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Editorial and Business Offices

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Editorial

May the Lord give you peace!

Although these make-up issues of THE CORD are non-seasonal in content, as we mentioned in the last one, still it seems fitting to devote some pages in any issue of a Franciscan magazine to meditation on the life and significance of our Founder, St. Francis. Particularly is this fitting in a number which, regardless of when it reaches you, bears the dateline "September - October." For it is in the middle of September that we celebrate the feast of the Stigmata, and it is at the beginning of October that we solemnize the anniversary of St. Francis' death, or birth into the pure life of eternity.

We concentrate, then, on the timeless and always valuable lesson God wishes us to draw from his stigmatization of that most Christlike of saints, Francis of Assisi.

We may be sure, first of all, that this singular sign was not wrought to serve Francis himself. For, while the early chroniclers record that immediately after the event, the Poverello seemed to be filled with new enthusiasm for doing God's work, he certainly had no need of the imprint of Christ's wounds to incite him to action. Nor, after such a long friend-ship with God, did he need such extravagant proof of God's love for him.

No, the reason for the stigmata is not found in any need on the part of Francis himself. His flesh was marked with the wounds of Jesus for the sake of other men. Even here, he is the herald of the great King. Our Lord himself confirmed this when he said to him, "Do you know what I have done? I have given you the stigmata which are the emblems of my Passion, so that you may be my standard-bearer" (Consid. III on the Stigmata).

This same reason is expressed in the Church's prayer for the feast, wherein we pray to Jesus, "who have renewed the sacred stigmata of your Passion in the flesh of the most blessed Francis, our Father, to inflame our hearts with the fire of your love."

And how does the stigmatization of St. Francis inflame our hearts with this fire? By marking our holy Founder as a man to be followed; by furnishing him with the graphic credentials of a man who can teach us to love Jesus because his own life was one long act of love.

Incarnation and Eschatology

Joahim McBriar, O.F.M.

The author of the *Imitation* of Christ echoes the thought of Seneca when he writes: "Each time I have sought the company of men, I have returned home less a man. "In another place the author states a recurring theme of his spiritual outlook: "Son, you are among enemies in this world, vexed with them on every side." As far as these statements go, and with further clarification from their author, they are true and communicate a spirituality which has been the source of great sanctity and, even in our own time, is the modus vivendi for many men and women.1 It is difficult, however, to overlook the inadequacies in such a position. What is the effect of the Incarnation (and our religion is essentially Incarnational) upon men and the world? How can Catholicism become relevant in our age? What is the place of science and technology within the framework of Christianity? How is the layman, within his sociological, cultural, historical and reli-

FATHER JOACHIM, stationed at Holy Name College, Washington, D.C., is presently studying theology at the Catholic University of America.

gious milieux, to survive as a Christian and discover the totality of his person? These questions are of the greatest interest to the world of the twentieth century. The answers to them are at times not precise and patent, and range from cautious separation from the world and adherence to the "blessed object of our hope" (Tit. 2:13), to total and unconditioned involvement in the world.

It is the object of this article to classify the two main tendencies in the search for Christian perfertion today, and then to exemplify one tendency with an analysis of the writings of Karl Rahner, S.J.

"THIS-WORLD" VS. "OTHER WORLD" THEOLOGY

The formulae laid down in the Gospel for man's identication with Christ can be reduced to love of God and love of neighbor. While the statement is itself quite clear, nevertheless centuries of interpretation have produced various, and often quite opposed solutions. Two tendencies have evolved: commitment - separa-

tion; involvement - withdrawal: Incarnation - Eschatology.2 Those who favor a "Christianity of Incarnation," while in no way questioning the transcendency of man's last end, maintain that the progress of mankind toward God is preparing the way directly for the coming of the Kingdom of God. They base their theory on such considerations as the assumption by the Second Person of the Trinity of a complete human nature, body as well as soul; the essential goodness of the created world according to Genesis 1, and God's invitation to man to co-operate by his labor in the creative work of God; and, finally, the historical development whereby the progress of Christianity in the western world has gone on side by side with a growing mastery by man over the material world. The surest way to find oneself out of step with God is not to deny his reality but the reality of the world. The exponents of this point of view maintain that there is a truly earthly task given to man. He has something he must accomplish as man. He is responsible for his generation, for the world, for the full development of the earthly city. This is his dignity and his sanctity. A failure to participate in this task is self-destructive.³ Many

object that it is arrogance and stupidity to make man the center of the universe. Yet man is the masterwork of creation because the Word became man. The destiny of man in the world is to humanize it, to spiritualize it, not escape from it or to pretend it doesn't exist.

In opposition to this outlook there is that school of theology, or that tendency among schools of theology, which takes a pessimistic view of human progress, of man's involvement in the world, of man's use of the world to acquire union with God. The outward march of man and the Church does not take place via scientific and cultural achievements, attractive as that doctrine seems to so many contemporaries. There is no place for a theology of the world, and the story of mankind can be seen in its proper perspective only from the point of view of an "eschatological theology," one that keeps in the forefront the last things and lives in the one great hope of the glorious return of Christ. Man, even regenerate man, can do nothing by his own efforts to accelerate or prepare the way for that return, for the Kingdom of God comes only by humble prayer. In no sense is man's union with God through Christ to be

attributed to an association and involvement in the world and progress of the world. Despite the fact of the Incarnation we who follow the Cross must live in a constant state of spiritual tension with the world around us, living in it, as St. Paul teaches, as strangers and vovagers. If one must look for the guidance of a master-hand in the advancement of modern civilization, the signposts, insofar as they can be clearly read at all, point rather to the prince of darkness than to any special providence of God.

Such are the two main lines of response to the problem of "this-world" vs. "other-world" spirituality. M. Aubert remarks that there are elements of truth on both sides and expresses the hope that continued study of the question will lead to a synthesis based on Incarnation and Eschatology rather than on either alternative exclusively.4 In this way theologians may avoid, on the one hand, an extreme "supernaturalism" which would be tentamount to a refusal by Christians to accept true responsibility and, on the other, an excessive optimism inspired by a thinly disguised naturalism and a tendency to divinize material realities by invoking a misguided "theology of Incarnation".

THE INCARNATIONAL APPROACH BY KARL RAHNER

The second part of this article is concerned with the thought of Karl Rahner as an exponent of the Incarnational approach. We shall consider separately the following aspects of Fr. Rahner's teaching: his theology of grace, of the laity, of the Sacraments, and of biblical inspiration.

The Theology of Grace

For too long, Fr. Rahner states, we have been content with a theology of grace that is based upon a juridical extrinsicism; nature is merely "disturbed" by the action of grace.⁵ Always maintaining the orthodox distinction between nature and grace, and attempting to avoid the confusion of the two orders, Rahner posits a "supernatural existential" which safeguards the gratuity of grace but gives to nature more than the negative potentia theologians heretofore had propounded. Rahner here follows in the footsteps of his fellow Jesuit, deLubac, who had seen in human nature a positive "demand" for the supernatural.6 According to Rahner there is more than an external decree which ordains man to the supernatural. There is an ontological rather than a moral

determination which touches layman as participating in a man in his very being and thus roots man within the di- of its being. Further on he vine economy.

This short consideration of problem of nature and grace exemplifies his Incarnational approach to theology as a whole. Because nature is sanctified in the very essence of itself all that is natural is to be appreciated and explored. The so called natural end of man is a mere abstraction; man exists with one goal alone. Because there is no natural end for man he must bring the supernatural into everything he does. The so called natural act, i.e. apart from grace, is unthinkable. The grace-filled economy is seen as a good to be explored. It is this orientation which is the basis for any genuine Incarnational spirituality, and which gives structure to the conclusions reached by the social, historical, and positive sciences.

The Theology of the Laity

"The notion of layman . . . does not mark the boundary between the sphere of the profane and the sphere of the sacred and sacral: rather it refers to someone who has a definite position within the one consecrated realm of the Church." Rahner here sees the from what has been said.

world redeemed to the depths states:

For the world is not merely Fr. Rahner's solution to the constituted by sinful and rebellious opposition to God, Christ, grace and the Church: the world is also God's creation, a reality which can be redeemed and must be sanctified (i. e. the Kingdom of God)... The layman is in the world ... and retains this place for his Christian existence (which is true of every Christian), and does not leave it even in the fulfillment of his existence.8

> Rahner here places the Christian within a situation and sees that situation as contributing to his totality. It is within the sacral place that he really comes to be, and it is through it that he achieves his fulfillment as a Christian.

> Later, in the same chapter on the layman, Rahner touches upon such points as the layman fulfilling the mission of the Church, the layman working to bring about the aschatological¹⁰ completion of the Church, and the lay apostolate as possessing the plenitude of the charism at Pentecost. It would take us too far afield to indicate all of these; the point seems to be sufficiently clear

The Theology of the Sacraments

Rahner traces the institution of the Church and the Sacraments through the pages of Old Testament writings. He sees that the organized association of those who are called to redemption is preceded, even chronologically, by a consecration of the whole of mankind which took place in the incarnation and in Christ's death on the across.

As the people of God socially and juridically organized, the Church (and the sacraments) is not a mere eternal welfare institute, but the continuation, the perpetual presence of the task and function of Christ in the economy of redemption, his contemporaneous presence in history, his life, the Church in the full and proper sense.11

Rahner, seeing the sacraments as realities we point to, located in space and time, insists that because they are there. God is reconciled to the world. There the grace of God appears in our world. There is the spatio-temporal sign that effects what it points to. To say that the sacraments confer grace without the subjective merit of the minister or the recipient of the sign is only the negative and therefore secondary formulation of a more positive content.12 That positive content, viz. the presence of God historically in the sign within the new and eternal covenant and the recipient's positive orientation to God, are the basis for his incarnational outlook.13

The Inspiration of the Bible

Rahner's concept of inspiration is a genuinely original contribution to the field. He places great emphasis upon the Christian community as possessing the source of inspiration, and sees in the *Urkir*che (the Apostolic Church in fieri) the milieu which God sanctified and permeated with the charism of inspiration. It is within the context of salvation history that God wills and produces the Scriptures. God wills the establishment of a supernatural and historical community, objectifying itself in a book.14 By this willing within an historical framework God is the author in the true sense of the word.

