

the person who has aroused my anger, by refusing to return a greeting, refusing to respond to a remark from that person? A face distorted by anger is sometimes laugh-provoking; but there is nothing amusing in the stare and curled lip that betrays quiet anger.

In regard to the minor clashes that are bound to occur in community life, we should carefully examine our disposition toward forgiving offenses and asking forgiveness of those we offend. For example: Do I know how to offer an apology in the spirit of Franciscan courtesy? Or are my apologies as insulting as the original offenses, and my acceptance of apologies so magnanimous that they dwarf the apologies? Do I forgive graciously and sincerely, and try to forget offenses as quickly as possible? Do I always wait for the other person to take the initiative toward reconciliation? Do I habitually take the initiative? Do I grant that I am the offended one, the other person the offender? Am I ready to admit that I may be as responsible for the discord as the other person, or even more so? These and similar questions will throw considerable light on the degree of humility and self-knowledge we possess.

A milder form of anger concerns our human tendency to complain about minor irritations. Such trivialities as bad weather, unpalatable food, and impatient people, will sometimes exhaust our meager supply of patience. If we avoid such faults entirely, let us at least avoid the habit of complaining. A Franciscan who must be qualified as critical, nagging, or murmuring is one who has forgotten he belongs to the Order of Penance. The same may be said of aversions. We cannot hope to love all people in the sense that we feel drawn toward them; such love is beyond our power to control or to force. Many people, even among our fellow religious, will be repulsive to us. But we must not allow such feelings to blind our judgment or to turn into hatred.

A final word may be said in regard to our attitude toward quick-tempered persons. Such persons are victims of a serious spiritual malady; humble and patient charity on our part will help them overcome their illness. We must never deliberately irritate them, as is sometimes done, to make them a source of entertainment. We have no right to make sport of the weaknesses of others, or to treat the dignity of the human personality as the image of God with irreverence. Let us bear in mind the admonition of our Seraphic Father: "We should bear with the frailties of our neighbor as we would have him bear with us if we had his frailties. 'Where charity is and wisdom,' said St. Francis, 'there is neither fear nor ignorance. Where patience is and gentleness, there is neither anger nor disturbance of mind.'"

St. Bonaventure University

Fr. Philotheus Boehner,

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### *The Sacrament of Love*

Back in 1917, during World War I, a group of eighteen Irish soldiers came across a church in a little French village which had been recaptured from the Germans. To their utter horror they found the tabernacle door forced open and the Hosts strewn over the floor. Reverently, adoringly, they gathered up the Sacred Particles and received them in Holy Communion. And in protest of such an abomination they posted this simple statement on the door of the church: "We, the undersigned, offer our lives, should God be pleased to accept them, in reparation for the horrible sacrilege committed against our Eucharistic Lord in this church." According to Army records, all eighteen of these soldiers were killed in the next battle in which they engaged. God had accepted their sacrifice.

Naturally, this story of heroism thrills us. We look upon those soldiers as men—men of deep and penetrating faith, with a practical love equal to their faith. In this conference, I should like to point out how we also can give a practical demonstration of our faith in, and our love for, the Blessed Eucharist—not by dying for it but by living according to its message. At times, living for a truth, day in and day out, often in the face of formidable challenges and heart-breaking disappointments, can be harder than dying for it by one swift, sure stroke. The message of the Eucharist according to which we are asked to live is fraternal charity, the love of our neighbor—a message that is fairly shouted forth from the tabernacle.

The very institution of this Sacrament took place against a background of love. Recall what the Gospel says when our Lord, with His Apostles, entered the Upper Room where He was to institute the Holy Eucharist: *Having loved his own, he loved them to the end* (Jo. 13, 1). Indeed, He had given the Apostles many proofs of His great love. He had chosen them as His ambassadors, He had bestowed upon them the privilege of intimate friendship with Him for three years, He had taught them to pray, He had shown them the utmost patience, sympathy, and understanding. But now He was to go the very limit of love and give them the gift of gifts—Himself. Thus, we can see that the very motive of instituting the Blessed Sacrament was love of neighbor. It was a gift entirely of love and wholly dedicated to the diffusion of love.

Many centuries have passed since that memorable night, but throughout all the Eucharist has been a faithful echo of that opening note of love on

which it began. In fact, Christ's life in the Eucharist is but a continuation of His life in Galilee, a life summed up by Saint Peter in the words: *about doing good* (Acts 10, 38). Yes, in the Blessed Sacrament Christ comes through again for all generations those acts of kindness and help performed for the people of His day. Thus, He wishes to be our inspirer and model in doing good, giving us an example, that as He has done to us, we also should do to our fellow men. (Jo. 13, 15). Let us now consider some specific lessons in fraternal charity which our Eucharistic Master gives to us.

