effort must be made to bring those outside the Church to a complete understanding of Catholic thought concerning the Blessed Mother and her mission in the economy of salvation. This should be done with due regard to the sensibilities of non-Catholics and the demands of charity.

If the Marian and Ecumenical movements progress side by side within the Church, and if earnest prayer is added to the efforts of all, the day may soon come when the whole community of Christians, through the intercession of the Mother who constantly fosters the unity of the Church, will be united in love of both Mary and her divine Son, and brought together in one fold and under the same Shepherd.

In the Blessed Mary, Mother of God, "the Church holds up and admires the most excellent fruit of the redemption, and joyfully contemplates, as in a faultless image, that which she herself desires and hopes wholly to be."

—Vat II, *Const. on Liturgy*, no 103

The Nursing Sister: Handmaid of the Lord

Sister Marie Clement, S.F.P.

The account is so very familiar to us: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and thou shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus" (Lk. 1:31). Then follow the words of Gabriel, clear, terse, meaningful, a divine confirmation of Mary's mission: "And behold, Elizabeth thy kinswoman also has conceived a son in her old age, and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month; for nothing shall be impossible with God" (Lk. 1:36-37). And Mary in humble, obedient submission, replied: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word."

The modern handmaid of the Lord, the spouse of Christ, the

religious sister engaged in the care of the sick, is conscious of her mission to bring Christ forth in souls. She, too, has professed: "Be it done unto me according to Thy word."

Bearer of God's Love

When Mary called herself "the handmaid of the Lord," her services to Him were defined for nine months, when He in His human nature became totally dependent upon her. But her service to Him inspired service to others; genuine love of God invariably awakens love towards one's fellow men. "For how can he who does not love his brother, whom he sees, love God, whom he does not see? And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also" (1 Jn. 4:20-21).

Our Lady's Visitation was a particularly human event in the economy of the Incarnation. In this article, Sister Marie Clement, of the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, describes how the Franciscan nursing sister suffuses womanly activity with the supernatural. Sister is Mistress of the Junior Professed at Schervier Juniorate in Dayton, Ohio.

And so "Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town of Juda. And she entered the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth" (Lk. 1:39). Mary's first response to the Son of God made man was to carry Him over

the hills with haste as she went on a mission of neighborly love. This, in general, is woman's mission in the Kingdom of God — to carry the Savior through the world, to lavish service and love on others out of love for Him. And it is the very particular mission of the sister who cares for the sick. For she has dedicated herself to bringing His love in a most tangible manner to those who stand in such poignant need of it — to those who have fallen ill, those who are in pain, those who must think seriously of meeting their Creator soon.

While on her way to her cousin's, Mary experienced the joyous solitude of a human being with God in a way hitherto undreamed of. The journey of three days through the hill country was difficult, but, oh so happy! A holy solitude — God and His Mother — Mary and her God! Anyone who chanced to see her could never have guessed what treasure she bore within. But it is always thus with the inner riches, those riches of the heart that are the ornament of womanhood. In Mary these shone in full splendor. The gentleness, the calmness, the thoughtfulness of a woman bespeak greater beauty than richness of raiment and gaudy jewels.

Greeting in the Lord

Then Mary met her cousin, and Saint Luke records Elizabeth's words: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb! And how have I deserved that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, the moment that the sound of thy greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who has believed, because the things promised her by the Lord shall be accomplished" (Lk. 1:42-45).

What was Mary's greeting? What did Mary wish for Elizabeth that had the effect of bringing a new and higher life to the child in Elizabeth's womb? Most likely it was the salutation common among the Jews: "*Shalom!* Peace be with you!". The greeting of Mary was a wish for a real tranquility of order within the human soul, the sum of all blessings. And the wish of the Mother of God was immediately effective: the statement of Elizabeth has traditionally been interpreted as implying that at that moment sanctifying grace was poured into the soul of the yet unborn John the Baptist.

In this greeting of two souls so dear to God, there is so much reverence. When people who are filled with love en-

counter one another, they experience no struggle for precedence, but a mutual and spontaneous well-wishing. This is the meaning of the "*Pax et bonum!*" of Saint Francis and his followers, a greeting which leaves no room for jealousy and strife — only peace. Again, it is a part of the special mission of the sister who is dedicated to caring for the sick and ministering to their physical needs, but who is at the same time always mindful of the undercurrents of distress, of worry, of fear, of apprehension, even of guilt, that must be allayed effectively and replaced by peace. To the aged person who is suffering a paralysis which brings about a total dependence upon others, she must show the consideration and respect which Mary had toward her aged cousin and Zachary, who had been so sorely tried by God. To the young, so fearful of medical treatment, her assurance must be as firm and secure and tender as that which Mary offered Elizabeth. To the patient who is emotionally afflicted, often beset by temptation as well as by physical distress, her willingness to serve as an instrument of God's grace must be just as effective as Mary's. Always she is mindful of her role as "handmaid of the Lord";

always she lives her original submission: "Be it done unto me according to Thy word."