In his thesis Rahner goes on to show man's formal part in the authorship of the Biblea part which is necessarily implied in Rahner's own concept of man in relation to God's absolute will in his concept of grace, and in his approach to the problem of the supernatural and the natural. This is, then, only a further elucidation of his basic incarnational outlook.

Conclusion

What has been attempted may lack adequate fulfillment, but to the degree possible in an article of this size, the main outlines of an important problem have been delineated. The distinction between the theological currents was made in the first part of the article, and selected writings of Karl Rahner were chosen so as to exemplify one of the currents. The subject is a pointedly contemporary one, consideration of which stands to benefit not only the individual Christian, but the entire Christian community as well.

- 1. Jean Gautier, Some Schools of Catholic Spirituality (New York: Desclee, 1959).
- 2. Kevin McNamara, "Catholic Theology Today," Irish Theological Quarterly, XXI (1954), p. 249.
- 3. James V. Schell, "Christmas and the World," Commonweal, LXXIX (1963), p. 392.
- 4. M. Aubert, La theologie Catholique au milieu du XXe siecle (Louvain: Casterman, 1954), p. 152.
- 5. Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963), I, p. 298.
- 6. See James M. Connolly, The Voices of France (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 84.
- 7. Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations (Baltimore: Helicon, 1964), II, p. 319.
 - 8. Ibid., p. 323.
 - 9. Ibid., pp. 323-334.
- 10. Eschatological here does not refer to the question we are elaborating upon. It is used here within the broader framework of Christianity.
- 11. Karl Rahner, The Church and the Sacraments (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), p. 193.
 - 12. Ibid., p. 214.
- 13. For practical applications of this outlook, see Karl Rahner, The Christian Commitment (New York: Sheed and Word, 1963).
- 14. Karl Rahner, Inspiration in the Bible (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), p. 15.

The Christ-Flame of True Existence

Paul W. Seaver, O. P.

His flesh by penance is subdued, Transfigured wholly and renewed: The Scriptures are his daily food, Renouncing earth's desires.

Then Seraph-like from heaven's height.
The King of Kings appears in sight,
The patriarch, in sore affright,
Beholds the vision dread.

It bears the wounds of Christ, and lo! While gazing on in speechless woe, It marks him, and the stigmas show Upon his flesh, blood-red.

This body like the Crucified, Is signed on hands and feet; his side Transfixed from right to left, and dyed With crimson streams of blood.

From the Sequence in the Mass of Our Holy Father St Francis

A torrent of books and articles have been written during the past few decades in an effort to explain the worldwide admiration had for the Poverello, that uniquely ecumenical saint. But I have read no-

thing which surpasses in either the felicity of its expression or the penetration of its insights these few beautiful verses of the Sequence. They tell how Francis, captivated by Christ Crucified as he found him in the Gospels, imitated his Master's form of life with such simplicity and ardor of spirit that he merited on Mount Alverna to receive the stigmata of the sufferings of the Lord

FATHER PAUL, who teaches philosophy at St. Stephen's Priory, Dover, Massachusetts, delivered this pointed and inspiring sermon on the Feast of St. Francis, 1964, at St. Francis College, Rye Beach, New Hampshire.

Jesus. At that moment the human and the seraphic found such intimate union in the person of Francis of Assisi that the world has never ceased to rejoice in this powerful and sublime reaffirmation of that exaltation of human nature first achieved by the Incarnate God.

Even the most devoted clients of St. Francis are sometimes at such pains to deplore the sentimentality and naturalism found in so much of the universal cult offered to St. Francis that they obscure what it seems to me is the really central lesson taught by Francis' saintly life — the unceasing and unflagging power of the Enfleshed God to move the hearts of men. Is not the humanity of Christ the hidden inspiration humanitarianism of modern even when allegiance to Christianity is specifically disavowed? Does not the Messianic spirit of Marxist Communism in its idealized goals recall Christ's own messianic mission? We may indeed be living in a post-Christian age, but that does not mean that the post-Christian ever has or ever will totally forget the message of joy and hope taught by Godmade-man. And who can doubt that if an avowedly postChristian and even anti-Christian heart can still, almost despite

itself, be inspired by messianic dreams, St. Francis of Assisi has been one of God's chief instruments in keeping this message of hope alive?

We deceive ourselves if we suppose that a revamping of ecclesiastical organization or a renewed and refurbished intellectual apostolate will win the world to Christ. No less an authority than Christopher Dawson, the foremost Catholic historian of culture, is at pains to tell us that it was not speculative mysticism or even the immense intellectual synthesis achieved by the Scholastics that exerted the greatest influence on Western Christinaity. It was "evangelical piety and devotion to the Humanity of Jesus that found its supreme expression in the life of St. Francis" which most profoundly influenced medieval religion and culture. This is a lesson we Christians of the twentiethcentury must not miss. As with Francis, so with ourselves, our lives and apostolate must be nourished and inspired by devotion to Christ's sacred Humanity. It is as personalities transformed by Christ and not as efficiency experts or mere disembodied intellects overflowing with the "right" answers, that we will find a sympathetic response from contemporary man. IBM machines and Madison Avenue have left a bad or at least jaded taste in his mouth for mere efficiency or mere information however pertinent or sacred that information may be.

This is not to say that St. Francis, who never expressed himself in the language of the philosophers (and who once said he needed no books for he knew the Gospel by heart) was anti-intellectual in temper. He had the greatest respect for the theologians of Mother Church, and he gave permission to Anthony to instruct the brethren in theology provided only that the spirit of prayer was not disturbed. It is simply that Christocentric piety, grounded in the reading of the Gospels and spiritual intuitions which received its first great impetus from St. Bernard, waited to find in Francis its most exalted and appealing expression.

Bernard banished for good from medieval minds any Byzantine-like representations of Christ as a Person aloof from men or awesome to behold when in vivid and passionate sermons and writings he underscored the approachableness of Christ. Reflecting on the weakness of the Christ-Child, Bernard commented: the voice of too gave alms to lepers through a child crying is more to be the meditation of a third perpitied than feared. But it is in

ligion "achieves an organic and complete expression in Western man." In the words ow Dawson: "As intimately as body and soul form a man, so do the Western nature and Christian spirit unite to form Francis." The deep impress of the Franciscan spirit on medieval art and poetry witnesses to the truth of Professor Dawson's bold claim.

Francis' was a keenly sensitive soul: gentle, artistic, poetic, simple, joyful, and serene; and precisely because of this sensitivity he was an individualist in all he felt and did. The decisive crisis in his life emerged precisely out of this exquisite sensitivity which set off contrary forces in his soul. In one single experience Francis was both moved by deep compassion for the needs of his fellow man and violently repulsed by the ugliness of these needs. Francis was transformed from being merely a gay and talented man about town into being a gay realist and lover the day he kissed the leprous sores of an ugly fellow human. Like contemporary man, who (often by force of circumstances) practices charity by check or money-orders, Francis son. But from that moment Francis that the Christian re- when, by the gift of self, he as-

similated the Gospel Message the Christ-flame as we may into his own life, he saw nature with new eyes as filled with symbols of the Crucified. He sensed the fraternity of creation because Christ - now a part of this creation --- was the first-born of many brethren. Now that his response to Nature was sacramental, Francis had an instinctive appreciation for the hidden, Christ-meaning of things. How else can we explain the paradox that his tributes to the beauty of the natural creation grew more eloquent and personalized the more the sight in his afflicted eyes grew weaker? Unless he had found Christ in the processes of nature he could hardly have referred to our inexorable mortality as Sister Death. All was his because he surrendered all the things of this creation to possess God alone. His is a powerful witness to the liberating effect of slavery to Christ.

Our Father's devotion to the sacred Humanity of the Crucified could not help but flower in his selfless service to others; and this evangelical ideal of service to all the brethren is the keynote for renewal of the Church in the modern age.

Pope John has proven that man is by no means so impervious to that wonderful blending of human affability and

have supposed. St. Francis was "used" by others; Pope John was "used"; but neither, for fear of this, shrank from becoming "fools for Christ's sake." Therein lies the greatness of both men separated by seven centuries of time but so remarkably simpatico in spirit. Both strove ardently for a peace grounded in the brotherhood of the human family. Both made valiant and dramatic efforts to bridge the gap between the Eastern and Western worlds.

Gabriel Marcel once wrote that "To love is to exist." The need of 20th century man, like the need of 13th century man, is to love that he may really exist. Suicide, after all, is the outward and ultimate expression of an inner and hidden conviction that, when all is said and done, the self does not have any meaningful existence. Nonexistence seems the only sensible answer to absurd existence.

Given our own personal plight and that of our brother men and women, can we refuse to join Pope John in the Umbrian Valley praying in the spirit of St. Francis so that we also may become Christed personalities and spread the Christflame of true existence to those who are empty and in need?

Franciscan Pioneers In Mexico

Benedict Leutenegger, O.F.M.

II. THE SACRAMENTAL APOSTOLATE

The friars of Saint Francis, who were the first to come to Mexico (they arrived in 1524), were all in agreement on how to proceed in converting the Indians. But the arrival of the religious of the Order of Saint Dominic in 1526, of the Augustinians in 1533, and of secular priests as well, occasioned differences of opinion. There were those who said that the sacrament of baptism was not to be administered to the Indians without observing all the ceremonies prescribed by the Church. Baptism was not to be administered merely with water and the sacramental words, as the first friars were doing, for this was sinful. Mendieta writes these objectors used all their energy in maintaining and publishing their opinions, but neglected to learn the language of the Indians and to try to understand them and win their affection. The ignorance and nudity and smell of the Indians repelled them. One of the missionaries said that he would

not waste his many years of study on such bestial and stupid Indians. These vain ministers caused unrest and trouble among the first friars who had planted the vineyard of the Lord under such great difficulties. The friars of Saint Francis, in their humility and selfabasement, were willing to be considered as simple and docile friars, though we know of many among them who were learned, gifted, and saintly men.

