

# the CORD

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## COVER AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

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## Experiments

That renewal of religious life calls for creative and imaginative experimentation is unquestionable. That such experimentation be intelligently and honestly evaluated is as certainly mandated by Vatican II. We have all seen some and experienced some experimenting; fewer of us have seen and experienced the evaluating. New forms of prayer, changed schedules, different dress, plurality of life-styles, inner-city apostolates, etc., have more or less invaded most communities. The persistence of some of these modes, we suspect, is to be traced to inertia rather than success. We live with the new not because we have found it to be better than the old, but because after being new for a time, it is now old.

The obvious standard to judge experiments by is their results—"by their fruits you shall know them." To apply this standard, however, one has to have a clear knowledge of the aims and goals both of the experiment in question and of religious life in general, and your particular institute in particular. Unfortunately, it is just this clarity about religious life which is lacking at all levels, most crucially at the levels charged with evaluating. Superiors who "don't know where religious life will be ten years from now" are obviously incapable of criticizing intelligently an experiment, and ought to resign immediately. Only those who have steeped themselves prayerfully in the very real and vital religious tradition of the Catholic Church and their founder's spirit and their order's history can have the depth not to "run scared" at the situation in religious life in the post-Vatican II Church and assess that life objectively.

Even among those who do know what religious life is all about (and their number is not inconsiderable) certain *a priori* positions seem to hinder genuine evaluation of experimentation. 1. "We can never go back." 2. "It is always worth the risk." 3. "We have no choice."

To take the last point first, we suggest that the pell-mell rush into experimentation that typified some communities and the more reluctant innovating that occurred in many more did not and does not have to be. Why can we not learn from the successes and failures of other communities? Do we all have to make the same mistakes? If the diaspora of seminaries has led to a dismemberment of a Province, oughtn't that give us much hesitation about inaugurating such a program here? If unstructured community life has emptied convent after convent, what is the sense of keeping that novelty in a place called an apartment? We cannot simply yield to popular pressure for experiment—even well meant pressure—when we know from the experience of others that chance of success is minimal.

Although the causes of egress from religion are multifarious and complex, it can safely be stated that experimentation is not *always* worth the risk. It is certainly better to be behind the times than not to be at all. One wonders whether much of what passes for innovation is being used as an easy substitute for vigorous exercise of authority. And one wonders too whether some experiments are *honest* risks, or rather desperate attempts to keep intense but self-willed religious in the community.

The oft-repeated "we can never go back" is a half-truth which we contend interferes with honest evaluation of experiments in religious life. Granted Vatican II, Carl Rogers, touchy-feely, and personalism have happened, adjusting of prayer life, schedules, life-styles, and dress has not in fact always produced a more vital, profound, or wider religious life. It has, on the contrary, frequently contributed toward the disintegration of religious life. It is time, therefore, to adjust the adjusting, even if this means going back to older forms whose rationale as community builders and preservers now appears more evident, perhaps, than before. Customs come down through the ages not just from sheer inertia, but (one would hope) also from recognized value and success. The experimental process honestly evaluated should enable us to "retain what is good," and such a retention is far from a simplistic, indiscriminate "going back."

In addition to the fundamental criteria of successful service to God and man, each experiment would properly be judged also by criteria peculiar to itself. Experiments in poverty, e.g., ought not be costly; efforts to foster communal living (such as group discussions and affective communi-

cation) ought to help community; innovative prayer should foster prayer. Any experiment, however, must also be judged on its relation to the *common* good. What is a success for one individual or small group can, let's face it, be hurtful in a larger perspective and so have to be adjudged a failure. The contrary can also be the case: an experiment may have unforeseen good fruits which justify, say, its lack of financial success. But the thing is, judgment of just *what is the common good* has to be left to those charged with responsibility for the common good—the superiors.

*F. Julian Davis*



who is she, who  
like the dawn  
ascends the heavens  
and shines  
like a star,  
resplendent as the sun?

## Merciful Heavens!

Robert J. Waywood, O.F.M.

A little reflection on our moral vocabulary will show that there is only a hair's-breath difference between "godly" and "snobby" in the popular mind. Take the word "moral" itself. The adjective derived from it—"moralistic"—is fraught with supercilious overtones. And while piety may still pass as a noble quality of soul, most of us would rather cross the street than run into a pietistic soul. To be always in the right and to be righteous are horses that are sometimes of indistinguishable hue. Most people would no more wish to be accused of sanctity than they would of being sanctimonious. Anyone who is noticeably pure stands in danger of being tagged as puritanic. Accordingly, most people are actually bragging when they confess, "I'm no saint." They are inclined to shoot holes through a reputation of holiness and to mistake a halo for a high hat. Instinctively they feel that even an obviously good man is not all he's "cracked up to be."

On the other hand, the populace are just as eager to "give the devil his due." I mean, we have only to scan the plots of pulp literature (and even those of a good deal of gilt-edged fiction) to see the popularity of the vulnerable protagonist or the less-than-lily-white heroine. The gallery of literature is crowded with kindly rogues and winsome wenches. From Henry Fielding to Graham Greene, from Moll Flanders to Suzie Wong, hosts of clay-footed characters have marched through our native fiction: the prostitute with a heart of gold, the alcoholic doctor or pastor with tear-drenched shoulders, the mother-loving mobster, the prince charming who goes from pillow to pillow in search of his abducted fiancée, the dance-hall doxy who is putting her brother through medical school, and the racketeer who puts rum-dum ex-boxers on the payroll.

The tendency to see every white thing as a whited sepulchre is simplistic and prejudicial beyond

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*Father Robert J. Waywood, O.F.M., is an Assistant Professor of English at Siena College and a member of the Executive Committee of the New York State Speech Teachers Association.*

a doubt. And the penchant to believe that the devil is not so black as he is painted is subject to maudlin exaggeration. Prescinding from excesses, there is, nevertheless, something healthy and elemental underlying these two ethical attitudes. By the end of this conference I hope to have spelled out what that something is. Be that as it may, at face value it seems scandalous to maintain that saints are villains and sinners are heroes. But then, there was in history a religious founder who taught almost as much and as a result became a scandal to the Jews and a stumbling-block to the gentiles. If there had been a tabloid newspaper in the days of Jesus of Nazareth, say, *The Jerusalem Journal* (with "all the news that's fit to print"... and then some), the headlines would have read in large, lurid lines: **HARLOTS FLOCK TO NEW PREACHER-MAN or RABBI ROOMS WITH ROBBERS or CARPENTER PUTS DOWN HIGH-PRIEST**. Christ's outlook on matters sacred and profane may ultimately have proven healthy and elemental, but in his day it was definitely unsettling and sensational. Let us now take a long look at the Master's treatment of sinners in general and in particular.