First of all, He is the very embodiment of self-forgetfulness, teaching us not to be eager for our own advancement, not to be envious of our neighbor's good fortune. Of old He went about His labors of love without the blare of trumpets, without the sensation of headlines, without a show. He had told the Jews: *I do not seek my own glory* (Jo. 8, 50). Literally He lived up to those words. Often, after He had worked a miracle, He would slip away to some quiet spot to avoid the praise of men. He sent His disciples with the power of performing wonders among the people, but He worried at all about how they might eclipse His fame in so doing. Today, in the Eucharist He is the same. How little in reality is done for Him compared to that which the world does for her so-called great men. He visits daily, a procession now and then, some songs in His honor. And His glory is greater than all the great ones of the world combined. How often He is content with a little frame house, or maybe not even that, while men of power dwell in luxurious homes. How often He has only the barest necessities, a simple line of sacred vestments and vessels, while His creatures go about in silk and jewels. Yet, we hear no complaints from the tabernacle, no spiteful attitude there. Self-forgetfulness is the watchword in that place. What a lesson for us when we feel we are slighted, when it seems our efforts are not appreciated, when we see others succeed and ourselves fail! At such times are we not easily tempted to begrudge our neighbor his success, and to boast of his accomplishments? But before we give in to these temptations, let us ask ourselves if Jesus would act that way. And when we have studied the lesson of utter selflessness that He gives us from the tabernacle, let us try to help us translate that lesson into practice.

Next, there is the question of judging our neighbor. We see how easily we are wrong—there can be no doubt about that—and we naturally feel inclined to condemn him. But, then, can we see the duration and the strength of the temptation that was his? Can we be sure that his fault was due to malice

rather to a moment's weakness? Can we know all the circumstances? And if we cannot, should we judge him? Let us look at Jesus' teachings on this point. While on earth, He proclaimed that He had come to save, not to judge. He refused to judge the poor woman taken in adultery. He corrected the Apostles who believed that the man born blind was so afflicted because of some sin on his part or on the part of his parents. In the Eucharist, He continues that same lesson. Can we for a moment think that He is ignorant of the untold uncounted sins of the world? He sees them better than we. He knows the malice of men's hearts. Often He recognizes a denying Peter and a betraying Judas at the communion rail. Yet He keeps His peace and reserves the judgment of such things to the great day of reckoning. Once more the sentiment of His Sacred Heart is: "I am to help and to save, not to judge." Why can't we adopt that principle as the rule of our lives? How much more pleasant we could make this world if we did! And how much more advantageous it would be for us than judging our fellowmen, since our Lord says: *Do not judge, that you may not be judged* (Mt. 7, 1).

Our Eucharistic Master, however, is not content with instructing us in what to avoid lest we do wrong to our neighbor, but He also teaches us how to be of service to others. While on earth, He wearied Himself in going from town to town to spread the consoling message of salvation. In the tabernacle He has put on immortality in order not to grow tired in helping us. He has multiplied His presence that He might be in all places just for our convenience. Of old, His time was everybody's time. He was sought in the early hours of the morning; His noonday repast was interrupted; and when evening shadows had fallen, though exhausted from the day's exertions, He was called upon to bless and heal the sick. Today, in the tabernacle, His time is ours. Never is He too busy for us; no hour is too early or too late for Him. In Palestine He blessed the children and fed the hungry people. In our churches and chapels He repeats these favors. How often has not His hand been raised in benediction over us? How often has He not fed our souls with a food more miraculous than the multiplied loaves of old? The sorrowing widow of Naim and the weeping sisters of Lazarus were consoled. Never has He refused the same service to us, as perhaps with aching heart we knelt before the tabernacle and poured out our troubles to Him. Formerly He worked countless miracles—restoring sight to the blind, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead to life. Nowadays, from His sacramental home, He gives ever new and more penetrating light to our soul that it might appreciate more deeply the wonders of the spiritual world. And He offers us

His own flesh to eat as the antidote against the leprosy of sin, and as of immortal life. Yesterday He climaxed His life of charity by a heroism. Today, at every stroke of the clock, that death is mystically renewed down God's love and blessing upon us. Where can we ever find a better in fraternal charity? Let us not say that it is too hard to learn. We are expected to do the same works that Jesus does—those wonderful miracles. We are expected to have the same love that He had: *This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you* (Jo. 15, 12). Many occasions during the day for little acts of kindness and service. They are a chance to show whether or not we have been apt pupils in the Eucharist of the Master. And there is our chance to amass for ourselves abundant riches, since every such little act of charity means a reward in heaven according to the words of Jesus Himself: *Whoever gives to one of these little ones a cup of cold water to drink, he shall not lose his reward* (Mt. 10, 42).

But the Holy Eucharist goes further than merely teaching us to love our neighbor. It also helps us to do so. Immediately after Jesus had instituted the Blessed Sacrament, He promulgated His great commandment of love: *A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: that as I have loved you, you also love one another* (Jo. 13, 34). He chose this precise moment to proclaim the commandment of love in order to show that it is especially in the Holy Eucharist that will help us to observe that precept. And it could be otherwise. We cannot stand near a fire without feeling its heat. In like manner we cannot come near to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, Whose Heart is a burning furnace of charity, without feeling our heart grow warm with true Christian love. The lives of the Saints are a clear confirmation of this truth. When did Saint Francis get his tender, all-embracing love for men? All through his life he would bask in the love of his Eucharistic God at the foot of the altar, and on the following day would radiate that love to his fellow men. What of Saint Vincent de Paul the Apostle of Charity in modern times? Very early in the morning he could be seen making his way to the chapel, there to spend a few hours with the Lover of mankind on the altar before setting out on his errand of mercy. How explain the heroic charity of Father Damian, which caused him to exile himself on a little island far out in the Pacific Ocean, there to care for the rotting bodies of lepers till he himself shared their terrible fate? There is only one explanation—the Holy Eucharist. "If it had not been for the Blessed Sacrament," he tells us, "I could not have carried on these many years." What the Eucharist did for these men, it can do for us also—make us *like-minded, compassionate, lovers of the brethren, merciful; not rendering evil for evil,*