The Sacrament of Baptism

The first friars of Saint Francis consulted among themselves as to how they were to proceed in converting, teaching, and baptizing the natives. They did not ignore the rules and ceremonies of the Church in the administration of holy baptism, but in the case of urgent necessity, which they judged to be present, they felt themselves excused from observing all the ceremonies. In fact, there were so many Indians to be baptized and so few priests at hand, that it was physically impossible to observe all the ceremonies of baptism. It happened that one priest baptized over

FATHER BENEDICT'S article, of which this is the second part, is appearing in four consecutive numbers of this review.

six thousand Indians in one day. In Suchimilco two priests baptizes in one day more than fifteen thousand. Motolinia in his History writes that the friars of Saint Francis had baptized some five million Indians in 1536, a number never equalled in the history of the Church in so short a time.

Had the friars tried to observe all the rites and ceremonies of baptism, they would have lost many souls. Mendieta writes that some of the scrupulous friars observed all the ceremonies, and as a result many Indians died without baptism. Other Indians got tired of waiting and returned home without baptism, for they had come from afar and were dying of hunger. Food was always a problem for these poor Indians.

With great feeling, Mendieta writes: "How is it possible for one priest to do so much in one priest to do so much in Divine Office, preach, witness the marriage promises, bury the dead, instruct the catechumens, learn the Indian language, prepare sermons in that language, investigate marriage cases, settle disputes, defend the Indians who can do so little, and baptize three or four thousand (I do not want to say eight or ten thousand), and observe all the ceremonies of baptism. Who could have the had in the days of their infide-

saliva to touch them all, even though he took a drink before each baptism? What church could contain all the Indians, since the churches were so few that the Indians were sometimes baptized in the field, and without the candle, for the wind blew the burning candle out. These things are not understood except by those who have experienced them. The scrupulous friars did not face these difficulties."

The matter came to such a state that a meeting of the entire Church in the land was held. No agreement was reached, however, and so the whole matter was brought to Spain. From there it went to Pope Paul III. In his Bull of June 1, 1537, he said, "... We decree and declare by these letters present that those who baptized these Indians converted to the faith of Christ without the ceremony or solemnities which the Church always observes, but baptized in the name of the most holy Trinity, did not sin, because in considering the circumstances of the place, we judge that this seemed to them the best way to proceed. In regard to these new Christians. let them not be ignorant of the great dignity of the baptism of regeneration, and how different it is from the washings they

lity. We now ordain that in the future, except in the case of urgent necessity, in administering the holy baptism, the ministers observe what the holy Church observes, and we burden the conscience of each one with the judgment that there is or is not the said necessity."

When this Bull of Paul III arrived in New Spain, the four bishops there (the fifth one was absent) held a meeting in 1539 and determined how the Bull was to be observed. The exorcism they shortened, using a short form they found in an ancient Roman Missal. The bishops decreed that oil and chrism must be used. Urgent necessity they declared to be infirmity, crossing the sea, time of war, etc. Cases of extreme necessity were put down also. Mendieta writes: "To some it seemed that the bishops greatly narrowed the meaning of urgent necessity. . . . Some bishops did not want to admit that there was such a great number of baptisms with the circumstances mentioned above as constituting an urgent necessity."

It took three months for a decision to be reached, and during that time the baptism of adults was discontinued. Many of the Indians died without baptism. And Mendieta adds this note: some priests did not excuse the friars from

fault in refusing baptism, even though the bishop ordered the friars to cease baptising until the method they were to follow had been determined. Those priests argued that it would have been better to obey the High Priest, Jesus Christ, and his Vicar on earth than any other prelate.

The Sacrament of Penance

In the days of their paganism, the Indians had a form of oral confession which they made to their gods twice a year by going into a corner of their house, entering the temple, or retreating to the mountains. There they showed intense contrition by shedding tears, wringing their hands, and contorting their face.

The Indians began to receive the sacrament of penance in 1526, and showed such faith and devotion that many Spaniards were put to shame. Once three thousand Indians followed a religious over the mountains to go to confession. The Fathers were so few and so busy that some Indians had to wait a month or two for confession. Mendieta adds: "I must admit that often enough, the Indians tried our patience."

The Fathers had no trouble getting the Indians to restore ill-gotten goods. One Indian was wearing a shawl, his only

possession, and this shawl belonged to another. To test his obedience, the confessor told him he had to give back whatever belonged to another. The penitent at once took off the nor did they understand their shawl and said, "Now I have nothing; I owe nothing, and I desire nothing." Father then told him to put on the shawl.

Motolinia wrote: "The most unceasing and arduous work that the conversion of the Indians entailed was administering the sacrament of penance. This is so continual that we have Lent all the year round. They come to confession at any hour of the day and in any place, in the churches as well as on the roads. The sick are especially insistent, and hearing their confessions is very hard work. ... The confessors in this land must not be too touchy and squeamish if they wish to hear confessions. . . . I firmly believe that those who faithfully persevere in devoting themselves to this work undergo a kind of martyrdom, and render a service that is very meritorious before God."

Holy Communion

There was also a difference of opinion in regard to giving the Indians Holy Communion. Some secular people and some religious held that Holy Communion was not to be given to

the Indians, for they did not show any intelligence. But Mendieta writes that those who held this opinion did not know the language of the Indians, character. He gives examples of true faith and genuine devotion on the part of some Indians. Motolinia wrote before him that those who lack the experience of at least three or four years ought not to speak so categorically. He also added that "many of our Spaniards are so scrupulous that they believe they are doing the right thing when they refrain from receiving Holy Communion. They say that they are not deserving of it. But in this they are seriously mistaken and deceive themselves. If the reception of Holy Communion depended on merit, not even the angels or the saints would deserve it." Four centuries later, in the decree "Sacra Tridentina", dated December 20, 1905, Pope Pius X officially expressed the same opinion.

Some held that Holy Communion should be given to all the Indians indiscriminately. But this would not have been right, for, as Mendieta writes, some Indians lived a life of drunkenness and vice, did not raise one finger from the ground, and could not distinguish sacramental bread from

ordinary bread. Extremes are wrong, he declares, and the first friars followed a prudent middle course. They proceeded slowly and prudently, and gave this sacrament only to a few who were properly disposed. Even at the time of Mendieta's writing, years after the first conversions, only a few Indians were receiving Communion. The reason may be, explains the friar, that the Indians are so poor and so taken up with making a living that they do not give much time to religious matters.

The Sacrament of Confirmation

Theologians debated the question whether a priest can administer the sacrament of confirmation. Mendieta writes that the learned Fathers of Mexico did not break their heads over this question. The Council of Trent, whose decrees were published in Mexico in 1565, had declared that the bishop alone is the ordinary minister of the sacrament of confirmation. In extraordinary cases, a priest can administer the sacrament. "I know of only one priest who administered the sacrament of confirmation in this new land of the Church, making use of the concessions granted by the Supreme Pontiff, and he was Father T. Motolinia. An occasion presented itself for the they were unable to unravel

administration of the sacrament, and the friars entrusted him with this office. When the first bishops came, they took over this duty."

The friars saw to it that no Indians remained without confirmation. The bishops were holy and poor men, and confirmed the Indians without remuneration, for the Indians in their extreme poverty could not afford even a candle. Some of the bishops died from overwork in confirming so many Indians. The first bishop of Mexico was the Franciscan, Juan de Zumarraga, archbishop of Mexico City. The other Franciscan bishop was Martin de Hojacastro, second bishop of Tkaxcala.

The Sacrament of Matrimony

The validity of marriage among the Indians was debated for many years by the first friars. They did not know the language of the Indians well enough, nor were they familiar with their customs and way of life. Some said the Indians had no valid marriage, for they had many wives. But the poor and ordinary Indian had only one wife, and they lived together for life. In trying to solve the marriage cases, Mendieta writes, the Fathers uncovered so many impediments and obstacles that and disentangle the twisted divine natural law. They knew threads of intricacies that were all knotted together." divine natural law. They knew nothing of the divine positive law. If these Indians had a law-

The friars of Saint Francis finally decided that the Indians did contract marrage validly. They came to this conclusion. however, only after examining the ceremonies the Indians observed in asking for and receiving their wives. These ceremonies the Indians did not observe when they took others as mistresses. Bishop Zumarraga attended the meetings and chapters of the first friars, and kept pressing for a solution of the marriage problem. At times he came with lawyers from Mexico City, who maintained that the Indians had no valid marriage. The matter was brought to Spain and then to Pope Paul III.

The Bull of Pope Paul III decreed that the Indians should be given their first wife. If an Indian did not know which of his wives was the first, he should be given the one he wanted. It sometimes happened that after an Indian had been married in Church, it became known that the woman he married had not been his first wife. This caused further debate. But finally truth prevailed: the first wife was the lawful wife, and to live with another woman would be to live in concubinage.

Mendieta writes that the Indians were bound only by the

divine natural law. They knew nothing of the divine positive law. If these Indians had a lawful custom of marrying their sisters, it would (at least according to Mendieta) have been a valid and licit marriage.

The ceremonies which the Indians observed in the days of their paganism were these: the interpreters of the stars in the heavens were summoned to interpret the signs when the person was born. If the signs were understood to be favorable, the preparation for a wedding proceeded. Since it was not becoming for a woman to seek a man, the parents of the young man started things moving. Two elderly women relatives went to the parents of the girl with a well-prepared speech. They admitted that they were seeking a wife for the young man, who was ready for marriage. They then returned with an answer to the parents of the young man, and after a few days came back and entreated the parents of the girl to consent to the marriage. If the proposal seemed good, the parents of the girl promised to speak to their daughter and forward the reply. When the girl gave her consent, the parents exhorted their daughter to be good and strive to please her husband. The parents of the young man likewise gave good advice

meeting, gifts were exchanged. When the day of marriage arrived, the girl was carried on the shoulders of some Indians, while others led the way with burning torches. As she approached the home of her husband, he went out to meet her at the gate of his house, carrying something like a censer with burning coals and incense. The girl was given a censer, and the two incensed each other. Taking her by the hand, the groom led her to her room, which had been decorated, and the people outside began to sing and dance. The witnesses seated the couple on a mat before the hearth, and fastened the bankets of the one with the other; gifts in the form of clothing were exchanged. Food was brought, and the groom gave of it to his bride with his own hand; the same rite was performed by the girl. Blankets were exchanged also among the relatives of the pair. Friends and neighbors were treated to food and drink. As the night advanced, the singers, dancers, and almost everyone present became intoxicated. But the newlyweds were beginning their four days of penance, to merit a happy marriage and to have children. On the fourth night, a bed was prepared for for it."

to the future husband. In every

them by the old men who were guards of the temple. They joined the two mats, and in the middle of them placed some flowers and a kind of emerald; they then spread a tiger's skin and some blankets over the mats. The newlyweds remained fasting and in penance for fifteen more days. It was from this procedure that the friars of Saint Francis judged the marriage of the Indians to be valid.

