

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

THE PERFECT JOY OF SAINT FRANCIS, Felix Timmermans, translated by Raphael Brown. New York: Farrar and Straus, 1952. Pp. 344. \$3.50.

Felix Timmerman's DE HARP VAN SAINT FRANCISCUS has been enjoying unusual popularity in continental Europe; thousands of copies have been published in almost every language, and now the English version appears under the title: THE PERFECT JOY OF SAINT FRANCIS. The translator is the well-known Tertiary, Raphael Brown.

Timmermans tells the story of Saint Francis in the manner of fictionalized hagiography. The historical facts are presented clearly enough and without notable distortion, but they are subjected to a considerable amount of imaginative coloration. If the book is read simply as a religious novel—which no doubt the author intended—the imaginative elements should not be too disturbing, nor should there be too much disappointment over the naively poetical characterization of Saint Francis and his first followers. More irritating, however, is the uneven style of translation. But almost every work suffers in its foreign language versions, and perhaps the childish tone of THE PERFECT JOY OF SAINT FRANCIS is the result of the translator's attempt to recapture the Fioretti-like flavor of the original.

Despite these minor shortcomings, however, the book is pleasant reading and can be recommended for general consumption. THE REVELATIONS OF MARGARET OF CORTONA, Most Reverend Ange-Marie Hiral, O. F. M. Saint Bonaventure University, 1952. Pp. 87. \$1.75.

This is another of Raphael Brown's translations, and here again we find evidence of his difficulty in rendering a foreign book in virile and idiomatic English. Apart from certain crudities of style, however, this little book has much to offer by way of spiritual refreshment. The sixty-eight chapters are composed almost exclusively of the conversations that took place between Christ and the penitent Margaret. There is no analysis, no interpretation of these conversations, nor is there any attempt at exploring the fascinating and challenging character of Margaret herself. It is unfortunate that Bishop Hiral did not attempt something of the sort; his love for the Saint would surely have aided him to analyze her

strange character and her still strange spirituality.

Since the book is purely devotional intended only to promote the cult of Saint Margaret and to make known the ineffable mercy of God toward sinners, there is nothing like documentation or reference source materials. But the revelations of Christ to Margaret make excellent matter for meditation, and for this purpose, taking revelations simply as they are offered, little volume is a welcome contribution to popular Franciscan material.

THE WORDS OF SAINT FRANCIS, compiled and arranged by James Meyer, O. F. M., Chicago: The Franciscan Heritage Press, 1952. Pp. 345. \$3.00.

Something new in Franciscan books is Father James Meyer's anthology, WORDS OF SAINT FRANCIS. The author's purpose, as stated in the Introduction, is to provide the average reader with a clear understanding of the Franciscan ideal as expressed by Francis himself and to show how this is to become functional in everyday life.

To attain his purpose, the author has arranged the authentic writings of Saint Francis in new translations, and the words of Saint Francis as recorded by his early biographer, into twelve chapters dealing with some specific topic. Each of the entries is preceded and followed by the author's remarks in the form of a running commentary.

Father James has been careful to provide a good text, based on critical editions and authentic sources, and he supplies adequate references for those who are interested. The notes are full and generally useful, although some, as for example the note to section in which the author defends his use of "Brother Death" instead of the commonly accepted "Sister Death", are merely annoying. The volume is compact, breviary in format, with flexible fabricating cover. There are twelve illustrations in black and white.

On the whole, Father James is to be congratulated on supplying a dependable collection of the writings and words of Saint Francis. For Franciscans, the present volume should prove as valuable for reading and meditation as the Rule itself; it is indeed filled with "spirit and life".

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### *Saint Francis*

To us Franciscans October means one thing above all others—the feast of our holy Father Francis. Therefore, it is easy enough to decide on the subject of our conference for this month. It is quite different, however, when we try to select some aspect from the life of Saint Francis for more particular study. So many attractive features present themselves for consideration that we are hard pressed to give any single one of them our preference. Still, since a choice must be made, perhaps we can discover the characteristic of Francis which stands out above all others and fosters all the rest, a characteristic which is the very soul and foundation of his spiritual life. To my mind that characteristic is his attachment to Christ. If ever a man made Christ the center of his life, the focus of his devotion, the goal of his strivings—that man was Francis. How much he would have loved the beautiful prayer of Cardinal Newman, since the sentiments are so typical of Francis's own converse with Christ: "Dear Jesus, help me to spread Thy fragrance everywhere. Flood my soul with Thy spirit and life. Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly that all my life may be only a radiance of Thine. Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel Thy presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me, but only Jesus."

The admirable thing about Francis's devotion to Christ is its completeness, its thoroughness. It was a total dedication to the entire man. His manner of life, his message to the world, his religious exercises—all had to do, in one way or another, with his heart's great love, Christ. This conference, of course, cannot begin to treat of all these angles. Hence, let us restrict ourselves to the message of Francis. It will be more than sufficient to emphasize the strong attachment of the Saint to Christ.

What is the message of Saint Francis? Actually, nothing else but the message of Christ. Francis was not an innovator, but a loyal follower. He knew full well that Christ, the God-Man, had come into this world for the precise purpose of showing us how to live. Had He not said of Himself: *I am the way, the truth, and the life?* (Jo. 14, 6). And Francis was too humble to presume to improve on God's plan. He was too wise to offer the poor substitute of a man-made program of life for the one designed by Eternal Wisdom Itself. He was too well versed in Sacred Scripture to forget the warning of the Holy Ghost: *If anyone preach a gospel to you other than that which you have received, let him be anathema!* (Gal. 1, 9). In very truth, he could cry out with Saint

Paul: *I determined not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ and him crucified* (1 Cor. 2, 2).

So the message of Saint Francis was, in itself, nothing new. It was the Gospel message; it was Christ. And the only reason it can, in any sense, be called Saint Francis's message is that he proved to the world that it could be lived in its entirety, that he left to us a practical method of living it, and that he aroused in the hearts of countless men and women an ardent desire to live it.

The world of the thirteenth century had not forgotten the message of the Gospel. It was read and re-read. But people had come to view it as a set of rules to be observed—and quite exacting rules at that—which called for no compromises. To Francis that was all wrong. To him the Gospel was more than a set of rules; it was a person—Jesus—Who had shared our life with us, in respect, except sin, in order to show us how to live and to sanctify each of our lives, and Who wished to continue His life in us.