Magnificat!

After she greeted her cousin, Mary's soul broke jubilantly into the *Magnificat*, for her heart could no longer contain its riches. Her hymn was spontaneous and natural, so characteristic of the East, and in singing it Mary became the poetess of the New Testament. Her song was the gushing forth of the thoughts stored within the reservoir of her heart. It broke out first in a canticle of humility, which neither denied the great things done to her, nor arose from a feeling of inferiority. Mary simply ascribed all to God. In the spirit of Anna, the mother of Samuel (1 Kg. 2:1-10), she attributed all that had come to her to God's goodness. She echoes Judith, who in her own canticle had sung, "O Adonai, Lord, greatest art thou and glorious in thy power; and no one can overcome thee. . . . They that fear thee shall be great with thee in all things. Woe to the nation that riseth against thy people; for the Lord almighty will take revenge on them" (Jud. 16:15 ff).

With a familiarity born of frequent and fervent prayer, Mary borrows phrases from the

Psalms of David with which to garnish her paeon of praise: "I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy. For thou hast regarded my humility; thou hast saved my soul out of distress and hast not shut me up in the hands of the enemy. . . O magnify the Lord with me; and let us extol his name together. . . I will praise the name of God with a canticle; and I will magnify him with praise. . . Who is this King of glory? The Lord who is strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle. . . Thou hast humbled the proud one, as one that is slain; with the arm of thy strength thou hast scattered thy enemies" (Ps. 30:8, 33:4; 68:31; 23:8; 88:11).

It is in the spirit of the *anawim*, the humble and poor of heart, that Mary acknowledged her total dependence upon God. With the truly poor in spirit she sang out, "He who is mighty has done great things to me, and holy is His name" (Lk. 1:49).

This is the same spirit which motivated Saint Francis to embrace a life of poverty, a life of total dependence upon God, dependence not just for material things, but also in his acceptance of everything which God gave to him and in all circumstances ordained by God. It is a spirit of trust and confidence, the spirit of the lowly

and humble, the spirit of one for whom God has come to mean all. It is the spirit of total surrender to the divine will. It is the spirit of loving acceptance of the "sacrament of the present moment." For the religious dedicated to serving Christ in the sick, it is living the response which she made to her vocation: "Be it done unto me according to Thy word."

Mary was caught up in the exigencies of the present moment, and, woman-like, she met the needs of Elizabeth. The Blessed Mother's consciousness of her cousin's need is one aspect of the mystery of the Visitation that has been for many a source of inspiration and of wonder, expressed in art and literature, and aptly summed up in the lines:

*O, child, when our heart
stirs to question, "Why?"
Whether we be old or young,
mother or maid,
When, helpless, we seek our
Fate's unravelling —
There's but one answer, child,
to serve, to serve!*

Is service not, in the last analysis, the ideal function of woman? Was it not to be a help-mate to man that Eve was created? And if service be woman's fundamental role in the scheme of things, then no-

where, certainly, is this beautiful virtue so strikingly exemplified than in the biblical description of God's own mother being of service to Elizabeth. It is this ideal that particularly inspires the sister engaged in hospital work, regardless of what form that work might take. She, in imitation of Mary, is fully dedicated to woman's ideal altocentrism.

Selflessness

The most natural manifestation of this orientation to the needs of others is the service of love which a mother performs for her child. Unquestioning, without hesitancy, her true love responds to every need of the child. Her sacrifice seems to others to be extremely heavy and burdensome; understanding her dignity and responsibility, she makes it without weighing the cost. Hers is a generous, unselfish service extending through twenty-four hours of every day. Nor is her service limited to material needs alone. She is constantly attentive to the higher, spiritual needs of her offspring, and prompt in responding to them. Love always seeks the good of the beloved, and the greater the love, the higher the good which will be striven for.

The most perfect example of motherly love and solicitude is

that of Holy Mother Church, the Bride of Christ, which He established so that she might foster every good of her children, but particularly the very highest good to which God has called them. Her dignity and responsibility lie in mystically begetting children to her divine Spouse through the sacramental system with which He endowed her. It is she who, in the divine economy, gives to them and nourishes within them the divine life through these effective signs of grace.

Through their membership in the Church, all Catholics share in this dignity and responsibility of hers. Once possessed of the divine life themselves, they acquire a mission whereby they bring other souls to her to be born to divine life. And it is not by accident that among all the members of the Church, some there are who are called Spouses of Christ. In the light of the Church's mystical motherhood, it is obvious that religious sisters bear this title with good reason, and not merely out of poetical piety. Dedicated as they are to Jesus and to mankind, committed as they are to begetting mystical sons and daughters to God, they imitate this motherly function of the Church in a very special and real manner.

Again, our own Saint Fran-

cis, so acutely aware of the true heart of things, observed this very natural tendency of a natural mother, and referred it to the supernatural order: "If a mother love and cherish the child of her flesh, how much more should not one love and cherish his spiritual brother." Francis was thinking here of the promotion of the greatest, the highest good, of the individual. And as far as he was concerned, this was the core of the apostolate.