*not for abuse, but contrariwise, blessing* (1 Pet. 3, 8-9). In this Sacrament is the fire which our Lord is so anxious to kindle in our hearts is, above all, the fire of love. And it is especially for that end that He comes to us in Holy Communion. Moreover, concerning this Sacrament, Christ has proclaimed: *The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world* (Jo. 6, 52). But what is the nature of this life, if not charity? And it is precisely to nourish that life that Christ offers to us the Eucharist. Indeed, the Blessed Sacrament is the most effectual means that could be found for energizing our souls with strong, active charity.

In this conference, an attempt was made to show that the Blessed Sacrament was born of Christ's love for mankind, that it teaches us how to love our fellow men, and that it helps us very much to do so. From these observations it is evident that the Eucharist richly deserves the special title so frequently accorded it, namely, *The Sacrament of Love*.

But let us not make the mistake of expecting this sacrament to work automatically for us. Like all the other elements in Christ's economy of salvation, it works to the extent that we work. While it offers us the greatest possible incentive to practice charity, it is at the same time a call to action on our part. To spend fifteen minutes before the Blessed Sacrament, or to go to Holy Communion, or to assist at Mass, is something very good, but it is not enough. When we leave the chapel we must show the fruits of our close association with Christ, we must act in such a way that others can see that we have learned well the lesson of our Eucharistic Master. Behold how our Lord gives Himself, whole and entire, to us in the Blessed Sacrament; we also must be willing to give our all for the preservation and growth of charity. Behold how our Lord sacrifices Himself for us on the altar; we too must be ready to sacrifice ourselves on the altar of charity for others. The law of charity goes hand in hand with the law of self-renunciation, and unless we are determined to practice the latter, the former will never produce the fruits which it should. In a word, the Eucharist points out to us the way of charity, it strengthens and supports us in its practice, but it does not dispense with effort on our part.

A soul-stirring scene was enacted at the National Eucharistic Congress in Cleveland a couple of decades ago. A living monstrosity of gigantic proportions, composed of thousands of school children, was formed on the field of the Municipal Stadium. It was a scene that left sweet memories in the minds of all who saw it. What took place on that occasion should be repeated every day in

our convents. The God of charity is always in our midst, in our chapel, and religious—to the very last one of us—should in spirit rally to His side with gold of love in our hearts to form for Him a splendid monstrance, a monstrance which will draw down upon us, upon our Communities, and upon all with whom we come in contact the last blessings and sweet joys of genuine charity.

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See how beautifully Christ is contained under these two species, first of all because bread and wine are the best food for man. Bread nourishes the flesh of the body, and wine passes into the blood which is the seat of the soul. In the second place, because they are more chiefly and commonly used since they are purer and less disagreeable, the spiritual purity of the repast is shown by them in the best way possible. Thirdly, they best signify the Body and Blood of Christ, for the bread symbolizes that Body, threshed, ground and pounded in the Passion, cooked and baked by the fire of divine love in the oven and on the altar of the Cross. The wine signifies the Blood pressed out of the grape, that is, out of Christ's Body, in the wine-press of the Cross by the treading of the Jews. And, fourthly, they beautifully symbolize the Mystical Body of Christ, that is, the Church, gathered together of many faithful predestined to life, though collected from a multitude of grains and grape-clusters.

Saint Bonaventure

## THE SIX WINGS OF THE SERAPH

The Prophet Isaias describes his call to the sublime office of a prophet in Israel in the following words: *I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated; and his train filled the temple. Upon it stood the Seraphims: the one had six wings, and the other had six wings: with two they covered his face, and with two they covered his feet, and with two they flew. And they cried one to another, and said: Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord of hosts, all the earth is full of his glory* (Is. 6, 1-3).

When Saint Bonaventure, the Seraphic Doctor, was about to compose a treatise for the direction of superiors, he borrowed the title from the above passage, and named his book *The Six Wings of the Seraph*. The choice was a happy one, for, the Saint argued, even as the highest choir of angels rules over the other angelic choirs and because of their closeness to the Triune God, they are burning (Seraphim from the Hebrew word *saraph* i. e. to burn) with the fire of divine love; so must those also, who are called to govern and direct souls to sanctity, be aflame with the love of God, which is the essence of all sanctity.

This little work of Saint Bonaventure, which is divided into seven chapters, may boast of a history which is at once eventful and colorful. It has been used by countless spiritual leaders and directors and, because of its practical approach and human touch, its usefulness continues to this very day.

The celebrated Father Claudius Aquaviva, General of the Society of Jesus, had copies sent to each superior of the Society with the injunction that its wise directions should be carefully studied and sedulously followed.

While the book is primarily meant for religious superiors and directors, its scope is so broad and its directives so flexible, that anyone in charge of others, whether in schools, hospitals or any other position, will not fail to draw valuable lessons from its content. In modern terminology we might call it a textbook on Educational Psychology.