Francis not only believed this sublime truth, but he also translated it into practice with all the fiery ardor of his generous nature. The aim of his life was none other than that enunciated in the words of Holy Scripture: *To make men like Christ* (Phil. 1, 21). Towards that end he strained every fibre of his being. And so marked was his success that our late Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, said of him: "There has never been anyone in whom the image of Jesus Christ and the evangelical manner of life shone forth more lifelike and strikingly than in Saint Francis. He was rightly spoken of as 'another Christ', appearing to his contemporaries and to future generations almost as if he were the Risen Christ" (*Rite Expiatis*, p. 4).

Yes, the people of Assisi woke up one day to find in their midst a poor man who lived and spoke and acted for all the world like Christ. At first they mocked him and abused him. Then they shook their heads in dazed astonishment, wondering just how long this strange experiment would go on. But, week by week, the weeks began to pile up into months, and there was no retreating on the part of this little man; when people recognized the disarming sincerity that underlay the whole tenor of his life; when they saw his childlike, unquestioning faith in the possibility of such a life—then their mocking ceased, their doubts were swallowed up in sympathetic understanding which soon grew into enthusiastic admiration and acclaim.

From all sides and from every walk of life people flocked to Francis, urg-

pleading with him to let them share his manner of life. And to all who came to him he had nothing else to offer but only Christ. His sermons were simple, and his exhortations to love the God-Man Who had loved them so much. In his devotions he taught them had to do with Christ, especially Christ in the Eucharist, Christ in the Eucharist, Christ on the cross. The Rules of Life which they followed were but the Gospel life of Christ adapted to their own varying conditions of life.

Thus it was that the multitudes who hastened to Francis ran right into the arms of Christ. And that is exactly what Francis wished. For he was not the goal of these people, but only their guide on the way. He was not the Christ, but only the mirror of Christ. He was not their King, but merely His herald.

But we still haven't heard the complete story of the message of Saint Francis. It contains a further feature which is truly a heaven-inspired stroke of genius. While Francis demanded of his fellow men that they be like Christ and act like Christ, it was not only the historical Christ of Galilee that he presented to them, but also the ever-living Christ of their own day and age—the Mystical Christ. The clear-visioned faith of Francis saw that if Christ were to be the exemplar, teacher, and confidant of all men, then He must meet the needs and answer the problems of each particular age; He must be—the expression of the Christ of the times, medieval for the thirteenth century man, modern for the modern man. Christ Himself had made provision for this by the establishment of the Church. Through the Church, Christ continues His life, His teaching, His ministrations among men, with never the slightest essential change, and still with constant adaptation to the varying conditions and problems of each succeeding century. Historically, Christ belongs to the first century only; mystically, by means of the Church, He belongs to every century till the end of time. Francis understood this perfectly, and that is why he bound himself and his followers closely, irrevocably to the Church. If they wished to hear Christ teaching today, they must hearken to the Church. If they wished to have their hearts burn with love of Christ, they must go to the Church, whose sacramental source of grace can alone make such love possible. No wonder the Church, in her liturgy for Saint Francis's feast, calls him "a man Catholic and wholly apostolic". No wonder, too, that the message of Francis is always strikingly new and appealing, since it is identified with the ancient yet ever youthful and vigorous Gospel message as guarded and propagated by the Church.

This cursory review of the message of Saint Francis provides us Franciscans with abundant food for thought. No doubt we were at one time much like the

thirteenth century Catholics. We looked upon our religion merely as a list of do's and don't's; we saw in the Gospel only an impersonal narration of the words and actions of the God-Man. And we struggled and wrestled with these things, striving to construct them into a program of life, a rule of conduct, for ourselves. Then one day, by the mercy of God, we met the little poor man of Assisi. What led to that acquaintance is not always easy to say. And it does not matter too much. Maybe it was a book about Saint Francis that we read, or an acquaintance with some follower of his. Anyway, we met Francis, and in him we saw the vision of Christ. Gradually our view of things began to change. We came to see Christianity not as something but as Somebody, not only as a biography but very largely also an autobiography. In other words, Francis pointed out that being Christians means being Christ—living His life, thinking His thoughts, doing His deeds; it means saying what Saint Paul said: *It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me* (Gal. 2, 20); it means, finally, accepting responsibility for the origin and increase of the Christ-life in others, for offering that life to men Christ depends upon us, He needs us. Strong as our claim may seem, it is just what Pope Pius XII teaches in his Encyclical on the Mystical Body: "One must not think that He (Christ) does not require the help of His Body's help. What Paul said of the human organism is to be applied like to this Mystical Body: *The head cannot say to the feet: I have no need of you*. Christ requires His members . . . And in carrying out the work of Redemption He wishes to be helped by the members of His Body" (No. 54-55).

Here, someone may object: "What's new about all this?" To which we can readily answer—"Nothing!" Didn't we observe before that Francis was a reformer and innovator? Franciscanism isn't a new system of things, but the methodical integration of the Gospel into everyday life. Let us note that word "methodical." It implies that we Franciscans are to be professional integrators of the Gospel into everyday life, that we are to be experts at the job. And right there is the unique element which Francis introduced. Every Order in the Church of Christ, while professing and living the complete Christian program, has what may be called its specialty, something which it cultivates with particular attention. Maybe it's the liturgy, or the scapular, or preaching, or education. With us Franciscans it is the Christ-life of the Gospel, that is, the entire and face-to-face acceptance of the Gospel message as preached and practiced by Christ, so that when He speaks about loving one's enemies, becoming like little children, being genuinely simple, not worrying about our bodily needs, etc., we take His words as His word and exclaim: "This is it! This is the life for us!" Francis expects his followers, to make it our business to go through the world, as he did,

prove to men that this Christ-life of the Gospel is possible, and that it is a life of peace and joy. Our mission, as Franciscans, is to be specialists in putting across that message to all with whom we come in contact, not only by our words but above all by our lives. Others are to see us and marvel, and marveling, be attracted by the lovable Christ Who lives within us, and Whose transparent temple we must be.

Only God knows how desperately our twentieth century needs this message. Perhaps the two greatest evils that plague society at present are bewilderment and lack of love. Look for a moment at the sea of bewilderment on which men are floundering today. Never in the history of the world have there been so many schools and so little education. Never have our printing presses run off so many countless pages of newsprint on every conceivable topic, and such utter inability to formulate satisfying answers to life's fundamental questions. Never has man delved so deeply into the secrets of nature, never has he walked the path of science with so much cocksureness, only to find himself pathetically inadequate to turn his knowledge into a genuine blessing instead of an instrument of extinction for the human race. What is the remedy for this disheartening bewilderment? There is only one, and we Franciscans must do our part in applying it. We must help to bring mankind back to Christ Who said of Himself: *I am the light of the world. He who follows me does not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life* (Jo. 8, 12).