The love and service given by the religious sister, the woman engaged in the apostolate, is well described in terms of spiritual motherhood. Her child is *Everyman* — any one with whom she comes into contact, and to whom she can be of service. Whether it be the old, the young, or the in-between; whether their need be physical, emotional, or spiritual; whether the service she renders be natural or supernatural; she will be ready to provide for all in a fruitful way, in a way that will bring Christ forth in the other, and that will satisfy the maternal need of her own womanly nature.

Conclusion

We have pointed out that the salient feature of Our Lady's Visitation was the forgetfulness of self that is characteristic of

a mother's service. Besides this, however, several other virtues are evident in Mary's regard for Elizabeth. These latter virtues are always attendant upon forgetfulness of self. Provision for the needs of others ever respects the independence of those who are aided; never becoming overbearing or pompous, it strives always to maintain gentleness which is inherent in woman's nature. Its aim is to be thoughtful and helpful. Ultimately, this attitude can be reduced to the virtue of humility, which is the primary characteristic of respect for others. The Blessed Virgin manifested this humility in a way which is simple, but most impressive. There is no indication that she desired to impress Elizabeth with her ministrations; she wanted only to provide for her needs in a thoughtful, gentle way.

The nursing sister should frequently evaluate her service to the sick to discover whether it is truly forgetful of self and wholeheartedly dedicated to the good of others. She must be ever alert to the encroachments of attitudes which would vitiate her service — aspirations of self-seeking, insistence upon recognition and expressions of appreciation, forgetfulness of the supernatural implications of what she does.

She recognizes that the sufferings of the sick often make them rather oblivious to the sacrifices which she makes for them. But here she sees an even greater opportunity to give. Here she can truly be a mother — a spiritual mother bringing forth new life, the supernatural life of grace in the soul of another. And she will know that in bringing grace to others she is closely imitating

Our Lady, who was the bearer of supernatural life in the Visitation. In imitation of her heavenly mother, the nursing sister strives only to give, only to be of service, only to live her love. She remembers that she has embraced her life of service by making her own the words of the Mother of God: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy word."

The days in which our work can prove our undoing are both too many and too obvious. All that need be said here is that if we exploit it simply for self, if we exclude God from it, if we make it our excuse for neglecting everything else, if we cheat at it, if we are lazy about it, if we give it up before the time, if we make a god of it, if we drive other people to do it for us, we are worse failures in this matter of work than those whom we despise for not doing it at all. Thus for practical purposes there are two extremes which have to be guarded against: first, allowing work to run away with us; second, finding excuses for running away from it.

— Hubert van Zeller, O.S.B.
WE WORK WHILE THE LIGHT LASTS

Vatican II and the Religious

Method C. Billy, O.F.M. Conv.

The second session of the Ecumenical Council Vatican II, which closed on December 4, 1963, followed the tone set in the first session by Pope John XXIII. Discussions on the various drafts or schemata were geared toward the evangelical and pastoral approach. Pope John suggested that we open the windows, let in some fresh air, and renew the spirit of the universal Church. Just how this renewal would be carried out was first described in certain texts which appeared in central Europe even before the first session of the council was convened. The influence on the liturgical aspect of the Church came from various parts of the world. The conciliar Fathers were briefed by theologians from different climates and backgrounds so that the preparation they received outside

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the council assisted them to vote intelligently upon the proposed drafts.

When the second session of the Vatican Council was about to convene, the same question was asked as before the first: what can we expect from this session of the council? Father Thomas Stransky, C. S. P., in an article entitled "A Critical Turn in Vatican II" (*Sign Magazine*, October, 1963, p. 16), stated: "My own answer, therefore, to what is to be expected from the second session is based on personal reflection and experience, aided by those best secondary sources of serious speculation that trickle down from the cooler North in the French, Dutch, and German journals." How true this statement was! Many suggestions contained in these journals were adopted both within the council and by Pope Paul VI outside the council. Little wonder, then, that Father Hans Kueng writes in his book, *The Council in Action* (Sheed and Ward, N. Y., 1963, p. 77), "It is no secret that it is the central European episcopate and

central European theology which has so far, intellectually, led the field."

Cardinal Suenens

Some notion of what we may expect from the council in regard to those who live in the States of Perfection can be gathered from the book *The Nun in the World*, by Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, Archbishop of Malines — Brussels (Newman, Md., 1963). Every aspect of the religious life as it pertains to sisters and nuns is treated in this work. It calls for a renewal from without, and the implementing of adaptations which will be necessary if women religious are going to take their place in the pastoral work of the Church. Will suggestions like those proposed in the cardinal's book prevail in subsequent sessions of Vatican II? If they do, the religious program of the Franciscan communities of nuns and sisters may well be affected. Naturally, this will necessitate a different allocation of time, which in turn will curtail some of the religious activities of the present schedule. According to the proposed plan, more time will be devoted to pastoral work outside the confines of the convent. It is hoped that in this way the work of the nun in the new economy of the

pastoral approach will be more effective and fruitful for the apostolate.

