

OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

The Story of the Crucifix

When Saint Philip Benitius lay on his deathbed, he called out in a feeble voice to his brethren kneeling at his side: "Give me my book; give me my book." For a moment there was puzzled inactivity in the room. Then one of the priests offered the Bible to the dying saint, and another handed him the writings of the beloved Saint Bede. But Philip gently pushed them both away. At that moment it was noticed that the saint's eyes were directed longingly to the crucifix on the desk. And when it was brought over to the bed, Philip grasped it eagerly in his hands and pressed it lovingly to his heart. "Yes," he said, "this is my book. From it I learned how to live and with it near my heart I wish to die."

During this holy season of Lent we would do well to foster in our hearts the love of a Saint Philip Benitius for the crucifix. It should be for us, too, our favorite book on which we frequently meditate and in which we shall find a story of suffering, ingratitude, and love without parallel. Following the example of the pious old lay brother we might imagine that this story is written in letters of red, letters of black, and letters of gold.

The letters of red speak of the indescribable sufferings of our Lord—of the mental anguish in the Garden of Olives, the quivering pain of the brutal scourging, the stabbing torture of the devilish crown of thorns, and the exquisite agony of the inhuman crucifixion. Of course we can never hope to get an adequate idea of those horrible sufferings. They were the sufferings of a God-Man, of One Whose divine nature gave extraordinary endurance to His human nature, making it capable of a degree of suffering far beyond the grasp of our puny minds. And yet we should not on that account hesitate to contemplate the Passion of our Lord. Let us meditate on it as best we can, making up by our devoted love for our lack of complete understanding. Jesus is so anxious to have us compassionate Him in His bitter sorrow. *I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort me, and I found none* (Ps. 68, 21).

Our reflections on the Passion should be impressive and fruitful. We can make the Passion truly impressive by picturing it to ourselves as vividly as possible. Let us not look upon it as a mere historical fact, accomplished nineteen centuries ago and finished once and for all. Rather, let us see in it an ever-present reality. As Saint Paul says, Christ does not belong to one age only but to all times: *Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday and today, yes, and forever*

(1 Cor. 13, 8). Day after day, therefore, Christ re-enacts His Passion sacramentally in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. *As often as you shall eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord, until he comes* (1 Cor. 11, 26). Day after day Christ continues to suffer and to die in His Mystical Body. *What lacking of the sufferings of Christ I fill up in my flesh for his body, which is the Church* (Col. 1, 24). With these constant reminders before us, it should not be too difficult to relive the scenes of the Passion in a realistic and impressive way.

It is likewise easy to make our meditation on the Passion fruitful. All we need do is concentrate on the marvellous example of virtue which our Savior gives us in His sufferings. Without doubt, every lesson of perfection is found in full perfection there. And, for the sake of a refreshing variety, it would be good to consider, every few days, a different virtue of our suffering Savior. In this way we can better realize the whole purpose of our meditation on the Passion, which is, as Saint Peter of Alcantara says, the imitation of Christ leading to our transformation into His likeness.

Besides the letters of red in the book of the crucifix, we also find letters of black. These represent the shameful, sinful role which we have played in the drama of the Passion. Perhaps this part of the story can be recounted most effectively by means of a lovely old legend. One day a young man, named David, approached Saint Joseph and eagerly asked to be taught the carpenter's trade. After agreeing to help him, Saint Joseph inquired why he was so interested in becoming a carpenter. The man's simple reply was: "Maybe, if I become an expert carpenter, I shall be asked someday to make a throne for a king." David was an apt pupil, and learned quickly and well. Soon he was ready to return to his village and open his own shop there.

The years flew rapidly by. David was now an old man and a master craftsman. On one occasion, when he made his pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the solemn feast of the Passover, he found the holy city fairly bristling with excitement. He asked for an explanation, and was told that two thieves and a third man were about to be crucified on the hill of Calvary. The crosses for the thieves were already prepared, but that for the third man was not. David mentioned that he was skilled in wood-fashioning, and that he would be glad to make the third cross. Quickly and deftly he finished his task and delivered the cross to the proper authorities. Then he sought to find out who the third man was, for whom he had made the cross. He was informed that the man was Jesus of Nazareth. David

started at the name and wondered if he could possibly be the same Jesus he had known in the house of Joseph long ago.

Anxiously he questioned one after another and was soon convinced that it was the very same Jesus. David was horrified at the thought and asked the people what on earth Jesus had done to be judged guilty of death. An elderly man answered: "I was blind and He caused me to see. I know only the good that He did." And a woman spoke in like fashion: "One day I touched the hem of His garment and was healed. I, too, know only the good that He did."

David then hastened out to the hill of Calvary and stood before the cross of Jesus. Through tear-dimmed eyes he read its inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews." "Good God," he moaned within himself, "is this the way my dream is to come true? Is this the throne I longed to make for a king? The cruel irony of the whole situation overwhelmed David. The skill, which he had learned from Joseph, he had just now used to fashion the instrument of death for his old master's child! And sinking to his knees, he implored forgiveness for his deed, and pledged himself to do whatever the Crucified One would ask of him. Thus was fulfilled, in a way he could never have anticipated, the ambition of his heart. For the cross he had made was indeed a throne, a throne of the King of kings, Who at that very moment won the undying loyalty of another soul—the soul of a poor old carpenter!

I remarked before that this is only a legend, and yet I wonder . . . Is it rather the actual story of our own life? When we gaze upon the crucifix, can we not say with even more truth than did David, the carpenter: "We made the cross for Christ. We used the very talents and gifts He bestowed upon us to cut and trim and fashion the tree that was to be His deathbed. We were the ones who drove the nails through His sacred hands and feet."? And if we ask, "How could we ever do such a thing? What evil had Christ done to us that we should be anxious to punish Him?" must we not also acknowledge that all we know of the good that He did? Can we not recount an endless series of blessings, tokens of His love after another? In vain do we search for even the slightest justification of our unseemly conduct.

Such is the message of the letters of black in the book of the crucifix—the message of base ingratitude to our Savior. It is something of which we can only thoroughly ashamed. It is something which should cause us to cry out in words similar to those of Jeremias, the prophet: *Who will give water to*

head and a fountain of tears to my eyes, and I will weep day and night for my sins which have crucified my Lord (Jer. 9, 1).