Concerning the second great evil, namely, lack of love—well, it ought to be evident to anyone who cares to see that, despite the numerous fraternities and clubs existing today, despite the gigantic undertakings of such organizations as the Red Cross and the Red Feather Agencies, despite the elaborate economic plans to help the world, I say, despite all these things, there is something lacking. Somehow these projects don't ring true. Maybe it's because they offer help in a manner that is mechanical, cold, and impersonal; or because they are tainted with the blight of self-seeking; or because, side by side with such activities, there is a sickening superabundance of bickering, jealousy, mistrust, and downright dislike. Whatever the immediate explanation may be, there can be no doubt about the root cause. Christ is left out of the picture. We must convince men that until they find and embrace Christ, actually or potentially present in every human being that walks the earth, just as Francis found and embraced Him in the outcast leper; until they hear and heed, as did Francis, these words of Christ: *As long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me* (Mt. 25, 40)—there will not be, there cannot be, any genuine charity

among men. The only motive for the consistent practice of charity under the trying circumstances of life and towards all the demanding and puzzling characters that are met in life is Christ.

The recurring feast of our holy Father Francis, therefore, presents a challenge to us Franciscans. It demands that we become imbued with more of the vision and more of the generosity of Francis, so that we may be able to share the treasures with others. The significant thing about Francis is that, although he suffered for years from a painful malady of his eyes, a malady that finally spelled total blindness, his vision of God's ways was perfect. And although his heart was emptied completely of the things men value so highly, his love for things God had made was that of a seraph. How different it is with so many people today! Their eyesight may be perfect, yet their vision is faulty; they see so many things that Christ is blotted out from view. Moreover, their hearts are full of love indeed, but so frequently they are stuffed with petty loves which leave no room at all for Christ. They are afraid to prefer Christ to all else, and so to embrace Christianity in its entirety. Someone recently made the point in an observation: "Men have been inoculated with small doses of Christianity which keep them from catching the real thing." May this feast of our blessed Father Francis do this one thing for us—make us eager to have men catch the real thing by helping them catch the spirit of Saint Francis!

Westmont, Illinois.

Fr. Herman Doerr, O. F. M.



*All that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Now these transitory things are contrary to eternal life. Therefore, always be poor on earth, if you do not want to be cast out of heaven.*

Saint Bonaventura

## A THIRTEENTH CENTURY ADVOCATE OF PEACE

Artists have been known to employ contrast in order to highlight a favorite theme in one of their compositions. To the twentieth century observer, looking back at the thirteenth century, it seems that this must have been the idea in the mind of the Divine Artist when He set Elizabeth of Portugal, that great Franciscan Peacemaker of the century, into the time and place that He did. What a setting for holiness it was—on the one side, a grandfather, James the Conqueror, King of Aragon, who almost rivalled Henry VIII in his matrimonial experiences, who banished his family from the Court to escape their murmurings against his loose living; and on the other side, a grandfather who was the illegitimate son of the Emperor Ferdinand II. It was with such a background that Elizabeth was born in Saragossa, Spain, the place of banishment for her family, in the year 1271. Her parents, Prince Peter, son of James I, and Constance, daughter of Manfred, gave her in baptism the name Elizabeth in memory of her mother's saintly aunt, the great Elizabeth of Hungary, who had been canonized by Gregory IX in 1235.

Her very birth itself began the role she was to fill for life, the role of peacemaker. The King was so anxious to see this youngest grandchild that, for her sake, he made peace with his son, Peter, and recalled both him and his family to Court. From then until his death six years later, King James kept her at his side and was much concerned with her training. In spite of the conditions existing at his Court, her biographers tell us, James did a very thorough job of instilling piety into the heart of this favorite grandchild. And the six year old Elizabeth was remarkably good and pious. Strange as it is to find such virtue in so young a child, still more strange does it become in view of the fact that as late as ten months before he died, the King who taught her was warned by Gregory X that unless something was done about his own scandalous life and that of his Court, he would be excommunicated and the whole of Aragon placed under an interdict. Nevertheless, it must be said for him, that before he died he did send away his latest matrimonial partner, as the Pope had ordered, divided his kingdom between his sons and donned the Cistercian habit.

At James's death, Peter became King and himself assumed the care and training of his daughter. He was most careful to expose her to the influence of only the most virtuous people, his idea being that their example would serve as a spur to Elizabeth. From this time until her marriage, we have only very provoking generalities concerning her. We read that as early as eight years of age

she had an exceptional self-control; her solicitude for the poor was surprising and her love of prayer was most unusual.

Scarcely had she reached the age of twelve when the question of her marriage became the all-important topic, not to herself, of course, for she was the last to be consulted, but to those most interested in the game of European politics. The King of Naples, Charles of Anjou, sought her for his son-in-law; while the King of England, Edward I, attempted to win her hand for his eldest son. Her father, however, was rather reluctant to part with this daughter, being certain that much of the happiness then existing in his kingdom was due to her prayers. But when it was Denis, the young King of Portugal, who begged her in marriage, he finally acquiesced; which acquiescence completely set off a contrast for this thirteenth century Queen, for Denis was himself an illegitimate son of a usurper and of an illegitimate princess. Somehow, we do not associate holiness with such a setup; and, to make the scene of things a bit dramatic, just two months after Elizabeth left the house of her father, he was suspected of being involved in the massacre of the Sicilian Vespers. When his answer to the accusation was an army sent to rout Charles of Anjou, the Pope, who was a kinsman of Charles, put Peter under a ban of excommunication and deposed him from the throne of Aragon.

In seeking Elizabeth for his bride, Denis had considered her birth, her beauty. However, after a very brief association with her, he came to admire her extraordinary piety, and, for the first few years of their married life, they were happy. He allowed her complete liberty in her devotions and charities—and there were not a few in this teen-age wife of his. In a Court where early rising was certainly not the order of the day, Elizabeth rose very early, recited Matins, Lauds, and Prime of the Divine Office. Upon completing them, she assisted at Holy Mass, then finished the Little Hours of the Breviary; to these she added every day the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Office of the Dead; in the afternoons, she said Vespers and retired often to her Oratory with her books of piety. She received the Sacraments frequently. Her mortifications were unusual in a Court in which indulgence was the accepted law: she adhered strictly to all the fasts prescribed by the Church and even added to them voluntarily, for she, of all people, realized that only in such self-denials could a balance be struck with the existing excesses; for three days of every week she fasted, in addition to all of Advent; every Friday found her partaking of nothing but bread and water. All this might be expected of a Nun. But Elizabeth was a Queen, with all the duties of a queen to fulfill, and she neglected not a

It makes her appear a very austere, unappealing person. But this Elizabeth was not. By her very charming modesty and sweetness she won hearts—her piety was not of the hard variety. Though she was severe with herself she was the essence of kindness to others, both equals and subjects. Her charity to the poor was especially remarkable. She gave not only alms, but she gave of herself. Frequently did she visit the hospitals and institutions to perform the humblest duties, which God sometimes rewarded with miracles.