The Sacrament of Extreme Unction

"In regard to the sacrament of extreme unction," Mendieta writes, "there is nothing to say except that in the beginning for many years the sacrament was not administered to the Indians, since the priests were so few and so busy that they could administer only the sacraments which are necessary for salvation. Later on, when there were more priests, the Fathers explained the efficacy and power of this sacrament. Gradually some Indians began to ask for it, and each day the number increased, so that today many Indians ask for and receive the sacrament. Some, however, do not do so, for various reasons. But the sacrament is given to all who ask

The Theology of the Brothers' Life

Raymond Currie, O.F.M.

The theology of the brothers' life is concerned with the way in which God acts through religious life to bring about his plan of salvation for the individuals concerned and for the Church. Very briefly, this statement outlines the two sections of this article.

The first section will deal with the relationship between religious life and baptism. After studying it as a ratification of baptism, we will outline the conditions — permitting the growth of the baptismal life to take place in religious life. The second part of the article will deal with the relationship between the brotherhood and the growth of the Church, the Body of Christ. We will review the principles of corporate growth of the Church and then see the apostolate of the Brothers in this light. Both the present occupations of the Brothers and the opportunity of future openings are important for the life of the Church. Finally, not on-

FATHER RAYMOND sends us this valuable insight into the life of the Religious Brother from the Franciscan Friary in Edmonton, Alberta (Canada).

ly does the individual Brother have a vocation of service within the Church, but he is also a member of a community which as a unit fulfills a task in the upbuilding of the Body of Christ.

I. RELIGIOUS LIFE AND BAPTISM

A Ratification of Baptism

"Now, however, after we have left the world, there is nothing else for us to do but be concerned about following the will of our Lord and pleasing him. ... So let us hold fast to his words, his life, and doctrine, and his holy Gospel."

If we did not recognize these words as taken from Chapter 22 of the first Rule of St. Francis, we might easily think of them as an admonition given to any Christian following his baptism. The religious profession made in the maturity of life is indeed, above all, the ratification of the "choice of a master" which every prospective Christian must make before baptism. When Francis speaks of the "Life of Penance" of his Friars, he is obviously speak-

ing about this adult conversion, often described today by the Greek term metanoia. It is a turning to God, which necessarily implies leaving behind all hindrances. Francis describes his own conversion in the well known text found at the beginning of his Testament. In this perspective, the vows of a religious are seen as a radical rupture with the world.

But we all know that the center of religious life is not a negative reality. The religious is not simply one who gives up money, marriage and freedom. The fact that so many young people think of religious life this way is an indication that we ourselves have often given them this impression. The aim of religious, as well as of all Christians, is a communion of life with the Father in the risen Christ. Because religious life involves particular means to reach this goal, we are tempted to stress the means at the expense of the goal.2 We must not try to understand the significance of religious life outside baptismal life, or even beside it or above it. Rather, religious life is the flowering of the initial baptismal grace. Strenthened and brought to adulthood by the sacrament of confirmation. all Christians have the grace necessary to respond to the initiative of God's

love. This is the meaning of the Eucharistic meal celebrated so frequently. It is a ratification of the covenant begun at baptism which produces a more perfect entering into communion of life. The grace of God inspires some Christians to express their response of love to God's initiative in an extra-sacramental manner by embracing religious life. Here the vows represent a total and permanent gift of themselves that does not permit "looking back." Why this response takes the form of vouws for certain members of the Church will be seen later.

Conditions for Growth in Communion of Life Through Religious Life

Once we have entered into this particular state of life, what is asked of us is openness and fidelity. Our progress in communion of life with the Father depends on this.

St. Francis tells us: "After leaving the world, we must hold fast to the words of Christ, his life, doctrine and his holy Gospel." Four times in this same Chapter 22 Francis insists that we must be faithful. No compensation, advantage, work, anxiety, or worldly affair is to ravish our hearts and snuff out the word and commandment of the Lord. It is important to

note the emphasis in these passages. Conscious of his interior poverty and littleness. Francis clearly sees that progress in communion of life is not man's work but God's. "We have nothing of our own but our sins and vices" (1 Rule Ch. 17). "What happens in the Kingdom of God is something similar to what takes place when a man has sown the seed in his field: he sleeps at night and wakes in the morning; meanwhile the seed in sprouting shoots the stem into the air — he himself does not know how. By an inward force, the earth bears fruit; first blade, then ear, then ripe grain in the ear; and when the crop permits, he at once applies the sickle, for the time for harvesting has come" (Mt. 4: 26-29). This parable from St. Mark helps us understand more clearly the nature of progress. We can speak of it less as approaching God than as a "refusal to depart from the God already possessed, and this because the divine initiative has already bound man to God in an eternal alliance of love in Christ, which of itself sanctifies and leads to its consummation, as long as man does not depart from it by infidelity."3

Progress therefore, must not be identified simply with conformity to the Rule and Constitutions of the community. 'You who would be sanctified by the law are separated from Christ, you have fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). This statement of St. Paul is re-enforced by another found in his epistle to the Philippians: "For the sake of Christ I have suffered the loss of all things, and I count them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found united to him, not with a holiness of my own derived from the law, but that which is obtained by faith in Christ, the holiness which Christ imparts upon condition of faith" (Phil. 3:9).

This is not the place, nor do we have the time, to develop an excursus on the role of the law. But it is important that we beware of the tendency to identify sanctity with fidelity to the law. The law is in itself insufficient. In as much as we are led by the Spirit, we are delivered from the law. This is the doctrine of the epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and Francis understood it. For him. fidelity is an openness of heart to the Spirit already possessed. but whose full activity is hindered by the fallen condition of man (1 Rule, Ch. 17, 22). The testament of Francis is ample proof of his openness to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. "There was nobody to show me what to do but the Most High Himself revealed to me

that I was to live according to the form of the Holy Gospel." Francis in no way claims to have a monopoly on the Spirit. Every Christian has received the Spirit through baptism, and progress in our communion of life with the Father depends on our fidelity to his inspirations. The heresy would begin, if, unlike Francis, the religious refused to have the voice of the Spirit "confirmed by the Pope" that is, by the Church.

These remarks are in no way meant to minimize the role of obedience. On the contrary, the obedience of the Friars becomes still more demanding. In this conception of obedience to the Spirit, Francis can demand not only obedience to the will of our superiors, but also ask that the Friars serve and obey even one another "in the charity of their spirit. Such is the true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Rule Ch. 5). This aspect of obedience and service to our fellow religious will be treated in the second section of this article.

In this same light we can also understand the tremendous insistence of Francis on knowledge of the Scriptures. Obedience to superiors and our brothers does not dispense us from direct contact with the word of God in order to develop another aspect of obedience to the

22 of the first Rule, he even quotes the entire parable of the seed of the Word of God that falls on various types of ground but rarely produces fruit because the ground is ill prepared to receive it. He tells Third Order members that they should have a religious "informed in the Word of God to exhort and strengthen them" (1 Rule of Third Order, Ch. 6). If this is so, how much more should not we require that the directors of our Brothers be so qualified? "Blessed is that religious who finds his whole delight and joy only in the most holy words and works of the Lord and by them leads men in all gladness and joy of heart to the love of God" (Reminder 21). Should that not be the portrait of our masters? Particularly in this day of vast biblical studies is there any reason why the progress of Brothers in fidelity to Church should be hindered by a lack of adequate training for the understanding of the "words, life, doctrine and Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?" In this age of conventions and study days, the masters could be aided in this by specialists being brought in occasionally for Scripture study days.

spirit. Once again in Chapter

One contact with Scripture that is becoming more frequent

for the Brothers is the breviary. II. THE RELIGIOUS IN REimagine that once the novelty has worn off, fruitful prayer of the psalter can be possible without some initiation into its relationship with the history of salvation, both past and actual. At this same point, we can foresee a change in the present practice of choral recitation of the Office in latin. With today's educational facilities, most of the Brothers are capable of praying the breviary and in fact many do so. Should it not be petitioned that the language barrier be dropped, for it prevents priests and brothers from being united as a community for at least a part of this most solemn liturgical prayer?3

Let us review briefly what we have seen up to this point. The first and most fundamental significance of religious life is that it is a means of ratifying. strengthening, and stabilizing our communion of life with the Father in the risen Christ. This began with baptism and is continually nourished above all by the bread of life. Recognizing our poverty, we have placed our entire lives in a disposition of openness to the Spirit of Christ that we may receive the riches of God in any way He desires to communicate them to us.

It would be folly, however, to LATION TO THE GROWTH OF THE BODY OF THE CHURCH

Corporate Growth of the Church

But no vocation in the plan of God is simply an individual calling to growth in Christ. It is always very personal, for Christ knows his sheep and calls them by name (Jn. 10:3), but the gifts of God are not given only for personal sanctification. Every vocation is a call to glorify God and serve his family, the Church. More precisely, we can say that every vocation in the Old Testament is a prefiguration of Christ's and each calling in the new Testament is a continuation of the vocation of Christ. It is by the outpouring of the Spirit of Christ that we have been made one with him. But his life is entirely a gift of himself. No less than forty times in St. John's Gospel alone, Christ tells us he is the Ambassador of the Father. He lives to communicate the life of the Father to us. On the eve of his death, he prays: "Father glorify thy Son that thy Son may glorify Thee" (J. 17:1). Having received the glory of the Father through his Resurrection, he communicates this glory to us that we may share this com-

munion of life. We, in turn, must communicate to others all that we have received. St. Paul is very clear. "The gifts of the Spirit are given to each individual for the common good" (1 Cor. 12). In Ephesians, chapter 4, Paul begins by saying that we have gifts in common: one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith and one baptism. Common gifts demand our unity. Then he shows that each individual in the Church has been given specific gifts (4:7). The role of the hierarchy in the Church is to organize all the Christians so that each one according to his talents, can build up the body of Christ (4: 11): "Each of you should use what endowments he has received in the service of others, as good stewards of the manifold bounty of God," adds St. Peter (1 Pet. 4:10).