We know full well what the general mission of the God-man was in this world. We know it on his own admission: "It is not the healthy who need a physician, but they who are sick. I have not come to call not the just, but sinners, to repentance" (Lk. 5:31-32). A swift

survey of his works and words will demonstrate that he earned the "mission accomplished" medal. Immediately after Peter dropped his chin to his chest and warned Jesus not to risk his reputation associating with a wharf-rat like himself, the Lord drafted the fisherman into service aboard his spiritual barque. Jesus fished for his own kind of soul-food at a well side and gently "hooked" a prize catch, the town trollop. He healed body and soul of both the young paralytic let down through the roof and the old paralytic stretched out beside the pool. He publicly defended and privately pardoned a wife who had been caught in the act of making love with her boyfriend. He condoned and apologized for his disciples who out of human weakness had picked and eaten some ears of wheat in violation of strict Sabbath observance. He acknowledged and saluted the repentance of a woman of ill repute who had slipped into Simon the Pharisee's banquet. And finally, he invited a thief, turned honest to God, to accompany him into Paradise. This is a mere summary of the Master's treatment of sinners as actually recorded in the Scriptures. Doubtless the full chronicle of the God-man who would not quench the smoldering wick or break the bruised reed would include many further feats of forgiveness. But we have here enough evidence to see the general pattern of the Savior's behavior: he not only rubs out the record for self-confessed sinners; in doing so, he

often "rubs it in" for self-proclaimed saints.

If this kind of conduct drew a raised eyebrow from the professional holy men of the day, the Master's parables fairly set their ears ringing. The analogies involving a strayed sheep or a lost silver-piece were bad enough—headlining as they did God's delight over the evildoer's conversion. The chiaroscuro cameo that contrasts the arrogant Pharisee and the humbled publican was worse—after all, wasn't the disciple of Moses doing all the right things? But the detailed narrative of the Prodigal Son... that was the last straw! This upstart Rabbi was being unconscionable. In this short story not only does a wiseacre young whippersnapper turn out to be the hero (co-featured with his merciful father); but also the older son, a God-fearing pillar of the community who always toed the mark and kept his nose to the grindstone, comes close to evolving into a whimpering self-righteous villain of the piece. From a purely natural point of view this eventuality seems a bit much. If the parable savors of the melodramatic, maybe that was the only way Jesus could dramatize the mercy of God.

His adversaries little dreamed what a compliment they were handing Jesus, or what a mouthful they were saying, when they charged him with being a friend of sinners: "Behold a man who is a glutton and a wine-drinker, a friend of publicans and sinners! (Lk. 7:34). Let us see in particular

if what they said was true—if Jesus really did befriend, sweetly convert, and exquisitely employ people with noticeable human frailties. To be systematic about it, let us recall and apply the catalogue of vices known as the seven capital sins: pride, greed, lust, anger, envy, gluttony, and sloth. We can easily find a victim of each of these vices in the Lord's circle of friends.

None of the Apostles seems at the start to have been absolutely free of self-importance and vanity. But for the deep-seated arrogance of soul that we call intellectual pride, perhaps there was no better contender than Thomas, the doubting Apostle. Oblivious of the many predictions Jesus had made regarding his resurrection and scoffing at the testimony of ten eye-witnesses, Thomas stubbornly stood his ground and refused to assent to the Lord's revivification. Jesus in turn not only let the man off with a gentle chiding, he also acceded to the skeptic's wishes and actually pulled the disciples finger and hand into the wound-marks to establish a faith that would withstand martyrdom. If we may construe greed to imply simply a great ambition for acquiring this world's wealth, friend Zacchaeus evidently was a greedy mortal. In all likelihood, after Jesus had sojourned with the enterprising midget and converted the whole well-heeled household, Zacchaeus doubled his already generous contributions to charity. Although the other Mary was in more than one sense a shady lady and not per-



fectly identifiable, it is she, whoever she is, who qualifies as the representative of lust, having loved not wisely but too well. Her chastened ardor made her the first Christian contemplative. Saul of Tarsus, a posthumous friend of Jesus, was the soul of anger—a hot-headed member of the posse breathing threats of slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. His aggressive personality proved tailor-made for his role of pioneer of the Gospel of Peace and the Law of Love. Two Apostles equally qualify as exponents of envy—the brothers James and John. For they were the

ones who silenced the lone-wolf exorcist and, at their mother's instigation, jockeyed for the highest thrones in Heaven. Jesus gently set them aright in the first matter and purified their ambition by challenging them to emulate his heroic sufferings. As for gluttony or, in its widest sense, intemperance, none of the Apostles was exactly ascetical as regards creature comforts; they all regularly were preoccupied with food and drink at certain crucial times. But maybe Matthew, who was given to the good life and had a reputation for setting a groaning board, will do

for an example of this capital sin. The tireless preacher and author of the first Gospel came to learn that man did not live on bread alone. Finally, there is Peter—Peter who fell asleep thrice in the Garden of Gethsemani and only dreamed of deeds of derring-do for the Master, Peter who talked the fire while Jesus was being scourged. His sloth would one day be converted to an unfaltering zeal that would drive him to the other end of the civilized world and to crucifixion upside-down. Jesus was indeed the friend of sinners, but most of them were really saints in the rough.

To fully fathom our Lord's predilection for moral "losers," we must analyze the workings of divine mercy. One of the best object-lessons in divine mercy occurs, one might have guessed, in Saint Luke's humane biography of Jesus: Chapter 7, the latter half of which is devoted to the penitent woman who stole into the house of Simon the Pharisee. There is a critical sentence in the account that has always puzzled the translator. Apart from the English version of the Jerusalem Bible, originally a French translation of the Scriptures, I know of no rendering of that sentence that avoids the obscurity. Traditionally the passage reads, "Wherefore I say to thee, her sins, many as they are, shall