Finally, we come to the pages in our book which are written in letters of gold. There can be no doubt about what they signify. They tell us of the strong, ardent, and boundless love of our Savior. No matter what divergent opinions men may have regarding Christ—and there have been many contradictory views—all are forced to agree on this one point, that His Heart was filled to overflowing with self-sacrificing love for us poor mortals. A single glance at the crucifix is enough to convince anyone of this truth. One particular prayer for the twelfth station of the Way of the Cross expresses it beautifully: "Behold Jesus crucified. Behold His wounds received for love of us. His whole appearance speaks of love. His head is bowed to kiss us. His arms are extended to embrace us. His heart is open to receive us. Oh, what love!"

Holy Scripture calls it a *very great love* (Eph. 2, 4). Yes, it is an excessive love. The wretched cave of Bethlehem would have been enough to prove His love, but Christ wanted bloody Calvary, too. *Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends* (Jo. 15, 13). One sigh from His sacred Heart would have sufficed to redeem us, but Christ chose to become *despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows who was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins* (Isa. 53, 3-5). Even human love—if it is true—never thinks it has done enough. What then must we say of infinite, divine love!

And a feature of this divine love which we dare not overlook is this, that it is something personal. Christ thought of every one of us individually as He suffered and died. Willingly, gladly, would He have borne all, even though you and I had been the only ones that needed redemption. Every one of us, therefore, can truthfully say with Saint Paul: *The Son of God loved men and gave himself up for me* (Gal. 2, 20). This personalized aspect of Christ's love gives it a particularly appealing character. It writes, as it were, a charming and touching conclusion to "the greatest love story ever told."

In this conference we suggested a few simple reflections on the crucifix by comparing it to a book in which are found three different kinds of lettering. There are letters of red—symbols of Christ's sufferings; letters of black—reminders of our ingratitude; and letters of gold—tokens of Christ's love.

In our meditations on the crucifix during this season of Lent, no doubt there will rise before our mind's eye almost spontaneously the vision of rugged

but beautiful Mount Alverno. On its lofty heights we shall spy the wasted figure of a brown-robed man, kneeling in prayer. He is without doubt one of the "most desperate and daring lovers" of the Crucified the world has ever known. With all the ardor of his soul he is begging his Savior for two extraordinary graces; first, that he might have in his heart, in as far as it is possible, the love for mankind which filled the Heart of Christ as He hung upon the cross and second, that he might experience in his flesh, in as far as he is capable, the intense suffering of his Lord's Passion. His fervent prayer is rewarded with the agonizing yet sweet embrace of the Crucified One. It lasts but one blissful moment. Francis can stand it no longer. But it is enough, for, when that moment is over, Francis finds his body stamped with the five-fold royal insignia of the cross. From then on he is known as the stigmatized Poverello of Assisi!

As that vision fades from view and our eyes become focussed once more on our crucifix, the thought strikes us that this crucifix can readily be for us our Mount Alverno. For, as often as we take it reverently into our hands, or piously press our lips to it, or cast a loving glance in its direction, we can pledge ourselves together with Saint Francis, to love and to suffer for Christ. We can offer our feet to carry us to the post of duty He has assigned to us; our hands to work for Him and to serve Him in others; and our heart to be faithful to all the demands of convent life. And we can do this with a consistency and a devotedness that will prove wearisome, that will call for sacrifice, that will really hurt. Thus, in a sense, we shall be wounded in our hands and feet and heart, and become, so to say, stigmatized men and women, living images, like our Father Francis, of the object of our love—the Crucified One!

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Unless a man prepareth a place for God within himself, he shall never find a place among the creatures of God.

Brother Giles

SAINT ANTHONY AND THE USE OF SCRIPTURE

The appropriateness of designating Saint Anthony of Padua a Doctor of the Church has been universally acclaimed. Though it has been a matter of centuries before the honor actually has materialized, none the less there has been the wisdom of the ages hovering around the gesture. Of all the possible titles descriptive of his vast learning and scholastic achievement, that of *Doctor Evangelicus* is particularly in accord with his personality, his temperament, his writings, his apostolate, and his spirituality. More than that, it focuses attention upon the use of Sacred Scriptures and emphatically demonstrates the primacy of the latter in Franciscan learning and experience.

The letter addressed by Saint Francis "to Brother Anthony, my bishop", commissioning him as the first lector within the Order of Friars Minor, is a document worthy of the Franciscan ideal. Recent literary criticism has restored its rightful validity as genuinely from the hand of Francis. The obedience thereof sent into the Franciscan study house of Bologna a professor and master remarkably competent for avoiding the pitfalls of extinguishing "the spirit of prayer and devotion". This was the friary upon which the Poverello had recently put a curse and there are those who feel that the arrangement of Saint Francis was not unlikely intended to counteract the academic program Peter of Scacia had in mind for the Friars studying there. Theology at this moment in the Middle Ages was in a state of being encroached upon by legal studies. Two inherent evils in the novel study programs of the day could threaten Franciscanism spiritually; economic security was possible in the practise of the juridical sciences, and worldly distractions all too readily available in manifold ways. This explanation sharpens our appreciation of the administrative wisdom of Saint Francis; it certainly extols the character and attributes of the assignment given the Wonder-worker.

When Anthony stepped into the classroom at Bologna, the many months of quiet solitude at Montepaolo had just passed. Prayer and contemplation exercised in that remote *retiro* was a perfect complement to the scholarly learning already acquired in the university halls of Coimbra. In so many ways, this experience of teaching the first Franciscan theologians would prove a culminating preparatory phase for his apostolate. For the student of theology there was but one manual, that of the Sacred Scriptures. The method of Anthony was to be the traditional one and any novelty he would bestow on it would well from his own fervor, piety, and intellectual acumen. Reverent emphasis would be given the opinions of the Fathers of the Church; the precedence of theology would

be consistently maintained and nothing extraneous to what was in line with the dignity of the sacred text would be tolerated. Though an interest in the natural sciences was beginning to be utilized as subsidiary towards expounding the inspired word, Anthony would be cautious in promoting it. Like his seraphic father Francis, he would concentrate upon what might be called the realities underlying the Old and New Testaments. Even more than Francis, had Anthony been impressed with the realization that there is a providential harmony and unity amongst all the books of the Bible by the very fact that each and every one of them has God as the author. For that reason we find him tapping them almost indiscriminately, whether his objective be doctrinal clarification or moral incentive. This very feature of his approach to the sacred writings crystallized in the name *Ark of the Testament*, which Gregory IX has honorably recorded in the Bull of Canonization, a tribute not only to the extensive knowledge of the Scriptures which his contemporaries credited to Anthony but also testimony to the incalculable treasures of his prodigious memory. While the volume of his writings is indeed relatively small and decidedly homiletic in character, they reveal an erudition that is comprehensive as far as the Scriptures are concerned.