By the Six Wings, Saint Bonaventure understands the six virtues or spiritual qualities which should adorn those who are placed over others. These are: Zeal for Justice, Sympathy, Patience, Good Example, Discretion, Devotion or Piety.

Here we shall have to content ourselves with a few passages, which, though chosen more or less at random, will nevertheless be found useful by all readers.

The Seraphic Doctor claims that there are four classes of Religious who, in spite of certain faults and defects, may go by the name of "Good Religious".

This classification shows the broadmindedness of the Saint. And while it tends to give courage to all of us perhaps, yet, those who may discover their place on the lowest rung will soon learn that they must rise higher if they wish to attain spiritual perfection. They will soon learn that a good religious life does not mean a perfect religious.

To begin with the lowest class. They are people, the Saint tells us, who do no wrong, avoid sin, never give offence or scandal. They are friendly, sociable, and live in peace with everybody. So much for the negative side. On the positive side, they evince only a small measure of energy and activity. They perform their routine duties with fair regularity, but display no real effort or advance in virtue. In fact they seem to shun hardship, toil and sacrifice. What humorously Saint Bonaventure calls them "baptised babies".

We all know this type. They are harmless, innocuous creatures: smiling, afraid to harm even a little cat; seemingly helpful everywhere when the floor needs scrubbing, or some menial task needs attention, though not apt to hide away or find some trivial excuse. And yet, everybody seems to love them, so much so that even Almighty God would find it hard not to love these dear little angels.

The second class has much in common with the above. Apart from their hatred and horror of sin and every evil deed, they do take an active part in the practice of virtue. They appreciate its value and desire to progress to a certain point. They go so far as to make earnest and continuous efforts, bring sacrifices in order to register progress in humility, in mortification, in fraternal charity, and the like. However, when they reach a certain point they seem to lapse into mathematical calculation. They want to do all that is right and proper, but they call a halt when the requirements exceed a certain measure. They fulfill every item of the law, but are not interested in anything beyond.

We often hear the language of this class of good people. "I want to go to heaven, sure. If I get by Saint Peter I shall be satisfied. But I don't want to be canonized. I don't have the ambition, the courage and the grace. Even in heaven I want to have my ease and not be bothered with the prayers and appeals of my brethren or sisters below, etc."

To sum up, they have no effective desire to strive after higher perfection. They are satisfied with what may be termed the "New Deal", leaving the steep slopes of the Everlasting Hills to those who wish to climb them.

The third class rises high above the second in their search for the higher and better things. Their horror for sin and all evil is deep-rooted; their love for virtue and good works profound and all-embracing. They are led by a spirit of genuine humility, mindful of the Savior's word: *When you have done everything that was commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants* (Luke 17, 10).

People of this class are positively yearning after the things of the spirit, after those inner graces which make us taste *how sweet the Lord is*, and which lead us to an intimate union with God. Yet, there is a certain inhibition, a hesitancy to go forward, which, perhaps may be traced to a degree of hidden self-love or selfishness. Hence, the spiritual misery of the sinful world and the horrible darkness in which paganism is steeped do not find much sympathy in their hearts. There is a curtain, as it were, between their own souls and the rest of God's unhappy children scattered over the vast and dreary lands of Christ's Empire. They fail to grasp the boundless love of the Sacred Heart of our Saviour. To explain their condition, Saint Bonaventure uses the answer of the fig tree to the other trees in the Book of Judges: *Can I leave my sweetness, and my delicious fruits and go to be promoted among the other trees?* (Judg. 9, 11).

This class, argues the Saint, is hardly fitted for superiorship, because they reveal a lack of vision and understanding in regard to the needs of others and fail to rise to the lofty plans of the Almighty. Hence, he introduces a fourth class which not only has the qualifications of true superiorship but also the requirements for true sanctity.

Such souls, Saint Bonaventure explains, not only possess all the virtues previously enumerated, but also a burning zeal that divine justice be exemplified in all men; that God be served, honored and loved by all. Our Divine Lord is the shining example; for being in the glory of God He left His heavenly home to live among men and become our servant. This is *the scarlet twice-dyed* (Ex. 26, 1), namely, the love of God and neighbor. The love of God not only seeks sweetness in God but strives to fulfill God's will in all His creatures, especially in those who are marked with His own divine image. Thus the love of God and the love of neighbor must converge upon their ultimate goal: the glory of God. In this state the soul is *not self-seeking* (I Cor. 13, 5), but God-seeking in all its hopes, longings and aspirations.

The description of this fourth class of Good Religious carries the implication that superiors should be chosen exclusively from this class. Saint Bonaventure knows well—and throughout the booklet he frequently avers to the fact—

that this is a high standard, and that the number of those who fully attain may not be large. On the other hand, the Saint makes it plain that the earnest desire and the strenuous effort to reach this standard are essential requisites for those who are called to lead others to sanctity, even as the same standard also serve as the aim of all who sincerely desire to be saints. When the Seraphic Doctor speaks of sanctity or perfection in religious communities, he speaks without mentioning the name, the Mystical Body of Christ, that unique spiritual organism, of which Christ is the spiritual Head and under Whom all members are united by the bond of love. This bond of *charity unfeigned*, as the Apostle calls it, flows from Christ the Head and, like the blood streams in the physical body, reaches all the members. To understand and fully share the knowledge and working of this mystery is the standard set by Saint Bonaventure for those who strive after sanctity, especially for those who are called to lead others to sanctity.