be forgiven her, because she has loved much" (Lk. 7:47). If the notion of "loved much" is understood as meaning "shown much penitence" or "shown ardent penance (and such would be a very loose interpretation), the sentence makes a little sense; but it is hardly an earth-shaking revelation. Without so free a translation the sentence, especially in context, has a ludicrous and almost blasphemous implication: "This woman has loved every Tom, Dick, and Harry, so she will get off lightly." On the other hand, the reading taken from the Jerusalem Bible is both unambiguous and staggering: "Many sins must have been forgiven this woman, for she shows much love." That this is the true meaning of the observation is borne out by the maxim Jesus appends to the episode: "He who is forgiven little, loves little" (Lk. 7: 48)—a dictum that delivers quite a comeuppance to a law-abiding, legalistic, self-esteeming Pharisee. Many sins must have been forgiven this woman, for she shows much love; he who is forgiven little, loves little. At first blush, this stance might sound to some like a licensed charter for flinging caution to the winds and painting the town red. Others may see in the passage a substantiation of an age-old heresy, to the effect that innocent people are somehow inhuman, drab, and shallow, while the man or

woman "of the world" is empathetic, interesting, and mature. Both camps of facile interpreters miss the delicate and daring point of Christ's words. The gist of the passage is this: that we all stand beholden to God; that God loves us superabundantly and unconditionally; that God's mercy is simply this love confronting our sins; and that the one who has experienced God's mercy has more experiential grounds than the guiltless for reciprocating God's loving mercy with loving gratitude. Or, to put it another way, granting genuine sorrow, even one's serious sins might prove a blessing in disguise, for they can lead to a more profound awareness of God's love and a warmer gratitude for his mercy. Thus, excluding very holy individuals who may have spiritually touched the living God in prayer or contemplation, forgiven sinners stand a better chance of intuiting and responding to the God of revelation than do those mortals who are without offense but familiar only with a remote First Cause or an invisible Taskmaster. Saint Augustine, whose life provides eloquent testimony to this phenomenon, expressed the paradoxical value of guilt in these graphic words: "God writes straight with crooked lines—even sins."

The mechanics of mercy bear looking into more closely; after all, reference to the mercy of God is made in Sacred Scripture over five hundred times! Theodicy, the natural science of God, teaches that God exists, that he is the

Creator of all things, that he endows all things with ontological goodness and truth and beauty, and that he maintains all things existing. It can also reason to the personhood of God. But not until the revelations of the Old and New Testament could man see or dare to acknowledge that God has historically entered into a person-to-person, bilateral relationship with his intelligent creatures. Again and again in the Old Testament, God is identified with his fidelity to a contract, a testament, a promise of great things made to his chosen people. In the New Testament that promise is crystallized into a pledge of God's indwelling in the souls of men here below and of the Beatific Vision through everlasting life hereafter; and in the New Testament God is identified with love. Now, on the one hand, almost every reference made in the Old Testament to God's fidelity mentions God's mercy along with it—as well it may, considering the continual infidelity on the part of the chosen people. (See, e.g., 3 K. 8:23; 2 Pa. 6:14; 2 Es. 1:5 and 9:32, wherein God is called the one "who keeps covenant and mercy.") On the other hand, the God who is love in the New Testament must inevitably be the God who is mercy; for, as we have seen, personal love in confronting sin is transformed to mercy (just as personal love confronting the offended turns to repentance and gratitude). If this scriptural analysis does not underline the intimate connection—no, the relationship of identity—be-

tween love and mercy, consider the following deductions from revelation.

Theologians reason that to propound a natural destiny, a human paradise, for man is a purely speculative exercise; for God has actually, and from the very start of the world, programmed man for a supernatural end: namely, to share God's blessed life for all eternity in Heaven. Obviously, no mortal—or angel, for that matter—can merit such a transcendent destiny. God must stoop to lift him. And that stooping is a mercy. If God, moreover, has given men and angels the radical gift, the sanctifying grace, to barter for eternal rewards, he has done so only in view of the redeeming life and death of his divine Son. All grace flows from the Cross, and the Cross is clearly an instrument of mercy. All those, too, who refrain from sinning do so in virtue of efficacious actual graces which are likewise the by-product of the merciful Redemption of the Savior. Even the sinless Virgin Mother and the unfallen angels needed the Savior and were subjects of God's mercy. God is love. But from our creatural standpoint that love is mercy. And it is probably the realization of this essential identity between God and love and between love and mercy that underlies mankind's instinctive delight over a story of conversion or that lures the novelist to toy with the notion of the admirable rogue.

If God is mercy, the corollary is inescapable: man becomes like God

by being merciful. Ultimately, the thermometer of a person's goodness is not any number of other moral standards such as self-fulfillment, self-knowledge, self-mastery, devotion to duty, or hewing to some code. Ultimately (and this is a truism of Christianity) it is love of neighbor. But the "hot point" of that love—in man's sub-lunar existence, at least—will be pardoning love, that is, mercy. In the final analysis, granting the radical grace God gives us in his mercy, we will all grow like to God and thereby deserve to dwell with him forever when and only when we forgive each other from our heart: "Do not judge, and you shall not be judged; do not condemn, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven" (Lk. 6:37). If a man knows God only in the Almighty's manifestations of power and justice, he does not know God. To know God as he truly is requires that one be recipient or at least spectator of his mercy. To see the face of God is to see his mercy: "The Lord show his face to thee and have mercy on thee" (Num. 6:25). And men become like the God of revelation not so much by the exercise of their power and justice as by their practice of mercy.

But mercy is above this sceptred sway;  
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings;  
It is an attribute of God himself;  
And earthly power doth then show  
likest God's  
When mercy seasons justice.  
(The Merchant of Venice,  
IV.1.193-96)

## Recent Trends in Religious Formation

Placid Stroik, O.F.M., and Roch Niemier, O.F.M.

This paper is an attempt to synthesize, from the provincial reports submitted for discussion at Oak Brook last year, an understanding of religious formation. In a second presentation, to follow next month, we shall deal with what the reports said about the four specific levels of formation and, in conclusion, with two areas of particular concern: unified programs for clerics and brothers, and small community living.

The present endeavor to get at the concept or nature of formation in general involves a consideration of the agents of formation, the unified approach to formation, and formation along the pattern of values and attitudes. The one over-all impression that emerges from reading the various provincial reports, is that formation is a very complex matter, varying widely from one province to another. The complexity is further compounded by the coexistence, in some cases, of multiple forms with-

in a single province. Still, the hope is that in the course of these two papers we shall derive a certain wholeness and integral understanding without sacrificing the harmonious contrast of particular patterns.

### Determining Agents

Previously the chief determining agents in formation were the structure and environment, mainly under the control of one man, the Master of Formation. Now there is evidence of a shift in the sense that there are other factors which are determining agents. The following trends seem to be involved.

