COVER AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

The cover and illustrations for the January issue of THE CORD were drawn by Sister Mary Regina, P.C.P.A., a contemplative at Sancta Clara Monastery, Canton, Ohio.

the CORD

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Prayer for Unity Expresses Love

The theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity during January 18-25, 1972, is Christian love. " A new commandment I give you, that you love one another," Jesus told his disciples in his farewell to them at the Last Supper (Jn. 13:34). At the same time he instituted the Eucharist as the sacrament of unity and offered his prayer to the Father for the unity of his followers for all ages and in all places: "that they all may be one."

It is imperative for us now to realize some of the implications of love in regard to Christian Unity. Much of the interest and enthusiasm of the years following Vatican II has waned. People are content to return to their former positions of complacency. It is easier that way. The Council of Churches on a local, regional, and national level is far different than a few short years ago. We may have to hit rock bottom before we begin to rise again and what the immediate future holds is anyone's guess. We need renewed dedication to the cause of unity; it is the position of the church today. It must become active in the life style of every Christian. It must show itself in the spirit of love.

Faith is demanded so that the teachings of Christ may be accepted; hope is necessary so that the future may be fraught with promise. But most of all love must be present so that the message and the mission of the Son of God may be lived and proclaimed to a world which needs him so desperately.

Love demands sacrifice, concern for others, the all-out giving of self. There is much talk about love today, but some of it is unreal and untrue and it does not last. Love is honest and sincere, capable of rebounding if necessary.

Pope John XXIII, who lived the command of Christ to love in a most wonderful way, felt the imperative of love in regard to unity. "Many misunderstandings have been smoothed over," he observed, "and everywhere there is a keen longing for brotherly relations and for the fulfillment of the wish expressed by our Saviour in his prayer to the heavenly Father at the Last Supper. We must therefore continue to strengthen the bonds of charity in order to prepare the way for increasing and more ardent efforts, in expectation of God's good time."

But he recognized that the path to unity is long and difficult and demands the very best in us. "It is a long and arduous road, demanding faith and perseverance, but we must remember all that the Lord has done and still does for every one of us and remember too that he continues to love all the redeemed, in spite of the insults and ingratitude with which they regard his kindness. So we must never give up praying and doing all that we can to hasten the coming of that day for which he prayed, when 'all shall be one.'"

Such is the purpose of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: to act as a stimulus to sincere and persevering prayer throughout the entire year. It cannot be limited to a short period in January; it must be an expression of love every day: a love that "reverses the roles" and brings the leader to serve as a servant, the innocent to serve as the guilty, in the love that will bring peace and unity to the world by its sacrificial quality. This is a love, like Christ's love for his own, that does not ask questions about worthiness but simply gives itself in humble service. And mutual love is the proof of Christian discipleship.

— *Titus Cranny, S.A.*

MONTHLY CONFERENCE

The Greatness of Gratitude

Robert J. Waywood, O. F. M.

It was only natural that Jesus should have miraculously multiplied the loaves in the desert, for he was a supernatural Person. It is not entirely puzzling that thereafter he should command the left-over morsels to be collected, for he was human like us in every feature except sinfulness. What is a bit astounding is that Jesus should so manifestly pause to give thanks for the provisions when he was himself the provider. Here as elsewhere Jesus was scrupulous in the observance of table prayers. The reason was, I believe, that the Master was furnishing his disciples with object lessons in a virtue that could bridge the human and the divine, that could most expeditiously lead man to God: the virtue of gratitude.

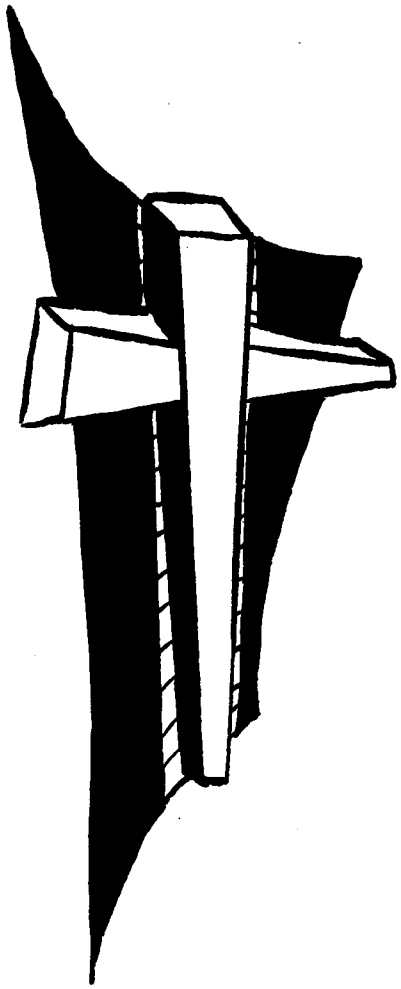
Twelve centuries after this miracle, the scene has changed from a grassy hill in the wilderness of Galilee to the dusty outskirts of a town in southern France. Saint Francis, who was neither photogenic in feature nor impressive in stature, and Brother Masseo, who could have filled any casting-director's bill as the "tall, dark, and handsome type," had just returned from their quotidian quest for bread. Francis exhibited his fistful of crumbs, and Brother Masseo appeared with several long loaves of bread tucked under his arms. On hearing the Saint chortle, "Brother Masseo, we're not worthy of such rich treasures as these," the good-looking friar wryly remarked, "Father, how can you talk of treasure when we lack just about everything! We don't have a table or knives or plates or beverage—just a few chunks of stale bread." Saint Francis jubilantly rejoined, "This is the very reason why I consider our meal a great treasure, because man has hardly had a hand in it, but all has been bestowed by divine Providence—as we clearly see in this bread of charity, this beautiful table of stone, and this clear stream of water. And so, let us beg God to make us love with all our hearts the treasure of holy poverty." Thereupon Francis devoutly gave thanks, and both men fell to the bread with gusto.

Father Robert J. Waywood, O.F.M., Assistant Professor of English at Siena College, is a frequent contributor to our pages.

Obviously poverty was the leading virtue, not to say **idée fixe**, of the man nicknamed "the Poverello." Most of his other moral excellencies are easily reducible to poverty. His remarkable humility—his sincerely low esteem of himself—was due to a sort of poverty of mind. His legendary obedience in regard to ecclesiastical authorities, religious superiors, and his own holy Rule may be construed as a certain poverty of will. Actually, his poverty might itself be further reduced to, and explained by, his habitual attitude of gratitude. It was precisely this grateful frame of mind, which lay at the root of his poverty, that distinguished Francis from a hundred and one ordinary beggars of Assisi and from the elite religious fanatics, such as the Albigenses, of the thirteenth century. Necessary poverty without gratitude is chill penury or greedy destitution; voluntary poverty without gratitude is gaunt and grumbling asceticism. But poverty with and because of gratitude is Holy Poverty—perfect joy, in the eyes of Saint Francis.

If there was one man who could understand and articulate the outlook and uplook of the grateful beggar of Assisi, it was his biographer Gilbert Keith Chesterton. In several essays touching upon the Saint, Chesterton explained Franciscan gratitude. It might be likened to that giddy and grateful surprise Robinson Crusoe experienced upon salvaging a small but valuable miscellany from the recent wreck. Each precious item—the axe, the fowling-piece, the roll of lead, the sodden gunpowder—was affectionately gathered and thoughtfully catalogued at the water's brink. So too, Saint Francis regarded all the creatures under the sun with fierce endearment and spontaneous appreciation as if rescued by Jesus Christ from the cosmic shipwreck that was Original Sin.

Chesterton further elaborated the Franciscan mentality when he posed the question in his **Autobiography**, "Who am I that I should deserve a dandelion?" The query plainly re-echoed the Poverello's ecstatic interrogation, "Lord, who am I but a miserable little worm?" Elsewhere Chesterton reasoned that, if children thank their parents on Christmas morning for filling their stockings with sweetmeats, parents ought to thank God every morning for filling their children's stockings with . . . legs—the latter being no less gratuitous than the former. Such was the sentiment of Saint Francis when he regarded Sister Water, who was usually taken for granted instead of taken with gratitude: "Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water, rolling or running or in a whirl— / To Thee, a chaste, devoted daughter; to man, a humble servant girl" (**Canticle of the Sun**). Chesterton, following suit, suggested that we compose and offer a grace before



opera and a grace before work to complement our grace before meals. His secretary of many years, Dorothy Thompson, testifies that Chesterton used to make a sign of the Cross with his cigar before lighting up. Francis had gone even further with his gratitude and recited a grace before being cauterized with a hot iron.