At his death in 1285, when Elizabeth was thirteen years old, her father was absolved from his excommunication; and in 1289 her husband, King Denis, was released from his. At the same time, the interdict which for years had overshadowed Portugal was removed, and for this blessing all the people of the land firmly believed that they were indebted to the Queen. It set her deeper in their hearts, if such a thing were possible.

In 1290, when Elizabeth was twenty, her first child was born and was named Constance after the mother of the Queen. After the birth of her son Alphonsus in 1291, she began her real role of peacemaker. It is worthy of note that the enemies here, as in almost all her other endeavors, were those of her own household. In her first attempt at establishing peace, when all her entreaties were in vain—when she was unable by persuasion to settle the quarrel between King Denis and his brother Alphonsus—she had her way when she resorted to diplomacy. She made over to her brother-in-law one of the estates from her own possessions, and the dispute was ended.

Though the daily life of Elizabeth was in itself a sermon, Denis, with all his qualities for greatness, finally succumbed to the temptations and the worldly pleasures that surrounded him. He became corrupted and led a life that was definitely unworthy of a Christian prince, a life that was a subject of scandal to his people. His unbounded jealousy and infidelity were to Elizabeth a veritable martyrdom. But we are told that she overcame her natural repulsion to such conduct in her husband, that she not only did not feel anger, either toward the King or toward the women that he acquired, but she even went so far as to command that his many children by them should be cared for as the children of a King should be. She met this trial, as she met all others, with a great calmness. She felt that the offense to God far outweighed any offense to herself, and so she prayed the more. She did not berate Denis, being wise enough to recognize the futility of such a method. Instead, she sought to win him with constant sweetness and gentleness and a never-ending courtesy. Denis, however, with this example of fidelity constantly before his eye, was not moved to give her credit,

but, because of his own sensual heart, he was inclined to judge ill. On one occasion when a nobleman in his Court, in an attempt to ingratiate himself, insinuated to the King that there was more than met the eye going on between Elizabeth and her young secretary, he believed the suggestions wholeheartedly. Secretly, he gave orders to a lime-burner to throw into the flames the first person who brought a message from him; and the next day he sent off this pious page of the Queen with the royal message. It so happened that the devout youth was in the habit of hearing Mass daily, so that when he passed the Church dedicated to Saint Francis and the bells were ringing for the Elevation, he entered and remained until the end of the Mass. But not having heard a whole Mass, when another priest approached the Altar almost immediately, he stayed and assisted at the second Mass also. Meanwhile, the King, impatient to hear of the success of his messenger, sent the calumniator to inquire. He arrived before the Queen's page and asked if the command of the King has been fulfilled. In spite of his protestations that he was not the one intended, he was thrown into the kiln and consumed by flames. Shortly after, the secretary of the Queen arrived and then took the word to Denis from the kiln-owner that his word had been punctually obeyed. To say the least, the King was surprised, and after a bit of reflection saw the hand of God in this strange turn of events. He determined never again to harbor doubts of his faithful Queen.

Elizabeth once more interfered in behalf of peace in 1297. She had at first urged armed intervention in an affair of the young Ferdinand IV of Castile, but her great love of peace prevailed upon her to invite to a peace conference Queen Maria, the mother and Regent of the young King. In just three days these two women settled by a treaty what men had not been able to settle by years of war and bloodshed. It was this same young King of Castile who married Elizabeth's daughter, Constance, in 1298 at Coimbra.

By 1302 some of the members of her family were again threatening to go to war upon each other. This time it was her brother, James II, and her son-in-law, Ferdinand IV. She besought the two Kings to submit the matter to the judgment of King Denis at a place between the two kingdoms. They acceded to her request after a great deal of persuasion, even to the point of opening the conference at the feast of the Nativity of Our Lady. The arbitration was so successful that not only did it settle that quarrel, but it brought about the Treaty of Alcaniz, which was an offensive and defensive alliance between the two countries.

Her son-in-law, Ferdinand IV, died while very young in November 1304. The King and Queen made the journey to be with Constance in her grief,

just two months after the death of her husband Constance died also. It was a real trial for Elizabeth, for her love for her children was a very vital part of her. On the way back to Lisbon, after she had buried her daughter, she was told by a hermit that she must have a Mass said for Constance every day for a year, in order to have her freed from Purgatory where she then was detained. He told the Queen that Constance had appeared to him in his sleep and asked him to explain her need to her mother. Elizabeth at once made the necessary arrangements, and at the end of the year Constance appeared to Elizabeth herself, told her that eternal happiness had begun for her, and that she was exceedingly grateful to her mother for her goodness.

From this time the Queen redoubled her mortifications and fastings. She increased her almsgiving to such a point that King Denis grumbled at her open-handedness. It would have taken a miracle to silence the royal objections. So the favored one of God got her miracle. On a winter day, the King met her as she was on the way to her beloved poor. At the time she had a sum of money with her and was attempting to conceal it in order to avoid another clash with her husband. Noticing this, he asked her what she carried so carefully. She answered him that they were roses for the poor, and to satisfy him she opened her mantle for him to see. Denis beheld the freshest of roses on that winter day, and once again he recognized the hand of God in the affairs of his Queen.

Elizabeth's son Alphonsus married Beatrice of Castile, and it was arranged by the King that they should live in a palace of their own, though he kept his illegitimate sons at his own Court, and favored one of them especially, Alphonsus Sanchez. Quite naturally this made for bad feeling on the part of Alphonsus, who planned to do away with Alphonsus Sanchez and to overthrow his father. It was Elizabeth who prevented the catastrophe.