First, self-formation. The primary agent is the self, which is allowed to respond freely to direction and leadership. Each individual is responsible for making his own life, for shaping his own environment. To say it differently: The student is the "director" of formation. The director has a permanent part—he tries to get the

student to be responsible, or be the primary director. He gives direction and leadership, and then stands aside and allows the student to grow. This brings on a new attitude and a new kind of relationship between the student and director, involving, e.g., co-responsibility and subsidiarity.

In describing the role of formation, the Holy Name Province says:

Primary responsibility of interiorizing values rests, of course, with the individual in formation. Nonetheless, the moderators of formation fail if they do not indicate to the individual those areas of his life—human, spiritual, apostolic, and academic—wherein he is failing to grow or refusing to take responsibility for his growth.

Elsewhere: "Concisely stated, the purpose of the high school seminary program is to help young men mature to be self-reliant, academically capable Franciscans."

The more immediate objectives [of college-level clerics] are: to help each candidate reach his full human potential; to determine if the young man has the personality, strength, and faith commitment to live as a celibate religious in community; to develop in each individual a sense of personal and communal responsibility.

On the high school level, the Assumption Province states, "the ultimate goals are those of self-determination, self-motivation, and increase of self worth and self-confidence." Their college program aims at helping young men to "set goals (and achieve them) that are compatible with a Christian life style, and are reflections of their individuality, and in this way help them develop capacities for responsible action."

St. Joseph Province, in Canada, states that "the committee of reception and initiation has the responsibility of assuring each candidate conditions that will allow him to be initiated to the Franciscan life and to progress towards the final commitment according to a personal rhythm that will take into consideration his aptitudes, difficulties, etc. In fact there are as many programs as there are candidates, even though the reference structures are the same for all."

The English Province, finally, stresses quite strongly that formation is geared to the level of spiritual and psychological maturity of each candidate, because of which

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*The authors are both members of the Assumption Province. Father Placid Stroik has worked in the vocations and communications departments of that Province for the past seven years. Father Roch Niemier, who holds a Master's degree in philosophy, has been in formation work for four years and is presently director of the provincial Affiliate Program in Milwaukee.*

the principle of graduality must be carefully observed.

Secondly, community as a formative factor. Concerning this idea, two different points of view seem to appear: (1) the peer group becomes a formative factor in the sense that the group is to develop community, or form community; (2) the community-at-large is the formative factor in the sense that

the student is taken up into the full life of the community which has an important part in shaping him. There is (3) also another level which seems to combine the other two.

In relation to the first, the Assumption Province and the English Province are clear:

The development of community, with an integrated human and Christian orientation, is the primary means for growth in personal maturity at this level (pre-novitiate, college). This includes definite experience and demands in community living [Assumption Province].

The novitiate is seen as the first step in forming community life, and we think it necessary that, with the guidance of the Master, the novices be encouraged to form community. Thus there is as much discussion about the forms of their life as is feasible. At the moment we do not think it good from this point of view to introduce the novice into an already formed community where he has no more to do than "adapt himself" [English Province].

In relation to the second, Holy Name Province (here in specific connection with its Brothers' Formation) and St. Joseph Province are equally clear:

We believe that the chief formative agent is the living in and participating in Franciscan fraternity... from the beginning a man should be made to feel that he is a full participant in communal life [Holy Name Province].

The basic training to the Franciscan life must be given in communities where a continuous effort is made towards living an authentic religious life... the realization of [our] objective supposes a thor-

ough integration into the life of the community: sharing the responsibilities, living the life of prayer, and generally taking part in all that makes up the everyday life of a community [St. Joseph Province].

Immaculate Conception Province, in New York, is reflective of the third view: "An important spiritual formative influence is the 'community' itself, both professed and novices. In ways that are sometimes obvious but more often intangible, each man acts on the other, conveying encouragement, sharing convictions, sparking enthusiasm, and so on."

The third trend envisaged here has to do with directors. In addition to the opportunity for private spiritual counseling, the role of a director is seen as the following.

(1) to create an atmosphere and situations in which personal, academic and spiritual growth are possible. Immaculate Conception Province states:

More important than academics—however successful efforts may be in this area—is providing the environment, example, counsel, and positive direction to enable the students to experience growth as individuals and as brothers in Christ and in St. Francis.

And at the post-novitiate level, that Province's *coetus educatorum* has adopted the attitude, at least experimentally, that "Franciscanism is caught, not taught." According to the St. John the Baptist Province major importance is to be accorded the "atmosphere of trust and openness among the formation

team and those in formation." The formation program is seen as "creating the atmosphere in which... students come to know Franciscan values."

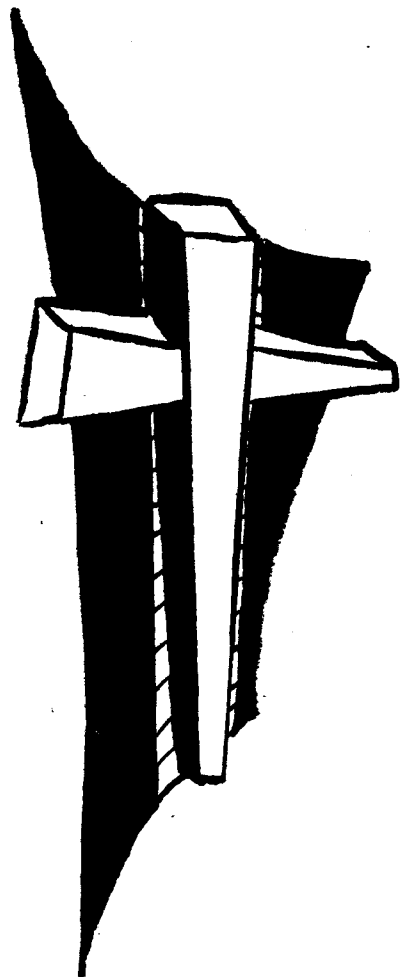
(2) to help the student relate on an adult level by helping him learn to confront and be confronted by other people, as Holy Name Province puts it.

(3) to provide opportunities for the young men to mature in their humanity and Christianity... by also helping them set goals which, according to the Assumption Province report "aid them in developing capacities for responsible action." Holy Name Province expresses this as follows: "To give the candidate that freedom necessary for a real sense of responsibility to increase his awareness of his own self concept and the demands of community living."

(4) to screen, i.e., eliminate those candidates who do not possess the emotional health, intellectual ability, moral character and faith commitment to become contributing members of the Province.

(5) sharing a common life—according to the Holy Name Province Brothers' Program: "We believe that the most effective way for the directors of formation—the formation team—to influence the attitudes of the young is to share a common life in praying together, recreating together and working together."