With such a weight of testimony to recommend it, this virtue of gratitude bears looking into more closely. Thanksgiving has always been reckoned as one of the aims of the believer's prayer to God; but the philosopher, I think, would do well to study the phenomenon of gratitude as an argument in itself for belief in God. The argument no doubt can be analyzed as being merely an application of the proof of God's existence from causality. But its appeals transcends the purely notional and penetrates to the visceral level. Oscar Wilde once quipped that people do not really appreciate a beautiful sunset because they cannot pay for it. Chesterton had a ready answer to that cynical stance: he said that people could pay for that satisfying sight by not being other Oscar Wildes, that is, by not being as cynical and amoral as the decadent poet. But a more immediate reaction to, and recompense for, the view of a gorgeous sunset is simply to enjoy it in grateful awe. Whether gratitude be experienced as a sentiment or a sensation, like love, it is meaningless when looked upon absolutely—as occuring in a vacuum—and without relationship to another person. To give thanks or even to feel like giving thanks implies a person to receive the thanks. And when the gratuity bestowed obviously has no human referent, as would be the case with a thrilling vista of the Grand Canyon or a startling panorama of the stars, the terminus of the thanks must be another Person—

capital **P**. The most ridiculous sight in the world has to be an atheist atop the Matterhorn gaping at the inspiring spectacle below.

Like the philosopher, the psychologist will discover in the exercise of gratitude something elementary and advantageous. There is something radically therapeutic, for the sick mind and the tortured will, in a spontaneous act of thanksgiving. Gratitude puts things in accurate perspective: as when a man measures his shoddy footwear against the amputee's indigence. And, as a smile (physiologists say) relaxes and refreshes the facial muscles with negligible effort, so a grateful sigh gratuitously unstrings the harried or scruple-ridden heart. Many a counselor has bidden his client count his little blessings—like indoor plumbing and gainful employment—to invite repose. Awareness of larger, if less obvious, gifts such as the breath of life or the memory of a mother, can make him bolt from his early morning bed and dash to his duties. The grateful neurotic is well on the road to recovery. He is miles ahead of the somber soul who decrees with fearful effrontery, "Blessed are those who expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed."

The serious student of asceticism will find in gratitude a virtue worthy of close consideration and unqualified cultivation. On the one hand, the exercise of thinksgiving can never become excessive. Hope pushed too far can turn into presumption; faith can be contorted into superstition; prudence in excess can beget paralysis; fortitude in the extreme becomes recklessness; even temperance and justice have their outer limits. But gratitude, like the charity Saint Paul describes in the thirteenth chapter of his first Letter to the Corinthians, cannot be overdone. On the other hand, the practice of the virtue of gratitude is safely within the reach of everyone, whatever his spiritual stature or ethical propensities. Very few can emulate the flaming faith, the iron fortitude, or the excruciating poverty of a Saint Francis of Assisi. But no one has to shrink from or strain after the example of gratitude left us by the Poverello. Even the moral back-slider can be Christ-like to the extent of mumbling his table prayers into his beer.

As a follower of Saint Francis who has—thank God—an ear for music, I have often mused what might make a good theme song for the Franciscan Order. Some titles immediately came to mind: "I've Got Plenty of Nothing," for example, or "The Best Things in Life Are Free." On further consideration, however, it occurred to me that probably the most appropriate number was the Chant Preface in the Missal. The start of that song, I think, makes a fitting close for this explanation of the greatness of gratitude. It goes: "Father, all-powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks..."

Bonaventure: Reverence and Relevance

Marigwen Schumacher

The sub-title of this two-part discussion is stated as "Reverence and Relevance" because I tend to favor alliteration in titles, as well as because it thus easily, obviously breaks the discussion into two parts: (1) Reverence and (2) Relevance—and there is, I do believe, a connection between them which will formulate the conclusion.

I. Reverence

The first part, on Reverence, could well be called "Windows." For I propose—literally and figuratively—to take "window glimpses" into Bonaventure's life and writings. This is not meant to be a chronological biography, nor an account of early Franciscan activities and problems, nor a theological-philosophical discursus. There are excellent sources available for detailed study in each of these topics. **My** concern is with the person who is Bonaventure. I want to share with you some of what my research has revealed of the fabric and fiber of Bonaventure's world—but only in the manner of kaleidoscopic light which, as it revolves, brings into play varying tones, colors, and emotions without for all that presenting a complete or systematic analysis.

The "windows" I am using are those in the magnificent friary chapel at St. Bonaventure University. Each of the six windows portrays an incident in Bonaventure's life and centers it around one of his writings.

The first one represents the saving of Bonaventure's life, as a young boy, through the prayers of his mother to Saint Francis; and the text is the **Legenda S. Francisci**, written in 1261. This, then, is the frame for our window-view of Bonaventure's early life. Bonaventure was born, probably about 1217—nine years before Francis' death—at Bagnorea in Italy: a region near Viterbo—Orvieto—somewhat north of Rome and southwest of Assisi. His father was a physician, evidently moderately wealthy. The whole area of medicine must have interested Bonaventure, for he uses medical terms and analogies frequently in his later writings. This may also be

Miss Marigwen Schumacher teaches Classics in the Division of Languages and the Division of Humanities at The Emma Willard School, Troy, N.Y.

part of the reason for his great interest in living things and his abundant metaphors of life and growth, be it leaves, flowers, or souls.

Bonaventure himself refers to childhood healing:

> Numerous blessings from God richly flow through him in various parts of the world. Just as I myself, from my own experience, give witness. Prayers for my recovery were dimming when, sent by my mother (this happened while I was still a small child), I was snatched from the very jaws of death through him and brought back to strength and health (**Legenda Minor**, lect. viii; ed. Quaracchi, vol. 8, p. 579).

It is to this encounter that his name is attributed: i.e., O Bona Ventura!—and also his acceptance of the commission to write, in 1260, the "official life" of Francis:

> Knowing myself unworthy and inadequate to write the biography of this outstanding man, nevertheless, even if the friars in Chapter had not fervently urged me to do this, I would have been compelled to attempt the task because—I remember as though it were yesterday—it was through calling upon his merits that, as a child, I was snatched from the jaws of death... I realize that the life of my body and of my soul was preserved for me by God through him and I have experienced his strength in myself (**Legenda Maior**, prol., §3; vol. 8, p. 505).

The second window shows Bonaventure as a teacher at the University of Paris. The text is his monumental **Commentarii in Libros Sententiarum** (1250-1256). Bonaventure came to Paris about 1234 to study at the University. He probably (although the exact date is still somewhat disputed) entered the Order of Friars Minor in Paris in 1243—at the age, then, of 26. He pursued the rigorous required program of the highly structured medieval university system and, after receiving his degrees, "gave a series of lectures on the Gospel of Luke which were beautifully and skillfully done and wrote four books on the **Sentences**... which still today are useful and brilliant." (**De Vita S. Bonaventurae**; vol. 10, p. 42)

There is dispute (and note I am avoiding all "disputed questions") as to when he obtained "magisterial status" at the University. Certainly he held it at the College of Friars at the age of 35. There was considerable tension during these years between the secular professors and the newly introduced Dominican and Franciscan teachers. Eventually both he and Thomas were granted full university rights. Whatever the exact date, we can visualize Bonaventure in the years from 1250 to 1257 lecturing and preaching at the University, to the Friars, and generally in and around Paris. Many of his **Sermones** which date from these years have been preserved. Paris was also the setting for his famous series of lectures: the **Collationes de VII donis Spiritus Sancti; Collationes de decem praeceptis**; and the unfinished **Collationes in Hexaemeron**.

In the third window, Bonaventure is revealing the secret of his wisdom to Thomas Aquinas. The text, appropriately, is the **Lignum**

Vitae, written in 1260. The friendship between Bonaventure and Thomas is, perhaps, best illustrated by quoting and extending Bonaventure's own words:

> No one is ready for the Gospel teaching unless he has shouldered the yoke of obedience, [Bonaventure observes in a sermon on Mt. 11:29 for the Feast of Saint Dominic] and for this two oxen are more suitable than one. Thus, in these last times, two Orders have been established; and just as the Lord joincd Paul to Peter in carrying the yoke, so too Bernard to Benedict, and Francis to Dominic (**De S. Dominico**, vol. 9, p. 565).

and, I add, "Bonaventure to Thomas." Similarly we read in the **Annales Minorum** of Wadding:

> Thomas Aquinas blazed with the same virtue and learning as did Bonaventure. They were joined in bonds of deepest love... It is a great testimony of a great man that Thomas called his friend, while he [Bonaventure] was still alive, "Saint" (**ad an. 1260**; vol. 18, p. 155).