Too often we are inclined to identify learning and wisdom with the books that crowd our libraries. Books are but products of minds. Knowledge is basic to a virtue and though its communicativeness is predominantly achieved through the written word, there are other means of enlightenment as intensive in the results. In this way Anthony is a singular Doctor in the Church. His is the learning that fired enthusiasm and envisioned truth as a living flame rather than the precious lustrous diamond that must be mined and chiseled and fashioned so that its brilliancy might prevail. Upon the death of Anthony there was universal and unanimous recognition of the greatness of his intellect. Any picture of him from those centuries close to him depict the Scriptures as his distinctive possession. Gradually, it is true, the faithful let their fervor lose itself in the attractiveness of his mystical union with the Infant Jesus. None the less, rarely are the Scriptures entirely eliminated from modern paintings and statues representing Anthony. The important fact is that holy writ remained the focal point in the matter. The core of his thought, of his preaching, of his writings and of his counsel, is the Scriptures.

A preacher leaves more than the written record of his sermons. If he has been anything of a success, he will have given his times a new spirit. This is exactly what Anthony accomplished. The Albigensian heresy was then threatening the souls and minds of men. Not the least of its errors was that of deny-

the Old Testament to be the word of God. Doubtless this accounts for the almost exaggerated use of the Old Testament in the sermons of Anthony as the only tactical left for one who set out to be a *Hammer of Heretics*. It is equally understandable why Anthony quotes the book of Isaias so frequently, whose lovely chapters not only enshrine and envision Christ prophetically but have all theunction and deep mysticism to fascinate a man and a saint like Anthony.

Among the varied methods of interpreting and expounding the sacred text Anthony preferred that technically known as the moral sense of Scripture. His explanations constantly utilized types, verses, expressions and adaptations suitable for inculcating the practise of virtue in daily life. The Book of books held for him secrets conducive to the proper regulation of human conduct. Some idea of his approach and its versatility can be gathered from the following passage on the degrees of perfection and the patterns he finds of them in the sacred writings.

"The state of perfection is threefold in character, namely, that of beginners, of those making progress, and finally of the perfect. Fortified as they are with freely given graces, beginners *eat the things that spring of themselves* (Is. 37: 30), as the Lord intimates in the prophecy of Osee, *I will love them freely* (Os. 14: 5). Of themselves they had been nothing and only the kindness and favor of God has enriched them. It is this thought that prompts the remark of blessed Bernard: 'Sometimes the disposition for pure prayer and the sweetness thereof is found lacking; yet it eventually appears, as it were, without seeking, without knocking, nay without asking, almost like unto a group of slaves, however rude, admitted to banquet with the children of the family. Grace comes unconsciously to a soul and despite its being only in the early stages of perfection an attraction for prayer is acquired such as is ordinarily reserved by way of reward for the perfect'. Similarly, those making progress can be likened to them that *in the second year eat fruits* (Is. 37: 30) of good works, as may be seen from the well-disposed will which, previously content with an affection for good, now effectively accomplishes good. By way of contrast the perfect are *in the third year* (Is. 37: 30), reaping the abundance of plenty in every possible way and quite as the Psalm tells us: *Thou shalt bless the crown* (namely, the life of the perfectly just) *of the year of thy goodness; and the hills shall be girded about with joy* (Ps. 64: 12).

"The state of beginners may be paralleled with those who should be celebrating the Pasch with the new dough of sincerity and truth (1 Cor. 5, 7-8) and

eating the Lamb with wild lettuce that in its bitterness is symbolic of their (Exod. 12: 8). Those making progress are people who *sit in the tabernacles of confidence* pointed out by Isaias (Is. 32: 13). As, in the Book of Numbers Balaam is said to have cried out, their tabernacles *are beautiful as woody valleys* (Num. 24, 5-6) wherein the lowliness of poverty offers them a protecting shield against the heat of worldliness so that *as watered gardens near the rivers*, grace will be poured into them (and replenish the parched soil of carnal concupiscence).

"Beginners should present their bodies *as a living sacrifice*, those making progress should present them as a holy sacrifice; the perfect as *pleasing to God* (Rom. 12: 8). In the Book of Leviticus you will find agreement upon the sacrifices where mention is made of three kinds of offerings. The first concerned cattle (Lev. 1: 2), the second, birds (Lev. 1: 14), while the third consisted *flour tempered with oil* (Lev. 2: 1) done in three ways, namely, either in an oven or in a frying-pan or on a gridiron (Lev. 2: 4-7). Beginners offer the first mentioned sacrifice, inasmuch as the sinner at the outset of his conversion should lay on the altar of his heart the sufferings of Christ, the scourgings, the mockery, the insults, the cross, the nails and the lance; thereupon he is expected to confess his guilt, acknowledge the single details minutely, accounting for their origin, the pleasure taken as well as the attachment given them; in the flow of his tears he should then cleanse away the filthiness of thought and deed. If he will have been so disposed and arranged everything in union with the Passion of Christ, when He is Himself the High Priest, the entire oblation will have the *fire of His love* descend upon it and consume all sin therein. The penitent will make of himself so completely an inflamed holocaust as to leave nothing of self therein, but rather transforming all for God, letting the sweet odor of Christ permeate everything round about and presenting your body as a living sacrifice, a victim of every sense of the word because wholly dead to sin, a living something because it will have the life of justice that the Apostle speaks of: *It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me* (Gal. 2: 20).

"Those making progress offer the second kind of oblation described in Leviticus, *the oblation of a holocaust of birds to the Lord* (Lev. 1: 14) inasmuch as the just man is indeed winged in virtue because of a chastity in him very much like that of turtle doves and young pigeons, whose cooing, which resembles the cry of penance that is to be heard on the paths leading from vice to virtue. Whatever will have become good intention in him, is certain to follow through into act. Progressing daily, ever more in virtue, the just man should himself set flame to the holy victim upon the altar and, like the saintly Father

of old, in a fire of holy devotion gained from imitation of the Passion of Our Lord be able to render *a holocaust and oblation of most sweet savor to the Lord* (Lev. 1: 17).