Franciscan Loyalty to Church

Our present Holy Father, Paul VI, like his predecessor Pope John XXIII, appealed to the entire Christian world to participate in the council. There come to mind immediately two ways in which we may respond to this appeal. First and foremost, we should pray earnestly and frequently for the council's success. Secondly, we shall be expected to comply with the council's decisions as loyal sons and daughters of Saint Francis and children of Mother Church.

In his address at the opening of Vatican II, Pope John declared, "In this assembly we wish, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to seek out how we are to renew ourselves so that we may correspond more and more closely to the Gospel of Christ." Our Seraphic Father presented this same appeal to Pope Innocent III for his small group of followers. He also realized that the Church is the guardian of the gospel. Thus, he admonished his followers to be ever loyal and obedient to the Church and to her visible head. In the first chapter of the rule he states that, "Brother Francis promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope

Honorius and to his successors canonically elected and to the Roman Church. And let the other brothers be bound to obey Brother Francis and his successors." In all humility and simplicity, Francis of Assisi dedicated himself and his followers to submission and reverence to the Holy Father and to the Church instituted by Christ Himself.

1209: Francis Goes to the Pope

When, in 1209 (or 1210, as some contend), the poor man of Assisi decided to seek approval for his new way of life, he set out for Rome with a small band of friars to see the Holy Father, Pope Innocent III. The Supreme Pontiff had listened to many requests from various groups for the reform and renewal of the Church; even the cardinals at the Roman Curia had asked themselves if this unknown Umbrian were not some sort of reformer who wished to stir up the faithful against the prelates. When they heard Francis explain his program for the Order of Penance, they were quite certain that it was impossible for any religious institute to exist without possessions, housing, food, or fixed revenue to support such a program. While living according to the gospel from day to day was admittedly a praise-

worthy endeavor, it seemed hardly practicable.

The Church certainly needed renewal at that time, as the contemporary Councils of the Lateran attest. Moreover, Pope Innocent himself wished nothing more than a true reform of the Church. Still, he could not quite understand the mind of this little poor man from Assisi. Evangelical poverty and life according to the letter of the gospel of Jesus was commendable, but hardly feasible. The problem which loomed large in the minds of the papal prelates was the future of a group such as Francis proposed to establish. Granted that a tiny band of immediate followers could persevere in such a severe manner of life, what would happen if a multitude of men should undertake it? Complete dependence upon divine Providence constituted a supreme act of trust in the goodness and generosity of God and His people; but how would such an institute be able to continue in the future?

While Pope Innocent and his advisors were weighing the implications of Francis' proposal, Cardinal Giovanni Colonna di San Paolo set before them an idea which shed a bright light on the question. "If," argued the prelate, "we refuse to approve this new way of life

on the grounds that it is impossible to live, then we shall affirm that the gospel of Christ is impractical to follow" (cf. *Legenda Trium Sociorum*, 46-51). So it was that Saint Francis found a friend in the holy and influential cardinal of the Church.

Impressed now by Cardinal Colonna's logic and Francis' sincerity, the Supreme Pontiff asked the latter to pray for a manifestation of God's will in this matter. We can be certain that Francis, man of prayer that he was, did not ignore the Holy Father's wish. And in reply to his prayers, Pope Innocent received the sign which removed from his mind all doubt as to the spirit by which Francis was being prompted. The pope dreamed that the basilica of the Lateran, the head and mother church of Christendom, was leaning to one side, about to topple. Suddenly a man of small stature ran up to it and, with a simple movement of his shoulders, righted the building. The Holy Father recognized the Assisian as the providential man of his dream.

The meaning of the dream was also clear to the pontiff: the universal Church needed the advent of a new spirit in order to be righted from its perilous position; the new spir-

it must certainly be a return to the life of the gospel, and here this little poor man of Assisi had appeared on the scene to request approval for just such a life. Pope Innocent willingly gave his approval to the new religious group, and so officially — albeit only vocally for the time — the Church sanctioned the Franciscan way of life as an authentic form of Christianity. Having expressed his gratitude to the Vicar of Christ, Francis went immediately to visit the tomb of the holy apostles, where he prayed for his new order and for the universal Church.

Now, seven centuries later, Pope John has called for an identical renewal, when he expressed the wish that Christians would live more closely to the gospel of Christ. Even today, does not the Church depend upon the charity of its members? Jesus founded His kingdom on love, and one of the ways in which this love is expressed is the sacrifice of the people of God. Some of the Fathers of Vatican II have enunciated their thoughts on this matter of evangelical poverty and living according to the gospel. Their Christocentric viewpoint seems to agree remarkably with the notions expressed by Saint Francis of Assisi.