The incident dramatized in this window is preserved for us in Wadding's account:

> Here we are giving another anecdote between Bonaventure and Thomas. From this seems to have originated the tradition about the Cross at the feet of which Bonaventure drank in all wisdom. One time, at Paris, Thomas was remarking that Bonaventure spent himself more on the Passion of Christ than on his assignments. Then Thomas saw, above the head of Bonaventure, Christ and from His wounds... flowing into the mouth of Bonaventure; thereafter Thomas did not dare to criticize him (Cited in **Vita**; **vol. 10, p. 54, n. 2**).

It seems fitting to add, here, two stanzas from the Hymn of the poet-mystic, Bonaventure, **to the Cross**:

> Keep it close, with Christ for leader,
> Till you live in light so brilliant
> That all doubt is cast away;
> Weary not and slacken never,
> That your heart be set afire
> With a flame as bright as day.
> Let the Cross's inner flavor
> Through the heart and through the [senses
> Spread its sweetness utterly;
> Let the Cross direct your body,
> Know its presence all-enclosing
> In your human entity.
> (stanzas 2 and 5; tr. José de Vinck).

The "prince of mystics"—to use the phrase of Leo XIII—is also a very real person understanding of human needs: "Because visual aids assist understanding," he says in the prologue of the **Lignum Vitae**, "I have gathered into a sort of visual tree and arranged it so that the lowest branches describe the birth and life of our Lord, the middle ones his Passion and death, and the topmost branches his Glory." (Vol. 8, p. 68).

The fourth window shows Bonaventure presiding at the Chapter of Narbonne, and the text is, of course, the **Constitutiones Generales Narbonnenses**. In 1256, when Bonaventure was still lecturing at Paris— a man in his mid-thirties —he was elected Minister General. The Quaracchi **vita** captures, in simplicity, some of the color:

> When those upon whom the duty of election had fallen asked John of Parma [the retiring Minister General]: "Father, you have visited throughout the Order and have come to know the mores and lifestyle of the friars. Nominate, for us, one friar who is suitable and whom we can put in charge of this task and succeed you." John of Parma immediately nominated Friar Bonaventure of Bagnorea and said that in the Order he had not come to know a better man than him. At once all agreed and Bonaventure was elected... and was in charge for eighteen years and accomplished many good things.

It appalls and impresses me that Bonaventure guided the rapidly mushrooming Order for all those years—longer as Minister General than anyone else! This was a period of strife and struggle within the Order and within the Church: Joachim de Fiore, John of Parma, heresies, trials, condemnations, indignation, splinter groups, factions, tensions... There is far too much complexity even to attempt, here, a simplistic explanation. Reams have been written, after all, in the effort to unsnarl, to unravel the tangled skein. But Bonaventure must in many ways have been a veritable "bridge over troubled waters." His first official act as Minister General was to send a letter to all Provincials and Guardians. This letter is a witness to his clear-headed and warm-hearted appraisal of the situation within the Order. In 1260 he summoned the first general chapter meeting at Narbonne in France where, in the words of his secretary Bernard de Bessa, he gave "structure and shape to the Constitutions."

In the following years, Bonaventure was busy teaching, preaching, guiding the Order. All of this involved much travel—from Paris to Rome and throughout Italy and France—and the pace of life must have been hectic. Take a look at the intinerary worked out by Fr. Bougerol, and recall that these were days before jet flights!

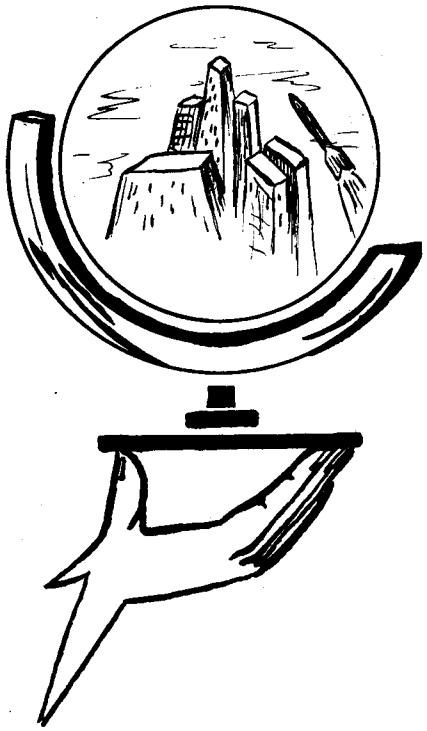
One incident (out of so many) that I should like to include because it is so familiar to us, a part of our everyday lives, and yet is a contact with Bonaventure too—is his insistence at the Pisa Chapter (1263) that "at Compline, the bells peal so that they might greet the Virgin Mary in every town." It is generally agreed that from this began our **Angelus**.

In the fifth window we see Bonaventure presiding at the Council of Lyons in May of 1274. The text is the **Breviloquium**, written about 1257 on his colleagues' request that he set forth a summary of theology. It perhaps most clearly presents his own synthesis of knowledge and Christian faith.

Although Bonaventure had been successful in his earnest pleading, in 1265, that Clement IV release him from appointment as Archbishop of York, he could not, in 1273, avoid nor alter Gregory X's insistence that he become Cardinal Bishop of Albano. From November of 1273 therefore, until May of 1274, he added to his duties as Minister General and to the challenging task of summoning a Chapter to elect his successor, close collaboration with the Pope in preparing the Second Council of Lyons.

The Pope had ordered that Bonaventure come without delay. A famous ancedote (which I have come to believe is "just like Bonaventure!) preserved in Wadding and elsewhere, recounts the "universal

tradition" that Bonaventure, who had started from Paris on his way to the Pope, had arrived at the friary near Florence. While he was drying the supper dishes, the pontifical legates arrived, bringing him the Cardinal's red hat. Bonaventure did not wish them to approach until he had finished the dishes; and so they hung the hat on a branch of the tree as he suggested. Finally, when he had finished, he offered by way of explanation the observation: "After we have finished these tasks for the Friars Minor, let us attempt those heavier ones. These have been steady and healthful, believe me, Friars; but those... heavy and dangerous tasks of high honor." (**Vita**; vol. 10, pp. 64-65) He told the legates to approach, then, and, with honor and ceremony, accepted and wore the red hat.



Official reports accord to Bonaventure great credit for the success of the Council of Lyons: "...presiding at the Council of Lyons, and directing everything towards the praise of God, he settled many difficult disagreements and was of great use and prestige to the Church." The Council had been summoned especially to consider the prospect for reunion with the Greeks, and in this ecumenical venture Bonaventure was involved, eloquent, successful. The accounts tell us that the reunion in question was accomplished: "On 29 June, the Pope celebrated a Solemn Mass in which the Epistle, Gospel, and Creed were sung both in Latin and in Greek; Bonaventure preached the homily." On July 6 the reunion was again verified, and the **Te Deum** was sung in rejoicing.

The final window—the sixth—is a representation of the glorious reception of Bonaventure—Saint and Doctor—by the Holy Trinity in the court of heaven. The text is his treatise **De mysterio Sanctissimae Trinitatis**, written at Paris in 1253. In the midst of the sessions of the Council of Lyons, Bonaventure died suddenly. The exact cause is unknown. He was 57 years old at the time of his death on 14 July 1274. All were grief-stricken. The following report is found in the documents of the Council:

> On the morning of 14 July, Friar Bonaventure, Cardinal Bishop of Albano, died. He was a man of outstanding knowledge and eloquence; a man, moreover, of unusual holiness, endowed with compassion and other remarkable qualities, kind, gracious, thoughtful and loving, filled with virtues, beloved of God and men. He was buried the same day in the Friars' church at Lyons. The Pope assisted at the funeral along with all the Council Fathers and the Curia... There was much tearful grief and lamentation, for the Lord had given him this grace, that whoever saw him, loved him with a deep, heartfelt love (**Vita**; vol. 10, p. 67).

In 1434, 160 years after his death, his bodily remains were moved to the new church of Saint Francis at Lyons. On this occasion numerous reports testify that his head, hair, tongue, and teeth were still whole and uncorrupted. At this time too several reliquaries were made and given, e.g., to the church at Bagnoregio, to Charles VIII of France, and others. Bonaventure was canonized on 14 April 1482 by Pope Sixtus IV, and his merits extolled in the Bull **Superna coelestis patria**.

In May of 1562, during the bloody strife between Huguenot and Catholic, the friary at Lyons was invaded, devastated, profaned. The main reliquary of Bonaventure was torn from its hiding place, added to the fire of sacred treasures in the square in front of the church, and its ashes later thrown into the river. The other reliquary was saved at this time and, along with his crucifix and chalice, restored to the church. A century later, however, in another wave of destruction, the church, the friary, and presumably also the reliquary were lost.

