

## THE CONTEMPLATIVE

There is no space for thunder here,  
No poppies from the old, luxuriant lips  
Spring up in crimson words and toss the stars  
Lightly around the dark, familiar skies.

We will not speak of mountains or of darkness,  
Nor even mention silver mists. The Name  
That bends the whole broad arc of worlds is only  
And all I know. We will not talk of prayer.

Go, put away the tales of almost-seeing  
(Sternier than legend!), whisper them away.  
Too shattered now for breaking, I come singing  
Hoarse little scraps of melodies You know,

Stumbling down a cinder path and clutching  
Pathetic, wind-burnt flowers of my love,  
My eyelids shuttering shame and peace past dreaming,  
Your mercy pouring down my cheeks like fire.

*Clare Monastery of  
Lady of Guadalupe,  
Socorro, New Mexico*

*Sr. Mary Francis, P. C.*

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

## Work

A few years ago, quite accidentally, I came across a little book by John Drabek, entitled *A Hymn to Work*. It contains some strikingly inspiring variations about work which I should like to adapt to the religious life conference. After all, work forms a great part of our daily life. And to a very large extent, depends our perfection, and therefore our happiness on earth, and our reward later on in heaven. Hence, it will be of great profit to spend a few moments of reflection on this subject.

The first thing to remember about our daily work is that it is part and parcel of human existence. *Man is born to labor, and the bird to fly* (Job 5, 7). This is true of human beings in general, how much more is it true of us religious. Without fear of contradiction, we can say that the Rule of every Religious Community imposes on its members a strict obligation to work diligently and faithfully. The religious life is not a sinecure to be enjoyed, but a cross to be borne. We become religious, not to take things easy, but to work hard, to burn ourselves out in the service of God. If we fail to measure up to this requirement of the religious life, we do not even earn the right to partake of the alms and charity of the faithful. *If any man will not work, neither shall he eat* (2 Thess. 3, 10). Apart from the prescribed recreations, therefore, we must keep ourselves busy with work assigned to us by obedience. It is true, not all work is equally hard, but all can and must keep themselves usefully occupied according to his capabilities, his strength, and his age.

But work is much more than a necessity for us. It is above all a blessing, the value of which we do not meditate upon enough. Its worth becomes immediately evident when we consider it in relation to God, to our fellow-workers, and to ourselves.

*In relation to God*, our work constitutes a distinct privilege for us, a source of praise to Him. Just to be able to work at all is something to be grateful for. Is not God Himself the Great Worker of all times? If we open the Bible, we shall find on its very first pages how God brought into being heaven and earth, and adorned them with the vast array of creatures whose beauty, diversity, and order amaze us. And did not Christ proclaim to the Jews: *My Father works until now, and I work?* (Jo. 5, 17). Therefore, when we apply ourselves to our work, we are imitating the Divine Worker, and that imitation is our glory.

And besides giving us a chance to imitate God, work likewise makes it possible for us to become God's collaborators. God has purposely left His work unfinished so that we might have the joy of working with Him and helping Him to perfect His creation. Think of all the necessary and useful things which man has produced down through the centuries. God did not need men to make these things, but that is the way He wanted it. In a very true sense we can say that these things would never have come into being without us. It's like the old violin maker who, fondly caressing one of his finished masterpieces, addressed thus: "God could never have made you had it not been for me." At first blush, that statement seems blasphemous. But, of course, its meaning is not that God was powerless to make that violin, but that he was unwilling to do so except by means of the skill of the craftsman. God's plan is to place in creation unlimited potentialities and to give us astounding abilities. Then He invites us to think about those potentialities and to work on them until, one by one, they begin to come into existence and to take the shape and form that will be of service to us. In this way, He accords us the sublime privilege of being His fellow workers in the completion of creation. He wants us to be more than mere spectators in the world; we are to be contributors to its splendor and usefulness by our work. Our contributions may be varied—anything from cooking a meal and making a habit to enlightening a mind and training a character. It makes no difference. Each represents the exercise of our God-given power to add a finishing touch in one way or another to the world around us; each makes us, in some slight degree, co-creators with God. What a gracious gift from God is this power to work. How like unto God it makes us.

When we view work in this light, it is easy to see how wrong we are when we fret about the type of work we may be asked to do. Every task, even the seemingly most insignificant one, brings with it the grand privilege, just described, of being God's collaborators. The Saints were quick to understand this, and that is why their ranks include slaves, shepherds, and common laborers as well as statesmen, brilliant educators, and kings. Hence, to feel elated because our work brings us into the limelight and wins for us the admiration of men, or to feel dejected because our work is hidden and unknown is to miss the point completely. The essential thing is to possess "the grace of working", as our Father Francis so discerningly styles it. The purely accidental part is to be scrubbing floors, or tilling the soil, or educating youth, or ruling a convent. The distinction between lowly and exalted forms of work, in so far as it implies lesser or greater worth, certainly never originated in heaven. For the Son of God Himself was engaged in both types, and who would dare to say that His work in the

carpenter shop was less acceptable to His Heavenly Father than was preaching of the kingdom of God? No, such a distinction is a survival of times when certain kinds of work were considered beneath the dignity of man. It is a distinction that bespeaks attachment to one's personal gratification and satisfaction. In a drama of the Passion some years ago, a character was cast who could imitate the crowing of a rooster when Peter denied his Master. The actor of the cast side-stepped this role. It was too insignificant for them; they wanted to be out on the stage where everyone could see them. One humble soul, however, volunteered to take the part and made such a good job of it that, when the actor was taking their curtain calls, he received the most enthusiastic acclaim from a part of the audience. And who knows—perhaps heaven's heartiest applause goes to the soul doing a so-called lowly task in some obscure corner rather than to one doing brilliant things in the eyes of the world.