What then does Saint Bonaventure mean by Zeal for Justice? In what manner of justice has he in mind? "By justice," he says, "is here meant the observance of all those things that are necessary for the salvation or perfection of souls".

In other words, for a Religious, justice means observance—the observance, namely, of the Holy Rule. The observance of the Rule to which the Religious has pledged himself is his safe, sound and solid way to sanctity. It reminds us of the clear-cut axiom of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux: *Serva Regulam, et Regula servabit te*—"Observe the Rule and the Rule will save thee." Nothing is clearer, more practical and more consoling.

Our Rule, Saint Bonaventure goes on to say, is derived from different sources which either directly or indirectly bear upon the Rule that we profess. These sources are 1) the Eternal Law of God; 2) the laws of human institutions promulgated under the authority of the Church or, which is the same, the Order; 3) our Holy Vows and all that they imply; 4) certain practices peculiar to each Order or community, which have the sanction either of a venerable tradition or of present legislation or counsel.

Like all spiritual writers and directors, Saint Bonaventure is careful to distinguish between what is grave and what is light; between strict laws and precepts and counsels. "We should not," he warns, "regard grave things as grave and trifles as grave things." We should not *strain out a gnat and swallow a camel* (Matt. 23, 24); nor *tithe the mint and rue and every herb and pass*

*judgment and the charity of God* (Luke 11, 42). Coming down to practical life, the Saint admonishes that there is a vast difference between omitting an inclination in choir than repeated detractions of a fellow religious; between neglecting a little rubric at the Office than starting a serious and scandalous quarrel in the monastery. The former neglects demand kindly correction; the latter faults, severe punishment. In this, as in all other things, prudence must guide the superior, and humble submission the subjects. Thus, discipline is maintained and, as a result, charity will reign like a queen among the virtues.

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Take this Sacrament of the Eucharist away from the Church, and what will remain in the world but error and infidelity and a Christian people dispersed like a herd of swine and dedicated to idolatry, as is quite apparent among other unfaithful souls. But through This the Church stands, the Faith is strengthened, the Christian religion and divine worship flourish; for Christ said: *Behold I am with you unto the consummation of the world.*

*Saint Bonaventure*

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

### *The Seventh Article*

TEXT: *A great sign and aid of the love of Christ is the frequent and daily approach to the Holy Eucharist, which is at once a sacred banquet memorial of His passion. It should also be the endeavor of religious frequently to visit and devoutly to venerate our Lord Jesus abiding with this admirable mystery; for this is the greatest Sacrament of the Church an inexhaustible fountain of all blessings.*

The personal devotion of a great saint may sometimes leave a deep impression upon all subsequent Catholic practice. We need but recall Dominic's crusade for the rosary, Saint Leonard of Port Maurice's love for the stations of the cross, Saint Margaret Mary's apostolate for devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As Franciscans we may recall with pride that the Church has given its Christmas crib to our Holy Founder. We may even know in some particular and general way that Francis is in part responsible for the strong emphasis on Christocentrism, on devotion to the humanity of Christ and on the mystery associated with the Incarnation that characterizes Catholic piety as we know it today. Yet we may tend to overlook a very concrete and striking instance of Francis's influence upon the devotional life of the Church, our attitude toward the Blessed Sacrament.

Independently of the Sacrifice of the Mass, the Eucharist, as the Resurrection Sacrament, plays a very central role in the private devotional life of the religious or devout Catholic and in the public worship of the Church today. We take this so much for granted that we find it difficult to imagine that it was not always thus. Yet, in Francis's day benediction or exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for instance, was unknown. Catholic Eucharistic devotion centered almost exclusively about the Mass as a sacrifice. Christ was primarily the Priest, not our Eucharistic Friend, our divine Lover, Whose *delights were to be with the children of men* (Prov. 8, 31). The altar, not the tabernacle, was the center of the church. Indeed, wherever possible the Sacred Species were usually reserved in some hidden place and not upon the main altar, a vestige of which practice persists in the custom of keeping the Blessed Sacrament in a side chapel of the great cathedrals. If people visited the church apart from Mass, it was to pray rather to their Father in heaven, than to the Son Who had come into their midst to meet them.

Only rarely and after long preparation did the faithful dare to approach the Holy Table. Even an exceptional saint like King Louis received six times a year. This unwholesome attitude of exaggerated fear had been growing more or less steadily for several centuries. So acute had the problem of Communion become that the Lateran Council in 1215 had to impose upon the laity the obligation of going at least once a year. With the love for the Eucharist growing cold, it is not surprising that churches, for the most part deserted, began to collect cobwebs, to fall to ruin.

Into this milieu came a Francis who could "see nothing bodily of Our Lord Jesus Christ except His most Holy Body and His most Sacred Blood." Here in the Eucharist was his Christ, the Christ of the Gospel, the Christ on Whose life he modeled his own, Whose "mirror" he would become. This was the Christ who *came unto His own and His own received Him not*, leaving Him practically deserted, for all purposes a "forgotten God". No wonder Francis's heart was touched. With his own hands he gathered stones and mortar to rebuild crumbling chapels, he seized a broom to sweep out dirty churches, he washed soiled linens that were to touch the Body of his Savior, he burnished the sacred vessels that would hold His Blood. Wherever he went, he preached devotion to the Eucharist, begging his listeners not to forget the God in their midst, their "Emmanuel".