Pope Sixtus V promulgated a Bull, **Triumphantis Ierusalem**, on 14 March 1588, in which Bonaventure was especially recognized as the sixth Doctor of the Church, under the title "Doctor Seraphicus." (Thomas Aquinas had been established as the fifth.) To quote a small excerpt from the **Triumphantis Ierusalem**:

> There was in Saint Bonaventure that unusual and special gift: he had an outstanding perception in discussion, a fluency in teaching, a keenness in explaining. In addition he had that rare power of arousing hearts and minds. In his writings he combined great knowledge with a spiritual intensity that stretched the mind of his reader and plunged into his heart the shafts and sweetness of deep devotion.

The **magnum mysterium** of the Trinity is frequently taught, explained, marvelled at by Bonaventure, in treatises of deep theological insight, complex philosophical rationale, lucid, inspiring, clarifying, evocative phrase. It would be folly for me, here, to attempt an adequate presentation; but a small glimmer from his homily on the Trinity may be appropriate. On the text, "There are three who give witness in heaven," he says, in part:

> Let us see, therefore, the representation of the Blessed Trinity in the sky [n.b. **coelum** and its meanings] as though in a footprint [**vestigium**]: This is done in a triple manner... The Lord wishes that his faithful look at the sky in order to see there the glowing splendor of the Creator—i.e., of the

Blessed Trinity—and this in three ways: consistency, influence, and efficacy. **Consistentia** attests to the Father, **influentia** to the Son, and **efficacia** to the Holy Spirit; and yet in each one the whole Trinity is depicted. In **consistentia** are three qualities: magnitude which is the Father, beauty which is the Son, and lavish diffusion which is the Holy Spirit. For the magnitude of the sky attests to the power of the Father; its beauty attests to the wisdom of the Son; and its lavish diffusion attests to the goodness of the Holy Spirit who distributes an abundance of charismatic graces . . .

II. Relevance

Just as there were six windows lending themselves to our meditation on Bonaventure's life, so we shall now consider six aspects of his relevance now—in 1972. It is hardly necessary, incidentally, to point out the symbolism involved in this parallelism of numbers.

Again, just as the windows of the friary chapel provided the solid frame for our considerations, with reverence, of various episodes of Bonaventure's life, so Bonaventure's own words, taken mostly from his homilies and letters (as this is my own special interest), provide here the solid basis for an appreciation of his relevance.

The window illustrations gave the main thrust, and the text furnished in each case a leit-motif. So here the documents of the Second Vatican Council will supply a leit-motif for the main thrust of Bonaventure's text. I propose to consider briefly each of these topics: (1) the nature of the church, (2) the nature of preaching, (3) the nature of the individual call to holiness, (4) the nature of the Order of Friars Minor, (5) the nature of ecumenism, and (6) the nature of the universal dimension.

My method will be to juxtapose quotations—with little or no comment—so that the reader may draw his own conclusions as to the relevance of Bonaventure to these present-day concerns of ours. I suppose I am somewhat "stacking the deck" because I have chosen the quotations and arranged the juxtaposition; but I am not claiming, nor mandating, nor delimiting your response.

The Church

In the opening conference of his series of **Collationes in Hexaemeron**, the lectures which are unfinished because of his election as Cardinal, Bonaventure defines the nature of the Christian community:

> The "church" is the calling together of thinking persons... It is the union of thinking persons living together in harmony and unity through a harmonious and united observance of divine law, through the harmonious and united singing together of divine praise. These follow in this order because praise is not possible where there is not peace; and peace is not possible where there is not an observance of divine law... The "church" is called "column and foundation" (1 Tim. 3:15) because it illumines the mind and stabilizes courage. Those who come are illumined through faith and stabilized through the steadfastness of virtue. To observers of divine law, lovers of divine peace, singers of divine praise, then, and not to others, this lecture is directed... for these are "church-men."

And in one of his homilies on the Ascension, Bonaventure speaks of the church as a "bundle" because it is gathered from many faithful, some of whom fall out and others remain—just as in the case of a bundle of branches, some fall out and others stay."

According to **Lumen Gentium**, the conciliar document on the church:

> By her relationship with Christ, the church is a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all men. She is also an instrument for the achievement of such unity and union... thus through the common sharing of gifts and through the common effort to attain fullness in unity, the whole and each of the parts receive increase... All men are called to be part of this catholic unity of the People of God, a unity which is harbinger of the universal peace it promotes.

Preaching

Bonaventure frequently refers to, explains, capsulizes the "duty of preaching." He says, for instance, that there are three qualities that "ought to be part of the duty of preaching: 1) holiness of deed, 2) truth of faith, and 3) authority of office..."

"It is important," he says elsewhere, "to measure out prudently the 'verbum divinum' according to the capacity of those listening in order not to speak too fully nor too briefly, too eruditely nor too colloquially." And since "we give witness in our preaching to the truth of eternal salvation... let us confirm what we say through Sacred Scripture."

Expanding on Sirach 51:31 Bonaventure takes the invitation "Come close to me, you uninstructed, take your place in my school" as addressed to the laity who are "uninstructed" because they have not been instructed in divine words. They "come close" when they offer the hearing of their ears and the understanding of their hearts to the words of the preacher... Thus there ought to be in preachers 1) authority of office, 2) truth of the gospel, and 3) listening from the people.

Bonaventure, in his exegesis of the homily text, moves always through metaphor and image from the "abstract" to the "concrete circumstances of life." On the text "Be renewed in spirit" (Eph. 4:23), e.g., he says in part:

> Consider that we ought to be renewed in four ways: as a serpent through the shedding of his skin—our carnal desire; as a deer through the shedding of his horns—our pride; as an eagle through the shedding of his feathers—our vanity; and as a phoenix through his own destruction—our own selfishness.

According to the Decree on the Liturgy, **Sacrosanctum Concilium**, it is "by means of the homily [that] the mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of the Christian

life are expounded from the sacred text." By a homily, the Council Fathers understand "an explanation of some aspects of the readings from Holy Scripture ... taking into account the mystery which is being celebrated and the particular needs of the hearers."

And in the Decree on Priestly Ministry, **Presbyterorum Ordinis**, we read that

> priests ... have as their primary duty the proclamation of the Gospel of God to all ... Towards all men, therefore, priests have the duty of sharing the gospel truth in which they themselves rejoice in the Lord ... No doubt priestly preaching is often very difficult in the circumstances of the modern world. If it is to influence the mind of the listener more fruitfully, such preaching must not present God's Word in a general and abstract fashion only, but it must apply the perennial truth of the gospel to the concrete circumstances of life (§4).

The Call to Holiness

The Constitution on the Church has this to say about the individual's call to holiness: "...it is evident to everyone that all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity ..." The parallel document on "The Church Today," **Gaudium et Spes**, explains that

> The people of God believes that it is led by the Spirit of the Lord who fills the earth. Motivated by this faith, it labors to decipher authentic signs of God's presence and purpose in the happenings, needs, and desires in which this people has a part...

And Pope Paul VI observes, in an address delivered 28 August, 1969, that

> ...today there is greater need than ever to cultivate the spirit and practice of personal prayer, because of conditions in our existence, so much absorbed by the attraction of exterior things and so greatly disturbed by profound and rapid changes going on. We cannot remain Christians unless we have our own deep, continual, inward life of prayer, of faith, of charity... we cannot give evidence of that Christian authenticity about which we hear so much, we cannot think, breathe, act, suffer, and fully hope with the living pilgrim church. We **must** pray! for this is the fountain of joy and hope of which we have need in our pilgrimage here on earth.

Bonaventure says, in a homily on Luke 19:46, "My house will be a house of prayer," that

> The house of God has such an exceptional quality that God does not accept there any action other than that of prayer. Then again, prayer is so exceptional that for it especially and particularly the divine dwelling has been made ready... No one faithfully remains in the house of God unless he concentrates on prayer. Likewise everyone who earnestly and perseveringly devotes himself to prayer stays in the house of God, and this is proper because he alone is ready for salvation. Therefore the whole effort of our salvation stresses the fitting and consistent practice of prayer. In this regard, there are three things necessary for prayer to be pleasing and welcome to God. They are (1) a "making ready" [which] must lead the way to prayer, (2) an "attentiveness" [which] must accompany prayer, and (3) a "passionate joy" [which] must follow close after prayer...

And elsewhere he dialogues:

> But how shall I gain strength in virtues? Surely, through meditation on the cross of Christ! Do you want the Holy Spirit to give you his help? Be in prayer! The Holy Spirit comes upon those in prayer. Those who reflect and pray have that "gold and silver" which is evidenced in their activity ... It is not possible for anyone to have that "gold" except through a continuance of good activity ... If I should show you where to find actual veins of gold and silver, you would listen to me gladly ... for you are looking for the gold of the earth but you are not looking for that gold from which virtues are minded—and yet **that** is the kind that should be considered!