Work, however, not only constitutes one of our highest privileges, but it also offers us a wonderful opportunity of fulfilling the great purpose of our creation, namely, glorifying God. Think of the rubrics and ceremonies connected with some sacred church functions—the folded hands, the bows, the genuflection and the like. They are not something extraneous to the function itself but add their help to make it sacred. They are prayers in action. It can be the very same in our daily work. If we take the viewpoint of faith and are convinced that our daily tasks form an integral part of our religious life, of our service to God, then our every action takes on the character of a sacred rite and ceremony and assumes the nature of an inner elevation of our mind and heart to God, which is nothing else but prayer. And thus is fulfilled the behest of Holy Scripture: *Whatever you do in word or work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, and give thanks to God the Father through Him* (Col. 3, 17). Hence, the statement of Saint Augustine: "Thou dost give praise when thou workest."

Let us recall to our minds the builders of the great medieval cathedrals. How conscious they were at all times that their labors were a sacred offering. They were working for God first and foremost. Every detail of that work, therefore, had to be perfect, whether it would be in full display on the elaborate facade, or whether it would be hidden from view in some remote corner. The best was not good enough for their Lord. Perhaps those men did not utter a great number of prayers in so many words while they toiled away, but the sound of their hammers and chisels echoed the sentiments of their hearts, and was wafted up to the throne of God in a sweet harmony of praise. And such a result will be the result of our work. No matter how ordinary may be the task

form, provided we do them in the spirit of devotion, provided we offer them cheerfully and freely to God, and accomplish them for Him to the best of our ability, they are, without doubt, a beautiful hymn of praise in His honor.

Next, with regard to our fellow men, work becomes an expression of our love for them. Saint John, the Apostle of love, tells us: *My dear children, let us love one another in deed, not in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and in truth* (I Jo. 3, 18). There is perhaps no surer nor more practical way of observing this exhortation than by working for others. What is it that endears a mother to her children? Is it not the many steps she takes for them, the countless ways in which she serves them? The toilworn hands of a devoted mother tell better than words could ever do how much she loves her children. For love, genuine love, entails the gift of oneself. But when we work for others we are offering to them our strength, our time, our attention, our convenience, our talents; in a word, our very selves.

Another way to view this truth is to look upon our work as the actual performance of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. From this angle, we can see that preparing the meals is nothing else than feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty; that teaching is instructing the ignorant and counseling the doubtful; that caring for the house is in reality giving a home to the homeless; that being infirmarians gives us a chance to visit the sick and comfort the sorrowful. And thus our work affords us a golden opportunity of showing that love which Christ Himself stated would be the factor deciding our eternal fate on the day of judgment.

Moreover, when we work conscientiously for others it is an indication of our high regard for them. Why go to all that trouble, why take such pains, why sacrifice ourselves to such an extent unless we consider the ones for whom we are working worth all the effort? Indeed, to be willing to work for others is to pay them a gracious compliment. For it means that we realize their worth, that we recognize them, according to the teaching on the Mystical Body, to be other Christs, for whom no sacrifice is too great, no task is too exacting. What a powerful motivation is contained in that thought for doing our work cheerfully and faithfully.

Finally, when we consider work in its bearing on our own lives, we discover that it is both a mold and a mirror of our character. How does work serve to mold our characters? Every job that we are given to do brings with it a definite challenge insofar as it demands energy, patience, careful attention, resourceful-

ness, and perseverance. If we measure up to that challenge by manifesting the qualities just mentioned, we not only do something splendid in the task performed but the task also does something splendid to us. It deepens our maturity, increases our sense of responsibility, thereby making us more complete men and women. Therefore, each piece of work well done means a further growth of character. As one writer puts it: "If the work you do at your little job is the best you can, whenever it grows to be a bigger job, it will find you ready for it." And that is precisely the meaning of our Lord's words: *He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is greater* (Lk. 16, 10).

But if work, because of its self-disciplinary quality, can help us to manifest a good character, it can also, by the same token, be a very revealing mirror of our character. To find out what kind of men and women we are, all we need to do is examine the kind of work we consistently turn out. Is it neat or slovenly? Is it performed enthusiastically or half-heartedly? Is it precise or haphazard? The answers to these questions will, relentlessly, tell the story of our character. Towards the end of the last century, a secular priest, who had been prominent in church circles, applied for admission into the Franciscan Order. When he entered the novitiate, no exceptions were made in his regard, and the good character expected none. One day a former associate of his was surprised to see him in the novitiate corridor, and made the remark: "Why, Father, do you do such work? Don't you consider that beneath your dignity?" The Reverend Novice replied: "No, not at all. But if I did not do this work well, I would consider that beneath my dignity." There was a man who had the right kind of work, who saw in it an accurate index of character. His answer points to the ideal attitude which we should always take towards our daily tasks.

This conference had as its theme our daily work. We saw, first of all, that such work is a necessity for us. And then we considered how we can manifest a beautiful virtue out of this necessity by bearing in mind the advantages that our work offers to us with regard to God, our neighbor, and ourselves. The constant endeavor is to make the most of these advantages, then our work will be an endless source of blessing to us. Even in this life it will fill our souls with an abiding peace and contentment that will make the cross of work seem light and sweet. And as to the next life, heaven—well, let us just remember the incident related in the life of our holy Father Francis. When he had turned his back on the world and had begun to serve God exclusively, he worked very hard in repairing neglected and dilapidated churches. Many of his former friends, seeing the change that had taken place in him, thought him foolish and ridiculous.