In view of the foregoing data, we may say that there is a shift taking place in responsibility and accountability from the group to





the individual. Previously the group gave a passport to life; now one must grow as an individual; each one must internalize values for himself. From one viewpoint, the group cannot do this for the individual; and correlatively, the individual can no longer "get lost" in the group.

The second general feature evident in what has preceded, is a search for meaningful structures: "All formation has as its primary task to offer a meaningful structure which allows for a creative use of the student's energies." This is a principle on which all guidelines for formation must rest. Our problems today are not related to the fact that we are too modern, too liberal, or too progressive. They flow, rather, from the fact that we do not have as yet the meaningful structures through which we can help the student give form to his many as yet undirected and unfocused potentialities.

Finally, we may point to the re-emphasis of the insight that individuation occurs by means of the common life. In a house of formation one's self concept flows almost totally from intra-community factors: recognition by authority, acceptance to the next level of training, emergence of the individual through attempts at self-expression in a non-threatening environment, the perception of growth through learning, etc. Because of the only limited apostolates possible for trainees, the "feedback" that is supportive of one's own worth and relevance is derived al-

most completely from the common life.

### Unified Approach

There is an evident attempt to effect a unification in formation at the various levels. This means that there are not necessarily different objectives from one level to the next, but rather a deepening and intensifying of the objectives begun in pre-novitiate and continued on into post-novitiate. In a sense, objectives are brought together, simplified, made one.

The Holy Name Province, e.g., states that to foster the interiorization of communal and apostolic values, the formation process envisions for the individual a human, spiritual, academic, and apostolic growth which is both gradual and unified. In the same report we read that the novitiate year should follow logically on the training received thus far and prepare the young man for subsequent training and the life he will lead in the province in future years. It is not a year of different aims and values, but one different only in its intensifying of these same aims and values.

The Immaculate Conception Province (New York) provides a clear expression of this point running through all levels. The minor seminary's objectives emphasize **growth in manhood**, training in Christian leadership, peer-group experience, and academic formation, as well as spiritual and moral development. The goal of the college seminary, as of all formation,

is to help young men develop fully as possible as human beings by fostering a due degree of human and Christian maturity. **Novitiate** experience should be sequential: Proper articulation of the whole formation program will reinforce rather than reject experiences along the way, especially at the novitiate level. Educational personnel, without advocating deadly uniformity, should realize the need for unity in essential matters affecting the students' and friars' lives and vocations in the Order and the Church. **Post novitiate:** We hope to aid them to achieve **human, Christian and Franciscan maturity** according to the ideals of the gospel and the example and teachings of Saint Francis.

The Holy Savior Custody likewise insists that "the objectives of post-novitiate are the same as those of our pre-novitiate program," and the English Province recognizes an underlying principle in formation: that of "graduality," which is governed by the spiritual and psychological maturity of the candidate, particularly with reference to the areas of prayer, work, and community life, the intensity of which is determined by the person's psychological and spiritual maturity. The candidate is gradually introduced into these areas in the novitiate; a fuller stature of these are expected in post-novitiate. And the Irish Province adds a final support, saying, "The post-novitiate program for brothers is to consolidate and deepen what had been learned in pre-novitiate."

### Attitudes and Values

Formation happens not because a candidate is fitting into a fixed structure and into a worked-out molded program, but because the structure is helping him develop attitudes and values which he internalizes.

On the minor seminary level, says Immaculate Conception in New York, the emphasis has shifted from molding into a fixed pattern to forming attitude and fulfillment.

Regarding objectives in the Assumption Province's college program, emphasis is on the following: the internalization of values, particularly the gradual integration of gospel principles; a positive approach to life, as manifested by such qualities as joy in living, co-operation; a deepening sense of being at ease with oneself and others; a sense of happiness and well-being, a sense of trust, thus contributing to the general overall atmosphere of the life style.

The concept of formation that thus emerges from the various provincial reports on the subject is, then, that of a process freely accomplished by the individual himself with the help of his community and especially the trained personnel assigned to foster that process. It is, like every truly progressive reality, a gradual thing—a development quite literally organic in nature, wherein values, attitudes, and ideals are assimilated and implemented precisely to the extent that they are unified, gradually deepened and perfected, and freely accepted and esteemed.

## In Fear and Trembling

"Serve the Lord with fear;  
rejoice before Him in trembling."

Because I fear  
I might not hear  
Your whispered: "Daughter,  
Walk upon the water!"  
I shall serve you, Lord,  
In leaning on Your word.

And fear be all my grace.  
My gaiety—Your Face  
Hid in remotest bliss  
Penetrated by my kiss.

The high romance  
Of hope's bright dance  
Needs elevation  
Past my station.

Except by practised tremble  
I find the vast ensemble  
Of cosmic dance is grace  
Shaken by Your Face.

So shall I serve you, Lord,  
Who laughed; and there was Word.

Mother Mary Francis, P.C.C.

## Dance, Franciscan, Dance!

Sister Jane Frances Omlor, O.S.F.

My widowed mother sarcastically says as we both walk around our spacious beautiful Motherhouse grounds: "Man, I wish I had the vow of poverty."

An Ursuline friend writes a disturbing letter, reacting to professionalism among Sisters: "Yes, oh yes, I would believe the beautiful wardrobes of poverty nuns! Convents with wall-to-wall carpeting, color TV, deep-freezers stocked to bursting point, etc., etc. . . . that may well explain the rich, plush, extravagant career women vowed to poverty."

And I, a Franciscan of all things, cringe . . . ashamed of these accusations based on just plain visibility. What can you say when you see! I see thousands of white elephants glaring at me, and then I see me—identified with it all.

Yet I see something else. I see a burdened people, lumbering along with the weight of too many pos-

sessions and worldly worries. Our structures which are threatened with extinction are forcing us to make a decision. Not so much a decision as to whether these white elephants should die or dance, but whether or not we are going to die or dance. What direction are we going to take?

Francis makes it quite clear. How many more theologians will we have to hire to tell us what Jesus meant when he said, "Sell all you have, and give it to the poor, then come, follow me"? How long will it take us to understand and joyfully accept the YES of Francis?

The YES of Francis was strongly seen at Wheaton, Illinois, last November. Two hundred and twenty Franciscan men and women gathered for a week of prayer and search. After a week of constant creative tension, serious thinking, and self-confrontation, one sensed that the general realization was

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*Sister Jane Frances Omlor, a member of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, Tiffin, Ohio, is currently engaged in Franciscan Communications Work in California. This article comprises some reflections on the workshop-seminar, "Faith Stance of Franciscans in the World," held at Wheaton, Illinois, in November of last year.*

that we would have to die first—then we could dance.