The Friars Minor

From Paris on 23 April, 1257, just after his election as Minister General, Bonaventure sent a letter to all the Ministers Provincial and Guardians of the Order. I quote from part of it:

> As I search out the reasons why the shine of our Order is somewhat dimmed, the following explanations come to me: Many jobs are greedily being sought and accepted for money—which is, above all else, enemy to the poverty of our Order. Some friars have nothing to do—and this is the worst vice! Many are half asleep, living an incredible existence between "contemplative" and "active"! Many are wandering about and, for their own personal physical comfort, making demands from those among whom they travel. They leave behind them an example, not of life, but of scandal! Incessant begging has made all travellers through the lands hate the arrival of the friars and fear them like pirates! There is much costly and involved construction of buildings which unsettles the friars' peace and burdens their friends and exposes us to the angry judgments of men! There is too-hasty appointment to office, so that friars not yet fully proven nor fully mature, nor strengthened in the Spirit are burdened with positions which they can barely handle. There are frequent and expensive changes of location. This creates a certain violence and unrest in the lands, shows obvious instability, and is not consistent with prudent poverty. The high cost of expenses—because the friars are not willing to be content with little—has made us burdensome to everyone and we will become more so unless a remedy is quickly applied...

There is of course no passage in the conciliar documents addressed exclusively and specifically to the Friars Minor. In place of such a text, however, I think it is legitimate to cite the **Spiritual Document** which resulted from meetings held in 1966 to "seek to present a contemporary statement on Franciscan-Gospel life in today's church and world." The translation is by Father David Flood, O.F.M.:

> We have bound ourselves to a life rooted in the gospel. We know, however, how imperfectly we satisfy this obligation, both as a community and as individuals. For that reason, in accord with the council's command, we want to hear the call to renewal sounding in the church, in the world, and in the midst of our fraternity ... to think anew how to live today as true friars minor ...
>
> We never find our gospel life once and for all. We must always seek it anew by reading the gospel within the ever-deepening intelligence the church turns on it. Consequently, our gospel life produces

a healthy uneasiness and a force for renewal . . .

Our gospel way of living, confirmed as Order by the church, has us live as brothers and not as individuals. We do not only live side by side, striving towards the same goal and helping each other to get there; we go forward with love for each other . . .

Our fraternity must not live shut up in itself. The dynamic force of true love reaches out to all things. It wants to meet in friendship and dialogue all factual persons it contacts. More precisely, our gospel life should not lead us to betray our fellowmen, for we are friars not for ourselves alone but for them as well . . . The gospel dedicates us to meeting men; turned in on ourselves, we rot; sent out towards men, we save . . .

We should be peacemakers, polite, joyful, devoid of pretension. . . Poverty is our share, and with it the kingdom of God and the land of the living. This poverty is inextricably interior and sociological. For that reason, the new structures of the world . . . require that we re-discover our attitude of poor men . . . To be poor men means to get loose from ourselves and open to all God gives . . . Our way of living is to be a sign of this attitude of poverty. It should express it and help us to deepen it. This attitude will make it impossible for us to be satisfied with a purely spiritual poverty. . .

Ecumenism

Because of the pressure of preparations and the heavy burdens of the Council itself—which may, indeed, have precipitated his sudden death—Bonaventure has left us no writings as Cardinal involved in the ecumenical affairs of the Council of Lyons. From the reports of his success in the re-uniting of Greeks and Romans, however; from the fact that he was chosen to preach the homily on the occasion (incidentally, he chose the text "Arise, Jerusalem, stand on the heights and turn your eyes to the east; see your sons reassembled from west and east at the command of the Holy One, jubilant that God remembered them!" [Baruch 5:5])—from these facts we should be able to build in our minds and hearts some understanding of his activity, achievement, and ardor in this mission.

The Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches begins as follows:

> The Catholic Church holds in high esteem the institutions of the Eastern Churches, their liturgical rites, ecclesiastical traditions, and Christian way of life. For, distinguished as they are by their venerable antiquity, they are bright with that tradition which was handed down from the apostles through the Fathers, and which forms part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the universal church.
>
> This sacred and ecumenical synod, therefore, in its concern for the Eastern Churches which bear living witness to this tradition, and in its desire that they may flourish and execute with new apostolic vigor the task entrusted to them, has determined to lay down a number of principles beyond those which relate to the universal church . . .

Compare this passage with a short excerpt from Bonaventure's homily on the Feast of the Epiphany:

> . . . the basis of the present solemnity is the arrival of the Eastern kings to worship and adore Christ. This event is celebrated with spiritual solemnity in both the Latin and the Greek church. Those Eastern kings were both the earliest of Christians and as it were the foundation of Christian belief. They were the "beginners" of the church of all peoples of the Christian religion. Moreover, the universal church celebrates this present feast to commemorate their faith and to urge us to be imitators of the Magi . . .

The Universal Dimension

The "universal dimension": this is perhaps where relevance merges with reverence, and both point to a conclusion which is not an ending but a beginning. In the friary chapel at St. Bonaventure University, behind and surrounding (almost symbolically "embracing") the main altar, there is a huge, 30-foot by 80-foot almost six-ton polychrome terra cotta reredos. This structure represents to us, on the left side, Francis at the moment of anguished glory on Mount Alverna, when he received the stigmata. The words inscribed are his frequent exclamation, "Deus meus et omnia"—i.e., "My God and my all!"

On the right side Bonaventure is depicted in a scene dating from 1259. It was October, two years after his election as Minister General. As he himself tells us,

> about the time of Francis' passing, moved by a divine impulse, I withdrew to Mt. Alvernia as to a place of quiet, there to satisfy the yearnings of my soul for peace. While I abode there, pondering on certain spiritual "reachings up" towards God, there occurred to me, among other things, that miracle which in this place had happened to blessed Francis—the vision he received of the winged seraph in the form of the Crucified. As I reflected on this marvel, it immediately seemed to me that this vision suggested the uplifting of Saint Francis in contemplation and that it pointed out the way by which that state of contemplation can be reached . . .

As we know, this vision resulted in his **Itinerarium Mentis in Deum**, his description of the Mind's Journey into God. The text which Bonaventure is here quoting is the first **Collatio in Hexaemeron**: "O Lord, I have come forth from you, Most High, and I am coming towards you, Most High, and through you, O Most High!"

The center section of the reredos is a magnificent Christ, depicted as a six-winged Seraph by Whom, towards Whom, through Whom Francis and Bonaventure—and so too, each and every one of us—is attracted, drawn, enraptured.

Scripture assures us of the eschatological significance of the "dreaming of dreams" and the "seeing of visions" and the never-ending song of Holy, Holy, Holy. . . which Francis sang in his beautiful **Canticle** and which Bonaventure constantly re-articulates throughout his writings. As a conclusion I should like to present some references made by Bonaventure in his sermons to the sentiments expressed by Francis in his **Canticle**:

Most High, Almighty, good Lord, yours are the praise, the glory and the honor and all blessings. To you alone, most High, do they belong and no man is worthy to name you.

Let us, then, praise the Lord, our God! Why have we been given understanding and tongue unless it be that God may be praised and greatly honored? In no way is a man more blessed than in blessing the Lord... but no blessing is complete unless it comes from the whole man.

Be praised, my Lord, with all your creatures, especially Sir brother Sun, who rises, and you give light to us through him. And he is fair and radiant with great brightness: of you, most High, he gives indication.

As you see, that material sun illumines the whole world materially: so does this true Sun of Justice illumine spiritually the whole heart of man and woman through grace whenever he enters in. And just as the sun, or the light of the sun when it enters through a clean window of colored glass, then the light is lovely and wonderful; but when it enters through a dirty glass window, the light is not so lovely though it is still sunlight, so it is with the Word of God...

Be praised, my Lord, for sister Moon and Stars: in heaven you have formed them bright and precious and lovely.

The moon is called the sister of the sun because it is a body most ready to receive the sun's light: it is not strange, then, if a pure soul is called the sister of Christ because that soul is most ready to receive the Light of Him who is the True Sun.

Be praised, my Lord, for brother Wind, and for the Air and cloudy, clear, and every kind of Weather, through whom you give sustenance to all your creatures.

Let us be grace-ful clouds through His grace flowing into us: let us not be storm clouds flashing forth bolts of anger and rumblings of impatience. And just as in the rainbow there is a multitude of colors, so in the spirit of Christ is a multitude of wisdom.

Be praised, my Lord, for sister Water, who is so helpful and humble and precious and pure.

By the phrase "living waters" is understood the Holy Spirit because of threefold qualities of living waters, which continually flow and make those places through which they flow fruitful and fertile. If we desire to be irrigated with these living waters, we must believe... Whoever wishes to drink from these living waters must necessarily, with much joy, give thanks and praise to divine Goodness for the benefits of the Incarnation.

Be praised, my Lord, for brother Fire, and he is fair and gay and robust and strong.