Among the revilers was Saint Francis's own brother, Angelo. One morning, when he saw Francis kneeling in prayer, he said to his companion, in a mocking tone, "Go and ask Francis to sell you a penny's worth of sweat." Francis mildly answered: "You're too late, my dear brother; I have already sold it at a good price to my Lord and Savior." What a consolation there is for us in these words! We, too have—so to say—made a bargain with God. We promise to do our work faithfully during the short span of this life, and God promises to give us in return everlasting bliss in heaven. *Behold, I come quickly, He says, and my reward is with me, to render to each one according to his works* (Apoc. 22, 12). In very truth, we have sold our efforts, our fatigue, our sweat for a very good price!

Westmont, Illinois

Fr. Herman Doerr, O. F. M.



To no one has the duty been given of judging the secrets of the human heart; the Apostle says to *pass no judgment before the time until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the things hidden in darkness and make manifest the counsels of hearts*. Therefore, never devote yourself to judging or condemning others, but whenever you see something happening that causes you displeasure, first of all, before you judge the doer, look to yourself whether you may find in yourself anything reprehensible; if you do, then condemn yourself for that concerning which you judge another, and say with the Prophet: *I am he that have sinned, I have done wickedly*.

Saint Bonaventure

SAINT COLETTE OF CORBIE (I)

Though Saint Colette was a personage of renown in the fourteenth century in which she lived, to-day she is little known beyond her native France, Belgium where her holy relics were for a time enshrined after her death in the city of Ghent. She was a contemporary of the great Saint Vincent Ferrer, the lowly Maid of Orleans, Saint Jeanne d'Arc. One wonders whether these two saints ever met in those dark and troublous days of the Church and of France. If they did, nothing beyond legend is known of it. But certainly they had much in common in the interest of the Church for which they labored, suffered and died. Saint Colette was especially known to the ecclesiastical rulers, and to the kings and nobles of France, who often sought her advice. Yet, her life's work, the greatest Orders in the Church, like the Order itself, remained hidden and unknown.

The life of Saint Colette, who was born in January 1381, spans the most unfortunate days of the Great Western Schism, when the seamless robe of Christ was being rent asunder by unworthy, ambitious, power-mad ecclesiastics. Perhaps never did the gates of hell threaten more fiercely to prevail upon the Church, and perhaps never did that Church prove itself so manifestly un-divine as in those days when destruction threatened, not from without by a persecuting tyrant, but from within by her own faithless children.

Saint Colette's birth of an hitherto childless mother, then over sixty years of age, was considered the miraculous fruit of her parents' prayers to Saint Nicholas, patron of children. Accordingly she was baptised Nicolette, which was later shortened to "Colette." She was reared in that staunch love of God and the Church, which has been characteristic of so many of the children of France, the Eldest Daughter of the Church. After the death of her aged mother and while she was still in her early youth, Colette wished to consecrate herself to God in one of the cloisters of the Poor Clares in France. But there, the ravages of the Schism had left their mark. The houses of the Poor Clares had relaxed, the Rule a mere ornament. In order to find in solitude and self-abandonment that spirit of prayer for which her soul longed, and which the religious life of her day could not offer her, she became a recluse in her native town of Corbie. A very large and wealthy Benedictine abbey flourished there and the Benedictine nuns undertook her guidance and ministered to her spiritual needs. Now, at the seclusion she had chosen, she found the union with God for which she had longed. She would seek nothing else than its perfection, and by prayer

she would offer herself day and night as a victim for the crying needs of the Church.

However, in her seclusion the spirit of God inspired her, urging her to do other work for which she felt neither the ability nor the desire. That she should go forth and reform the Order of Saint Clare in which she had once labored to find her life's work, was a task she felt she could not accomplish. Again and again she resisted the signs God gave her of His will; but when she was finally struck blind and deaf, she cried out her *Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?* God then sent her a guide in the person of the saintly Franciscan Pere Henri de Laune; and in August, 1406, at the age of twenty-five, Colette left her hermitage with the permission of the papal legate in Paris, Cardinal de Chalant, and the Bishop of Amiens. She left against the advice of her Benedictine guides and in the face of their displeasure and that of many of the people of Corbie who were loath to lose their saintly townswoman. She was made to feel this displeasure for many years after, even when she endeavored to establish a monastery of the reform in Corbie. In company with Pere Henri and a friend of the Countess Blanche of Geneva, she journeyed to Nice. Here she was presented to Pedro de Luna whom France recognized as the sovereign pontiff, Benedict XIII, though he was in fact the anti-pope. To Colette, he was the representative of Christ, and to him she determined to confide the work to which God was calling her. When she was ushered into his presence, he arose to meet Colette. After a lengthy interview, he received her vows and despatched her, as abbess, on the way of her arduous undertaking. He gave her as guide and assistant Pere Henri who was to share indeed in her labors and her trials.

The word "reform" is generally frowned upon in our day, and often given an incorrect interpretation by a distortion of its original meaning. To "form again" and rebuild that which has fallen to ruin over the passage of time or the misuse of man is surely a most commendable work. A person engaged in restoring an old historic land-mark to its original form would feel he was doing a great work; by others he would be praised rather than condemned. The reformers of religious Orders have been just such rebuilders, on a far nobler plane. Saint Colette, by God's inspiration and under His guidance, began the reform, the forming-again to its original beauty, of the Order of Saint Clare in France. Though still young in years, she was already a mature woman of deep spiritual insight, sensible and practical, with a loving and understanding heart. She has been falsely depicted as severe, forbidding, possessed of a harsh austerity which would give to the Order of Saint Clare a visage never intended by the foundress.

Those who know Saint Colette better, who have lived by the statutes she formed for the Rule of Saint Clare, see the holy reformatrix as she really was, a mother of the Order. Though Saint Colette was a reformatrix, she reformed the Order by new beginnings rather than by reforming the old members of the Order. Her task did indeed lead her to a few monasteries where a very small number of religious lived a relaxed life, but for the most part she did not try to restore the dying embers, but built up new communities, allowing the old embers to slowly disappear. Thus her reform was made almost exclusively in new monasteries of Poor Clares, where she began with the enforcement of the First Rule of Saint Clare.