At this point, when the King was still upset by this rebellion of his son, a certain few of his courtiers voiced to Denis their calumnies concerning his consort. They accused her of being indifferent to his interests, and of being ready to second their son in any attempt he might make to seize the crown. King Denis, believing because of his jealousy, ordered Elizabeth to withdraw to her residence at Alanquer. With her customary patience and calm the Queen received this added disgrace. Her time of exile was to her truly a time of glory. Her poor sick, and the lepers especially benefited by her enforced retirement. On one occasion while assisting in the care of the sick in the hospital, she was washing one of the women, when she noticed how the patient attempted to conceal one of her feet. The woman feared that the very sight of such a cancerous foot would

be too much—much less did she expect that the Queen could tend it. But she reckoned without Elizabeth, whose powers of persuasion in such a case and her reluctance were practically limitless. It ended by Elizabeth having her way. Not only did she clean the wound but in the process she pressed her lips to it, and at the very moment that her lips touched the wound the cancer disappeared. This is just one of the numerous instances of cures which she effected during the period of her banishment from Court.

The fame of these cures, as well as their own love for her, made the people restless for her return. Both the officers of the Court and the leading citizens of Coimbra begged the Queen to allow them to interfere in her behalf, with arms, if necessary, but she would have none of it. As is to be expected, Denis heard of both these offers, and of the vehement rejection of Elizabeth to them, and of her refusal to allow bloodshed as a means to reinstate herself. He realized that he had better recall her to Court in order to keep the good will, not only of the common people, but even more so, of his own officers. And her return, and the enthusiastic rejoicing of her people, partook more of the nature of a triumphal procession than of a return from exile.

Almost the first act upon her return was to persuade Alphonsus to make his submission as son and subject to Denis; and to secure from the King a full pardon for all the rebels who had joined forces with her son. This was in 1317; but in 1320 her son was once more trying to bring about the death of his half brother, and, as a result, war broke out again between father and son. Even Pope John XXII could effect nothing with his exhortations nor by recognizing Alphonsus as heir and contributing to the fleet of Denis. It required the skill of Elizabeth. She rushed into the midst of the ranks, careless of her own life, intent only on preventing more misery. Alphonsus was really devoted to his mother, and his utter disregard of herself in her concern for them touched his heart. She appealed to the fatherly love of Denis and, in the presence of both armies, brought about a reconciliation.

The truce between them lasted, however, for only a year and a half, and in 1323 the ambition of Alphonsus renewed the quarrel; and at the head of an enormous army he met the King on a battlefield not far from Lisbon. They were deep in battle, the dead and wounded lying on all sides, the arrows and spears were flying free and fast, when right into the very thickest rode the royal peace-maker. To what daring her love of peace led her! The very daring of the deed so stunned everyone that the fighting stopped and they watched. Her heroism and the love that prompted it finally so affected the father and son that it arc-

the son to repentance and forced him to beg mercy of Denis and to promise obedience; while the King, in turn, gave his blessing to his son. Thus ended the struggle between the two nearest her heart, brought about through the endeavors of a tender courage.

Following this reconciliation, Elizabeth was granted one of her much prayed for desires. In May, 1323, the Pope absolved Denis from his excommunication, and, for the first time since the very earliest days of their marriage, they knelt side by side to receive the Body of Christ. Denis was completely won from his evil ways; he had begun to understand the grace with which God had favored him in giving him such a wife as Elizabeth. But it was only toward the end of 1324, when he became seriously ill, that full realization came to him. The Queen never left his side. Her tender affections and solicitude were to him indeed soul-stirring. It was probably through her efforts and prayers that he was given the blessing of a holy death on January 6, 1325, after a reign of 45 years.

A few days after the death of her husband, Elizabeth clothed herself in the habit of the Third Order and withdrew to a small house next to the Convent of Poor Clares in Coimbra, which she herself had been instrumental in establishing. She spent much of her time in going among the nuns in humble service and joining them in the recitation of the Divine Office. The following year, as dowager Queen of Portugal, she made a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Apostle of Spain, Saint James of Compostella, and one among many of her gifts was the golden jeweled-encrusted crown of her coronation. It was on this pilgrimage that the Archbishop gave her the pilgrim's staff and shell which were so precious to her that she had them placed in her coffin. Upon her return home, she seemed unable to dispose of her valuables fast enough. Her jewels were made into chalices, reliquaries, crosses; her royal robes were made into vestments for Church use; her alms were multiplied past believing. It appeared that at last the way was clear for her to join her dear daughters, the Poor Clare Nuns, and she began to make her preparations. The priests and the people of her kingdom, however, tried to persuade her that she could promote the glory of God much more effectually in the world by her works of zeal and charity. Finally, her love of neighbor triumphed over her own inclination to the extent that she was satisfied to follow the rule of the Third Order, and to live in her little house in the shadow of the Convent where her own will would have taken her. And this very Franciscan Queen insisted on wearing the habit of the Third Order publicly; with her there were no half-measures.

Not even these last few years of her life which she so wanted to spend in

solitude and prayer were free from demands on her ability at mediation. As in the past, the trouble was with her own family. In the summer of 1336 war broke out between her son, Alphonsus IV of Portugal, and her grandson, Alphonsus of Castile. Every attempt possible was made to dissuade her from making a journey to the combatants, but to no avail. It was a troublesome and dangerous journey, but she was determined to save her people from the bitterness and bloodiness of war. She was suffering from a tumor and some sort of blood poisoning, but neither the excessive heat of her body, nor the intensive summer heat of the plains could stay her. She had a mission to perform and perform she would. When she arrived her very presence seemed to dispose both parties to peace, yet she was in such a condition that they feared she might die when she spoke to them. To her son her last message was one of peace—he was to live a life according to the teaching of the gospels, and to do all in his power to preserve peace, a message to be expected of a mother who had spent practically her whole later life in getting him, not out of one bit of trouble after the other, as do mothers of other sons, but in getting him out of one war after the other.

The following day, Monday, she grew much worse, and by Thursday she seemed a matter of breaths, so consumed by fever was she. After having made her last Confession when her Chaplain brought the Blessed Sacrament to her, she insisted not only on rising from her bed but also on falling to her knees and bowing to the ground in adoration of her God in the Eucharist. Then shortly afterward, she received Extreme Unction. From then on she continued in a state of prayer and often invoked the Blessed Virgin. She was heard to speak while smiling: "Mary, mother of grace, mother of mercy, defend us from our wicked enemy and receive us at the hour of our death." Then in the presence of her son, the King, and his wife, she went to the Prince of Peace, bearing an unusual record of peace making. It was the fourth of July, 1336, and she was then sixty-five years old.

Elizabeth was buried, with all the solemnity and pomp of a royal funeral, in the Convent Church at Coimbra and almost immediately many miracles were attributed to her whose intercession the people invoked with heartfelt confidence. When her body was exhumed three centuries later in 1612, it was found to be entire, at which time it was enshrined in the Chapel built especially for her. Not until 1625 did Pope Urban VIII solemnly canonize Elizabeth of Portugal and set aside the eighth of July as her especial feast.