"Grace" is rightly called "fire" if the properties of this fire are considered: Fire is bright in appearance, warm in action, and quick in movement. In this manner, grace shines through awareness, warms through love, and enkindles in quick movement through commitment. Just as pottery, when fired in the kiln, is strengthened rather than destroyed, so it is with good spiritual vessels.

Be praised, my Lord, for our sister mother Earth, who sustains and directs us, and yields various fruits with colored flowers and grass.

Flowers are the first signs of the seasons growing again into new life, and they witness to our new beginnings in Christ's resurrection giving life through the newness of glory.

Four things are needed for the material tree to produce good fruit: warmth from above, good ground, careful pruning, abundant irrigation. So too four things are needed for spiritual fruitfulness: inflowing of grace, right intention, asceticism, and prayer.

Be praised, my Lord, for our sister bodily Death, from whom no living man can escape. Woe to those who die in mortal sin! Blessed are they whom she shall find in your most holy love, for the second death will do them no evil.

Death itself, in so far as it is **de se**, is punishment for sin and must be endured; in so far as it is **de ratione** of Justice and divine Grace, it is the entrance to life and therefore must be sought by good men... They know that death is worthy of seeking because, laying aside the labors of activity, the difficulties of tensions, and problems, it leads to life and joy everlasting those who are reborn in Christ.

Be praised, my Lord, for those who forgive for love of you and support sickness and tribulation. Blessed are they who support this in peace, for by you, most High, they shall be crowned. Praise and bless my Lord, and thank and serve Him in deep humility.

O most sweet, good Lord! Look with compassion on those who humbly trust in you and truly know that without you we can do nothing. You who gave yourself in payment for us, give us—although we are not worthy of it—to be so totally merged into your perfect grace that we are re-made, through your Presence, into the image of your divinity. Amen.

Thoughts on Poverty in an Age of Reform

Cyprian J. Lynch, O.F.M.

One who registers shock at the strange facts he uncovers as he reviews the history of the Pilgrim Church has not grasped the true nature and mystery of the Incarnation of which the Church is the extension in time and space. It is admittedly a depressing experience to come to the realization that Christians—even truly dedicated Christians—have repeated over and over through the centuries the same senseless mistakes. And yet, a moment's humble reflection discovers the same gloomy process operating in one's own life experience.

The Church is more than the supernatural reality through which man is incorporated into God through the mediation of Christ. It is also the whole mass of lowly human beings for whom Christ shed his blood. That is why its history reveals such a disconcerting contradiction between the grandeur of its ideal and the weakness of its members; between the dignity of Christianity and the unworthiness of Christians. Faith alone enables the mature Christian to accept this inescapable paradox.

Though the human lump has a regrettable tendency to fall flat, Christianity carries within itself an indestructible leavening element: the charism of reform. The Holy Spirit never fails to raise up men who fearlessly and fiercely set themselves against the evils which disgrace the Spouse of Christ in their age. These men possess an acuteness of spiritual vision which enables them to detect the presence and diagnose the causes of deformation within the Mystical Body. Prayer and penance render their souls sensitive to divine inspirations which suggest to them the Gospel remedies apt for stimulating the process of reformation. At the cost of heroic effort they apply these remedies to themselves and inspire others to follow their example, in the process never yielding to pride or exceeding the bounds of charity.

Inordinate preoccupation with mammon has always been a factor in deformation. In the early Middle Ages feudal secularization was the deformity which disfigured the

Father Cyprian J. Lynch, O.F.M., presently a member of the 'ritiro' community at Lafayette, N.J., delivered this talk at a Symposium on Mendicancy at Holy Name College, Washington.

Body of Christ. The Church allowed itself to become a fixture in the establishment. It became so much a part of contemporary society that it was at the mercy of the predominant economic and social forces. It adapted to the point of conformity. It lost its freedom because it ceased to transcend the world. The most obvious symptoms of this deformity were simony, avarice, worldliness, and a dulling of the Christian social conscience. Monasteries became wage-paying corporations directed by lay abbots whose principal concerns were the exploitation of serfs and the collection of feudal revenues. Of course, all this happened gradually and went unnoticed by the majority of monks, because each step of the decline could be rationalized on the grounds of common-sense utility or justified on the grounds of apostolic necessity.

During the tenth and eleventh centuries the reforming leaven became active, and there emerged from the midst of God's People new apostles, men poor in spirit, who had the courage to put their sole trust in their Heavenly Father. Chief among these reformers were the great abbots of Cluny and Citeaux. These sponsors of renewed monasticism fervently embraced strict poverty, manual labor, austere living, and apostolic service. All over Europe new monastic units arose like islands of peace in a sea of feudal anarchy, and monasticism once again became an independent spiritual power.

But the inherent inertia of the human lump had not been permanently exorcised. The Benedictine reforms eventually fell victim to success. Almost in spite of themselves, the monks were drawn back into the feudal whirlpool. Wealth and lands were literally forced upon them, always for good reasons, by good people, with good intentions. Slowly commercial zeal replaced enthusiasm for worship, work, and service. Once again it was proved that true followers of Christ cannot serve both God and mammon.

The thirteenth century was a time of radical transformation. An atmosphere of general unrest pervaded every level of society. Feudalism was on the decline and national monarchies were in the process of formation. Commercial capitalism was beginning to replace a stagnating manorial economy. A host of new goods, customs, and ideas were being introduced by returning Crusaders. The pace of trade and business was rapidly accelerating, a development which was accompanied by the reintroduction of money as the common medium of exchange, and the revival of urban society. And a new social class, whose members were neither serfs nor lords nor vassals, was clamoring for recognition and a voice in determining its destiny.

Over all this feverish activity the Church reigned supreme—or so it seemed. It was the wealthiest, most powerful institution in Christendom. But many perceptive Christians had misgivings. It seemed to them that churchmen's

concern for matters political and financial too often took precedence over their spiritual mission. That the Church had become over-involved in material things, was confirmed by the oft voiced yearning for a religion which would re-present the charity, poverty and humility of the Gospel. The People of God longed to behold in living Christians the freshness and spontaneity of the evangelical ideal. The same old mistake had been once again repeated. It was time for the leavening charism of reform to re-emerge. The stage was set for the entrance of Francis of Assisi.

It is unlikely that Saint Francis studied Church history, or that he ever deliberately undertook the task of isolating and analyzing the causes of ecclesiastical deformation. He had neither the talent nor the inclination for such an undertaking. His ideal of mendicancy, which became such a potent instrument of reform in the Church, was not the product of conscious mental effort; it was not a carefully developed legal construct; it was not a philosophical projection evolved by a theorist. Francis thought instinctively and expressed his thoughts in concrete, personal, Gospel terms. Ideas appeared to him as images, and the natural medium for him to employ in conveying these ideas was the parable and the symbol. Such a manner of speaking surely contributes to the Saint's charm, but it also adds to the difficulty persons less pneumatically endowed experience when they attempt to discover the exact meaning of his words. The task of defining Franciscan poverty and of assigning to it a precise position and function in the **totum** of Franciscan spirituality is therefore not an easy one. This difficulty is compounded by the many and serious problems connected with the critical evaluation of the sources for the life of Saint Francis and the early history of his Order. Therefore, nothing more will be attempted here than a listing of the characteristics of Franciscan poverty as they are revealed in the writings of our holy Father.

For Francis poverty was first and foremost an act of worship of the heavenly Father who holds absolute proprietorship over all things by right of creation. The renunciation of earthly goods was an act of adoration by which one acknowledged the dominion of God and admitted one's dependence on him. The object of poverty was to submit one's self completely to God. To be free to render this act of total worship one must divest himself of earthly goods. The possession of property too easily caused men to forget God's absolute dominion and their total dependence. Francis wished to give graphic witness to his fervent belief and total trust in God's paternal dominion by an almost reckless declaration of dependence upon Him. "My God and my all" is the prayerful exclamation by which Francis so frequently gave expression to the impulse of this latreutic poverty.

For Francis the poor life was also the most perfect manner of imitating Christ, who became poor for us in the Incarnation, in the Eucharist, in the Mystical Body. Francis proposed for his followers a poverty which was as close an approximation to that of Christ as he could discover and apply. The friars' poverty was to consist of an act of renunciation which would imitate the self-surrender of the God-Man. Fellowship with the poor Christ could become a reality only if the friars made themselves sharers in His total renunciation, and incarnated in their daily lives the selflessness of His earthly pilgrimage. Poverty was both the starting point and the consummation of the Gospel life. Poverty was necessary both to grasp the Gospel's secrets and to carry out its commission.