"The perfect amongst men offer the third type of oblation mentioned in the Book of Leviticus as that of *flour tempered with oil* (Lev. 2: 5). Cleansed as it is and perfectly white, flour really signifies the life of the perfect man with nothing in it of the coarse outer shell of worldly vanity, purified in chastity and anointed with the oil of piety (Lev. 2: 4). All this is prepared in the oven of poverty, fried in the pan of dire necessity, roasted on the gridiron of the Passion (Lev. 2, 4-7). Truly then does the victim become pleasing unto God".

These excerpts are drafted from the sermons of Anthony. No one will gainsay the richness of his learning nor minimize the splendid and profound appreciation he had of the word of God. These thoughts come from a full heart and from a tongue perseveringly miraculous, reminding us that the spirit of Anthony is that of Francis in its reverence for the holy Scriptures.

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"To sum up then, the Holy Spirit goes about cleansing souls in the following way, by enlightening the soul with the knowledge of truth, purging it of ignorance, enkindling it with the love of God, razing the evil of concupiscence, and invigorating the soul for the work of Perfection. In triple fashion does it act unto good: by suggesting that one think of what is good and therein dispel any slothfulness, by guiding the mind how to realize goodness in life and avoid any imprudence, and by driving the will to wanting to do good and eschew carelessness."

Alexander of Hales

AN EXPLANATION OF THE RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR (III)

The Second Article

The Brothers and Sisters, following the example of their Seraphic Father, promise obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope and the Roman Church. They are bound also to obey their canonically established Superiors in all things that pertain to the general and particular aim of their respective Institute.

Completing the first chapter on the "Sum and Substance of the Religious Life", this second article stresses a second point which the Third Order Regular Rule has in common with that of the First and Second Order—a chivalrous loyalty to the "Lord Pope" and the holy Roman Church. Two essential characteristics of the Franciscan movement were the return to the Gospel and complete submission to the Church. If the first differentiates the Franciscan order from other religious movements in the Church, it is the second that distinguishes the true followers of Francis from other back-to-the-gospel reforms that ended outside the Church. Francis, it is true, has been hailed by many non-Catholics as the "first Protestant". But then Christ himself has a great many part-time followers, who call themselves "Christian". And so it is not strange that the "Mirror of Christ" should also have a following among those who single out but one or the other of his admirable traits, for after all, he is "everybody's Saint Francis". And yet this, "Fourth Order of Saint Francis", as his non-Catholic following has been called, must close its eyes to one of his most childlike virtues—his loving obedience to his "mother, the Holy Roman Church" and to the Lord Pope, who was his "father".

History tells of various religious reform movements that waxed strong especially in France and northern Italy around the time of Francis. As the Church grew, its government inevitably became highly complex. Force of circumstance had not only thrust the temporal rule of the Papal States upon the Holy Father but in general the higher clergy belonged to the nobility and were temporal princes charged with the administration of feudal estates. Too great concern for political and financial matters, prevented them from devoting the proper care to the spiritual welfare of the common people. As the worldliness of the clergy increased, licentiousness grew among the people and began to infect all classes of society. Not only did this condition provide a fertile soil for the nefarious Manichean heresy imported from the East whose followers were known as the Albigensian sect, but it gave rise to many sincere reform movements advocat-

return to the simplicity, poverty and humility of the Gospel. Such, for instance, were the followers of Peter Waldus, the Poor Men of Lyons and of Lombardy. But the Waldensians and Humiliati soon came into conflict with the Church, and drifted into heresy.

Following the example of their Seraphic Father . . .

Guided by God, Francis avoided the mistakes of these reformers. As his little band of followers began to form, he instinctively led them to the feet of the Holy Father, for as he put it, "without the Pope's consent and approval, it seems to me nothing can be stable or good in matters of faith or religious life. Let us go then to our mother, the holy Roman Church. Let us make known to the Pope what our Lord has begun to do for us. We will then continue our work according to his will and his commands." (*Tres Socii*, ch. 1) No wonder that Pope Innocent III could say of Francis: "This is indeed the pious and holy man through whom the Church of God will be raised up and sustained." (*ibid.*) As Francis' early biographers go on to tell us, when Innocent had given his oral approval to Francis' rule, the holy Patriarch made his profession into the hands of the Pope himself, at the same time solemnly vowing obedience and reverence to the Holy Father and the Roman Church. According to feudal customs, individual knights and nobles did not pledge their loyalty directly to their king or ruling prince but to their immediate liege lord. He in turn pledged not only his personal loyalty to his prince, but that of all who had avowed their allegiance to him. That is why expositors of the rule could say that Francis not only pledged his personal fidelity to the Lord Pope, but vowed obedience and reverence in the name of all those who would call themselves his followers. Which is why he could write in his first rule for his friars: "Brother Francis, and whoever may be at the head of this religion, promises obedience and reverence to our Lord Pope Innocent and to his successors. And the other brothers shall be bound to obey Brother Francis and his successors."

But Francis could not forget that papal approval at the beginning of his order was not enough to keep it from drifting astray. He need only recall the example of the Waldensians, who had the approval of Alexander III. Consequently, he studded his rule with warnings lest anyone be taken into the order, or be allowed to preach, "contrary to the form and institution of the holy Roman Church." And "let all the brothers be Catholic and live and speak in a Catholic manner." As a final precaution, he petitioned the Holy Father for a special Cardinal Protector to be the "governor, protector and corrector of the fraternity" and commissioned his successors in holy obedience to do likewise. Why?

"So that always subject and submissive at the feet of the same holy Roman Church, and steadfast in the Catholic faith, we may observe the poverty and humility and the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as we have faithfully promised." (*Reg. bullata*, ch. 12) No wonder the liturgy for his feast day opens with the words: *Franciscus, vir catholicus, et totus apostolicus, Ecclesiae tenentem fidem Romanae docuit, presbyterosque monuit prae cunctis revereri*. Here indeed is the keynote of his life.

Promise obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope . . .

Not only did other religious orders follow the example of the Franciscans in adopting a Cardinal Protector so that it has become a general practice in our day to do so, but Francis' recognition of the Holy Father as the highest religious superior has found expression in the new code of Canon Law. "All religious are subject to the Pontiff as supreme superior and are obliged to obey him also for reason of their vow." (Can. 499) The reason lies in the fact that the promise of obedience made by a religious is a public vow, accepted by the legitimate superior in the name of the Church, and therefore in the name of the Holy Father. It is generally admitted, however, that a Franciscan religious has a greater obligation to obey and reverence the Pope than other religious have owing to the fact that this point is explicitly incorporated in the Rule. This does not mean that an act of disobedience to the Holy Father, if he were to command a religious under vow, would so differ in the case of a Franciscan as to become a numerically or specifically different sin.

Even in regard to the Pope, however, this vow of obedience is not unconditional. Like other religious superiors, he can command only such things as pertain to the primary or secondary aim of the Institute in virtue of the vow. In addition, of course, the Holy Father can command religious as he can the rest of the faithful in virtue of his universal jurisdictional power. Even though he commands something that could fall under the vow, the Pope is not presumed to be doing so unless he implicitly or explicitly expresses this fact.

And the Roman Church.

The Pope can delegate this power over religious to others, for instance to a delegate who acts as Visitor, or to the Roman Congregations. Ordinarily, however, only the Congregation for Religious has this power to command religious by reason of their vow. The rule adds "and to the Roman Church." This is primarily understood to refer to the College of Cardinals, who rule

the Church when the Holy See is vacant. And so far as the vow of obedience is concerned, they exclusively are meant.

But what of the obligation of reverence? Can anyone regard himself as a true follower of Francis without having something of that loving respect which the Poverello manifested towards the Church as a whole and in particular towards the members of the clergy? As he put it bluntly to his friars: "The Lord has called us for the help of his faithful people, of the clergy and prelates of the holy Roman Church. Hence, by all means in our power we should always love, honor and reverence them. For we are called Friars Minor that both in name and in deed we may set a constant example of humility to all. At the beginning of my conversion, the Lord placed his word in the mouth of the Bishop of Assisi that he might advise and confirm me in the service of Christ; for this and many other excellent things I honor and respect not only bishops but also poor priests, desiring to love and reverence them and to look upon them as my masters." (*Speculum perfectionis*, ch. 10)

They are also bound to obey their canonically established Superiors . . .

The Pope, the Sacred Congregation for Religious, and the Bishop—in the case of non-exempt religious who take a vow to obey him—are sometimes referred to as external superiors in contradistinction to the internal superiors, who are members of the Institute. The internal superiors of a given Institute include the religious chapter (collegiate authority) and the persons properly designated as superiors, both major and minor. The Superior General, Provincial Superiors, their Vicars, together with those who have the authority of a Provincial, for example, the Provincial Visitor, are considered major superiors. The local superior, on the contrary, is a minor superior.

"Canonically established" in this connection means simply that the superiors are appointed or elected in accord with the rules or canons of the Church and their respective Institute. Practically, the constitutions determine the procedure to be followed for the valid election or appointment of the various superiors.

External superiors can command a religious under the vow by reason of their jurisdictional power, whereas the internal superiors ordinarily enjoy only domestic power over their respective subjects. Jurisdictional power is a public power to make laws, set up courts of law, impose censures and vindictive penalties, etc. Domestic power is the type of authority a father of a family has over his children, the domestic servants, etc. Only in clerical institutes that are

exempt does the superior have, in addition to domestic power, true jurisdiction and this only within the limits determined by Canon Law and the rule and constitutions. Jurisdictional power, however, is never granted to women superiors, even though they have the power to give strict precepts or commands that bind under the vow of obedience.

Unless otherwise expressly determined by the constitutions, the power of command by reason of the vow is restricted to the Chapter, the major superior and the local superior, each within the limits of his respective office.

In things that pertain to the general and particular aim of their Institute.

As indicated above, religious do not vow to obey their superiors unconditionally but only within the limits determined by the rules and constitutions of their Institute. This is made explicit in the present Rule. The general aim of every religious order or congregation is the self-sanctification of its members by a life lived in accord with the religious vows, the rule and constitutions. The particular or secondary aim is the practice of certain corporal or spiritual works of mercy for which the respective Third Order Institute was organized. Such as, for instance, would be the education of children, care of the sick or orphan, missionary work, and the like.

Any external act that directly or indirectly tends to further these aims falls within the scope of the vow of obedience. Hence, the superior could command any point of divine or positive ecclesiastical law, or of the rule or constitutions under holy obedience. Practically, only such commands of a superior are excluded which are clearly against, above or beneath the rule and constitutions.

A command is said to be *against* the rule or constitutions, if it is opposed to any point that admits of no dispensation. The power of a superior to dispense is specified in the respective constitutions, and except for the case of clerical exempt religious whose superiors have jurisdictional power, dispensations are limited for the most part to minor points of discipline. A command is *beneath* the rule, if it serves no purpose or is utterly ridiculous. A command is *above* the rule or constitutions, if it enjoins something that lies beyond the general or particular aim of the Institute. Thus, for instance, while superiors may command the observance of any item of the rule or constitutions under the vow of obedience, they could not command the practice of heroic penance as a virtue since this is not the ordinary way of striving for perfection that a religious takes upon himself in joining an order or congregation. Likewise, if the exclusive secondary aim of a Third Order congregation is the education

of children or young women, a superior could not command a subject under the vow to undertake hospital work. The superior could, however, command the subject to take charge of the convent infirmary or care for the sick of the community, since this pertains to the normal administration of any religious Institute. Similarly, the internal sentiments or acts of a religious lie beyond the scope of the vow. Thus, a superior cannot command a subject under the vow to meditate or make an examination of conscience, though the subject's external presence in choir during the time of these exercises can be matter for the vow. It should be noted, however, that what is above the rule or constitutions can pertain to the perfection of the virtue of obedience. Thus, a subject who carries out a command while inwardly rebelling, would violate the virtue of obedience but not the vow.