Now, there were some dancers with us whose presence moved hearts, touched minds, and disturbed bodies.

What a joy it would be to be as free, serene, and trusting a dancer as Dorothy! Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement and 75 years old, blessed us all with her presence. Sister José Hobday, a Milwaukee Franciscan now preparing to be with the American Indians, brought a flare that was as radical as "I would love to call for a decision that would say, I'll get rid of the name if I don't want to live it. I think the whole Franciscan world would renew a lot more deeply if we'd make genuine choices, such as saying that we're a real Christian community but don't want that Franciscan handle."

Bob, Paul, Warren and Mel—Franciscan priests and brothers who live in Chicago's uptown—have truly become friars minor. In the presence of the poor it all makes so much more sense. The scholar and servant, Father Sergius Wroblewski, who lived in institutions for twenty-five years and finally got the chance to live the life as he saw it, inspired us to another way. He's living that way in a small community in the presence of the poor of Chicago.

These dancers died—in more realistic terms, they became poor.

But how? And do you have to? Is there another way? But I have to live this way, because of my job; because of the people I'm with....

Most of us were thinking that maybe we could still more or less continue as we had been, but as the week progressed it became clearer and clearer that the Franciscan way is more narrow than we'd thought. There is a Franciscan priority—to live as freely as possible from the goods of this world. The Third Order Rule states it this way: "At a time when men were so taken up with the pursuit of the goods of this world and so torn by civil strife, God raised up a man who showed another way." Talk about Situation 1972! Our society today needs to see an alternative way of living. Life itself calls for a more limited, disciplined, integrated direction. Franciscans must be people willing to live this way.

Dorothy Day shows us another way. She is a humble servant. She is worthy of the hard saying of Vincent de Paul: "You have to love me very much to make me forgive the bread you gave me," as daily, hundreds of people are nourished at the hospitality house in New York.

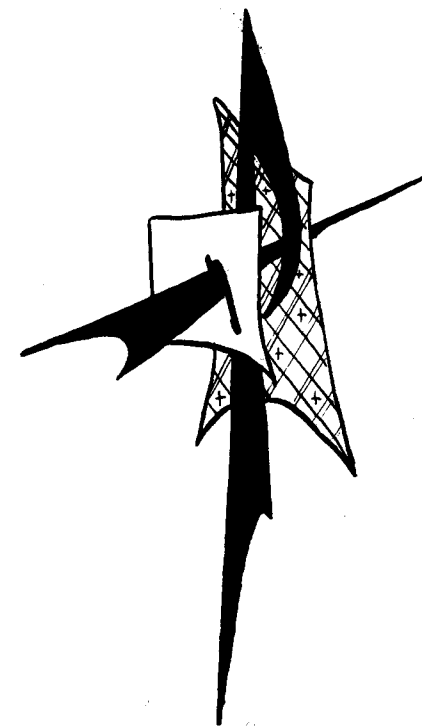
Her gentle ways were interrupted when she repeatedly warned us of involvement with the government. "We should not serve the State but think in terms of personal responsibility. Do as much as you can on your own, God will provide the rest. If you don't, you'll set up a pattern—taking more and more from Caesars. The less you have of Caesars, the less you have to render to Caesars."

We are trying to get out of the bind we're in, yet trying at the

same time to get government money for our schools and hospitals. Dorothy indeed thinks that this present financial crisis is a great blessing. And indeed this can be true, if we depend more on God and each other, rather than our institutions and the security of insurance, retirement programs, government funding, and the other ways of the world.

Father Sergius warned us of the dangers of consumerism, the evils of capitalism—systems that the Church and our Order have conformed to much too readily. He explained that capitalism is alienating the middle class and transforming them into consumers so that their whole point of view is one-dimensional. "Middle America is really becoming atheist of the market place; they are so preoccupied with things. The whole system of advertising is doing this to them. By being prophets, we have to be critics by our life style and say what it is that makes life truly human. Capitalism simply splinters community. What they do is run after profit—move into a better community, live more elegantly, and look down upon the rest. This is what the economic system does to them. We must show brotherhood."

Jesus saw this factor of competition, exploitation, in his own day, and he introduced a new principle for building community and society—servanthood, humble service. Yet the Christian community has always tended to divide up into classes: the dominant and the



dominated, the rich and the poor, the superior and the subject. Yet God raised up a man who showed another way. Francis appeared on the human scene at the time of feudalism and took a prophetic stance against lordship by the espousal of servanthood.

And here we are—living in the midst of exploitation, grave injustice, and ecological crisis. Are we a threat to this society? Do we even make anyone uncomfortable? On the whole, we have conformed, we are consumers, we have kept right up with the Joneses, the Notre Dames of Indiana, the Immaculate Conceptions of Washington, the St. Patricks of New York,

the St. Marys of San Francisco. Sergius bluntly exclaims to this: "If in the concrete, we have lands and buildings and comfort, then we have power and capital and status, and we are on the side of the rich and the powerful who exploit."

It's very easy to blame those institutions and very difficult to start where it is. What about the useless luxuries in my life; how do I give in to this consumerism? Father Alan McCoy says that "just as you cannot expect the gospel to be accepted wholly by people with empty stomachs, so also you can't really preach the gospel if you are the person who took the food and made this hunger." Can our brothers in Latin America see Christ in us when they have had their raw materials taken away from them by us for our luxury?

Father Bob Powell believes that voluntary poverty should be preached and asked to be vowed not only by us who are religious, but by every man, woman, and child on the face of this earth, simply from a sheer ecological point of view. "Yet how can we ask this world to limit their consumption of we ourselves are sitting on such high piles of wealth? If our word is to be credible, it has to be embodied in our option of where we live and how we live."

Dorothy makes it very simple when she says: "When you go to the market place, look at all the things that you can do without."

All the things that we can do without. Get rid of all those things, and then go to the Lord and be

filled. Talk and excuses about spiritual poverty must seriously be tested by your fruits. Sister José strikes close when she says, "If I have spiritual poverty and spend all my time protecting the reasons why I keep everything; if I have spiritual poverty and worry and worry in my conversation and decision about what I eat, what I drink, and what I put on my back. . . 'By your fruits you shall know them', says the Lord." Sister challenged us to test our poverty against the have-nots, and to look at it also in the areas of prestige, security, possession, comfort, and disposability. A little further, then: live close enough to people who do live with all of this. "Go to the poor because you need to learn how to be poor, how to wait."