Saint Francis was gifted with a strong eschatological sense. At the very beginning of his conversion he announced himself as "the Herald of the Great King." The imminence of the King's coming, to each man in death and to all men in judgment, was a reality ever-present to his consciousness. The special mission of his friars was to announce the advent of the Lord to an imperiled world. But the call to peace, repentance, and reconciliation would be neither heard nor heeded unless announced by men whose principal concern was for the world to come. Only poverty could identify the preacher of penance as a citizen of the kingdom yet to be. It was by the renunciation of the goods of this world that the friars would anticipate, prepare for, and make others aware of that other world yet to come, but already in the process of realization.

The Friars Minor were to be the servants of all men. But they owed service first of all to the poor, who most resembled Christ and were most dependent on the heavenly Father's benevolence. Only poverty could free the friars to serve the poor as Christ served them. Unless they themselves were poor how could the friars with honesty and conviction announce to poor persons the dignity of the lowly station they shared with Christ? To fulfill this mission the friars had to be on terms of equality with the poorest of the poor. How else could they exemplify the spirit of evangelical brotherhood which God had commissioned them to announce to the world?

In Francis' scheme of things poverty also had an ascetic function. It was the principal means by which obstacles to intimate union with God could be removed. Only when emptied of every selfish affection and despoiled of all attachments to material things could the soul surrender itself to the embrace of divine love. Renunciation was the necessary preparation for mystical union, because it alone had the power to dissipate the confused longings and complexities which frustrate the soul's efforts to attain communion with divinity. To taste the sweetness of the Lord, one must approach the common

table of Providence in an attitude of total dependence.

Loving obedience to the hierarchical Church is the final characteristic of evangelical poverty as conceived by the Poor Man of Assisi. He was never scandalized by the human shortcomings he observed within the institutional Church, for to him that Church was above al else the projection in time of the poor Christ. Humble submission to the will of the Church, its officials, and its institutional procedures was to be an identifying mark of the Friars Minor; for Catholicity was both the symbol and the guarantee of their Gospel life of poverty.

Towards the end of his life, tension developed between Francis' personal conception of poverty and the practice of poverty as construed by the hierarchical Church. The Saint resolved this crisis of poverty by an heroic act of poverty. He demonstrated that total renunciation includes even one's most cherished ideals. By so doing he gave highest possible expression to his unshakable belief in poverty and his absolute trust in the poor Christ living in the visible Church. He was certain that this Church alone could guarantee the vitality and durability of the Order of Lesser Brothers. This Church would always support and protect his friars, because the unique poverty they professed was an essential part of the Good News the Church was commissioned to preach to all nations.

Saint Francis never explicitely defined his ideal of poverty. To do so never occurred to him. He simply assumed that his followers would grasp the ideal as instinctively as he did. The experience of the early brotherhood seemed to justify such an assumption. The first companions came to an understanding of the ideal by hearing Francis eulogize it in inspiring Gospel language and by seeing him exemplify it in dramatic Gospel action.

The ideal itself, then, is the first element which stimulates development. We are accustomed to bewail the fact that Francis did not leave us a precise exposition of his ideal with a list of minute regulations attached to guarantee its observance. He did not attempt to do this in his admonitions to the friars, because Christ did not attempt to do it in the Gospel. Like his Master, Francis wanted to allow his followers the largest measure of personal freedom, initiative, and responsibility compatible with honest striving for the ideal. Divine Providence would reveal in what manner and to what extent that freedom would have to be expanded or restricted as the Order grew through the centuries.

The Franciscan way of life has retained a significant degree of the knightly freedom which characterized the early brotherhood. The wonderful diversity of personality observable in the Order's saints and the variant forms taken by its numerous branches demonstrate this fact. Francis certainly would not consider as betrayals of his ideal the constitutions evolved by his friars in later centuries. Although such legislation might lend to the life of his friars a more prosaic tone, its true purpose was to promote and protect Gospel fredom.

His deep humility prevented Francis from fully appreciating his remarkable power to inspire those with whom he came in contact. But as he grew in grace and experience that same humility did enable him to recognize his limitations. The ability to inspire a small circle of intimates to heroic action by the sheer force of personal contact did not necessarily include the ability to direct large numbers of men who could be contacted only by the written word. The realization of his shortcomings as an executive and legislator was certainly one of the factors which influenced Francis to resign the government of the Order into the hands of a vicar, and to seek counsel and advice in putting the Rule into its final form.

The remarkable growth of the Order must have amazed Francis, and the complexity of the problems created by that growth must have frightened a soul as simple as his. But he overcame that fear by faith—faith in the poor Christ still living in the visible Church. Being human, he certainly experienced some misgivings. Nevertheless, he deliberately chose to entrust his Order to the Successor of Peter in imitation of his Master who entrusted his very Body to a Galilean fisherman.

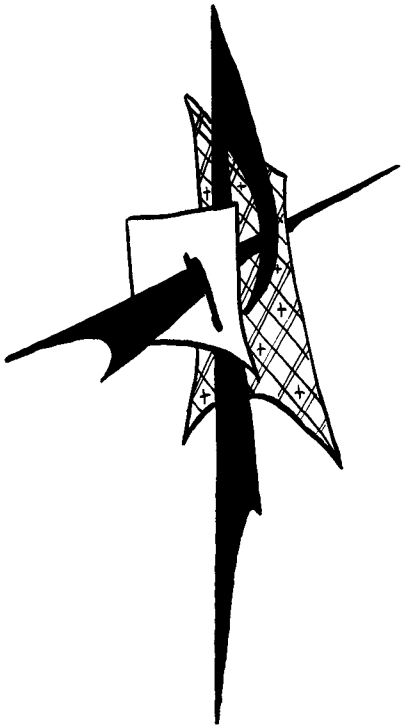
The Church, then, is the second force which stimulates development of the Franciscan ideal of Gospel poverty. Francis was convinced that its magisterial power would compensate for his limitations as a legislator. He knew that the freedom allowed his friars would give rise to disputes on questions to which he himself had no answers. In his last years he was saddened by the formation of parties, whose members took firm stands on these disputed questions. When, after his death, factional strife became a scandal among his brothers, those friars who understood Francis best turned to the Church for a solution.

It is significant that in the very first papal pronouncement on the Rule, Gregory IX, Francis' friend and confidant, stated that his declaration was necessitated by the fact that the Rule contained "many things doubtful and obscure, and certain things difficult to understand." Francis would not have challenged that assertion. Those who brand this and subsequent papal declarations as legalistic mitigations, overlook the fact that many of these documents contain sharp condemnations of abuses and moving summonses to renewal. They also overlook the sad chapters of Franciscan history which record the story of those intransigent primitivists who equated all adaptation with betrayal.

The third development factor is the experience of the friars in actually living the ideal. Saint Francis did not conceive of the Gospel

as a static entity. Its growth and development began during his lifetime. Up to a point he was able to adapt the ideal to changing circumstances. This is illustrated by his fluid attitude towards the use of property and buildings.

He and his first companions dwelt in caves, abandoned churches, and leper hospitals on a transient basis. This arrangement was well suited to their way of life and their form of apostolate at the time. When the number of his followers increased Francis moved them to the shed at Rivo Torto, which was occupied on a more regular basis with the permission of the owner. After his band began to grow into something resembling an order, he moved to the Portiuncula which he made the permanent center of his infant organization. Here he became a tenant of the Benedictines to whom he paid an annual rent of a basket of fish. Later still he accepted from Count Orlando, by a verbal agreement, some vague property rights over the hermitage at Mount Alverna. But about the year 1220 he ordered the friars to evacuate a newly constructed house at Bologna. When he was informed that the house belonged to Cardinal Hugolino who was merely allowing the friars to use it, Francis allowed them to return. He was confused by the distinction between ownership and use, but evidently he did not think the arrangement completely destroyed the friars' status of dependent pilgrims. Here Francis came very close to the doctrine enunciated in



Gregory's IX's bull **Quo Elongati** alluded to above, which in turn closely resembled the doctrine of absolute poverty later elaborated in scholastic terms by Saint Bonaventure. While the friars could possess nothing, either individually or collectively, they could use the things truly necessary for their day-to-day life of prayer and apostolic activity. This poverty was no legal fiction. It was keenly felt by those who professed it. It was a meaningful sign to all who beheld it. Its development was the fruit of the experience of zealous, sincere, and dedicated mendicants—simple, honest men with whom Saint Francis would have felt at home.