Those superiors who have the authority to oblige their subjects under the vow are cautioned to use this power only rarely and as circumstances warrant. To oblige their subjects under mortal sin or to impose a serious obligation by reason of the vow, two things are required. First, the matter must be serious or grave; secondly, the superior must make known his intention to oblige under mortal sin by using such expressions as "I command you strictly", or "in virtue of the vow", or "in holy obedience", and the like. Otherwise, the presumption is that the obligation is not binding under serious sin, even in the case of a real precept or command. Such a precept or command, it should be noted, always binds by reason of the virtue of obedience and under venial sin at least. Such real precepts or commands should be distinguished from those cases where the superior merely expresses his or her will or wish to have something done, but does not intend to oblige the subject to anything more than the acceptance of correction or a penance for acting otherwise. Deliberate disobedience to such wishes, though not strictly a sin in itself, is always a positive imperfection. That is to say, it involves the neglect of a counsel of religious perfection, which if freely used will make for progress in the virtues proper to the religious state. Usually, such deliberate disregard for a superior's wish involves at least venial sin on some other count, as for instance, because of scandal given, or because the motive prompting the disobedience is sinful, for example, pride, sloth, hatred, and the like.

Where an act of disobedience springs from formal contempt, no matter how insignificant or trivial the matter, the sin is always serious. Formal contempt consists in despising or rejecting authority as such. It is to be distinguished from so-called "virtual contempt" which is based upon a dislike of the person, rather than the authority, of the superior. Such antipathy towards the person of the

superior, however, if not curbed, may lead to serious infractions of obedience and to grave scandal.

Superiors in doubt whether they can command a certain point by reason of the vow should refrain from giving such a command, since the presumption is in favor of the subject. But if it is the inferior who is in doubt whether the superior can legitimately command a certain thing, the inferior is obliged to obey because the presumption is in favor of the legitimacy of the command.

No true Franciscan, however, will attempt to limit his obedience only to such matters as are strictly obligatory. Striving for evangelical perfection, he will recall the words of Francis: "The Lord says in the Gospel: he that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be a disciple and he that will save his life shall lose it. That man leaves all he possesses and loses his body and his soul who abandons himself wholly to obedience in the hands of his superior." Such a religious will indeed have the blessing of obedience on his every word or action for as the Poverello goes on to say: "Whatever he does or says—provided he himself knows that what he does is good and not contrary to the superior's will—is true obedience." (*Admonitions*, n. 3)

(to be continued)

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Allan Wolter, O. F. M.



Let us make good use of time. Our steps should be in conformity with the vocation to which God has called us. Let us work out our salvation with fear and trembling; with burning love and zeal. Let us promote the salvation of our brethren and neighbors. And may all the glory be to Our Great God.

Junipero Serra, O. F. M.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

According to Saint Bonaventure

There are various reasons why a Franciscan should curb his natural desire for precious possessions. The basic reason, however, is that this desire springs from evil sources: pride and avarice, sensuality and aestheticism. If uncontrolled, it will inevitably lead a religious to spiritual disaster. Because Saint Francis loved poverty so ardently, and because he saw so clearly the dangers inherent in man's desire for precious things, he insisted that his followers be completely detached from all possessions in both the physical and spiritual order. He even sought to cleanse his speech from the "mine and thine"—the cold word, as Saint Paul calls it—of the worldling. The only transgression that brought a curse from the gentle and tolerant Francis was the transgression against his beloved Lady Poverty. Other lapses he punished with a gentle hand; but when certain friars forgot the dignity and excellence of poverty and began to covet precious things, his hand fell heavily upon them. Because this natural love for precious possessions is so deeply rooted in us, and because in our fallen state it easily leads to grave evils diametrically opposed to the Franciscan ideal, Saint Bonaventure urges that we ask ourselves:

Do I Yield to a Fastidious Desire to Possess Precious Things?

Every branch of the Franciscan family has its own regulations concerning the vow of poverty. These regulations, if slowly meditated upon, offer an excellent guide for our personal examen. And even though the various Franciscan institutes may have a different interpretation of the vow of poverty, the spirit remains the same for all. Logically, then, we should first ask ourselves whether we really know what the spirit of Franciscan poverty is and what it requires of us. Do I study the life and writings of our Seraphic Father so as to understand the kind of poverty he expects of his children? Do I realize that God and the world also expect me to love poverty as Francis did? Is poverty really a lofty and inspiring ideal for me, or do I accept it stoically and unenthusiastically as one of the burdens I assumed upon entering the religious state? Am I convinced that I am failing in my obligation if I accept poverty simply because I entered what happened to be a Franciscan congregation, and make no effort through reading, meditation, and prayer to fill my soul with the true spirit of Franciscan detachment?

To determine whether this spirit is in us, some of the following questions may be helpful: Do I habitually and deliberately violate the restrictions imposed by poverty? Do I cut corners on the vow? on the virtue? If I had my choice, would

I prefer to live according to the standards of the rich rather than of the poor? I envy religious whose Rule does not impose the poverty to which I am bound? Am I ashamed to use things that reflect the poverty of my state? Do I try ways devious or direct, to conceal my poverty from the eyes of the world? For example, do I try to borrow a friend's new Packard because the convent's year-old and somewhat battered Plymouth is hardly suitable for my use? When I take a friend of mine to dinner, do I spend with the easy lavishness of a millionaire instead of the moderation of a religious who really lives on the pittance of the poor? A Franciscan must never forget his obligation to love poverty and to make that love shine forth in every circumstance of his life. Let us keep in mind, however, that imperfection lies not in admiring the beautiful and precious and the luxurious things of the world, but in desiring to have them either for their own sake or for the sake of the prestige connected with possessing them.

Once we have determined our real disposition toward poverty in general, we may go on to examine ourselves more in detail. First, let us look into our attitude toward things possessed by our institute. It goes without saying that every religious should have both the material and spiritual welfare of his community at heart, and should take a just pride in its achievements. But to strive incessantly to secure precious objects for our Order or to add to its material resources or to win for it worldly fame and honor is to miss the point of Franciscan renunciation. We may ask, then: Do I seek to obtain rare and precious gifts for my institute—statues, for example, curios, paintings, vases, rugs, table services, and similar objects? Do I try to secure such things illicitly, and against the will of my superiors? Do I perhaps commit the ultimate indecency of snaring benefactors into giving us more, or buying articles more costly, than originally agreed upon? Do I insist on their buying the most expensive when the less expensive would serve the purpose as well? Am I aware that seculars—even the most worldly-minded—expect the children of the Poverello to live in houses reflecting at least something of the poverty of their father? Love for Christ in the Blessed Sacrament demands that our churches and chapels be truly beautiful and decently equipped, but the Franciscan ideal demands the beauty of simplicity and austerity, not the beauty of a museum of fine arts. Likewise, respect for guests requires that we receive them in comfortable and suitably furnished rooms, that we offer them well-prepared and properly served food; but we need not try to rival the elegance of a metropolitan hotel.