But because his voice was weak and would not carry to the corners of the earth, Francis began to write those simple touching letters, letters to the clergy, to the rulers of the people from the mighty prince down to the mayor of the humblest hamlet, to the custodes charged with the care of his friars, to all the faithful. "Eucharistic letters" they have been called, for it seemed that the Poverello could not pick up a pen, or write what was closest to his heart, without pleading His Love Who was not loved. He begged priests to show a greater reverence "for the Lord's Body and the cleanliness of the altar" (*Letter to the Clergy*). He would have the mayor send a town crier through the streets at eventide to remind the people to praise and thank God, to put off their foolish anxiety and receive the Body and Blood of Christ (*Letter to the Rulers*). He enjoined the superiors of his Order that "in the preaching they do, they admonish the people concerning penance and that no one can be saved except that he receives the most Sacred Body and Blood of the Lord" (*Letter to the Custodes*).

He sent his friars to distant provinces with chalices, ciboria, linens for the altar made by Sister Clare and her companions; he provided them with beauti-

fully wrought irons for baking hosts; all this, that they might supply needy churches and that his Lord might be treated with due reverence.

He encouraged the practice of visiting churches (*Letter to All the Faithful*). What even great theologians like Saint Thomas and Saint Bonaventura hesitated to do, he invited—daily reception of Communion. His *Laudes* or "Praises on the Our Father", interpret "our daily bread" as the Eucharist. And when some of his friars wondered at the time he spent before the Blessed Sacrament and asked him what he did there, Francis replied: "I pray, I love, I adore."

Here was the heart, the living source of his spiritual life. Here was the reason why churches could never be just beautiful buildings of stone. This "faith in churches", as he quaintly calls it, he regarded as one of the greatest of the graces God had bestowed upon him. Recounting the special blessings God granted him upon his conversion, he writes "The Lord gave me so much faith in churches that I would simply pray and say thus: We adore Thee Lord Jesus Christ here and in all Thy churches which are in the whole world, and we bless Thee because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world!" (*Testament*).

When he learned that in certain parts of France there was a devotion to the Eucharist, France became for him "the Friend of the Eucharist". At the Pentecost chapter of 1217, Francis, resolving to go himself to a distant province, declared: "I choose the province of France, where there is a Catholic people who more than other Catholics greatly reverence the Body of Christ, which is to be a great joy, and therefore do I desire to converse with them" (*Speculum perfectionis*, c. 65). Indeed, he desired to die in France that his death, like his life, might be an act of adoration of the most holy sacrament.

His personal crusade for the Eucharist ceased to be a one-man affair. It became an essential part of the early Franciscan apostolate, a charge the Saints would not let his friars forget. Significantly, the very first of his *Admonitions* is entitled "On the Lord's Body".

What was the result? Lest we seem prejudiced let us quote the impartial testimony of the Benedictine Dom Cuthbert Butler. "When we find that a change appears in Western Christendom towards the middle of the thirteenth century, a great wave of Eucharist devotion and piety then beginning to flow, and when we recollect Saint Francis's Eucharistic propaganda, we can hardly be mistaken in looking on him and his friars as the first heralds of the movement that more than aught else has given increasingly its most special character to

all subsequent Catholic piety and spiritual life." (*Ways of Christ*, Sheed and Ward, 1933, p. 53).

If even non-Catholic admirers of Francis recognized that the Eucharist was not only "the favorite theme of the Saint" (H. Boehmer), but also "to a certain extent the soul of his piety" (Sabatier), we can understand the importance of the present article of the Rule. Its wording needs no explanation. In it we hear Francis speaking again, we listen to his earnest words, we feel the warmth of his burning letters, we recall the solicitude that prompted his last will and testament. How well Francis realized the Eucharist as "the greatest Sacrament of the Church"; that it was not merely a sacrament, but a sacred banquet to be partaken of "readily and without delay"; that an example he sets his followers, his impatience to visit his brother friend, his longing to adore Him "in all the churches which are in the whole world," his eagerness to "pour out his heart before Him." If we would be like Francis in spirit and in truth, the Eucharist must be the soul of our piety also.

The idea of daily Mass and Communion is no longer the thing we wonder at it was in the day of Francis. Our danger is that we come to take for granted the miracle of love for granted, and so, in our own fashion, repeat the mistake of the medieval Catholic by failing to tap this splendid source of spiritual life, this "great aid to the love of Christ." We would do well then to take Saint Francis for another favor, the grace of perpetual wonder at this invisible fountain of all blessings." Whenever we welcome Christ, be it on an altar or in our hearts, let it be with a blessed mixture of his Seraphic voice and Seraphic love.

"It is a great misery and a deplorable weakness," wrote Francis, "when you have Him thus present to care for anything else in the world. Let the entire man be seized with fear; let heaven exult when Christ is in the living God, is on the altar in the hands of the priest. O admirable light and stupendous condescension! O humble sublimity! O sublime love! that the Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humble Himself for our salvation He hides Himself under a morsel of bread. Consider, brothers, the humility of God and pour out your hearts before Him, and be persuaded that ye may be exalted by Him. Do not therefore keep back anything from yourselves that He may receive you entirely Who gives Himself up entirely to you." (*Letter to All the Friars*).