The Constitutions which Saint Colette left to the houses she established are still being observed. Anyone who could write a series of directions on an old Rule of the thirteenth century, more than two centuries after that Rule had been written, and with an insight and wisdom that would make those directions as practicable in the twentieth century as they were in the fifteenth, must certainly have been guided by the Holy Spirit. When in 1933 the Constitutions of Saint Colette were revised to conform to the new code, the changes necessarily made in them were so negligible that for all practical purposes they remained unchanged. This was the great work of Saint Colette. Her journeys, her sufferings, her miracles, all were accomplished with unflinching courage and firm conviction, but always with the tender heart of a mother. She did not, in any way, as is sometimes claimed, change the spirit of the Order, adding a greater austerity than Saint Clare had given it. She did not graft a new branch on the old trunk, but made the original trunk grow, blossom and bear new fruit. The devastation had left it almost barren. Her aim was not to make a good thing better, but to form anew a work of the Holy Spirit in the Church of the West, bringing it back to its intrinsic beauty and usefulness. It is no great art to make over an old garment into something more beautiful than its original, but it is a delicate touch to restore what was worn out and lost, fashioning it into its original glory, unchanged and undiminished, so that it is entirely as it was—original—that is greatness and art. Such was the work of Saint Colette in the Order of Saint Clare.

Those who have passed long years in the Order and have observed and lived by the Rule of Saint Clare and the Constitutions of Saint Colette can assure themselves with conviction that the latter was a true follower of Clare, humble, loving, and maternal, a true mother of the Order. The sweet and humble virgin of Corbie would be the last to consider that her own stature should or could be measured

by that of the great Foundress of the Second Order. What the patient hands of Saint Clare formed under the direction of the Seraphic Father was humbly measured and balanced, formed anew with delicate exactitude by Saint Colette, and then placed again in the care of the great Foundress. She who formed her own life after the pattern of the seraphic virgin of Assisi patiently strove that the houses she founded should be such that Clare could easily and joyously find place in them. To call the Poor Clares who observe the Constitutions of Saint Colette "Colettines" is likely to create confusion in the minds of those not familiar with the Order, giving the impression that they form a separate Order—certainly the last thing Saint Colette would wish. The title conferred by Holy Church is "Poor Clare Nuns of the Reform of Saint Colette," a title much more to the mind of the saintly reformer, who wished no distinction for her name save to be a humble follower of Saint Clare, just as her life and her reform followed the life and the primitive Rule of the glorious foundress.

Though Saint Colette was called by God to restore the spirit and observance of the First Rule of Saint Clare, this was by no means the sole interest and work of her life. She who loved the Church of God so ardently, mourned incessantly over the Schism which rent asunder the seamless Robe of the Bride of Christ.

Even as a child she had realized the sad condition of the Church, when schism gave allegiance to two popes. In her hermitage she ceased not day or night to plead for those blinded prelates whose pride held all Christendom bound in fetters, unable to expand to the grace and joy of the Divine Shepherd of Souls. Unutterable anguish filled her soul as she beheld in ecstatic vision the ravages the schism was causing as it went on year after year without cessation. We cannot doubt but that she offered her life again and again for its healing; however, she was not to die for the cause, but to live and suffer for it. Her labors brought her in close contact with prelates and nobles, and she strove not only by her prayer and penance, but also by her advice to bring that dark chapter of the Church's history to a speedy close. She had been a close friend of Amadeus of Savoy and when the Schism was renewed she strove by earnest pleading to convince him that he should refuse the unholy distinction of accepting the offer of an anti-pope. For a time her earnest words seemed to hold him in fear of committing the sacrilege, but in the end he succumbed to the temptation and accepted under the name of Felix V. Colette in deep grief journeyed to the various houses of her reform exhorting her communities not to give allegiance to him, but to redouble their prayers and sacrifices for the Church.

Having spent herself for over 40 years without ceasing, she was near the 66th year of her age. She had worn out and exhausted her physical strength and knew she was nearing the threshold of eternity. The close union of her soul with her Beloved kept her at times in an almost unbroken state of peace and her Daughters knew she was pleading for the suffering Bride of Christ. Standing now on the pinnacle of her own deep humility and consolation, holiness, she, better than anyone, could see more clearly the deprecation of the Church left in the wake of the long Schism. She viewed with a breaking heart the wreckage of that great bulwark of the Church, the religious Orders; but in this life was she to see the Church rise from the deep mourning into which the faithless children had cast her. But when she looked into the Divine Countenance of her Bridegroom in eternity she knew her sufferings and labors had not been in vain. On the same day that her soul left this earth and winged its flight to heaven the election of Nicholas V as successor to Eugene IV put an end to the Schism with the resignation of Amadeus of Savoy. God had touchingly accepted her sacrifice.

(to be continued)

Poor Clare Monastery of  
Our Lady of Guadalupe,  
Roswell, New Mexico

Sr. M. Immaculata, P. C. (A)



During the whole course of your life strive to be subject to all the commands of the Lord and to show humble obedience always not only to prelates but to subjects. Do not be quick to ask, "Who is it who gives this order?" but rather rejoice that he does give an order.

Saint Bonaventura

## AND THE LORD LED ME AMONG LEPERS

Heaven gained a new Saint, the Church a new Spiritual Leader and the sick and infirm found a new friend and protector in the youthful Francis of Assisi on the day he stepped from his horse, handed a coin to the repulsive looking leper standing at the roadside with outstretched arms, and went the limit to which any man being could go when he pressed upon the leper's rotting flesh the highest token of human affection—a kiss. It was a test administered by God Himself to His beloved servant, and Francis made the grade. Having mounted his horse again Francis looked back to take a last glance at the leper, but behold, the leper was gone! And as Francis rode along, a multitude of thoughts must have invaded his mind so that with the spiritual eyes of his soul he surely saw written in letters bold and gold, on the tablet of the sky, the Master's own words: *Believe me, when you did it to one of the least of my brethren here, you did it to me* (Matt. 25, 40). From this day until his death Francis of Assisi continued to lavish his affection upon the poor and the sick, the outcast and the leper.