What is my attitude toward expensive hobbies? It is becoming a general

unprecedented point that a hobby can contribute much to the mental health of a religious, provided it is not carried to the extreme. Here again the norm must always be set by Franciscan poverty and detachment. It would be an odd sight, indeed, to find a friar a noted collector of Ming pottery or ancient Armenian coins. To be an authority, a connoisseur, is entirely commendable; but the collector of rare and precious objects is usually a man of wealth, and a Franciscan can never be that, nor try to be, nor pretend to be. Let us, then, ask ourselves: Are my hobbies a source of unnecessary expense to the community? Are they of any value, or do they serve merely to keep my mind occupied? Are they in harmony with my Franciscan vocation? If I am building collections of genuine artistic or scientific value for the benefit of my institute, do I keep my heart detached both from the objects themselves and from the prestige of being a recognized collector? As we have already pointed out, to strive within reason for the material welfare of our community is a matter of obligation, and if our institute is engaged in the works of education, we are certainly obliged to help keep it as well equipped as possible. Since scientific and artistic collections are a part of our educational equipment, there can be no conflict between them and our vow of poverty. However, once the heart becomes attached to these things, once collecting becomes an obsession, there is danger not only of violating the spirit but even the vow of poverty. What shall we say of the religious who collected relics with such zeal that he stole—or, more technically, appropriated—relics belonging to his confreres to add to his own collection? Here again we must make a distinction: the danger lies not so much in the intrinsic value of the objects we desire to possess, but in the disposition itself—the pride of possession—that is so contrary to the very essence of Christian perfection.

The desire for precious things need not be limited to material or physical objects; it may—and with religious very frequently does—extend into the spiritual. A true Franciscan is not only poor in spirit, he is virtually a beggar in the spirit. In utter humility he stretches out his hands to God, pleading only for the graces he needs to sanctify his soul and thereby to glorify his Creator. For extraordinary gifts of the spirit—visions, ecstasies, raptures—he has admiration but never desire. On this point, then, we may ask: Do I yearn for extraordinary graces? Am I dissatisfied with the state of my soul because my mediocrity displeases God, or because it displeases my self-love and debars me from the esteem I covet? Am I envious or jealous of my confreres who seem to be spiritually richer than I? Do I, for the purpose of winning the admiration of others, pretend to possess gifts of soul that in reality I do not have?

Intellectual gifts may also be an object of illicit desire. Certainly a religious and especially a priest, should make every effort to cultivate the talents God has given him. The great saints of our Order have proved beyond question that learning and the Franciscan spirit are not mutually exclusive. But to desire talents above and beyond those that are ours, to covet academic titles and honors is to fall into a dangerous pit. We shall indeed have to render an account for talents deliberately abused or neglected; but we shall never be held responsible for talents we did not possess, nor for talents we may have had but which our superiors did not see fit to have developed. Here, then, let us ask ourselves: Do I attach undue importance to intellectual gifts? Do I brag of the accomplishments of confreres and of my Order in general, and belittle the achievements of others outside the family? Do I make a display of my own personal ability? Do I publicize my knowledge or learning? habitually call attention to my academic achievements, my degrees, my reputation as a scholar? If I do not possess these things, do I covet them—secretly or openly? Do I nag my superiors into allowing me to acquire degrees or professional training for which I may not even be qualified? Am I perhaps so far gone that I pretend to scholarship without a solid foundation? If I do happen to possess some academic or professional training, do I permit myself the ultimate foolishness of feeling superior to those who do not? Or, if the situation is reversed, do I make a point of ridiculing or sneering at those who are better educated than I? Sour grapes curdle the Franciscan spirit.

On a still lower plane are certain exterior qualities we are prone to desire: personal attractiveness and charm, influential family and friends, distinguished social position, culture, background, reputation. It is related of Saint Bonaventure—as in fact of most of the Franciscan saints—that he was a man of attractive presence and fine culture. It is quite in the Franciscan tradition to be as attractive as possible; but not to *enjoy* the doubtful sweetness of being loved by men. Our purpose must be that of Saint Paul—to become all things to all men and so lead them to Christ. If we would but pause to analyze the tremendous attractiveness of Saint Francis—an attractiveness that has but grown stronger with the passing of the centuries—we would see that it has its source in his crystalline simplicity, his candor, his wholly realistic acceptance of what he was in the eyes of God. With this in mind, then, let us look into our own soul. Do I accept myself as I am, without attempting to claim qualities I do not possess? Do I give rein to a desire to be physically attractive, and do I make desperate and perhaps futile efforts to become so? If God has endowed me with physical beauty, do I take vain and conceited pleasure in the fact? Do I strive to cultivate an arrested

personality? If so, why? Let us be convinced that the only kind of charm a religious should cultivate, the only kind that can win souls to God, is the charm of humility, simplicity, and reality—in other words, the charm of genuine sanctity.

It may be well, also, to examine our attitude toward family and friends. It is one of the most common weaknesses of the foolish human heart to yearn for the prestige of birth. Few of us, in this country at least, can, or even wish to, boast of noble blood; but we have our own aristocracy of wealth and power and descent, and we take pride in it. God forbid that any religious should be ashamed of family or friends. To brag about them, however, to bask in the borrowed light of their prominence, is vainglory indeed. Let us examine ourselves honestly on some of the following points: Do I take vain pride in my relatives and friends—in their wealth, influence, social position? Am I a snob? If my family and associates afford me little matter for bragging, do I try to surround them with an imaginary glamour, or build them up to an importance they do not actually possess? Do I take pains to conceal my humble origin? Am I ashamed of my nationality? Or, on the contrary, do I bore others by boasting about it? Patriotism is a virtue; chauvinism is not. What about my friends? Do I desire the friendship of distinguished persons? Do I perhaps render myself a little ridiculous in my efforts to secure such friendships? The Franciscan who makes a grand display of important connections—real or imaginary—is a sad anomaly. We would do well to remember the tragic fate of Brother Elias—the proud friend of pope and emperor, and the expendable victim of their political quarrels.