The service of others in imitation of Christ or, more precisely, as a continuation of Christ in the world today, is absolutely essential because the growth that takes place in the Church is of a corporate nature as well as of an individual one.

God's family is not a mass of individuals, but a unity. Exegetes agree that the whole community and not just individuals is being rooted in Christ and built up on Him (Col., 2:7).5

"Christ himself is our peace; he it is who has made both Jew and Gentile one, and has broken down the partition wall of hostility which separated them. So that of the two races he might create in himself one new being. . . . You are an edifice built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole structure is being closely fitted together by the Spirit to become God's temple consecrated in the Lord. In him you, too, are being fitted by the Spirit into the edifice to become God's dwelling place" (Eph. 2:14-22). The final goal of progress is a corporate reality; we can even say that growth, for the members of the church, is from the immaturity of individualism to the unity of the fullgrown man, the plenitude of Christ. Together we are the olive tree (Rom. 11:17), the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16), the bride to be presented to Christ in glory and spotless holiness (Eph. 5:26). We do not grow in isolation, but as a single body (Col. 2:19). "Harmoniously joined and knit together,6 the body derives its energy in the measure each part needs, only through contact with the source of supply" (Eph. 4:16).

An adequate understanding

of the corporate growth of the God, they proclaim the word of Church has deep consequences God. ... All then, are not obon our grasp of the signifi- liged to speak, but all the cance of religious life. First of all, we should abandon the general statement often heard, that the priesthood is for the inevitably lead to martyrdom service of others, but religious life is for one's personal sanctification. This type of statement appears often in vocational literature. It implies that religious who are not priests are concerned only with their own sanctification. This falsely accuses of selfishness. From what has been said above, it should be clear that every Christian has an apostolate by the very fact that he possesses the Spirit of Christ. The sanctification received, for it is indeed a gift, must be communicated to others. Is this not particularly true of the Friars Minor?

The Apostolate of the Friars

St. Francis wished to found an apostolic religious family. In chapters 16 and 17 of the first Rule Francis writes that "the brothers who go among the Saracens may conduct themselves spiritually in two ways. One way is not to start strife and contention, but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake" (1 Pet. 2(13) and so profess themselves to be Christians. The other way that when they see it pleases gious Brother? If there is true

brothers, however, shall preach by their actions." He also envisages that such conduct will in some instances. Example, word and blood are the three forms of preaching for the Friars. The context shows that these are not the exclusive prerogatives of the clerics of the Order. However, the Brothers of the Order have too long been confined almost solely to domestic tasks. This exclusivism does not seem in accord with the ideal of St. Francis. nor with the nature of the apostolate of the Church.

Today we call upon the laity to accept their responsibilities in the Church. We do not base our appeal on their generosity, nor simply on the fact that there is a shortage of priests in the Church, but rather on the nature of the Church as expressed in Eph. Ch. 4. There St. Paul says that the role of the hierarchy is not to do all the work of the apostolate, but to organize, direct, and prepare christians so that each one according to the talents and graces received can contribute to the upbuilding of the Body. If this is true of the laity, is it not equally true of the reliopenness to the Spirit, then the Ministers of the Friars will see that the work of the brothers. in as much as possible, utilizes all the talents possessed. This will suppose that greater responsibility be given to the Brothers. To arbitrarily ignore talent or to refuse the opportunity of developing it is a sin against the apostolic mission of the Church.

But before encouraging new forms of apostolate, it would have been more logical to discuss the theological significance of the present tasks of the Brothers. On this point. St. Francis stresses above all the attitudes that must accompany work. The Friars are to work in a spirit of faith and prayer (2 Rule 5), with humility (1 Rule 17) and they should be subject to others (1 Rule 7). He also sees this as a means to combat laziness, the enemy of the soul. In view of contemporary biblical research, it is possible to stress another aspect of the dignity of work. It is true that Scripture does not encourage any temporal messianic hopes; as St. Paul says, the "figure of the world passes away" (1 Cor. 7:31). However, the doctrine of the new heaven and new earth (Mt. 19:28; Apoc. 21:1) as well as St. Paul's doctrine on the recapitulation of the universe in Christ (Rom.

seem to indicate a certain permanence of man's work. The nature of it is less clear. What is certain, and should be clearly developed, is that any work no matter how humble it may appear, done by a man who lives in harmonious union with Christ, is in reality a form of priesthood. Man, made to the image of God, has been given dominion over the earth. He alone among all creatures, can hear and understand God's Word, the same creative Word that brought all things into existence. The plan of God is that through the Church, that is, his members, Christ should fill even the universe with His presence (Eph. 1:20-23) (14). "All things are yours, you are Christ's and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:22). It is chiefly through the dominion of man over all creation that all things can give glory to God, and therefore man can do all things for the glory of God (1Cor. 10:31).

8:19; Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:16, 20)

Before stressing this aspect too much, it would be good to bring out an important distinction between the work of the laity and the religious in the Church. Pope Pius XII called on all the laity to become involved in all forms of apostolate: the familial, social, economic and political spheres of life, in order to build up the Body of Christ. He added that the consecration of the world is the essential work of the layman. The lay person then portrays the *incarnational* aspect of the Kingdom of God. Through the marriage of Christians, their self-determination and ownership of goods, all for the service of others, the Kingdom of God becomes fully incarnate.⁷

On the other hand, the religious, by his vows announces to the world the definitive, last stages of the Kingdom. This is the eschatological significance of religious life. Virginity or celibacy, embraced by the grace of God, is a universal love which has already surpassed the limits of sexuality, and the person who lives this already lives in the Kingdom, where there will be no giving or taking in marriage (Lk. 20:36). The poverty of religious, and of the community, professes the reality that God alone suffices. Francis wanted a group of men who would be content in having Christ only. He also insisted that this poverty has established us heirs and kings of the Kingdom (2 Rule 6). The obedience, as well as the celibacy, is an image of those who, in the kingdom, "follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (Apoc. 14:4). By a leap of faith, the religious passes over the joys and pleasures of this world,

and finds his joy in the "things that are to come." I noth words, the religious has died a more immediate death in order to share more immediately in the resurrection.

Both the incarnational and eschatological aspects of the mystery of the Church are essential to her life. Moreover, it is important that we ask ourselves whether any one person can adequately give witness to both aspects? If not, then we must beware that involvement in the world does not become so intense for the religious that the eschatological significance of his vows is lost for the world, and therefore invariably for the religious himself. This would be an infidelity to one's grace of state, to the form of witness expected by Christ. Perhaps it would even be a scandal to the world. Moreover, it would be taking from the laity a responsibility that is specifically theirs.

The Apostolate of the Religious Community

One final point remains to be treated in this article. So far we have spoken only of the apostolate of the individual friar in the world and in the Church. We must insist that the community itself has an apostolate. It can even be true

to say that community life is an apostolate.

The common life of religious must not be understood only as a means to perfection for the individual friar, and certainly not as a cross to be carried. although accidentally some circumstances may lead it to be such. We are brothers in Christ who gather around the altar each day to offer praise to the Father and to nourish our communion of life. This unity must be lived throughout the day in fraternity and mutual service. Otherwise, religious life becomes the worst imposter imaginable in the Church. St. John uses very forceful terms when speaking of our brotherly love. "We have passed over," he says, "from death to life in loving the brethren as we do" (1 Jn. 3:14). Our joy, peace, fraternity and loving service of one another must be the most uncompromising and forceful signs of the presence of the Kingdom of God in the world.

Such a sign will exist only if they should rather be willing the spirit of service exists in the religious community. Service, in the gospel sense of the word, does not consider whether one be first or last. Christ explicitly forbade his disciples to reason thus (Lk. 22:24 - to reason thus (Lk. 22:24 - to reason thus of the individual friars, we should all remember that service is, as the talents and graces conferred by Christ, the needs of the

community, and the immediate wishes of the superior; and of fulfilling one's role in a spirit of love and humility.

Certainly in the life of the Friars Minor, the Brothers are not second class religious, subject to the priests. They are not exclusively or even necessarily at the service of the priests. Francis is very clear about this in the first Rule. "Likewise, let the brothers not have any power and authority, above all among themselves. For the Lord says in the Gospel, 'the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them" (Mt. 20:25). It should not be thus among the brothers, but whoever wishes to be the greater among them, should be their minister and servant'(cf. Mt. 20:26), and 'he who is the elder among them, should be like the younger' (cf. Lk. 22:26). And no brother should do or say anything evil to any other. On the contrary, they should rather be willing to serve and obey one another in the charity of their spirit. And such is the true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Rule 5). Whatever the form of service asked of the individual friars, we should all remember that service is, as Christ says, a "giving one's life 20-28). With him and with his followers as well, there is question always of a death and resurrection. He who serves with Christ, will reign with Christ.

Although service and charity may be considered synonymous, it may not be pointless to insist that love must be at the base of all service. In his epistle to the Ephesians, where Paul most extensively develops his theology of the corporate growth of the Church, he tells us that we must "profess the truth in love." He concludes the section by stating that the "body grows and builds itself up through love" (Eph. 4:15-16). In his epistle to the Corinthians, he enumerates various gifts of the Spirit only to review the list in detail, insisting that without charity, the striking gifts of the Spirit are of no avail (1 Cor. 12-13).

The very motivating force in the growth of the Church is charity. Without it, no growth, no other gift of any worth, is possible. Communion of life with the Father in the risen Christ means communion of life with one another. This truth must become a reality in our religious houses. Community life will then merit the description St. Luke gives of the early Christians in the Acts of the Apostles: "All the believers were united, and held all things

in common. They would sell their possessions and goods and distribute them to everyone as need required. Daily with one accord they attended the temple and, breaking bread at their homes, took their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having the good will of all the people. Day by day the Lord added to their company such as were to be saved" (Acts 2:44-47).