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 translated and edited together with a sketch of his life, by Rev. Fr. Pas  
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- Golland Trindale, Henrique, O. F. M.  
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- Gummerman, Basil, O. F. M. Cap.  
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- Homan, Helen Walker  
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(to be continued)

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## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

*According to Saint Bonaventure*

God is simply good, and for that reason there can be no envy in Him. Goodness loves goodness and abhors evil. God would contradict Himself were He to will evil or rejoice over it. God is charity, overflowing goodness, and in His love He gives every good and perfect gift.

As children of Saint Francis, we pride ourselves on a more conscious living of the Christian truth that we are children of God. Now, a child must resemble its father; for, as our Rule exhorts, "it becomes the child most of all to reproduce in itself the image and virtues of its parents". Imitating our Seraphic Father, then, we too must show forth in our life the goodness and charity of God. It simply follows that there can be no envy in us, no dislike of goodness, no joy over evil. *Charity does not envy . . . thinks no evil, does not rejoice over wickedness, but rejoices with truth* (I Cor. 13, 4-7).

Nevertheless, as long as they are pilgrims here upon earth, even the children of God may be tempted to envy and jealousy. Hence the Seraphic Doctor urges us to ask ourselves.

DO I YIELD TO ENVY BY REJOICING OVER THE FAILURES OF OTHERS OR BY GRIEVING OVER THEIR SUCCESSES AND GOOD FORTUNE; BY BEING PLEASED AT DISCOVERING FAULTS IN THEM AND UNHAPPY AT DISCOVERING GOOD QUALITIES?

Before going on to consider these points, it may be well to distinguish between merely human envy, or jealousy, and diabolical envy, or envy in a more restricted sense.

Human envy is almost synonymous with jealousy. Jealousy does not sin so much against God and goodness as against our neighbor and fraternal charity. Jealousy is egoism. A certain object which is the property of someone else appeals to us and we covet it; or a certain object which we possess appeals to others and we guard it passionately so as to keep it for ourselves alone.

In regard to jealousy, then, we may ask ourselves questions such as the following: Do I covet the good qualities of others—gifts, talents, virtues, appearance, personality? Do I suffer when I see that others are better than I, have more success in their work, receive more praise from superiors, are held in higher esteem than I? How do I react when one of my fellow religious meets with outstanding success or wins a bit of glamorous publicity? Is it easy

for me to offer congratulations with unmistakable evidence of sincere joy, or does my forced smile, my dead-fish handclasp, my faint damnation betray the petty rancour in my heart? Do I feel hurt when others advanced to positions of authority or given opportunities to standing work for the Order? Do I try to salve my wounded ego with argument that circumstances favored them, that superiors are partial to them, that they are mere sycophants and that if I stooped to their level I could rise to prominence? Do I have the childish habit of comparing myself with others and concluding that I am just as good, if not better, than they?

There are some religious who possess many talents, but keep even them for themselves. On this point we may ask: Do I keep my knowledge and the fruits of my experience for myself alone and refuse to share them with others?—for example, a certain method of teaching, or an unusual recipe, or an effective way of handling a difficult situation? If so, what is the reason? Because I want to be known as the only one who can do this particular kind of work, or because I fear someone else may surpass me, or because of the smallness of my heart I feel that others should learn the hard way? Did I withhold from others information and skills that would be of use to the community and to those under our care, preferring the praise of my own little glory to the common good? Jealous guarding of one's talents and knowledge is a kind of spiritual miserliness; it is one of the meanest faults a religious can be guilty of.

Of a much more serious nature, however, is the diabolical envy mentioned by Saint Bonaventure. If jealousy stems from human weakness, diabolical envy stems from complete malice and no excuse can be offered for it; it is a total perversion of nature. For greater clarity, let us examine ourselves on each of the four points Saint Bonaventure mentions:

1. *To rejoice over the misfortunes of others.* Malicious joy is mean. It is true that *simile simili gaudet*, then to rejoice over the failure of another gives evidence of a soul that has failed itself, that has wrecked itself on the rocks of malicious envy. If we experience joy over the misfortunes of others, even of our enemies—it can mean only that our soul is devoid of charity, that words and deeds which may appear charitable to other persons are the effluvia of egoism in the sight of God. Our self-scrutiny in regard to this must be merciless; to deceive ourselves would be tantamount to eternal sui-

There are many kinds of failures and misfortunes, but here we are concerned only with those that are not of a moral or religious character but are more or less extrinsic to the person afflicted. We may test out attitudes in general by asking one of the following questions: How do I react when one of my confreres is in trouble? Do I feel genuine sympathy? That is elementary charity. Do I feel that it serves him right, that he deserves to suffer because of this or that injustice done to him? That is revenge. Do I actually enjoy watching him suffer? That is diabolical envy. By way of closer examination, we may ask ourselves: Do I enjoy watching others writhe under the crossfire of public rebuke or scandal or severe criticism? Do I feel satisfaction, gloat over them, make them the butt of my cheap jokes and witticisms? Do I even increase their misery by deliberately meddling with them? If I know a confrere has suffered a severe loss—a beloved friend, perhaps, or a close relative—do I add to his pain by my attitude? Do I make the misfortunes and failures of others the subject of my liveliest and most interesting conversation? Do I impatiently publicize them even outside the convent, like the bird that fouls its own nest? Is it a joy for me to dig up the old bones of forgotten scandals and scatter them abroad, perhaps even to the ruin of a person who has since lived a good and respectable life? Do I realize that this kind of subversive activity is murder in the worst sense—spiritual murder? Our Seraphic Father had harsh words for such envious religious: "Disruption threatens the Order," he warned, "unless the detractors are counteracted. The sweetest odor spread by the many good Friars will soon turn to stench unless the stinkers' mouths are gagged . . . and if you find any accused brother innocent, make his accuser a marked man before everyone."