*Like Father, Like Son.* A son often inherits many of his father's characteristics; a spiritual offspring, if at all genuine, must inherit some of its founder's characteristics. The Seraphic family, among the many other Seraphic virtues which it inherited from its Founder, found itself at every phase of its existence the Champion of the Sick. Saint Francis never tired of pleading the cause of the sick in order to impress his followers with the need of this form of the Apostolate.

In his Admonitions Francis writes: "Blessed is the brother that would love his brother in illness, when the brother cannot be of use to him, as much as he loves him in health, when he can be of use to him." And in his definitive Rule of 1223 he penned those words which have been imprinted upon every Franciscan Heart at the very dawn of his Franciscan Life: "And if any of them (i. e., the brethren) should fall into illness, the other friars should serve him as they would wish to be served themselves." With this last admonition, which he deemed prudent to impose upon his brethren as a precept—binding under pain of mortal sin—Francis of Assisi was convinced he had presented his followers with a worthy challenge. It remained only for history to show whether or not that challenge would be heeded.

We, the twentieth-century followers of Saint Francis of Assisi, may say without fear of contradiction that the challenge of the Seraphic Saint has been heeded. For we can proudly say to those who dare question us: "Look at the record." Our modern world is interested in statistics, not that they are

sufficient proof for any premise we may assume but because they serve as measuring stick for the amount of good capable of accomplishment. If it is statistics in which we are interested, we Franciscans can proudly point to 130 hospitals conducted by our Franciscan Sisters throughout the country. Of these hospitals have priests of the First or Third Order Regular as chaplains in order to assure themselves of the perpetuation of the Franciscan Spirit and Heritage. All this is proof sufficient that the Sons and Daughters of Saint Francis of Poverello of Assisi are conscious of the good which they may accomplish in this form of the Apostolate, they are conscious of the place Saint Francis occupies in the field of Nursing, and they are doing all in their power to imitate him.

That Francis of Assisi is capable of helping those in the Nursing Profession is brought out more forcefully by the following example. The visitor to the Montefiore Hospital in Pittsburgh may be amazed to find there, in the parlor in honor in the lobby, a beautiful painting of Saint Francis of Assisi, the inspiration of which each member needs in his profession. What is most interesting in this case, though, is the fact that Montefiore Hospital is a Jewish Institution. Is not a fitting tribute to our Holy Father?

*Perpetuating our Franciscan Heritage.* In no other place in the world are we able to exercise a more fruitful apostolate than in the Hospital. It is here that a man is smitten and thrown upon his back in a hospital bed that he begins to examine his conscience. Indeed, "man's extremity is God's opportunity." It remains for us Franciscans only the task of perceiving the opportunity and doing what we are humanly able to do as Christ's representatives. But when we are able to do anything for the patient we must first become conscious of our own position in the divine economy of salvation. We have pledged ourselves to follow Christ after the pattern set for us by Saint Francis of Assisi. This is only a *means* of arriving at Christian perfection, but mark well, a *necessary means*. Unless, therefore, we are permeated with the Seraphic Spirit, we shall be nothing more than walking ghosts in our hospitals, accomplishing absolutely nothing for the patients. But how shall we acquire this spirit?

Our first task should be to read Franciscan Literature. It must become an integral part of our personality. We must pray much to obtain this grace, we must reflect frequently upon the Franciscan Spirit and every line of our reading must be done in a prayerful spirit. Then, and then only, shall our intellects be able to absorb this vast object known as "Franciscan Spirituality". Surely, we all agree that the place to begin our reading is with the writings of Saint Francis.

Now though they are, they are replete with sound, spiritual Franciscan teaching, and when they were penned by the Franciscan. From these we should proceed to the Franciscan hagiography, reading the lives of those who lived our own form of life and lived it successfully enough to be raised to the honors of the Altar. Our attention should be centered upon those who were engaged in our own type of work, works of charity, in order to see how they practised the Franciscan Spirit.

And as our reading progresses, and our minds absorb and assimilate more and more of the Seraphic teachings, there shall remain in our souls only one thought: *Non sibi soli vivere*, and perhaps when our bodies are in the sleep of death, our fellow Religious may lavish upon us the beautiful encomium which the Mother Church lavished upon Saint Francis: *Non sibi soli vivere, Sed aliis vult proficere* (He did not wish to live for himself alone, but desired to be of assistance to others.)

*Catholicity—the Hospital Atmosphere.* Whether you are conscious of it or not, the hospital in which you are sacrificing your time and energies (notice I did not say "in which you are working", for it is much more than that for us Franciscans) bears the name Catholic. And you yourself are a Catholic Hospital Chaplain, or Sister, or Physician, or Nurse. What a sublime dignity is yours! There was once another man who bore that very title; it was given to him by the Church in recognition of his spirit, his labors, and he was called "Francis, the Catholic and wholly Apostolic man." Take him for your Model, let him be your Ideal. Set yourself to the task of molding your spirit, your attitude of mind, according to the mind of "Francis the Catholic . . . man."

Have you ever stopped to think what the term "Catholic" means? It means universal, and more concretely, it means that the patient in the hospital bed and you are related, for you are both children of a common Father, and brothers and sisters of Christ, the God-Man. This is why the Church gave Saint Francis that admirable title, for he always insisted that God is our Father and we are His Children in Christ. Being children of God, we are then brothers and sisters of Christ, and, if we are deeply convinced of this fact, our conduct will show it as we go about our daily duties.