When this is a reality, then we speak of religious life as the "City of God" or a sacrament of God's presence. This is a grace of witnessing that is essential and proper to community life. What St. Peter says of the Church, then, applies to the Order as well. "You are a chosen race, a holy nation, a people that is God's possession, that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

In order that this article be not purely theoretical, the conclusion will review the various aspects of religious life treated in these pages and indicate the direction of possible application to the religious life of our Brothers.

If religious life is a ratification of baptism and if growth in communion of life with the Father in the risen Christ is the aim of every Christian, Brothers included, then the center of religious life must be the liturgical life of the Church. Therefore the conferences to the Brothers and the manner of living the liturgy must open as much as possible the riches of the Eucharist, the source of all sanctity.

If fidelity to the Spirit is a condition of growth in Christ, then the Brothers must not be burdened with so many laws that they are kept spiritually immature and led to the false conclusion that the law is the criterion of sanctity.

If Francis asks us, now that we have left the world, to hold fast to the words, life, and gospel of Christ, then the Brothers have the right to expect the treasures of Scripture to be explained to them.

If Brothers have received the spirit of Christ and are adult Christians by confirmation and religious profession, then we must expect that the Spirit of Christ will speak to the community and the Church through them also.

If corporate growth in the Church is from the immaturity of individualism to the unity of the full grown man, the plenitude of Christ, then Brothers must understand their res-

ponsibilities to the Church and the Order, and no selfishness in spirituality can be tolerated.

If Christ has given gifts to every Christian for the upbuilding of the Body according to Eph. 4, then it would be theologically unsound to stifle the development of these talents.

However, if religious life is a sign of the Kingdom to come, then Brohters must not become so involved in the world of work that the eschatological significance of their state of life is lost to the world.

If the priesthood of the laity if a reality for brothers also, then the dignity of manual work should be taught in this light.

If charity or love is the condition of all growth in the Church and the greatest gift of the spirit, then brothers must not be thought inferior because they have not received the gift of teaching or preaching.

If the community life, lived in a spirit of charity and service, is the most uncompromising sign of the Kingdom in our midst, all religious priests and Brothers must consent to serve each other — "in the charity of their spirit" (St. Francis) in order that this witness can be given in the Church.

- 1. All references to the writings of St. Francis will be given in the body of the article. The source is The Words of St. Francis, compiled by James Meyer, O.F.M. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1952).
- 2. Cf. the important article by Fr. Tillard, O. P., "In The Wake of the Sacramental Life," **Donum Dei** series (Ottawa: Canadian Religious Conference, 324 Laurier Ave. East, 1962), Vol. 4, pp. 61-81.
- 3. The choral recitation of Office in Latin will also most certainly have consequences on vocations to religious Orders. The daily prayer life being so important, it is certain that many young men will shy away from Orders of religious obliged to pray in latin when they understand that elsewhere they can request permission to pray in the vernacular.
- 4. George Montague, S. M., Growth in Christ, A Study in St. Paul's Theology of Progress (Maryhurst Press, 1151 Kirkwood Road, Kirkwood 22, Mo., 1961), p. 59.
 - 5. Cf G. Montague, op. cit. pp. 246-248.
- 6. This image used by St. Paul is an architectural image "representing the whole elaborate process by which stones are fitted together; the preparation of the surfaces, including the cutting, rubbing and testing" in G. Montague, op. cit. p. 158.
- 7. Cf. John D. Gerken, S. J., Toward a Theology of the Layman (Montreal: Palm, 1963), 152 pp.
- 8. R. Carpentier, S.J., Life in the City of God, Introduction to Religious Life (New York: Benziger, 1959), 192 p.

PRAYER FOR BROTHERS' VOCATIONS

O GOD, Who wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live, give to your Church an increase of Religious Brothers, fellow-laborers with Christ, to spend and consume themselves for souls.

O MARY, My heavenly Mother and Mediatrix of all Graces, ask your Divine Son to send us generous and devoted Brothers, intimately united to the Heart of Jesus, in order that through their work in the Church, many souls may be launched on the road to salvation and sanctification.

ST. FRANCIS of Assisi, humble and zealous Brother who was poor in earthly things, yet rich in heavenly virtue, pray for me so that if God wants me to enter the Franciscan Order to be your follower, I may do the will of God.

Mary's Apparitions in Salvation History

James Long, O.F.M. Conv.

We are living in a Marian era. One need only recall Lourdes and Fatima to see that in the past one hundred and fifty years our Blessed Lady has favored us with more important apparitions than ever before. Neither God nor His mother is capricious in revealing the secrets of heaven to mankind. Whatever God does, He does for a reason — because it somehow fits into His eternal plan of salvation. So, in order to interpret properly the apparitions of Mary, we have to try to understand how her appearances fit into the history of mankind's salvation.

This history, briefly stated, is God's plan for man's eternal happiness, man's salvation, as seen in the world's past. We all know that the focal point of man's return to God is Christ's redeeming sacrifice on the Cross. In the garden of Paradise God promised to two sinful creatures and

FRIAR JAMES, a theological student in the Province of Our Lady of Consolation, is stationed at Assumption Seminary and College, Chaska, Minn. In addition to preparing for the priesthood, he is working toward a master's degree in classical languages at the University of Minnesota. their descendants a redeemer who would re-establish the friendship between God and man. At the same time, God also mentioned a woman through whom the redeemer would come.

The Preparation: Hints and Images

The centuries of the Old Testament were a constant preparation for the coming of God's Chosen One. The history of the Hebrews and their sacred writings all pointed toward the advent of the Messiah. Sometimes the preparatory images were vague; but often enough they were only too clear, as in the case of the brazen serpent or the prophecies of Isaiah. In the Book of Genesis the figure of a woman also appeared. Throughout the Old Testament (as, e. g., in the sign given to Achaz) she can be seen, though not so often nor so clearly as the Messiah. As God is preparing the world for His Son, he is also hinting that there is a woman, "set up from eternity and before the earth was made" (Sirach 24: 14), who will play an important auxiliary role in the work of salvation begun in a remote of man's salvation.

Finally he came: the God-Man, Jesus Christ. By his sacrifice on the Cross he repurchased heaven for man. Christ's coming was the turning point in the history of man's salvation. He turned the human race back to God. The promises and prophecies of the Old Testament had prepared the people for the coming of Christ. The New Testament, alive with the person of Christ, His apostles, and their successors, proclaims for the whole world to hear the message of salvation as taught by the God-Man. The "fulness of time." of which St. Paul was to speak (Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:10), had come. God sent His son, born of a woman. And this woman was Mary.

The Past Becomes Present

In the Scriptures living in the Church we find the path which God has traced for man to follow in order that he may be saved. But the Scriptures are not without end. Holy Mother Church tells us that when Saint John died about the year 100, the book in which revealed truths could be written was closed. God's public revelation ended.

centuries now Church has continued the work have chosen millions of other

Roman province called Judea. Christ's work of bringing all men back to his Father is carried on in the Church. In the Church the Scriptures are kept alive. We are, all of us, under the pope and bishops, called together in this world-embracing plan of redemption founded on Christ's message. Each of us is united to every other man in Christ, our mutual head. This is the Church of Christ, the Mystical Body of Christ, the "City of God" on earth.

Thanks to God's loving kindness in revealing to man the path of salvation, the "City of God" has become a practical reality producing a wonderful and workable flowering of the faith. It is in the Church that we make contact with God's promised plan of salvation. Past and future are united in the divine plan. In a sense the past is present. We are within a living body, the Mystical Body. The gospel is with us. It is Christ who passes by us, curing the sick and forgiving sinners. And, just as in Galilee two thousand years ago, his mother is with him.

Mary's Place in the Plan

Mary's place in God's designs is well known to us all. Even the though almighty God could

ways to redeem man, he called upona woman to give him a human nature. Mary said yes. Because God knew that Mary would say yes, he spoke of her in the Old Testament and blessed her with incomparable gifts of grace to prepare her for role of being Mother of God.

As we have seen, Mary's connection with her Son in the redemption of man goes back beyond the Annunciation to the actual promise of a redeemer. Man had sinned and fallen away from God. Now it would be necessary for God to bring him back to his heavenly heritage. So man received from God the promise of a Savior. Here at the very beginning of salvation history we understand that there will be a woman through whom the Redeemer will come. Mary was connected with Jesus as an assistant in the deliverance of fallen man, for she was to be the mother of the Deliverer.

It should not surprise us that Mary's assistance, foretold in Genesis and hinted at throughout the Old Testament, should continue through the life and death of Christ, through Pentecost, and even to our own day. As long as we men need Christ, Mary will be instrumental in bringing him to us.

However, Mary's role was not all glory. It involved much more than bearing a Son. The sorrows of Mary's life ran parallel with the sorrows of her Son. Even though she was sinless, God asked her to suffer much, even the loss of her Son, for she was a part of the divine plan of redemption. God did not have to give Mary this part to play, but he did. Marv was in the stable with Jesus. Mary fled with him into Egypt. Mary suffered separation from her Son, and Mary stood beneath the cross.

God took everything from her, but only to return it all. After Good Friday came Easter Sunday. Glorified in heaven now at the side of her risen Son, Mary continues there the work she began on earth. Hers is the privilege, as long as there are men to be saved, of again and again bringing Christ to unhappy man. Her great role, Mother of God, is now fulfilled from heaven. God has made Mary the mother of Jesus so that she might be the mother of the new humanity gathered together in Christ's Mystical Body, the Church. In uniting her so closely to the redeeming activity of her Son. God established her as a kind of helpmate to him in the work of salvation.

Mary's recent appearances

are a continuation fro heaven of the role begun on earth when she consented to be the Mother of God. We need Christ's saving mission to be renewed, not because of any weakness in the mission but because of our own human weakness. Mary is God's instrument in this renewal. In the apparitions of Mary, God reaches down once more and touches our sinful state with a reminder of hope and love.