1962: *The Pope Goes to Saint Francis*

On October 4, 1962, Pope John, himself a Franciscan tertiary from his youth, made a pilgrimage to the Seraphic shrines at Assisi and Loreto, where members of all three branches of the First Order had the pleasure of receiving him: the Friars Minor at Saint Mary of the Angels in Assisi, the Friars Minor Conventual at the Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi, and the Friars Minor Capuchin at the shrine of Our Lady in Loreto.

At each of these shrines the Holy Father prayed for the success of the Second Vatican Council, which was to open on October 11. While visiting Loreto, Pope John prayed, "O Mary, O Mary, Mother of Jesus and our mother! We have come here this morning to call upon you as the first star of the council that is about to begin; as the auspicious light on our path, which is directed with confidence toward the great ecumenical meeting awaited by all" (*The Pope Speaks*, vol. 8, 1963, p. 277).

At Assisi the Pontiff spoke to the crowds of pilgrims who greeted him. He declared that Francis, who had been poor and humble here upon earth, entered heaven a rich man. He also called for holiness of life, and

pointed to the Seraphic saint as one who summed up the good life in a single word, teaching us how to set a proper value on events in this life and how to communicate with God and with our fellow men. The possession of God was the dream and goal of Francis, and he achieved it by living according to the gospel of Jesus.

Renewal of Spirit and Adaptation

The world today is on the move. Its problems are not those of the thirteenth century. Nevertheless, the Christian gospel, and even its particular adaptation by Saint Francis, is as relevant to our own times as it was to the times of Francis.

Every aspect of our modern apostolate will be discussed by the Council Fathers. Since the general tendency of the council is to stress the pastoral approach to the apostolate, even though the pastoral approach is not confined to parish work alone, the means to progress in the modern-day apostolate may be changed.

If Franciscan religious are going to be effective in teaching and preaching the word of God to modern man, they must seriously ponder how they are to renew their spirit, both from within and from without.

The conviction that their vocation is a Seraphic one must be renewed; their own lives must be brought to conform more closely to the life of Jesus as related in the Gospels; the Christocentric view of life which is characteristic of modern theology must be recognized and reaffirmed as their Franciscan heritage.

As Pope John pointed out in his talk at Assisi, Saint Francis our founder knew how to communicate both with God and with his fellow men. So also, we who are followers of the Poverello must acquire the knack of doing this if we are to be true to our Seraphic Father. Emphasis on fear and punishment has never been the authentic Franciscan approach to religion; the message of God's love, the good tidings of the gospel which has been so wonderfully stressed by good Pope John — this is truly our own heritage, and we Franciscans should be in the front ranks of those who would bring it to the world.

Pope John wisely reminded us that today's world is much more in need of saints than of intellectuals. Sanctity is a much more powerful influence in the world than discussion and instruction. In the renewal of the Church, it is the living example of Jesus Christ which is

most important. And it is given to the Franciscan, in virtue of his dedication to living the gospel life in his own time, to be just that — a living example of Jesus Christ. This is what Saint Francis became to his contemporaries; it is what we must become to ours.

The wisdom of the Franciscan way of life is such that it will not change with each new age. It is perennial in its applicability to changing times. Our Father Francis exhorts his followers in the fifth chapter of the Rule of the Friars Minor that they should not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion. While this particular chapter of the Rule is entitled "The Manner of Working", its substance deals with prayer. This is specifically the basis of our renewal. It is the individual seraphic soul in union with its God that must be renewed in the spirit to conform more closely with the gospel. Renewal must begin with the individual, who in turn will share it with the entire Franciscan family. This was always the principle of renewal with the Seraphic Order: a movement from the individual to the community, and so eventually to a more profound appreciation of our association with Jesus.

Francis of Assisi was a man

of intense prayer. His spirituality was Christocentric, all of his activity being referred back to Christ. His motto, *My God and My All* was the external expression of his internal conviction and self-sacrifice. He wished to follow Jesus in prayer, just as he did in preaching and in doing good for others. Francis prayed alone in the hills of Umbria; he prayed with his community at Saint Mary of the Angels. His praise of God took on both a personal and a communal aspect. Ever since the early days of the Franciscan Order, his followers have recited the divine office in choir.

The schema on the States of Perfection which the Fathers of Vatican II will discuss at the next (or perhaps at some subsequent) session, may bring some changes into our Seraphic way of life. This does not mean that essential parts of our heritage from Francis will be disturbed. The spirit of prayer,

zeal for souls, active participation in the apostolate, and our own sanctity and imitation of Christ will still be our goal. Since our Rule is evangelical in spirit, we can adapt ourselves to such changes. To live according to the gospel is what we professed to do when we became Franciscans. To do this more closely will require a renewal of spirit in the individual Franciscan, and the adaptation of the community to the proposed wishes of the Church as expressed in the future teachings and recommendations of the council. As true sons and daughters of Saint Francis, we can intensify our determination to the extent that wherever we are called upon to adapt ourselves to the new pastoral apostolate, we shall not lose the spirit of holy prayer and devotion. In all things we shall progress with our imitation of Jesus, as outlined for us by our holy founder, Francis of Assisi.