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## AN EXPLANATION OF THE RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR (IX)

### *The Eighth Article*

**TEXT:** *But the test of the love of God is the practice of charity towards our neighbor. Wherefore, charity towards others should appear above all in the true follower of Christ. All his conversation should be guarded, useful and proper. That charity may abound in deed, it must first abound in the heart.*

This is the third and the last article of the present chapter on the aims and objectives of the Tertiary Regular way of life. The first article, as we recall, indicated that love or charity is not only the mark of the Christian, or the ideal of the religious as an apostle or bride of Christ, but it is the special heritage of the children of the "Seraphic Saint" whose love transformed him into a "mirror of Christ".

The second article stressed the Eucharistic Christ, as the "soul of Franciscan piety". It is Christ come into our midst to remind us of His love for us and to help us grow in love for Him.

This final article tells us what is all important, how we may know if our love of God be true. As Saint John puts it beautifully: *No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. In this we know that we abide in him and he in us . . . If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar. For how can he who does not love his brother, whom he sees, love God, whom he does not see? And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also. (I John. 4, 12 . . . 21).* Our personal attitude towards God's other children, towards Christ's other brethren, will always be in the last analysis the real test of true love.

We cannot help recalling how God tested the love of Francis. For He willed that it should be active and practical like His own—active in meeting the challenge of sin and the ravages it left upon the corporate body of mankind, practical in seeking out those most desperately in need of help.

Of the corporal works of mercy practiced by Christ, the one that seems to stand out strikingly in the Gospel account is His compassion for the sick and needy. And this example of the Master was to change men's attitude towards the unfortunate. Now in Francis's own day, the disease that was fast becoming a major social problem was leprosy. Brought in from the east, the Arabian leprosy



had spread so rapidly during the time of the Crusades that most of Europe was plagued with it. In France and Italy, especially, thousands of leper hospitals sprang up to care for them. Almost every big city and even the larger villages had their lazarettos. For Christian faith saw in these social outcasts something of Christ of whom Isaias had written: *He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows; and we have thought Him as it were a leper and as one struck by God and afflicted* (Is. 53, 4).

If Francis by reason of his affectionate and generous nature seems to have had a natural love and sympathy for the needy, he did not find it easy to work with the lepers. In fact, he seems to have had more than a normal horror and revulsion for these unfortunate souls. Their running sores, the filth and stench associated with their hospitals filled him with a terrible nausea and revulsion. He himself tells us how he could not bring himself to give them alms personally but would rather have another hand them to the leprous beggar while he himself would hurry past holding his nose. (*Tres Socii*, n. 11).

With this in mind, we can understand something of the test God devised for Francis. One day without warning Francis was suddenly confronted by a leper on the highway. His first feeling was one of fear and revulsion. He wanted to ignore the outstretched hand, or to throw the money on the ground and flee. But he remembered the words God spoke to him in spirit: "Francis, if thou wishest to know Me, conquer thyself, choosing the bitter instead of the sweet; and in reward what is bitter will become sweet" (*Celano, Legenda Secunda*, n. 9).

Conquering his antipathy, Francis dismounted from his horse and ran to meet the leper. Kissing and embracing the man, he filled his hand with coins. And when he remounted his steed and turned for a parting look at the leper, the latter had mysteriously vanished. But Francis's own soul was filled with supernatural sweetness. From that day on, Francis became the special friend of lepers. He would go to the lazarettos to wash their sores, mend their tattered clothes, and bring some measure of cheer into their bleak existence. And when friars began to band about him, he would settle them in the vicinity of leper hospitals and even have them use these hospitals as their temporary homes.

Our love for God may never be tested in the dramatic fashion that Francis was, but tried it will be. And for all the difference in the concomitant circumstances, the test will be basically the same. What we do to the least of His brethren, He will account as having been done to Himself. Each Third Order Congregation or Institute has its own special apostolate of charity to perform

Whichever spiritual or corporal works of mercy it should emphasize, its members will find ample opportunity to imitate Francis's heroic love of neighbor.

Every true Franciscan, then, should be sensitive and alert to the needs of humanity and eager to alleviate them. There will be nothing of that manifest condescension in his manner that makes it so difficult to accept charity from another. Francis's attitude to the poor should be our model here. Time and again he would give away to some beggar in dire need his tunic or mantle or the bread he had collected for his meal. And always because he wanted no one to be poorer than himself, or to be dearer to his own Lady Poverty. And because he saw in every poor person "a mirror in which to behold the Lord and his poor mother", as he put it, his attitude towards them was one of sincere friendliness and profound esteem. In like manner, we should see the "needy Christ" in all whom we help. Only then will we consider charity a privilege, for there can be no attitude of condescension in one who serves Christ.

Un-Franciscan too is the attitude of those who would excuse their lack of charity because others are undeserving, unappreciative, or may exploit their love. We cannot forget what Francis did when he found that his friars were turning away robbers who came to them for food. He reproved his brothers sharply and sent them out into the woods with baskets of food in search of "Brother Robbers".

Our charity should not be limited to those outside the convent. Above all, it should characterize all our relations with our companions in religion. The apostolic band, by reason of the evangelical counsels they were to practice, were in truth Christ's first religious. Three years they spent in the school of the Master, and, when their last class was over, what thought did Christ leave with them on their graduation night? *A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: that as I have loved you, you also love one another. By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another* (Jo. 13, 34-35). No wonder then that the rule adds: "Wherefore, charity towards others should appear above all in the true follower of Christ." And who more than the Franciscan apostle or bride of Christ should be called His follower?

If charity is the great social virtue, the faculty of speech is in a special way our social faculty, for it makes human society possible. It is the means of learning the needs of others, of communicating our encouragement, our sympathy, our experience. Yet too often the human tongue becomes an instrument of unkindness, of discord, of seduction. More evil and harm is caused by thoughtless or careless speech than we dream of. No wonder that Saint James could say: *If anyone does not offend in word, he is a perfect man* (James 3, 2). Wisely,

then, the rule points out the practical warning: "All his conversation should be guarded, useful and proper."

But because it is *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks* (Mat. 12, 34) it is in the closing words of this article that we come literally to the heart of the matter of charity. For both in word and in deed charity should always be an utterance of the heart. And unless we treasure this key which opens the pearl of great price, for which we would barter even our precious selves, we will never be truly worthy of the Seraphic Saint we call our Father.