This attitude will prevent us Franciscans from being mere cogs in the modern hospital machinery. We will not treat the patients as so many products of the assembly-line, but each as an individual worthy of individual and loving consideration. It has been said of Saint Francis that he never saw the forest for the trees, in other words, he was so preoccupied with the individual trees which



composed the forest that he never got around to considering the composite attitude, too, should be like this; we should be concerned with each individual patient and not with the entire hospital. That will be cared for by the Superintendent, the Board of Directors—and don't forget Divine Providence—but the matter for you here and now is the patient who has been committed to you.

If, perchance, we are hospital officials, we might well consider our attitude towards patients of different races. Has there been any discrimination in admitting paupers to our hospitals? One of our great Archbishops recently gathered together the communities engaged in hospital work in his diocese. He received several complaints regarding admission of patients to these institutions and the eminent Churchman, in no uncertain terms, informed those present that he would no longer need the services of a Community which would refuse admission to a person because of race or financial conditions. And while there are unfavorable incidents which we must face, we are, nevertheless, comforted when we hear of incidents which prove that the Spirit of Saint Francis is still in the world today. A pauper attending Mass at one of our Franciscan Churches collapsed, and the Superior of the Monastery hastily summoned an ambulance from a local Catholic hospital. When the doctors arrived they looked at the patient and said: "Oh, another one. And to think that we just put clean linens on the stretcher." The Superior, in his simple manner, informed them that he was willing to pick up the linens later in the day and wash them himself. Saint Francis must have smiled benignly upon this son in whom he could rightly be proud.

*Franciscan Principles in our Hospitals.* There are many important points of Franciscanism which might be treated here. I must limit myself to three focal points of Franciscan Spirituality: Union with the Incarnate Christ, Union with the Suffering Christ and Union with the Eucharistic Christ. The problem facing us is this: How are we able to make our Catholic patients conscious of these Franciscan sentiments? To be sure, we need not prefix the word Franciscan to every sentence or phrase. The finest example of Franciscan Spirituality which I ever read was a book where the only mention of "Franciscan" was in the title which appeared after the author's name. The method must, and should become convinced of this, be adapted to each personality, taking into account the person's present attitude towards Christ, his progress along the path of perfection (as far as we are humanly able to discern), and his receptivity. We shall then consider the first of these:

*Union with the Incarnate Christ.* The Franciscan's love for the Incarnate

Christ goes back to the moment in Heaven when it was decreed that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity should assume human flesh. For Him were all things created, He was the Center of all creation. And the moment He appeared in human flesh at Bethlehem was considered so sacred and memorable a moment to Francis of Assisi that he wished it to be imprinted forever upon the minds of his followers. For this reason he popularized the devotion of the Christmas Crib as a means of recalling the Incarnation and all of God's blessings to mankind.

The Franciscan must show the patient how he can love Christ the Man, the Christ Who could feel deeply on certain things, the Christ Who could weep at being scorned and forsaken, the Christ who could gather children about Himself and say: *Unless you become as one of these, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* In talking to the patient, therefore, we should personalize Christ, make Christ live again, and then the patient will be willing to accept Him.

*Union with the Suffering Christ.* Once the person grasps firmly the personal attitude towards Christ, once he begins to look upon Christ as a Person Who could suffer, he will begin to think less of his own sufferings. Here we Franciscans have the priceless treasure of the Devotion of the Way of the Cross which we can offer our patients. It is an infallible remedy, for once the patient begins to contemplate Christ's sufferings, he will become so immersed in them that his own sufferings will seem quite small in comparison to those of the God-Man.

It was with this end in view that Father Matthew Miller, O. F. M., founded the Franciscan Apostolate of the Way of the Cross. Realizing that many bed-ridden patients are being deprived of a wealth of spiritual treasures he resolved to spread the use of the centuries-old Station Crucifix among these shut-ins. In this way they are able to "walk the Holy Highway" with the Suffering Christ and gain countless blessings and indulgences for each mental journey they take with Christ.

*Union with Christ Through the Eucharist.* Only God could have thought of such a means of union as the Blessed Eucharist, because only God could create the effect such a possibility. The mother gives a memento to her child as he goes home, the friend gives a photo to a friend, but Christ gave us Himself. Unfortunately, in the early centuries people did not receive Christ into their hearts daily. It was Saint Francis of Assisi who insisted upon more frequent reception of the Eucharistic Christ into our hearts. This Seraphic love which

Francis had for Christ in the tabernacle has been transmitted to every Francis heart. But it cannot, and must not, stay there.

Knowing what His presence means to us we will be anxious, serene, restless, until we see our Catholic patients receiving Christ into their hearts or at least several times a week, according to their physical condition. We will be told that He will help them battle the difficulties which assail them, the discouragements which are continually cropping up as they lie in the hospital, helpless and forgotten. This will surely prove to be the patient's greatest consolation.

We have touched upon the most important phases of Franciscan Spirituality as they affect the vitality of our Franciscan hospitals. It has been shown that the over-all spirit which should dominate the Franciscan hospital is the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of men. Finally, the three elements which molded Francis's character are also proposed for the molding of the patient's character: from the Crib we lead the patient to the Cross and to the Eucharist, Which will serve as his Companion into eternity. What formula can we desire?

Buffalo, N. Y.

Fr. John Forest Faddish, O.S.A.



Preserve silence so that you may never engage in detracting, complimentary, dissolute or dishonest speech, and realize that it will be necessary, according to the Savior's teaching, to give an account in the day of judgment not only of idle, harmful, and scandalous words but also of the slightest thought.