Why all this stress on poverty? Brother Warren brought to mind that there always has been a fight in our Order on how poor we should be. Shouldn't we pick on something else for a change? Sister José, in her many experiences with Franciscans throughout the country finds that so often poverty is at the heart of what keeps the joy and freedom from being expressed. "My own experience is that prayer seems to flourish more profoundly, people seem to live together in a different kind of charity, when they are living with the poor. Where there is more lack I often find more life, more prayer, more joy."

Yet Father Paul La Chance warns, "Material poverty chosen for itself leads to hardness, ignorance, and thinking how poor we are." Father

Bob believes that Franciscan poverty is possible only in a love community. This brings us to the deeper dimensions of prayer and community.

Poverty chosen for its own sake can take a Franciscan on a real ego trip. Great pleasure and satisfaction can come from being grubby to the point of attracting attention. Attracting attention is being a sign, but you have to emit something more than your own petty grubbiness. This is where the communal dimension of poverty is of value. Individually, you must internalize your expression of poverty and be responsible for it. Communally, you must be willing to be purified by the community—by others with other viewpoints, who will test you. Community must discern with you. There is a real cross in this conflict, but also a real lasting growth—especially when you know that your community loves you, trusts you, supports you, and also challenges you.

According to Father Bob, community determines the degree of your poverty, your detachment. People have a need for some kind of security and when that security does not come from other people, man finds it in things or in situations. "You have to be in a community that enables you to let go of these things. When you know you are loved, then you can gradually let go."

Creating a real community is a risk, a giant undertaking. You have to lay your life open, right on the line. Father Stephen Mannie puts

it this way: "Our eggshell might be cracked, but you can't go along being a good egg forever. Either you hatch or rot."

Hatching is hard and takes faith. Father Nicholas Lohkamp reminded us of this with a call to faith. Faith as a way of life. Faith that is evident and visible—we are believers. "If Franciscan community is to come about, it has to be in a prayer community. Insofar as we are engaged in community life, giving visible witness to faith within us, permeated in a prayerful atmosphere, we would be able to answer, or say something at least, to the deepest needs of people. What's it all about, is that all there is?"

Father Bob echoes this by exclaiming, "I couldn't live it without prayer. I didn't give my life only to help people get out of the ditch, but to bring them to something much wider than any political or social redistribution of wealth could bring them." Bob is convinced that you must take the miseries and frustrations of the people to the Lord. Where else can you gain the strength? Bob expresses the stance of his community when he says, "Our poverty, our powerlessness, our minority has its root first before God. We are all beggars. . . I find it almost impossible to live in the midst of the poor without the contemplative as a strong and consistent element." That's why the topic sentence for the Rule in their house is: "But above all else we should seek to have the spirit of the Lord at work

within us as we pray to him unceasingly." Again Sister José, "...where there is more lack I often find more prayer."

Empty yourself and then go and be filled.

Our dancers have created for us a marvelous dance of life; hands and hearts linked together, they have formed a chain. Community deeply rooted in faith, nurtured in an atmosphere of prayer, then blossoming into a sign of simplicity, powerlessness, and minority.

Our dancers are all different people who wear different shoes, who take different steps; but they all dance to the same song—a uniquely Franciscan song. Francis sang it straight, and he sang it from the cross. Sister José sings extravagantly, "As Franciscans something has to come off strong and sharp and clear with us about our call. Francis saw his call as one to live Jesus Christ as thoroughly

and totally as he could discern him and to be purified..." In the midst of power, Francis was powerless. In the midst of wealth, he was poor. In the midst of status, he was little. Francis was free, and he danced.

The dance of many Franciscans has become top-heavy, and we're beginning to get exhausted. We've been running into too many build-ings, too many possessions, too many silly obstacles. We've lost our balance, and you can't dance without balance. There are too few of us, dancing with the least, the oppressed, the poor. We're identified in so many ways with the have's and super-have's. It's fine to dance there—if we dance as Franciscans, God's poor ones—but first we have to gain our balance.

Or I should say, first we have to die; we have to become poor, then

dance, Franciscan, dance!

Francis lived eternity in the present moment. He wasn't concerned with his looks, the habit he wore, or the dusty sandals; he could have cared less about the horses, or the fasts, or the rules themselves, few as they were in those days, as long as the life of the Spirit of any living thing was in distress and needed NOW, at this precise moment, an innovation or extravagant splash of the rare ointment of human understanding recorded only in the little book of the Gospels which he understood so well.

—*Frederick McKeever, O.F.M.*  
*in a Chapter Homily*

## Affirmation of Franciscans

Gathered at Wheaton, November 1971

The Lord revealed to me  
that he wished me to be... a new kind of fool...  
the likes of which the world has never seen before.

As a body of men and women who profess Jesus Christ as their Lord,  
and who claim Francis as their brother,  
we declare, in hope,  
that these words are meant to become realized in us  
this day

as we search for a WAY to become GOOD NEWS TO ALL MEN.

We acknowledge that the WAY is an Exodus, in a world oppressed  
by the sin of men

who tend to lord it over one another,  
whose guilt we admit in ourselves,  
whose crying need for redemption we share,  
whose plight has moved the heart of a merciful God  
who came as one of us  
promising a life where all men are as brothers  
and leaving us a power, completely beyond our powers,  
to help make this future possible.

While we know that God is present everywhere,  
nevertheless, by the pattern of His comings,  
we seek Him

like Francis before us,  
especially among the poor.

We recognize as God's poor all those  
who suffer brokenness  
of heart, mind, body, dignity, and relationships.

To all these suffering their powerlessness,  
be it social or moral,  
we are convinced we dare not go, except  
as men and women who have nothing to lose,  
who seek to gain nothing,  
and who expect to receive more than we offer,  
though it be our all.

It must be clear that the power we offer comes from God through Jesus.  
Through this power we see the world  
even in its ambiguities  
and behold its truth, goodness and beauty.

Ever watching for signs of the New Creation,  
we affirm, with our Creator:  
Yes, indeed, IT IS GOOD!

We believe that this transforming power  
inheres in the lived sign of fraternity  
which expresses the truth of being a people,  
forgiven and forgiving,  
reconciling, ministering and celebrating their gifts with joy.

In this disarming simplicity of life,  
and careful to let the Word of God test us daily,  
we intend to wield the two-edged sword  
of unconditional love  
and a cutting challenge  
to the world's values and the dominance of the powerful.

In so doing,  
we attempt to run the WAY of Francis.  
We recognize in him a man divested of illusions of grandeur.