A Sign for Hope

God has always made his will known through signs and wonders. In the Old Testament Moses and the prophets worked miracles to prove that their message came from God. Christ and the apostles performed wonders so that the people might more easily believe them. Because of miraculous signs both God's revelation preparing the Jews for the coming of his Son and Christ's promulgation of the New Law to all the world were more readily accepted. reason we assent to these signs is that we see behins them the undeniable and activ epresence of God in the manifestation of his power. Faith does not need miracles, but such signs act as guideposts for weakened human nature in its search for the divine.

Once all this has been said, the apparitions of Mary in the last 150 years can be viewed in their true perspective. They the signs and wonders worked are intimately connected with by God for his people in the Old Testament and by Christ and his apostles in the New Testament. They are a part of the life of God's Church because they encourage failing man to a renewal of faith in the promises of God's revelation.

The apparitions of Mary are another manifestation of her auxiliary role in the Mystical Body of Christ as helpmate of her Son in the work of our salvation. At Fatima, and at Lourdes, and at La Salette, Mary has raised in the world a sign which certifies her divine commission in the work of redemption. We have been saved by the blood of Christ. Heaven is open. Christ's Mystical Body, through which the promise of salvation has been given to man, is alive upon the earth in the Church. But we are weak, and the brilliance of the promise of salvation often fades in the glitter of earthly attractions. Our hope and enthusias mneed to be rekindled. Our feet need to be led back to Christ's way.

This is how Mary, who assists her Son in the work of salvation, fulfills her role to- earth once again the Son of day. She is raising in the world a permanent sign, such as Lourdes, of humanity reunited around Christ. She is reaffirming the life of humanity in grace. She is sustaining man's anthusiasm by bringing to

God who will accomplish his promises in the Church. Mary glorified appears in our unglorious life as an image of the Church's own destiny and a guarantee of its fulfilment in Christ.

Predestined from eternity by that decree of divine providence which determined the incarnation of the Word to be the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin was on earth the virgin Mother of the Redeemer, and above all others and in a singular way the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, brought forth, and nourished Christ, she presented him to the Father in the temple, and was united with him by compassion as he died on the Cross. In this singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in giving back supernatural life to souls. Wherefore she is our mother in the order of grace.

— Decree on the Church, Vatican Council II.

A Unique Franciscan Apostolate

Declan Bailey, O.F.M.



Father Declan Bailey, O. F. M.

Pope John XXIII rocked the world and the Church with his announcement of the Aggiornamento. He said that the Church must be updated, that it must be in tune with the times in which we live and that because of this updating many changes

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were necessary. Approaches and forms which had become static through the centuries which were not of the essence of Catholic doctrine needed to be brought up-to-date. As this was true in many areas of the Church, so was it true of the Third Order of St. Francis.

What had happened to the Third Order? During the seven hundred years of its life it had been at times a vital instrument of social reform in the Church and in the world, yet from time to time it had become encrusted with barnacles, which hindered the development of its growth. There were extreme views expressed. Some said the Third Order must do nothing except teach its members to pray. Sometimes the direction of the Third Order was hindered not only by its members but also by the priests who directed it. In many places the Third Order was run as a pious society of a purely devotional character. In this form it held little attraction for many zealous Catholic lay people who felt that the issues in the Church and the world were of such vital character that the

role of the laity must be far more than a pietistic one.

In this they were not alone. The Church felt the same way. Time and again the Church reminded the Franciscan Third Order that its mission was an intensely important one. Pope Leo XIII, himself a devout tertiary, said that his social reform was the Third Order of St. Francis. And he didn't mean by this that the Order should be merely a devotional association. Pope Pius XI didn't hesitate to remind Franciscans that they were not realizing the great potential of the Franciscan spirit. And even Pope John told them it was high time they stopped living on the glories of the past and produced fruits of good works in the present.

In 1957, on the 25th day of August, the Feast of St. Louis the King, Patron of the Franciscan Third Order, the Church issued a new Constitution for the entire Franciscan Third Order. This Constitution was a revolutionary document because it stressed the oneness of the Franciscan Third Order. even though it is served by four religious Franciscan families. This new Constitution was strongly influenced by another great tertiary, Pope Pius XII,

direct intervention of the Holy Father. In Article 80 tertiaries are admonished, "In order to ensure that they do not develop into associations of purely devotional character, the fraternities of the Third Order are encouraged to perform individually, as far as circumstances permit, a particular work of the apostolate." "—— tertiaries. instructed and trained for the gospel life, which is truly apostolic, should imitate in their own daily lives their Seraphic Father, who did not think himself a friend of Christ if he did not devote himself to the souls redeemed by him". (Article 8). Finally, Article 75 admonishes tertiaries to be thoroughly familiar with the social Encyclicals of the Church and other Papal documents dealing with social and political matters so that they may make every effort to put these principles into practice.

From these and other directives in the Constitution it was abundantly clear that the Church intended the Third Order of St. Francis to exemplify the gospel life and to bring Christ into the market place. One apostolate which arose as a result of this is the Vico Necchi Franciscan Apostolate. In the main it is an effort to reach and influence a segmentso that we may see in it the of the Catholic laity who are

rarely reached or influenced by the Church. While it is misleading to refer to it as a specifically "professional" apostolate in the Franciscan Third Order, actually the VNFA seeks to reach people who are generally in this category. It seeks to enroll in the Franciscan Family men and women who are actually in positions of leadership in business, professional and political life, to form them as authentic lay Franciscans, and to help them to be apostles in their business and profession.

This type of division within the Third Order is provided for in the Constitution which speaks of "special groups" in Article 6. Actually, many different types of special groupings already exist within the Third Order, e. g., high school groups, college groups, married couples groups, secular institutes, etc. Thus the idea is not entirely new.

The actual arrangements for VNFA groups differ according to local circumstances. In New York there is a special fraternity known as the Vico Necchi

Fraternity. In Philadelphia, Atlanta, Denver, they are part of existing fraternities. Similar programs are under way in other cities. Plans are being made for the formation of a VNFA group in Washington, D. C.

It should be emphasized that the VNFA is not a new type of Third Order nor a splinter of any kind. Rather, it is an apostolate of Franciscan lay people who seek to make the influence of Christ felt in the world according to the spirit of St. Francis. Its members are dedicated men and women, mostly very busy people, yet they find time to devote themselves to a variety of apostolic works. What direction this apostolate will take in the future can only be determined by the laymen themselves because the emphasis in this Franciscan apostolate is on the authentic role of the layman. That this influence can be dynamic there is little doubt. It can be and may very well be one of the great influences for good in the updating of the Franciscan Third Order.

Penance and the Religious Life

Vincent Cushing, O.F.M.

Penance has a number of meanings. It can mean abnegation — the voluntary denial of something that is good for us, the performance of something that is difficult. It can also refer to the sacrament of God's mercy and love, given to man to forgive his sins and to encourage him in his growth in Christ. But penance has another meaning still. St. John the Baptist touched on it, when he baptized and preached on the shores of the Jordan: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:2).

Now it is certainly possible, as we read this, to think in terms of giving something up, to resolve to deny ourselves some simple pleasure such as recreation, or TV. I think, however, that John is speaking on a much deeper level. He is not directly speaking of an assorted array of corporal, or even spiritual mortifications; he is, rather, echoing a basic theme of Scripture itself, a theme that harks back to the preaching of Isaia, a theme that

grows and develops all through the suffering of God's beloved people in the Old Testament. that reaches its pregnant fullness in Mary, that bursts upon the earth in Christ, receives its most graphic embodiment on the Cross, and is forever committed to man in the Sermon on the Mount. When St. John speaks of repentance or penance, he is calling for a basic reversal of one's life from selfishness to Christian unselfishness, from wickedness to holiness, from the ego-centered life to the Christ-centered life.

It is not simply a question of grieving over one's sins, nor solely a line of action characterized by fasting, although these can be expressions of it. It begins with a great act of love, and, quite simply, it is the living out of the consequences and the demands of that love. John tells people who came out to hear him: Change your heart! He is saying that the first and enduring act that man must live in his life with God is this unending re-orientation of his whole person to God. Now, this is not something that is done once and is over and done with. It calls for endless repe-

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tition — better, development.

Recently the Space Agency sent a Ranger satellite aloft to photograph the moon. No sooner was it launched that it was found to be slightly off the mark. It is the same with us: no sooner are we launched in our life with God, than we find that we are just a little off center. We see duplicity in our hearts, a "tarnishing" of motives that were once silver clear, a lack of focus in vision because something other than Christ has captured our hearts.

This is perfectly understandable. No more - indeed, far less — are we perfect than a space satellite, because we have a kink in us — original sin that makes us constantly drift from our goal. And it is precisely for this fact of a built-in unbalance within us that the ing of John when he announces message of John has relevance to us: Turn your heart completely to God.

life is formalism: a ritualistic and exterior performance of actions with no inner meaning for our lives. It is like a man hand. Repent and believe in who plays a violin with mechanical excellence, but never lets his heart and soul grip the majesty of the music and breathe into it the inner life that is there. We can, and often do, do the same thing. In other themes, but this basic

that angered God in the Old Testament, it was the remarkable ability of the Chosen People to carry out externally all kinds of religious acts, and yet interiorly to be far from God. Isaia repeatedly hammered home the point that penance is much more than external repentance. It is basically a turning of oneself to God, a loving dedication to him (read, in this connection, what the prophet has to say in his 58th chapter).

This is what penance means: a change of heart and a continuing return of one's whole heart and soul to God, a loving surrender to Christ, a gift of all that one is and has to the One who has loved us so very deeply.

Christ re-echoes the preachthat the Kingdom of God has come: "And after John had been delivered up, Jesus came A real danger of religious into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at the gospel.'" (Mk. 1:14-15). This divine command runs consistently through Christ's preaching, like the continual and varied theme of a great piece of music. True, there are fact, if there was one thing patern is always in the background. Indeed, God's love is shown only to those who have consented to center their hearts on him (see Isaia 61:1-3).