Saint Bonaventura

## THE GOSPEL MERCHANT

Thomas of Celano, the first officially-recognized biographer of Saint Francis, was a writer whose literary gifts and discerning taste have preserved for us much of the pristine glory of Saint Francis's life. Thomas assures us that the whole object of Francis's striving, his first wish and his final aim, was to observe the teachings of the holy Gospel in utmost faithfulness—"to obey the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ with all the ardor of his soul."

Francis yearned to reproduce in his own life the life of Christ, as fully as that is given to mere man. And so Saint Francis was a balanced idealist: his heart was in heaven but his feet were firmly on the ground, and he knew that only by prayer and by a close study of Our Lord's character as narrated in the Gospel could that holy balance be achieved and maintained.

Those who first surrounded our Seraphic Founder clearly grasped that Francis intended only that his brothers live the Gospel integrally if they were to become Christ-like. And thus when it seemed doubtful that Pope Innocent III would actually approve the Franciscan Rule, it was Cardinal John of Saint Paul who appealed to the Pope and to the cardinals of the papal court. This defender of Francis and his ideal pleaded that a rejection of the petition of Francis on the grounds that his Rule was too novel and too hard to live would in effect impugn the practicability of the Gospel. All the little beggar from Assisi wanted, the cardinal argued, was that the law of the life of Christ in the Gospel be confirmed unto him and his followers.

In reality, that was an astute argument to advance against any possible objection Innocent III may have had to confirming the Rule officially. Cardinal John of Saint Paul was perfectly aware that the guiding purpose of the Pontiff's reign was the creation of a theocracy of the Christian nations, under whose aegis the Gospel itself would be better realized in all spheres of contemporary life.

The superb intuition given to Francis, enabling him to perceive the fundamental importance of the historic life of Christ as delineated in the New Testament, has stamped an everlasting evangelical character upon Franciscanism. It has fixed the gaze of his spiritual progeny unflinchingly on the Christ of the Gospel. For the Franciscan, then, other biographies of Christ, books of piety and meditation, all are acceptable in the degree that they aid one to interpret and to apply to one's own soul the lessons of the Christ-life.

We understand that even the most "inspired" books can never hope to do

more than deepen our love and attraction for the inspired Gospel account. The imagination of any word-artist, however so beautiful and moving the poet's traces of Christ, becomes meaningless and empty if it prove untrue to His character as found in John, Luke, Mark and Matthew.

Indeed we have sufficient material in the Synoptics and John to occupy our exclusive attention. For like a magnificent panorama of mountain valleys and the awesome vistas across the face of some storied land, we find always new angles, fresh inspiration, hitherto undiscovered loveliness hidden within the Gospel narrative. The Little Flower, once advanced well in the spiritual life, put aside all else in favor of "just" the New Testament. Is it likely that he kept by his side much else? It is not without cause that Saint Bonaventure calls him "a Gospel merchant."

Were we never to study anything but the life of Christ in the New Testament, yet we should never begin to exhaust the limitless possibilities of the Gospel. We should begin to study still more about *this most beautiful among the sons of men*. We would then commence in time what we hope to continue throughout all eternity.

The deepest secret of genuine holiness, as shown us in the lives of the saints, is this vision of Faith that reveals Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life, and once having attained it, the implementation of it in one's personal life. As Bonaventure reminds us in his commentary on Saint Luke: "The ascent to heaven consists most especially in two things: in the perfect knowledge of Christ through faith, and the perfect imitation of Him through the Cross. It does not the vivid quality of our faith (albeit an infused virtue) require quickening support from a close examination of the historical details of His divine life lived so perfectly in human form?"

Of course it is by His grace—first of all—that we can become like Jesus: *Without Me you can do nothing*. But grace perfects nature, and it is why we strive to have the guilelessness, the limpid simplicity, the all-pervading humility that adorned the natural character of Christ and Francis. We see Christ clear and firm and decisive in His judgments; we hear Him speaking with one having authority, so that His very enemies are compelled to exclaim: *Has any man spoken as this man speaks*. No matter how He may be heckled and harassed by others; no matter how fatigued by the burdens of the day and the heats, He remains patient, approachable, with time to help those who come to Him in need.

In His relationships with others, we learn from the Gospel that He values them in terms of their love for the heavenly Father: He does not play favorites and rewards with a kind word those who have tried their best. He pierces through the weakness and the malice and the blindness of men, and sees in them the image of God Whose Son He is. He is a true friend Whose sympathy goes out to the little ones, to the outcasts, to the lepers, to the sinners. And Saint Francis turned at times to fix his gaze on this facet of Christ's character almost to the exclusion of the rest.

But yet we never find that He is soft, or over-indulgent, or influenced by human respect. Even those who come to entrap Him in His words must admit that He cares not for the opinion of men. Never languid nor motivated by mere sentiment, He is in all things selfless, incapable of deception, single-minded for the interests of the heavenly Father.

Our Lord's constancy meets us at every turn in the Gospel. A shadow of that same constancy manifested itself in the firmness of Saint Francis's conviction that God had called him neither to the eremitical nor the monastic life as already established, but to a new and simple observance of the Gospel. Jesus has a definite work to do, and His meat and drink is to do His Father's will. His journeys, His teachings, His sufferings, all demonstrate this unswerving trait.

Failure may come His way, but He does not despair; opposition may beset Him on all sides, but this serves only to enkindle his best efforts; the malice of others never embitters Him. He does not look for recompense on this earth; He toils and prays and goes about doing good. Above all and in all He understands that there is no salvation for men unless there be the Cross for Himself: *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His Glory?*

Briefly, then, this is the picture of the eternal Galilean that must have formed in the mind of Francis and filled his soul with love and longing. This is the Christ Whose wounds were impressed forever in the crucified flesh of our stigmatized Saint-Founder. This is the Christ to Whom we too must conform our lives in the measure of our grace, because we too are Franciscans. An impossible task, you say? Yes, but are we not called to the impossible? *Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father*. We do not cease to be true followers of Christ and Francis simply because we are not perfect. We cease rather when we cease trying to be like them!