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Saint Francis used to say that the ideal Friar Minor should have the *love* of Brother Bernard—he had it in a most perfect degree along with his love of holy poverty; the *simplicity and purity* of Brother Leo—truly a man of the most holy purity; the *courtesy* of Brother Angelo, the first knight to enter the Order—a man graced with all courtesy and gentleness; the *gracious mien and intelligence* of Brother Masseo, together with his fair, devout language; the *modesty* of Brother Giles, elevated in contemplation to the utmost perfection; Brother Rufino's *gift of virtuous, continuous prayer*—he prayed always, even sleeping and working; his mind was always with God; the *patience* of Brother Juniper—arrived at a state of perfect patience by accepting the exact truth as to his own uselessness (which he kept before his eyes continually) and by desiring above all else to imitate Christ on the way of the Cross; the *bodily and spiritual prowess* of Brother John Lodi—in those days stronger of body than any other man; the *charity* of Brother Roger—all his life and manner was aglow with charity; the *solicitous concern* of Brother Lucido—his conscientiousness was the greatest, and scarcely would he stay in any place a month at a time, for at the moment he found pleasure staying at a place he promptly left it, saying: "We have no lasting home here, but in Heaven."

*Speculum Perfectionis*

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

*According to Saint Bonaventure*

The Franciscan way of life is the way of joy in the Lord. To a soul that is wholly devoted to God as a child to its father, all things are touched with the brightness and sweetness of divine love. Once we have come to the realization that God is truly our Father, that He adores us with an infinite love and holds us securely in His all-powerful arms, then we will experience a foretaste on earth of the peace and delight that will be ours in heaven. As the Christian soul advances toward perfection, spiritual joy increases and sadness with all its concomitant evils decreases. Because the degree of our spiritual joy is so intimately and essentially associated with the degree of perfection we have attained, Saint Bonaventure mentions as the last point in our examination of conscience the vice which opposes spiritual joy—the vice the medievals called *acedia*, and which we translate rather lamely as sloth.

Actually, *acedia* has a much broader connotation than sloth. *Acedia* is spiritual torpor, coldness, solidification; it is laziness, indifference, listlessness; it is tedium, sadness, depression, aversion for the things of the spirit. Bonaventure calls it the cesspool of all evils—the source of evil suspicions, of blasphemous thoughts, of malicious detraction. And the religious who falls victim to this terrible sickness of soul is in danger of eternal death. The Holy Spirit Himself warns us (Prov. 24, 30-34):

*I passed by the field of the slothful man,  
and by the vineyard of the foolish man:  
and behold it was filled with nettles,  
and thorns had covered the face thereof,  
and the stone wall was broken down . . .  
Thou wilt sleep a little, said I,  
Thou wilt slumber a little;  
Thou wilt fold thy hands a little to rest;  
And poverty shall come to thee as a runner:  
And beggary as an armed man.*

Sloth is the most dangerous of the capital sins. It does not cause the scandal or incur the censure that falls to the more spectacular vices such as anger or gluttony or lust; but precisely because it attracts so little attention it is so much the more dangerous. The slothful religious feels himself secure in his torpor. After all, his sin is more negative than positive; he does not do anything so

very wrong, he simply fails to do anything very right. Yet of all the vices that plague our fallen nature, sloth is the only one that actually nauseates God. *Because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth* (Apoc. 3, 15-17). For this reason Saint Bonaventure urges us to search our soul and ask ourselves honestly:

#### HAVE I YIELDED TO SLOTH?

In general, we may ask ourselves whether or not true spiritual joy reigns in our soul. We must not, however, confuse lack of joy with aridity and similar states of soul which are sent by God for our purification and are not the result of any fault on our part. The gladness of heart that characterizes a healthy spiritual life will never be lost, even in the midst of the severest interior or exterior trials. The soul that truly loves God can never be truly unhappy, no matter how great the sufferings and desolation that may descend upon it. We should also understand that a sour, gloomy, or pessimistic disposition need not be taken as an indication of sloth. The cold and killing joylessness that marks the slothful soul is of a distinct and unmistakable nature. It is rooted in a perverted will, and manifests itself, according to Saint Bonaventure, in three principal ways. Each of these will be a point for our consideration.

1. The slothful religious is *tepidus*—lukewarm. Here we may ask ourselves: Am I making serious efforts to strive after perfection, or am I content to drift with the current? Do I easily seek to be excused from my obligations—of prayer or work? Do I fulfill my obligations only when strictly necessary, then without enthusiasm or interest? Do I try to avoid serious sins, but habitually wink at minor transgressions? Do I side-step sacrifices and whatever may disturb the inertia of my soul? Have I permitted my conscience to become lax, so that I can no longer discern the gravity of my sins and imprudences? Do I try to palliate my lapses by comparing myself with others, by hiding behind the refuge of self-deception, or even by refusing to admit the true nature of my sin? *There is a way which seemeth just to man, says the Holy Spirit, but the end thereof lead to death* (Prov. 14, 12). The tepid religious is like the stagnant pond and the stench of his soul rises to high heaven.

2. The slothful religious is *somnolentus*—dreamy. Do I indulge in day-dreaming, in filling my mind with pleasant fantasies, in living in a little world of my own creation? Is reality so unpleasant to me that I try to escape from it by retiring into my dream-world? Do I realize that my vocation to religious perfection requires my fullest attention at all times, that I must face

situations and use every moment for God and for my own sanctification? Unfortunately, it is possible for a religious to sleep his way through life, even to dream of himself as a mystic and therefore above the petty concerns of the world about him. Do I tend in this direction? Am I aware that some day I must awaken from my sleep, and that the awakening may be not only rude but utterly tragic?

3. The slothful religious is *otiosus*—lazy. To be sure, laziness is a vice to which all men are more or less prone, but let us ask ourselves: Do I make the necessary efforts to overcome laziness, or have I allowed it to become one of my major faults? Do I shy away from work, even from that which is obligatory, merely because effort of any kind is distasteful to me? When I am forced to work, do I move sluggishly and painfully, hoping that some kind confrère will pity my weakness and relieve me of my burden, or that my superior will become exasperated into giving my work to someone else? Do I go through the motions of being busy in order to avoid a real assignment? Do I waste time doing nothing, or worse still, do I waste the time of others by idle conversations, or silly diversions, or simply by getting in the way? Do I cherish an over-tender fondness for my bed, seeking it out at the slightest provocation and leaving it with the greatest reluctance? Is physical comfort the primary object of my endeavors? Am I mentally lazy? Do I hate the mental effort of studying or concentrating on my work? Do I shrink from thinking out the problems that face me daily, shrugging them away in a kind of *laissez-faire* attitude? Am I too lazy even to make the effort of examining my conscience? In general, am I tractable and submissive as long as no one disturbs me, but surly and peevish whenever anyone tries to force me to activity? Let us remember that Saint Francis had no use for lazy religious. He called them flies.