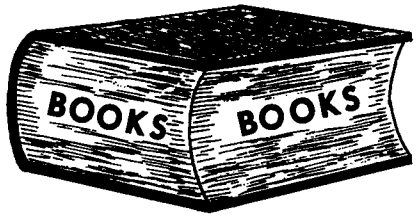
Today we occasionally hear it said that the mendicant orders are a medieval anachronism and that the friars are totally irrelevant in today's world. In the face of such assertions, it is imperative that we reaffirm our conviction that the mendicant ideal has the capacity to grow, develop, adapt, and renew itself in every age, and that it has already begun to do so in our own. The factors which have stimulated growth and renewal in past ages are still present and operative. The Gospel ideal itself has the power to inspire to heroic action men who come to know it in prayer. The Church of the poor Christ is still capable of interpreting, protecting, and perpetuating that ideal. The contemplative and apostolic experience of dedicated friars is already discovering the means whereby that ideal can best be exemplified in the historical context of our times.

Brothers, let us be certain of one thing: "We have promised great things, still greater are promised to us."

A Fragile Faith

My faith was so fragile,
I lost it over dinner,
like losing a filling
from a wisdom tooth
and scanning faces
around the table,
hoping no one saw me squirming...
And rushing home
to ask of God
if He's upset when I'm unsure about Him.

Sister Mary Jo Schulte, O. S. F.



Priestly Celibacy: Recurrent Battle and Lasting Values. By Albert J. Hebert, S.M. Houston, Tex.: Lumen Christi Press, 1971. Pp. 198. Cloth, $6.00.

Reviewed by Father Don Bosco Duquette, O.F.M.Cap., Novice Master for the New York-New England Province of Capuchin Franciscans.

In these uncertain times, it is a delight to read a positive and enthusiastic defense of celibacy. This one has its faults: it is repetitious, grammatically awkward in places, unduly opinionated at times, and short on serious scholarship. But it is eminently inspiring and practical, a good meditation book for the clerical silent majority whose convictions on the value of celibacy could use some shoring up in the heat of battle. The author has been around in the priestly ministry, has tasted the fruits of a celibate life in the service of the Lord and His people, and writes from the heart.

His emotionalism will convince no one on the other side of the question. Nor will his cause be served by his failure to confront the defects in the structure and life-style of the priesthood which have contributed so much to the firing up of the debate. One would have hoped that Father Hebert might offer some help here from his own background as a religious—e.g., the value of living in community as a support for celibacy, or the value of choosing superiors for a limited term of office as a means of fostering professional fulfillment in the priesthood.

Nevertheless, there is much of real value here, particularly in the chapter on "The Celibate Priest and Christ," where the author zeros in on the heart of the matter. "The real problem for the priest is not in finding the identity of himself simply as man—e.g., in marriage—but as a man who is a priest." "The priest does not identify himself with just the human nature of Christ, perfect and incorruptible as it is. The priest identifies himself simply with Christ the Son of God. . ." "The priest above all must be one with his Master, taken up with Christ, lost in Him, having the same spirit, living the same life" (pp. 154ff). After all the practical advantages of a celibate life in the service of God's people have been enumerated and extolled, it is still the literal imitation of Christ that forms the foundation and the inspiration for the law of celibacy.

Father Hebert quotes Pope Paul VI to the effect that "it would be much better to promote serious studies in defense of the spiritual meaning and the moral value of virginity and celibacy" (p. 85). Whether this work qualifies as a "serious study" is debatable, but in view of the bishops' consensus on celibacy at the 1971 Synod, it deserves a wide circulation. An inspirational book such as this helps one to "think with the Church." For those who prefer a more theological brand of thinking, I would suggest the article "Priestly Celibacy" by John Sheets, S.J., in the October 1971 issue of **Worship**. It is probably the most profound, logical, and readable treatment of the subject that has appeared in recent years.

The Survival of Dogma. By Avery Dulles, S.J. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971. Pp. 240. Cloth, $5.95.

Reviewed by Father Alban A. Maguire, O.F.M., S.T.D., Definitor and Director of Franciscan Life and Formation for Holy Name Province.

This work was compiled from a collection of lectures delivered between 1968 and 1970. The author is Professor of Systematic Theology at Woodstock College in New York City. Because of his position and well known competence, he is frequently asked to address himself to questions which are agitating the intellectual climate of our time. Since these essays were adapted from lectures where he was attempting to respond to the concerns of his audiences, they are particularly relevant.

The world has long viewed the Catholic Church as an unchangeable monolith. To Catholics who have accepted this view, even the title may come as a shock. However, it must be said that this book was not written to shock but to help the educated Catholic understand what is going on in the Church. Every topic presented is concerned with a really critical issue.

Change is the problem. Where before people had looked for stability they now find a kind of change they seem unable to cope with. Yet anyone who is acquainted with the history of the Church realizes that change is very much a part of this history. Dulles bewails the lack of historical sense which is responsible for the short-sighted view that what is now going on is unique. He feels that a great deal of personal difficulty arises from ignorance of what has taken place in the past.

We accept it as a truism today that Christianity and the Catholic Church does not exist in a vacuum but is embedded in a particular culture. When in the past culture itself passed into a new phase the Christian reality likewise made a "quantum leap." Keeping this firmly in mind will help us to understand what is taking place now. To be sure we can get an understanding of the present from these great social and cultural upheavals that took place in the past; nevertheless, I wonder whether this is enough to explain what is going on today. Changes that took place in the past took place in what was basically the same world in which men were not asked to revise too radically their world view. Now we seem to have passed into a new cosmos which demands an even more revolutionary change in self-understanding.

This observation does not detract from Dulles' main thesis. He reminds us that the knowledge of history will help us to understand that radical change has not been confined to the present generation and to the modern Church. He concentrates on set principles and basic ideas which are involved in the revision of our understanding. He asks us to consider that unless we change we may be distorting Christian reality. Doctrines expressed according to formulas originating within a particular cultural context may be distorted if interpreted within another cultural context. The distortion may not be confined to the understanding of the terms but also reach to the concepts which lie behind the terms.

Dulles' approach to the thesis of this book is that of a moderate. The notions that he struggles with are faith, teaching, authority, and dogma. His treatment of faith considers the development of the notion of faith before God revealing himself. From this he argues that the modern notion of faith has to be more than the acceptance of propositions presented by the Church for our belief. While maintaining that authority is necessary he tries to understand it in terms of personal initiative and pluralism. Similarly in struggling with the question of the revision of dogma in its present context he considers

the possibility of doubt as well as the problems arising from ecumenism and reformulation.

Everyone can read this book to his own benefit. Some may be looking for a book of this kind to enable them to appreciate what is going on. At the same time it will probably upset conservatives and fail to satisfy liberals. The conservatives will be disturbed by the defense of not only the possibility but also the desirability of change. Liberals on the other hand will feel that the author does not go far enough. Nevertheless, this book will enable us to take an objective look at the questions raised and will provide us with a basis of a new type of stability.

God Is More Present than You Think: Experiments for Closing the Gap in Prayer. By Robert Ochs, S.J. New York: Paulist Press, 1971. Pp. 63. Paper, $0.75.

Reviewed by Father Michael D. Meilach, O.F.M., Ph.D., Editor of this Review.

Good things, apparently, still come in small packages. Here is an unpretentious and virtually irresistible invitation to have a hard look at some deep-seated facets of our attitude toward prayer (not to mention our attitude toward God). The author makes a good case for his diagnosis that most of us are afflicted with a deism making personal relationships with God all but impossible.

Because of this underlying deism, we fail to peceive God as present in precisely those key areas where we ought most to find him. We regard the divine Will, e.g., simply as manifested to us in a series of commands. We fail to see the commands as only an instance of the more general personal self-giving embodied in requests.

Similarly, we fail to see our own thoughts as the necessary medium for divine communications; and we don't take seriously the fact that we —God and our own self—are in real personal encounter during prayer. That is, we keep looking to some ideal, objective portrayal of God, on the one hand; and, on the other, to an equally ideal and consummated, perfect self which will one day be able to meet this projected God. Through all this devious dodging we manage to blot out what is really taking place as we try concretely here and now, to get to know the God who does meet us and try to give himself to us as we are.

Erudite theological and phenomenological analysis along these lines would doubtless prove helpful and perhaps even edifying. But Father Ochs gives us something infinitely better than purely theoretical and abstract analysis. His little booklet rings throughout with the living conviction (which cannot help communicating itself) born of experience, of enthusiastic fidelity and apostolic zeal. Best of all, though, is the author's way of suggesting specific, concrete "experiments" which have a way of catching one up short and, if unchecked by cynical sophistication, of working a real revolution in one's life. Try conceiving God, for example, not as "loving" you, but as "liking" you . . .

If this valuable booklet has any real drawback, it is that care was not taken prior to its wider distribution, to obviate the provincialism evident in the constant references to Saint Ignatius (which references made eminent sense, of course, for the original Jesuit audience). It would be unreasonable to object to a couple of references, but in this case one gets the impression that Ignatius and his method are the absolutely necessary framework outside of which there is no Christianity or religion at all. Father Och's message is too vital, too important to be obscured by this trivial stylistic defect. One hopes it will be corrected in future editions.

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