Anthony-on-Hudson  
Selslaer, N. Y.

Fr. Aidan Carr, O.F.M. Conv.

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

The following list of Franciscan Ordinaries gives a fair indication of what is to the Church in China. The list is accurate up to December 31, 1951 (Acta O 35-6).

Diocese of Mission	Ordinary	Position
Chefoo	Alphonse Tsung, Bishop	Impeded (probably in)
Chowtsun	Ambrose Pinger, Bishop	Imprisoned (Tsingtao)
Idushien	Sac. saec. PA	?
Weihaiwei	Gabriel Quint, Prefect	Imprisoned (Shanghai)
	Apostolic	
Tsinan	Cyril Jarre, Archbishop	Imprisoned <sup>1</sup>
Kiangchow	Quinctinus Pessers, Prefect	Thought to be at liberty
	Apostolic	
Luan	Constantius Kamer, Bishop	Impeded (Peiping)
Shohchow	Edgar Haering, Bishop	Impeded (Peiping)
Taiyuan	Luke Capozzi, Archbishop	Imprisoned
Fengsiang	Anthony Chow, Bishop	Perhaps now imprisoned
Yutze	Hermenengild Focaccia, Bishop	At liberty
	Apostolic	
Sian	Pacificus Vanni, Archbishop	Impeded (staying in)
Tungchow	Peter Moretti, Prefect	Expelled
	Apostolic	
Yenan	Pacificus Ly, Bishop	Newly appointed <sup>2</sup>
Sanyuan	Fulgence Pasini, Bishop	Imprisoned
Hankow	Maurice Rosa, Archbishop	At liberty
Ichang	Venantius Gijssels, Vic. Capit.	Imprisoned
	Apostolic	
Kichow	Ferruccio Ceol, Bishop	At liberty
Laohokow	Alphonse Ferroni, Bishop	Expelled
Shasi	Julius Dillon, Prefect	Expelled
	Apostolic	
Suhsien	Dominic Mien, Prefect	At Liberty
	Apostolic	
Wuchang	Rembert Kowaski, Bishop	Imprisoned
Changsha	Petronius Laccchio, Archbishop	Imprisoned
Hengchow	?	?
Paoking	Ladislaus Lombos, Prefect	Impeded (staying in)
	Apostolic	
Siangtan	Pacificus Calzolari, Prefect	At Liberty
	Apostolic	
Yungchow	Sigisbald Kurz, Bishop	Impeded (staying in United States)

<sup>1</sup> Since this report was compiled, notice has been received of Archbishop Jarre as a result of imprisonment. The faithful of Tsinan are already venerating him as it was Archbishop Jarre who published in 1943 his Chinese translation of the Canon Law (CORD, Vol. I, No. 12, October 1951, p. 240).

<sup>2</sup> Rev. Fr. Pacificus Ly Hsuan Te, of the Fengsiang Commissariat, was named of the Diocese of Yenan on December 28, 1951.



The summer of 1952 will mark the thirteenth year of the Department of Sacred Science at Saint Bonaventure University. Courses in Theology are offered to Sisters, Brothers, and lay-teachers of Religion in Catholic Schools.

This department was organized by the Very Reverend Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O. F. M., former President of Saint Bonaventure College and Rector of the Seminary of Christ the King, and the present Minister Provincial of the Holy Name Province. The curriculum comprises five summers of study in Dogmatic and Moral Theology, Sacred Scripture, Church History, Canon Law, Catechetics, and related subjects, leading to the

Master of Arts degree upon the completion of a written dissertation. The first completed their studies in 1943.

For the record, let it be mentioned that Saint Bonaventure University was the first institution in the Americas to offer a degree in Sacred Theology for teaching. Other colleges and universities have since adopted this program, varied in non-essential details to their individual purposes but based upon the plan first put into effect by Saint Thomas. The first of these schools was founded in 1863. The first graduates of the courses in the Sacred Theology were conferred in the year when Saint Bonaventure University granted degrees to its graduates in the same field.

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### Religious Profession

I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body (Gal. 6, 17). When a religious makes his profession, he promises to observe the particular Rule of the Order or Congregation by living in poverty, chastity, and obedience. This ordering of the formula of profession clearly indicates that the essence of the religious life is the observance of the evangelical counsels or the three holy vows. A person is a religious, not so much because of the Rule he follows, but rather because of the vows he makes. Hence, it is of the utmost importance to every religious to have a high regard and a deep love for those sacred promises. Let us, therefore, take the religious vows as the subject of our conference this month. While the conference deals with the vows directly, still all that is said can be understood with equal right of the three virtues which underlie the vows, namely, the virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Consequently, those who have not made religious profession as yet, can look upon the following thoughts as applying to themselves as well as to the professed members of the Community.

At times, spiritual writers compare religious profession to a mystic crucifixion. The comparison, I think, is apt and suggestive.

According to this view of religious profession, poverty is the nailing of our hands fast to the cross. It is with our hands that we conduct our affairs and dispose of things. We speak of giving with a free hand. When we offer something to another, we do so by stretching forth our hand and saying: "Here is something for you; take it." We even have a commonly-used slang expression, "hand-out", to denote a gift. Hence, when the right to dispose of things, to give things away, is taken from us by the vow of poverty, it is really like nailing down our hands on the cross so that they can no longer have, or do with, things as they please.

Obedience is the nailing of our feet to the cross. Our feet represent the power of movement, the ordering of our lives, the going where we will. This going where we please is of the very essence of liberty and independence. That is why, when the State wishes to take away a person's freedom, it locks him in jail so that he cannot move around as he would like to. When, therefore, we renounce the freedom to come and go as we please by the vow of obedience, we, for all practical purposes, nail our feet tightly to the cross.