If the Franciscan who makes a display of family and friends is offensive, not less so is he who makes a display of his fine manners and cultivated speech—acquired, no doubt, after entering religion. Such affection is downright disgusting. The first followers of Saint Francis were models of courtesy and chivalry, but their courtesy was an overflow of charity—it was genuine and realistic, and its source was in poverty of spirit. Consequently they were as much at home in the palaces of cardinals and kings as in the hovels of lepers. If they had a preference, it was for the poor and lowly. So should it be with us.

In the last analysis, there can be but one object of our desire, but one good we may strive to possess: the God Who made us for Himself. Or, as Saint Francis wrote to his brethren: "Do not keep anything for yourself, that He, who entirely gave Himself to you, may entirely accept you".

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FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

SAINT CLARE OF ASSISI, Nesta de Robeck. Milwaukee: the Bruce Publishing Company, 1951. Pp. 242, with 8 illustrations. \$3.50.

A visit to Assisi in 1951 so impressed Nesta de Robeck that she became an ardent admirer of Saint Francis and Saint Clare and five years later entered the Catholic Church and the Third Order. **SAINT CLARE OF ASSISI**, her first book, has been inspired not only by her personal devotion to Saint Clare but especially by her conviction that only through prayer and penance—of which Clare gave such glorious examples—can our troubled world find peace.

Miss de Robeck's treatment of the life of the Lady Clare is interesting, readable, and factual. She makes no attempt to fictionalize or dramatize, and only occasionally does she interpret or suggest. Obviously a labor of love, the book reflects the author's warm sympathy with the Franciscan ideal as well as her intimate knowledge of early Franciscan history. However, it presents nothing new either by way of fact or by way of analysis and interpretation; it simply restates in a brief and simple manner the generally-known events connected with Clare's life. As an introduction to the subject, the book is valuable; but to anyone already familiar with the life of Saint Clare it will seem rather thin and superficial.

Perhaps the author meant the work to be merely introductory, for she has provided a good bibliography for those who wish to read more extensively, and she has also included in five interesting appendices "The Office of the Passion," "The Rule of Saint Clare," "The Testament of Saint Clare," "The Cause of Canonization," and "The Bull of Canonization."

It is to be hoped that **SAINT CLARE OF ASSISI** will be followed by more substantial and penetrating contributions from Miss de Robeck.

DE SPIRITUALITATE FRANCISCANA, P. Vitus a Bussum, O. F. M. Cap. Romae: apud Administrationem Analectorum Ordinis. 1949. Pp. 321.

In **DE SPIRITUALITATE FRANCISCANA**, father Vitus has selected for discussion the basic and more exclusively characteristic qualities of Franciscan spirituality. The first and largest section of the book is devoted

to a treatment of Christocentrism—particular as it is exemplified in the life of Saint Francis and in the writings of Bonaventure and Scotus, and in general as it has appeared in the traditional practice of the Order. The typically Franciscan virtues—reverence toward all creatures, simplicity, the evangelical life, seraphic love—are discussed extensively but by no means exhaustively. The second part of the book is devoted to the apostolic life and related subjects—regular discipline, spirit of prayer, study. Father Vitus has reserved the latter part of his book for a discussion of the Capuchin vocation as distinguished from the Franciscan in general. While this section is well done, its interest for any but Capuchins will perhaps be limited to the historical aspects of the subjects presented.

On the whole, Father Vitus has produced a work of considerable value for those who wish to study the nature of traditional Franciscan spirituality. He has clearly synthesized the practice and doctrine of the great saints and scholars of the Franciscan Order, and has indicated the lines to be followed for further study. If at times his treatment becomes somewhat labored, it is never confused; and his style is always simple and direct.

It is difficult, however, to decide whether or not the book should have been written in Latin. As a rule, those who profit most from studies of this type are either not equipped to handle Latin or are not enthusiastic about making the effort. On the other hand, those who have no objection to Latin are usually already familiar with the sources upon which such studies are based. Since Father Vitus' approach is factual rather than interpretive, and since he presents no hitherto unknown material nor solves any disputed problems, his work holds little interest for specialists. It would seem that by writing in Latin he has definitely cut himself off from the very readers who would benefit most from his work and most appreciate it. Of course, it is only fair to add that the author intended his book primarily for the use of clerical students, and for this use it is admirably adapted.

There is a good bibliography, an index, and a table of contents. The typography is excellent.

OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

Faith

Scarcely a day goes by without some announcement of another startling advance in the field of medicine. It may be a novel technique that has been developed, or the discovery of a new wonder drug; or maybe it's the latest miracle of surgery. Among the last mentioned—miracles of surgery—there is one, performed for the first time a little over a decade ago, which has always fascinated me. It is the so-called transplanting of an eye, or portion of an eye, from one human being to another, with the result that the latter, who had been blind before, is now able to see. I think this operation is a most apt illustration of what took place in us at the time of our baptism.

At that solemn moment, God's eye, so to say, was given to us by means of the virtue of faith. And through that eye of God we are able to see in a supernatural manner, able to take the divine view of things. We can see things we never dreamed of before; we can see more clearly; we can see more accurately. This marvelous gift of faith plays such an all-important role in our life, that we shall do well to examine it a little more closely.

The first thing to be noted about faith is its absolute necessity for a truly spiritual life. Holy Scripture emphasizes this fact very pointedly by stating: *He who is just lives by faith* (Rom. 1, 17). In other words, if we wish to be holy, virtuous, God-pleasing, we must live a life of faith. Merely making acts of faith now and then will not suffice. Our entire life must be permeated by faith. Everything, just everything, in our life must be viewed, evaluated, accepted or rejected according to the standard of faith, if that life is to have its full worth.

This necessity of faith has a universal application. It holds for anyone's life. But it applies with double force to us religious. Our life must be pre-eminently a life of faith, or it doesn't make sense. Without intending to lessen in the slightest degree the greatness of the religious life, we must admit that it does restrict some very basic and some very strong urges of our human nature, namely, the urge to possess, to establish a home, and to be independent. And, unless we are able, with the help of faith, to sublimate these restrictions into positive and attractive values, our religious life is bound to become painfully boring. Then, too, there are so many things in the religious life which are hard to explain. We cannot see the reasons for them with the eye of our unaided mind. We need a more penetrating eye, the eye of faith. For instance: we are assigned to some work which is apparently useless, or for which we are plainly unprepared; or, at