... All who render this service (of praying the divine office) are not only fulfilling a duty of the Church, but also are sharing in the greatest honor of Christ's spouse, for by offering these praises to God they are standing before God's throne in the name of the Church their Mother.

— Vat. II, *Const. on Liturgy*, no 85

Some Recent Franciscan Books

Philip Harris, O.S.F.

Books in English by Franciscans or about Franciscanism have been coming forth in the last decade at a prolific rate. The publications reviewed briefly here are produced by the Franciscan Herald Press (1434 West Fifty-first Street, Chicago 9, Ill.), which has done a remarkable job in translating a large number of basic Franciscan works from the German and French with the hope that this policy will inspire American writers to produce scholarly and popular volumes based on the words, example, and ideals of everybody's saint, Francis of Assisi. The challenge to all who would interpret the message of Francis is to produce a readable book in the context of the twentieth century and relevant to the needs of contemporary man. The following efforts are steps in this direction.

Placid Hermann, O.F.M., has done remarkable research into original sources, and published

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a synthesis of the spirituality of Saint Francis. *The Way of Saint Francis* (1964, 172 pp., \$3.75) digs into the words of the Poverello and highlights his characteristics of moderation, self-denial, self-sacrificing and self-emptying love of God and neighbor, and literal faith in God's world. There is a need to emphasize more the humanness of Francis and less his asceticism; while this book moves in that direction, it does not quite capture the warmth of the personality that has enthralled the hearts of men for centuries. It does analyze the salient reasons why Francis had such an impact on the people and conditions of his time, and attempts to point out the significance of Franciscan spirituality today. Actually, it only opens the topic and leaves to other writers the demonstration of how the new developments and insights into Christian spirituality in this century were foreshadowed by Francis.

The New Song (1964, 140 pp., \$3.50) develops the theme further, but concentrates on the theological counsels as the heart of Franciscan spirituality.

This translation by Antonellus Engemann, O.F.M., discusses the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity which flower in the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Christocentric spirituality of the Seraphic Father engenders a grace-giving community life. The author describes the means for growth in these virtues and the dangers that threaten their development. He maintains that "the new creature" can emerge only from these three germinal forces so well exemplified in the "Second Christ", as Pope Pius XII called Francis.

Saint Francis was a prophet in so many ways. In our age of materialism, his teaching on poverty assumes a fresh meaning. Valentine Breton, O.F.M., has attempted to give moderns the essence of that inner poverty of spirit which Francis lived and preached. *Lady Poverty* (1963, 104 pp., \$2.50) gets into the Poor Man's example and approach in this regard. Translated from the French by Paul Oligny, O.F.M., the book captures some of the simplicity and humanness of Francis as he wooed this Lady he called poverty. However, it yet remains for a layman, perhaps a member of the Third Order Secular, popularly to present this magnificent concept in an understandable and attractive

format that will have the necessary impact on the contemporary American, so orientated to and attracted by the accumulation of the things of this earth without comprehending the need for detachment from the possession of them. Not enough has been written on the value of sharing material wealth for the service of one's neighbor as a manifestation of true poverty.

Memorable Words of Saint Francis of Assisi is a classic from the French historian and student of Saint Francis, Alexandre Masseron. Taking the most memorable words of the saint of Assisi, the author provides pithy commentaries. He groups his selections around certain themes like poverty, obedience, joyfulness, charity, prayer, example, and death. However, the appropriateness of some of his choices can be questioned, especially when they lack a modern interpretation which seeks to get at the real essence of Francis' meaning as applied to our times. An example of this is the short chapter on "The Company of Women", which seems only to point up the Church's traditional respect for womanhood, but her alienation of them in daily life. One would have to be a student of history, culture, and anthropology to get at the ex-

act intention of Francis' words within the framework of his times, in order to grasp their application to our own. Perhaps a new forthcoming book of the same title and publisher may begin to do just this.

For those interested in the basic source works on Saint Francis, it is well to point out that a book previously published, entitled *Saint Francis of Assisi* by Thomas of Celano, his first biographer, is now available in a pocket-book edition without illustrations, at a third of the original cost (1963, 405 pp., \$2.95).

The next three books of the Franciscan Herald Press form a biographical trilogy of great Franciscans. The first is *Saint Charles of Sezze*, the autobiography of the Franciscan lay brother who was canonized in 1959. The book has been translated and edited from the Italian by Leonard Perotti, O.F.M. Although circumstances forced Saint Charles to forsake formal studies at an elementary level, this simple brother has left behind volumes of profound writings on the spiritual and mystical life. A contemporary of numerous canonized saints and confidant of three popes, Brother Charles has been praised by Pope John XXIII as "a martyr of obedience" who demonstrated "absolute love of

silence, detachment, and humility, values which the world despises, but which alone have value before God." This revealing book goes into the saint's thoughts about the virtues of his parents, his vocation, interior life, obstacles before and during his entrance into the religious life, his problems with melancholy and vain glory, his humble assignments in the friary, his ecstasies and levitations, the opposition to his writings, his battles with lust, and his virtues. An interesting life, but not one expressed in terms likely to inspire young men and women to imitation in this day and age. With growing evidences of holiness among the laity, one wonders when the process of canonization will include more laymen whose example of sanctity will be emulated because people can relate and identify with these saints.