As Franciscans we must try to keep our heart always charitable, always pure, and the eye of our mind simple and open to all good, blind to all evil. In the misfortunes and failures of others let us see only Christ Who suffers in them, and let us leave judgment to the Lord.

2. *To grieve over the success and good fortune of others.* It seems that religious frequently overlook one basic form of charity—to rejoice at the good fortune of others. Yet it is this very rejoicing with others that, according to Saint Bonaventure, will increase our happiness in heaven, since the *amor caritatis exultat in multitudine bonae societatis*. Our fallen nature, however, and our disordered self-love make it much easier for us to feel sympathy with one who suffers than with one who rejoices. But even here we must be careful to distinguish between the real *compassio*—the real suffering with another—and the pseudo-compassion that affords us a kind of sentimental pleasure in feeling sorry for

another. In any case, the charity that must be in us as true children of God forbids that we should ever grieve over the happiness and success of our brethren in Christ. And this is the point we should now consider. Am I unhappy because others are happy? Do I keep aloof or maintain a disapproving silence, when I find a confrere basking in the light of glory? Do I try to belittle the accomplishments and good works of others, try to explain away a confrere's virtues because they appear to be faults, or insinuate that what passes for a good work is the consequence of overweening ambition or some other vice? Do I impute unworthy motives to every work of charity, to every outstanding enterprise that is not my own? If someone who was my equal and my friend is suddenly raised to a prominent position or is made superior, do I promptly discover his failings and refuse to see any good qualities in him?

Saint Francis seems to have known this kind of envious religious malice well, for he analyzes their motives with merciless clarity: "This is how the detractor talks: 'I possess no moral perfection, I have no learning or talent to fall back on, and so I have no standing with God or with men. I will do what I will do: I will smear the elect and curry favor with those higher than I. I know that my superior is human and that he, too, now and then makes the same shift as I to fell the great cedars and leave myself the only shrub in the forest.' Ah, you wretch, go, live on human flesh, and with nothing else to live on, gnaw at the vitals of your brothers!"

If I am the kind of a person who has no eye for anything good, either in my own Order or in any other, I must realize that I do not love God. For I am truly catholic—universal and all-embracing—I will rejoice over all the good that is done for God and the Church. Anything less would be unworthy of a child of Francis, the *vir catholicus*.

3. *To be pleased at discovering faults in others.* Here the Seraphic Doctor advises us to examine our attitude toward moral and religious defects in others. We must have true and genuine pity and sympathy and mercy toward all sinners, but we must never be happy at discovering sin in anyone. Sin must always be abhorrent to us, and we must hate it because it offends God and defiles the world redeemed by Christ. It is not hard to discover faults in others. The Pharisees had no difficulty in discovering faults even in Christ Himself. And how pleased they were! How pleased they were to discover sin in others, how happy to condemn! Am I perhaps of the race of the Pharisees? Am I meticulous and correct in exterior observance, scrupulously careful to avoid staining myself

serious sin, yet totally devoid of understanding love and pity for the weak who cannot measure up to the law that I so flawlessly represent? Do I indulge in the satanic practise of spying on others, setting traps for them, deliberately maneuvering them into situations that I know—or hope—will break them? If I do these things, what is my motive? Am I trying to ruin others, or am I trying to enhance the whiteness of my own perfections against the blackness of another's sins? Whatever the reason for our joy in discovering evil in others, that joy is diabolical.

4. *To be displeased at discovering good qualities in others.* This is the ultimate in malice. If we are jealous of the good qualities we see in others, it is only because we want them for ourselves. But if we are displeased at seeing good qualities in others because we hate goodness, then we are steeped in that kind of envy that characterizes the devil. Certainly no child of Saint Francis could live such a terrible contradiction—no Christian could live it. We mention it here only because of the sad fact that even religious may fall so far from grace that goodness becomes hateful to them. Let us be watchful then; let us keep a close scrutiny over our attitudes toward the virtues we see in others, lest spiteful envy poison our soul.

The words of Saint Peter offer a fitting close to this examination of conscience: *Lay aside, therefore, all malice, and all deceit, and pretense, and envy, and all slander. Crave, as newborn babes, pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow to salvation; if, indeed, you have tasted that the Lord is sweet* (I Pet. 2, 1-2).

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He who contemns knowledge is an enemy of nature, because it is natural for man to desire knowledge; therefore, he who despises knowledge sins against nature, and he who neglects the gift and talent of the Holy Spirit stands convicted of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Saint John Capistran, O. F. M.

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

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

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

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

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

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

strange character and her still strange spirituality.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### Saint Francis

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

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

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