When Christ speaks of those who will be present at the Banquet of the Kingdom of Heaven, he relates the parable of the man who made a feast to which none of his friends (they are all choked by their own cares) will come. Then the Master sends out for the poor and lowly, those who thought they were forgotten by everyone who mattered. Compare this parable with the reality of God's choice of Mary as the Mother of Christ. What are her words when she realizes that she is to be the Mother of the long awaited Messia: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; because he has regarded the lowliness of his handmaid..." (Lk. 1:47-48).

Again, when Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount, his whole message is directed towards an interior change of heart:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are the meek... Blessed are they who mourn... Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice... Blessed are the merciful...

Blessed are the clean of heart..." (Mt. 5:1-8)

Christian "success" consists in

being meek and humble like Christ, for if any one of us really wishes to follow him, we must deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and follow him in earnest (cf. Mk. 9:4).

As you so well know, however, Christ was not only a person who preached a doctrine; he was a man who lived and died. All that he called us to do, he himself did, when he freely offered his life on the Cross to make atonement for our sins. His entire life and doctrine were summed up in the Sacrifice of Calvary. It is this unique sacrifice that is represented once more in the Mass. Thus our preparation for Mass is based on this complete turning to God of our heart and soul, of every fibre of our being, of every aspect of our lives. Our Mass is our life, and our life is our Mass, in preparation, in participation, in thanksgiving.

Penance can manifest itself in various ways, depending upon the direction of the drift within us that makes us withdraw from God. Penance, or conversion of heart, is of its nature something that is individual, personal, incommunicable, because it looks to the whole personality of the individual in question. Admittedly, and hopefully, we have embraced this conversion of heart

in entering religous life. Our religious profession was a reaffirmation of our dedication to Christ in Baptism. And yet, as the years slip by, we find deeper recesses within us that are quietly and firmly turned from God. Thus we must begin once more this endless task of giving birth to Christ within us. Above all, this requires a calm, sound, perceptive knowledge of ourselves. Coupled with this is a need for fervent prayer, begging the divine Penitent to live within us so that his dedication and singleness of vision may inflame us and render us generous in living his life.

If I would stress anything it would be this: in bringing our heart dead center on Christ once more, we must have a knowledge of ourselves as we are: talents, faults. graces, fears, hidden anxieties, halfmotives — whatever it may be. We must know ourselves deeply and calmly. This is not the place for frenzied and false humility, not the area for indiscriminate and over-enthusiastic mutilation of one's personality. It is a sincere search, always in reverent respect for the personality that God has given us, to center ourselves on Christ.

We are not philosophers, seeking to know ourselves so that we can perfect ourselves.

We are followers of Christ, seeking to give ourselves entirely to him and thereby willing to allow him to develop us, according to his way rather than our own. Each one of us is unique, created by God and endowed by him with a particular personality, individual gifts, and propensities to specific failings. We are not plaster statues, lifted from some mold, all of the same pattern and design. And because we are not statues, but individual persons with all the complexity that involves, we should not assume that another person's development in love, manner of holiness, growth in dedication, will be the same as ours.

Because self-knowledge can be such a difficult thing, we must proceed carefully pray for the light of the Holy Spirit to help us on our way. And this knowledge comes only gradually. We can recall when we first entered reliligious life; why, we thought we would have all difficulties solved within a year — by the end of novitiate at most. But the novitiate has come and gone, and we know that this was not the case. Indeed, with the passage of years we still grow, and we see that as we get on in life there is a need for a deeper, more perceptive approach.

Nor should we become discouraged. After all, God has called us to this life, and since he has done so, he has his reasons. Certainly, none of us naively believes that he or she will make himself a saint; we know this is the work of God. All we can do is to present the open, penitential generous, heart of Christ, allowing him to fashion it into the image he desires it to achieve. This approach to penance is not easier than some random voluntary mortification. It is, on the contrary, more difficult, because it looks to those deep wells of our personality that drift from God. And it will be precisely these depths that will want no place for the light that is Christ — "the darkness grasped it not." Our job is to Christ-centered, totally which means allowing him to transform every part and fibre of our lives.

In effecting this our penance must be directed and focussed on the sources within us that will turn us from God in any degree. Our response will be both exteriorly and interiorly penitential — but always precise and directed so as to allow Christ to penetrate even to these levels in our lives. We are in no sense alone in our penance, in our suffering, be-

cause we join ourselves entirely to Christ; we join our sufferings to those of the suffering Servant of God, Christ himself; that he may become fully incarnate in us.

This penance that we have discussed here is, in reality, the reverse side of the coin of love. How easily we toss off the cliche that love involves sacrifice. It does. But the sacrifice is of great magnitude, something far larger than giving up candy, cigarettes, or a martini before dinner. The demands of the love of Christ would be frightening, beyond our ability, much too difficult for the weak person that each one of us is - were it not for Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, God helps the Christian in his greatest suffering with a gift of his love that contains redemption within itself. The power of the love of the God-man on the Cross absorbed suffering and death into itself: "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" In the Eucharist the energy of God's love penetrates our exhausted, vielding capacity to love. God reaches down in Christ and embraces us from the Cross. "Thanks be to God who has given us the victory through cur Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:55, 57).

Particular or Special Friendships

Sister M. Thaddine, O.S.F.

It took you a long time, you were a great listener, and didn't it, Sister, to learn the yet in your heart you felt that meaning of the initials, "p. f."? You had heard these letters for you, didn't you, dear Sisused in hushed-up whisperings by the Senior Novices in the Sister, wasn't he? He has given Novitiate, but your stubborn German pride kept you from receive. The senses and apasking just what these abbreviations meant.

they really did mean, you couldn't understand the secrecy of it all. There were those who used the words as if they had a nasty taste. Others, still, contended there was nothing wrong with particular friendships, for they argued, didn't even Christ seek out particular persons on whom to lavish his friendship? This didn't quite suit you, did it, Sister? You for one, disliked the term p. f. and you avoided it like the measles or the mumps. Yes, you conceded that p. f.'s were out of order in the religious life. In your discussions with your fellow Sisters

particular friendships were not ter? God was good to you, little you graces that others did not petites we talked about before are often very forceful. Touch Then when you knew what and imagination, the joy of being loved in a singular manner. of being picked out of many others, can sometimes cause problems. When a woman consecrated to God by her vows begins to seek out some one other individual to whom she devotes a great deal of time and attention, there is danger of leaving behind the other Sisters to whom she also owes her love. The senses are innocent enough. God created them to bring into the world of our mind, the wonderful things he has made for us. The intellect is sensitive, for it discerns that which is good in what the senses present to it. But once the barriers are down because of excesses, and the senses bring into focus everything that stimulates the God-given appetites, then the intellect can

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vity and choice only those things which it pronounces good. The will, then, overwhelmed by the strength of these presentations, weakened by constant indulgences, insidiously pushes God out of the picture. This leaves a vacuum, and the mind then sucks into itself the sensual pleasures of particular friendships.

But you, dear Sister, did the right thing when you talked this matter over with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. You made it the subject of your meditations and often talked it over with your spiritual director, didn't you, dear Sister? And to show you his great Love for you, Christ put it over to you simply and concisely. You knew that these friendships ought to be special and not particular. Didn't Christ love St. John and display his friendship and affection by letting the young virgin apostle nestle against his divine breast? Why? Because John was good and pure. Christ loved him for these special qualities.

Do you recall, dear Sister, from your readings of the Gospel stories, how Jesus cried at Lazarus' death? There must have been something very special about Lazarus for Jesus to feel so strongly toward this man. How Jesus must have his love for all Marys, for all

present to the will for selecti- loved the Mary who washed his feet with her tears of contrition and dried them with her hair. Surely, Christ must have had a very special love for that Mary, too! You see, now don't you, dear Sister, the difference between special and particular. Particular connotes limitations, but special designates quality.

> Remember Father Leo's admonition? A friendship becomes particular when it becomes dangerous. But in your country-groomed greenness, Sister, you couldn't see how friendship could ever be dangerous. Father Leo made that clear, too. He said, "Friendships are no longer friendships when they take you away from God." You didn't quite understand then, did you dear Sister? You needed a definition of terms. But you do know now, Away from God! Away from God in recreation --- away from God in prayer — away from God in meditation. Yes, you are older now, dear Sister, older in wisdom and in grace. Christ in his beautiful love for you has shown you what he meant by his special friendships. Was he in fact, embracing all virgins in his embrace of St. John to display his love for purity, kindness and gentleness? In his love for Mary, did he manifest

who give him their love? In his spouses to be as one flesh, so tears for Lazarus, did Christ cry for all mankind? Did he show how love for him could bring back the dead soul and make it live again in vibrancy and in joy? Were not all of these special friends?

There is a trend, dear Sister, in our time, to harp on such matters as religious garb, on getting out of the cloister into the clutter, of letting down one's hair and being out-going. But first, dear Sister, look about you. Look at all of those wonderful Sisters of yours, handpicked by God for you when you entered the Community of your choice. While it is true that you must spread the love of Christ to others, it must first radiate in you; then it must produce by its heat another fire in the hearts of your Sisters. Finally, with ever increasing flame and heat, it must spread to your pupils, your patients, and those with whom you deal in everyday life. It must not smolder like a dying ember in the corner of your soul and that of one other particular friend. Sure you are going to like some persons better than others. You'd be an anomaly if you didn't. But you belong to Christ now, in body and in soul. No one part of you is yours to give away. Just as your married friends gave themselves up to their

you too, gave yourself to Christ to become as one with him in love. Our hearts will ever be restless; human loves will satisfy only for a time, to be cast aside for one and the other and still again seek on. Look again, dear Sister. Look at all the beauty! Look at your Sisters; look at those about youeven the most perfect and beautiful is merely a reflection of God's beauty.

Sister, get wise! You have it all: God in his beauty and grandeur; in him are contained all of the loves in the heart of mankind. And you, Sister are his! You have nothing now to do but to share him -share him with all with whom you come in contact, with all you meet - not one or two - but all!

In summary, Sister, let us meditate on our many special friends, our Sisters. Our Sisters whom God has chosen for us. Each one has something so very special about her that we must love. Let us not then exclude any from our special friendship. Let us not let any created thing take us away from our love of God. You may have but one particular friendship, Sister, and that is with your Divine Spouse Christ Jesus. All the rest should be just special friends!

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