Certainly, the subject of the next book, Junipero Serra, is of interest to Americans, but largely as a great historical figure. Marion Habig and Francis Steck, of the Order of Friars Minor, have brought together in this book a series of articles which are dedicated to the Apostle and Father of California on the occasion of the two-hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Serra's birth. Since

this dynamic missionary's cause for beatification is currently under investigation, *Man of Greatness* (1964, 172 pp., \$3.50) is a welcome contribution to the growing number of biographies on Fray Junipero. Interestingly written in story form, but based on careful scrutiny of historical facts, this volume will be enjoyed by young people and adults, whether they are interested in evangelization or American history.

I, *A Sinner* (1963, 393 pp., \$4.95) is a good example of modern religious biography which will appeal to people of this generation. It is a unique autobiography of the worldly Mexican opera star who became a Franciscan friar, José Mojica, O.F.M. The noted Mexican writer and historian, Alfonso Junco, thinks that Father José has recounted his life story from childhood to ordination without guile and with frank Franciscan simplicity and freedom. A descendant of one of the signers of the Mexican Declaration of Independence, José was raised by a devout widowed mother, only to reject the Church when he was twenty years old. From operatic

success in his native land, José went to stardom as a member of the Chicago Opera Company in this country. By 1934 he had appeared in a dozen movies and over three-hundred concerts all over the world. Described in Hollywood as "a second Valentino", he fell in and out of love and lived like a king. A chance recital at the Franciscan college in Quincy, Illinois, was the immediate source of his eventual conversion, membership in the Third Order Secular of Saint Francis, and religious priestly vocation. Suddenly, at the height of his successful career, he stopped in the midst of a world tour in Peru, and entered the Franciscan Order. His popularity in Latin countries can be gauged by the fact that the Spanish edition of his autobiography sold over three million copies. Since his ordination, this priest has devoted his life to the promotion of religious vocations and the building of a seminary. His is a touching story which again demonstrates the attraction of the Seraphic Saint, whose ideals and example can still have an impact on the sophisticated modern.

Our Senses and Appetites

Sister M. Thaddine, O.S.F.

Now, Sister, now that you understand and know a little better, perhaps you realize that saint production is not an assembly line job. Yes, of course, you had great ideals and plans mapped out for your religious life, didn't you, Sister? No small-fry holiness for you! You would become a great saint; maybe even a martyr saint. You had visions of your heroic courage and sanctity. What's become of them, Sister! Why, there were times you even fancied you felt the pains of the Master's wounds, so great and intense seemed your love.

But this past week wasn't so good was it, Sister dear? Last night after your examen, as you looked up at the Savior, you didn't have much to offer, did you? Oh yes, you had been kind today, and cheerful; you had worked hard and practiced patience; you had really sacrificed in obeying the rules and regulations; but, Sister, how about recollection and silence? Did you pause momentarily

from your Martha work and gaze into your soul at Christ? Yes, I know you made the good intention for the day this morning, Sister, and that counts for something. Don't be annoyed with me, Sister. I'm just trying to be of help to you as I know you will be to me.

So, you were very busy today. Your hands and your feet, and, at times, your mouth, too, were something like a treadmill, always moving. Now, as you kneel in the darkened chapel where the peace of God envelops you and the candle in the sanctuary lamp casts red shadows on the stained glass windows and all is quiet and calm, your treadmill grinds on, doesn't it, Sister? It's hard for you to wrench the psyche from the hustle and bustle of the matter and to let it gently blend into the spiritual realms of prayer and introspection.

Just what did you do wrongly today, Sister, that makes you sad in your offering? Christ listens. Tell Him. So you spoke harshly to a fellow sister; so you completely avoided and ignored another one; you didn't practice any mortifica-

This is the third of six Essays for Religious Sisters appearing every other month in this volume of THE CORD.

tion when it came to food; so you wasted time by participating in idle gossiping for purposes of human respect?

Why, dear Sister? What is there in you and about you that makes you do as Saint Paul says: "For I do not the good that I wish, but the evil that I do not wish, that I perform" (Rom. 7:20-21). Surely by now you have become acquainted with those wonders of God, your senses and your appetites. We'll discuss these forceful powers in a moment, Sister, but for now, let us get back to that examen you were making when all the pernicious and frustrating little creatures crept into your thoughts and invaded your peace and quiet. Don't let them frighten you, dear Sister. Really, their subtle invasion only points up the fact that you, after all, are a member of that common species called man — you are a human being.