4. The slothful religious is *tardus*—slow. Some people are naturally slow-moving, which is no fault of theirs; but *tarditas* as an offshoot of sloth is not so much slowness of action as lack of that joyous eagerness, of that alacrity of mind and spirit, that characterizes the fervent religious. Here we should ask ourselves: Do I go about my work listlessly, dragging myself from one task to the next as if the simple effort of keeping alive were too much for me? Do I lack the zest and vigor of movement that would be mine if I truly loved God and took delight in His service? Does my slowness indicate that my spiritual life is congealing—that the fire of love is burning so low that it can no longer keep my soul warm and alive and active? Am I becoming frozen over spiritually?

5. The slothful religious is *remissus*—negligent and careless. Do I give my duties out of sheer boredom or indifference? Am I the type of religious who can never be given a responsible assignment because it is known that I will do it carelessly? Do I accept work, but postpone doing it? Do I make promises and promptly forget about them? How do I discharge my religious duties? Do I neglect corners on such matters as prescribed prayers, rubrics, ordinances? How do I discharge my professional duties? If I am employed in caring for the sick, do I do some other work where the consequences of my negligence may affect the sick? Do I realize that I may be in danger of committing serious sin, and of being involved in public scandal? Although the remiss religious may not always feel serious guilt as a direct result of his negligence, the point to be stressed is the attitude itself. The religious who is habitually remiss is one who no longer has the purpose of his vocation at heart.

6. The slothful religious is *dissolutus*—dissolute. The test here, based on the question: Where do I seek my pleasure? For the dissolute religious is worldly and carnal. "When the spirit is lukewarm and grows cold, cooling down to grace," says Saint Francis, "flesh and blood needs seek its own. What is left, when the soul finds no delights, but that the flesh turns to the carnal sense shapes a man's conscience" (II Celano, 69). Do I have to go to the world to find enjoyment only in worldly sports and amusements and not in the service of God? Do I prefer the companionship of worldly-minded seculars to that of my confreres, and do I, in consequence, spend most of my time outside the monastery? If I have to answer these questions in the affirmative, dare I go to the world to ask myself why it is so? Am I trying to drown the voice of conscience? Or has tepidity made religious life such a torture to me that I can find surcease only in carnal pleasure? How far have I gone in this? To the point of mortal sin? Sacrilege? Am I leading a double life—a religious exteriorly, but secretly addicted to the most shameful practices? Do I realize that this cannot go on forever and that sooner or later I must come to an impasse?

7. The slothful religious is *indevotus*—without devotion or fidelity to God. Is this perhaps my state? Do I find the spiritual exercises so irksome that I perform them as quickly as possible, mechanically, or not at all? Do I spend my time of prayer in deliberately entertaining distracting—even sinful—thoughts? Do I sneer at monastic customs of piety, ignore monastic rules and regulations that are meant to increase devotion? Do I take little or no interest in the things that concern God, the Church, my Order? Have I but slight appreciation

of spiritual values? Am I living the religious life simply out of routine? How is it with Mass, Holy Communion? Do I go to confession regularly but confess only the usual trivialities and make no mention of the disease that is killing my soul? What about the annual retreat, the monthly recollection? Am I, in my perversity, piling sin upon sin by abusing the very means God has given me for my sanctification? To be without devotion—without a healthy prayer-life—is to be in danger of spiritual disaster. For this reason Saint Francis urged his brothers to pray well, for from prayer comes spiritual joy. "If the servant of God studies to have and to keep, within and without, that spiritual cheerfulness which proceeds from a clean heart and is acquired by devotion to prayer, the evil spirits cannot harm him . . . But the demons are elated when they can extinguish or in a measure interfere with the devotion and joy proceeding from prayer that is pure." (*Speculum Perfectionis*, 95.)

8. The slothful religious is *tristis*—sad and melancholy—and for very good reasons. To try to live the religious life after all supernatural motives have died out is a real torture. The difficulties of community life, the demands of superiors, the innumerable trials and conflicts that are inseparable from the religious state, become unbearable once the soul has lost contact with God in love. If we are sad, then, we should do well to ask ourselves the cause of our sadness. Am I unhappy because the religious life has become burdensome to me, and yet I have no desire to return to the world, or see no way of returning? Or am I fretful because I have opened my soul to the demands of pride and sensuality and avarice, and my vows prevent me from fully satisfying these demands? Do I regret that certain pleasures are forbidden under pain of grievous sin? When I see others faithful to their duty and progressing in virtue, do I give way to envy and jealousy and melancholy brooding? Has my character become so twisted and soured that my confreres avoid me, and do I, in consequence, become sullen and depressed and critical of what I consider their lack of charity? The sadness that stems from sloth is a disease for which there is but one remedy—sincere manifestation of conscience to a spiritual director and a wholehearted effort to return to God.

9. The slothful religious is *taediosus*—a victim of utter boredom. To such a religious, life in the service of God becomes "flat, stale, and unprofitable"—and it is questionable if anything less than a miracle of grace can help him. The soul is completely solidified by the coldness of spiritual torpor; it has passed into the coma that precedes death.

In order to keep from falling into sloth and becoming a prey to the diseases that it engenders, we should make every effort to keep joy alive in our heart. In fact, spiritual gladness is the best safeguard against every sin. Therefore, close our examination of conscience with the words of our Father Francis: "The devil exults most when he can steal a man's joy from him. He carries a powder with him to throw into any smallest possible crack of our conscience, to soil the spotlessness of our mind and the purity of our heart. But when spiritual joy fills our heart, the serpent pours out his deadly venom in vain."

"The demons cannot hurt a servant of Christ when they see him with holy mirth. But when his spirit is tearful, forlorn, downcast, it is swallowed up completely by sadness, or it is carried to the extreme of vain joys . . . When a servant of God, as commonly happens, is troubled by anything, he ought to rise and pray, and insist on staying in his sovereign Father's presence until He restores the joy of his salvation to him. For if he lingers in his gloom, that Babylonian mess will ripen to the point where, if it is not flushed out with tears, it will generate permanent corrosion in the heart" (II Celano, 100).

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There are many people who devote themselves to prayer and devotion and practice bodily mortifications and lacerations of many kinds, but at a single word that seems offensive to their person, or at anything taken away from them, they are quickly troubled and perturbed.

Such people are not poor in spirit, because anyone that is truly poor in spirit hates himself and loves those who slap him in the face.

*Saint Francis*