Being totally over-taken by a God  
who became one of us,  
Francis purposely sought occasions to draw closer to the out-  
[cast,  
believing that there, above all, he would find his God.

In this way he served them with genuine conviction of his own identity  
as a lesser brother,  
whose privilege it was to be among them.  
This too, is the call we hear.  
We believe it is what Francis called "the better WAY."

In the image of God's Son,  
we earnestly strive to grow into the poverty  
born of love  
which heals the world.

In the mystery of this call we commit ourselves  
to that continuing change of heart  
which is inspired by the self-emptying of Jesus  
and which is heard in the cry of the afflicted.

By continuing growth in awareness and inner freedom  
we hope to become His Body,  
given as bread to a starving world,  
ready to be broken,  
to be shared,  
to be consumed.

We acknowledge that this WAY unfolds  
through the power of an unceasing call  
which becomes louder among men who are trapped in a prison  
forged by cultural sins  
of exploitation, domination, prejudice and alienation—  
men who are so poor  
they have no voice, no vision, no honor, no hope,  
no sense of themselves  
nor of their destiny as children of God.

We commit ourselves to a life of solidarity with these poor,  
coming to them in the mystery of mutual salvation,  
knowing that in some paradoxical way,  
it is they who heal us.

In heeding this call we find it confirmed  
in the desert of one's conscience  
after a struggle, like Jacob's,  
which yields the blessing of a call  
to joyful worship and compassionate service.

Like Jacob, however,  
we leave such a struggle  
wounded by the darkness in our own hearts,  
wiser in discovering life's truth,  
and able to recognize our likeness  
in everyman's sin and struggle.

We believe this is the time of a renewed Pentecost.  
The Spirit of God has fallen fresh on us  
with a call to become  
**WISE FOOLS**  
who in striving to be loyal sons and daughters of the Church,  
do not hesitate to speak to her prophetically  
after being chastened by the fire  
of prayer and experience.

We know that this venture is a journey of the spirit  
which each undertakes  
from varying points of departure.

We respect this variety  
and rally in support of one another's intention  
to run generously on this WAY.

We seek to:

Refuse all personal expressions of status (titles, privileges, etc.) in order to be very simply the brothers and sisters of all.

Choose homes which bespeak poverty in solidarity with the poor of the world.

Practice a hospitality expressive of our universal brotherhood.

Celebrate the beauty and goodness of all God's world by creatively ministering to ourselves and others the gifts of color, sound, taste, etc.

Wear clothing which bears witness to the radical choice to be one of God's poor.

Select and use the means of transportation, personal communication, and recreation as the poor would select and use them.

Enjoy in thanksgiving the simple, frugal fare of a people on pilgrimage.

Reject all goods produced by man's exploitation.

Reject the pretensions in whatever we possess.

Deepen the primary bonds of community life as the essential witness to the world.

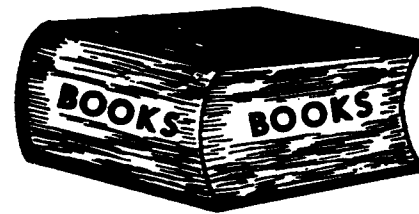
Extend our brotherhood in Jesus to ever-widening dimensions.

Give the widest expression possible to corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

Give and live our lives for the total liberation of every person as willed by Christ.

Educate ourselves to the cultural sins of abuse and exploitation in our capitalistic, consumer society.

Patiently and consistently strip away the non-essentials which clutter our lives and obstruct the realization of the Good News.



**The Sunday Readings: Cycle A (1).**  
By Kevin O'Sullivan, O.F.M. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971. Pp. ix-419. Cloth, \$7.50.

*Reviewed by Father Charles V. Hayes, O.F.M., a member of the Mission Band of Holy Name Province.*

It has been said that there is no easy way to prepare a good homily. With this saying, I think, most priests agree, because a good homily requires both work and inspiration. In *The Sunday Readings*, Father Kevin O'Sullivan offers a welcome help to priests in the work part of the good homily. By "work part" I mean the basic scriptural research and interpretation of the readings for every Sunday and Holyday of the year.

As to the second need for a good homily, inspiration—well, inspiration is a personal thing, and although Father O'Sullivan's presentation may often trigger inspiration or help to

feed it, it is more for the work part of a good homily that this book is valuable. This is not to say that each of the Applications (homilies) given is not useful. It is indeed. Very useful. Each may be used as it is, or because of the combined richness of the whole presentation each may be adapted, enlarged, or modified to suit the particular needs of the preacher and his congregation.

Although Father O'Sullivan is a noted scholar, his presentation in this book is not too deep or too detailed. It is direct, simple, readily understandable, and suited to the needs of the average Sunday congregation and the priest who preaches to that congregation. There may be no easy way to prepare a good homily, but *The Sunday Readings* is a very valuable and welcome aid in making that preparation easier.

**The Meaning of the Sacraments.** By Monika Hellwig. Dayton: Pflaum/Standard, 1972. Pp. 102. Paper, \$1.50.

*Reviewed by Father Robert Gavin, O.F.M., M.S.Ed., Assistant Pastor, St. Francis of Assisi Church, New York City.*

The contemporary attitude toward the sacraments seems to be characterized by a falling off of apprecia-

Fergus Kerr, O.P., is represented by "Eschatology as Politics," in which he expounds Moltmann's thesis that Christianity is essentially eschatological; its primary content, a hope in the future promised. When believers genuinely conduct their lives and thought in light of their hope in God's rewards, he maintains with Moltmann, then a real tension will inevitably arise between the believing community and modern society.

In "The Future at Brussels," Father Gregory Baum describes the benefits resulting from the meeting of the International Congress of Theology, which met in Brussels in September of 1970. There were three main themes discussed: a willingness on the part of theologians to acknowledge mounting non-conformism in the Church; theological pluralism; and, finally, speculation on the institutional or structural reality in the future Church. Father Baum avers that such discussion may be prophetic for

the further development of the Church.

The last article, by Cardinal Leo Suenens, "After Vatican II," serves as a fitting conclusion—it summarizes the results of the Council and points out a number of items of "unfinished business." The Council Fathers themselves discovered that they had overlooked some important problems and only half solved others. What cannot be denied by way of real accomplishment, Suenens observes, is that Vatican II presented the world with a new image of the Church and her mission in the world.

Since the authors of the several articles in this volume enjoy a reputation of high regard for their expertise in current Catholic theological thought, this compilation will help the busy Catholic become aware of this theological progress. It can be of immense value for those Catholics who have not done much reading in theology or have not understood what they have read.

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