Do you recall the conferences that Father Leo gave when you were a novice? Really, Sister, it's not *that* long ago. He relished telling little stories to make a point, just as Jesus used to relate His parables to the poor unlettered fishermen so that they would glean the desired meaning. Father said in analogy, that the tiny dust particles which are always present in the air about us cannot be

seen by the naked human eye. But let a bright, shiny, stray sunbeam sneak through the window and ho — the tiny specks become visible, dancing, spots of matter thrown boldly and clearly into view.

So, too, dear Sister of mine, is your precious soul. When you were living in the world of the laity, bustling hither and yon, you did not see the dust specks of imperfections, of faults, of unkindness, of human frailty. You did not even know that they existed because then, my dear Sister, you did not focus on them the bright spotlights of meditation, particular and general examen, introspection, and prayer. Now, this special insight into your soul permits you to see them clearly and vividly. Don't be alarmed, Sister, for even though you did not see them before, they were there all the time, hiding in the shadows until you found them. What a tremendous discovery, Sister. Now you can begin to work on them, whilst heretofore they worked on you.

But, back to those appetites and senses again which started all this business anyway. What about them? Just what makes them so forceful, so vicious at times, so docile and subjective at others? We have already discussed the soil, namely the strengths or weaknesses inher-

ent or acquired in which these appetites are planted and which the senses feed and harbor. It's a pretty evident fact that normally you can't do much about the color of your eyes, the size of your ears, or the curve of your nose; but you can and are expected to control your senses and your appetites. To make it practical for you and me, dear Sister, let's cite an example — something closer to home.

You like to eat, don't you, Sister? Who doesn't? Almighty God gave you an appetite for food and the pleasure of taste to enjoy it.

If you never experienced hunger and the pleasurable zest of eating, you probably wouldn't take the time to eat and brother body would soon rebel and suffer. But, thank God, there's nothing wrong with your senses, Sister. Those dagwood sandwiches you used to construct at home look and taste just as delicious in their religious environment, your convent refectory. But you have learned to control this appetite for food, haven't you, Sister? Especially now since your size 14 has expanded to a size 20. But that's not your main reason, Sister. You have learned moderation. You have learned the story Father Leo expounded so frequently: "Virtue takes

the middle of the road", not too much, not too little — and in accordance with your nature and acquired strengths and weaknesses, you have done so very much, Sister. And look at those hand-picked sisters of yours about you; they've been working, too. It could just be that their soil of character is not as fertile as your soil of character. They need your strengths.

Our senses! What wonderful gifts of God — feeding and harvesting our imagination; memory; giving light to our intellect and forcing it to present choices to the will. Let's take another look, a different perspective. What happened this morning at five a.m., Sister? According to the books, you *were supposed* to arise from your repose quietly, and in the presence of God, prepare your way to chapel. Well, Sister, when that convent bell emitted its monstrous, lengthy shriek, you shuddered and flew out of bed like a shot out of a cannon. "Why", you trembled, "Why does Sister Emphatica have to lean on that bell?" Then you awakened somewhat, and caught the delightful aroma of freshly cooked coffee, and you softened. Sister Mellowness up at dawn. How wonderful she is to get up so early to prepare that delicious hot coffee for you,

Sister and for your fellow sisters.

You gathered yourself together then. In exactly twenty minutes you were due in chapel. So you smiled, dear Sister, and hurried to wash the traces of sleep from your eyes, and to don the armor of religious garb while whispering, "Good morning, my Jesus, I place myself in your presence," and then ruefully, "I did it again, Jesus. But you understand, don't you?"

Let's backtrack now, Sister. That harsh bell that shattered the convent silence and your ears; that bell triggered off one of your senses, your hearing to be exact. The aroma of the coffee brewing tickled your sense of smell and taste; your eyes opened and let into your mind images and pictures of things about you; your fingers touched lovingly your religious habit. These sentinels of sense, industrious and sharp, are always ready to prod into action the highly specialized powers which in turn, with far greater accuracy than an IBM machine, will decipher and code into cognizant thought those treasures or trifles your senses have snared. Oh wonder of wonders, our senses — our sentinels. Scholastics affirm: "*nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerit prius in sensu*, there is

nothing in the intellect which was not first in the senses."

And so, dear Sister, what now? What does our conversation suggest to you? Humbly and sincerely it is meant to be a supportive shoulder for you; hopefully it will help you in turn to support others. It is meant to remind you, dear Sister, that we are all so very weak and yet so very strong; so dependent, yet independent; so lovable, so thoughtful, so inconsiderate. And so, dear Sister, come. Let us labor together to understand our senses, and to plan a mode of action to better control them, so that we may reap abundantly the harvest of good from the seeds we have inherited, acquired, and sown. Let us sift out the chaff and the weeds, and bring our offering pure and unsullied together to Christ.

After all, Sister, we are sisters — hand-picked by almighty God, to be His chosen ones forever for both cross and crown.

Your Thought For Now: Let me know myself, dear Lord — my weaknesses that I may strengthen them, my strengths that I may share them. Help me to guard my senses. Enlighten my intellect, and grant me the will to make the proper choices. And, dear Lord, include my sisters in this prayer.

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