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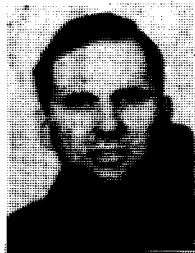
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COVER AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

The cover for the September issue of THE CORD and the illustration on page 263 were drawn by Father Joseph S. Fleming, O.F.M., M.F.A. (Tufts). The illustrations on pages 268, 276, and 286 were drawn by Mr. John Lennon, a student entering his senior year in the Franciscan Formation Program at Siena College.

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Work Is Not Prayer

One of the good things to happen recently in religious life is the movement toward the establishing of houses of prayer. Fresh from a month's stay at our own Province's place, I would like to suggest that you give your Province's house of prayer the benefit of your presence, or—if one is not already established in your Province—that you set in motion a plan for one. The theory behind such a place is obviously to give one a chance to re-focus on things spiritual. Important and necessary as it is, work—the most apostolic of work—is *not* prayer. Surely it is the awareness of this truth, through sad experience, that has at least in part sparked the movement toward taking some time out for contemplation. Recommitment, remotivation, reawareness of Whom we have left all to follow, are the fruits to be hoped for from time spent in a spot where you don't have to *do* anything at all—just *be*—for God.

One of the delights of my experience was living in a small community—a small community, moreover, whose orientation was to God directly and not through the apostolate. The support of the brethren had to be basic in my endeavors, and must be for all of us who are called to *community* life. Of course, while the brethren can pray with us, they cannot pray in our stead. There is a consolation, Merton among others has remarked, that we cannot give to one another because it is God's to give. In the quiet and leisurely atmosphere of a house of prayer, that consolation has a chance to be heard and noticed by us.

Speaking of leisure, it ought to go without saying that no religious house can refuse an individual the chance he or she needs to deepen prayer life, or recoup a spirit of dedication that years in the field may have eroded. On their part religious

ought to be judicious in selecting a house of prayer, if there be a choice. Ads for places which feature Yoga, the Jesus Prayer, vegetarian diets, and the Eucharist as if all were of comparable value, convey an impression that a stay at a house of prayer is a spiritual gimmick that will get results fast, in a quasi magical way, and make the movement suspect. Prayer does work wonders—slowly.

What a house of prayer was really about was brought home to me quite vividly by a friend to whom I was bragging about enduring the difficulty of a month devoted to prayer. "What's hard about spending a month with someone who is all of your life?" Whether it be a month, week, or day—if we can't really say that He *is* all of our life, then we are candidates for houses of prayer. Try it; you'll like it!

J. Julian Davis

Morning Glory

Bright quiet morn.
Empty streets
I receive my God.

Red tulip chalice
Dogwood host
Dandelion candles glow.

Rain the wine
Feeds earth kindly
And earth receives her God.

My God comes to me
He speaks to me
In the growing grass.

Sister Brendan M. Ronayne, O.S.F.

A Voiceless Flower

Marigwen Schumacher

A voiceless flower
speaks
to the obedient
in-listening ear.

Onitsura
(1660-1738)

THE EASTERN TRADITION of Haiku often presents to us, in its abbreviated poetic form, an explosive simplicity and emotional power that is impossible to probe fully or define. We react—but instinctually; we see—somehow universally but, at the same time, uniquely from our own individual experience of life. If one attempts to analyze coldly, intellectually, the haiku which titles this paper, the logical (i.e., Western) mind questions and wonders while one's psychic response is of agreement that "Yes, it is so!" But, persists that logical mind, what is an "in-listening

ear"? How does a "voiceless flower" speak? What is the message? And—if the message is really important—how does one learn to be "obedient" and to hear?

A partial clue is offered by Mary C. Richards, who quotes "an ancient teaching" that each person

has three ears: the outer organ, which bears the name "ear" but which does not hear anything; the inner ear, with all its intricate resonating devices, which connects with the brain and the rest of the body and tells us what sound the other is carrying; intellect, who "hears" the meaning of what the sound is saying.¹ feet and from his heart to his intellect, who "hears" the meaning of what the sound is saying.²

It is, then, this "whole-person-ear" that "in-listens" to the meaning not only of actual sound

¹ Mary C. Richards, *Centering in Pottery, Poetry, and Person* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 5th printing, 1972), p. 58.

Miss Marigwen Schumacher, who teaches classics in the Division of Languages and the Division of Humanities at the Emma Willard School, Troy, N.Y., has just completed a translation and commentary on St. Bonaventure's Sermons, which will be published by the Franciscan Herald Press.

but also of visual messages from flowers, trees, sea and sand, grain and grape—from, indeed, all of creation.

Bonaventure, in his *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* (particularly the first two chapters) discusses the ways in which we come to see and love God, our Creator, through and in his creation.

The whole perceptible universe is, for us, like a mirror through which we move towards God, the all-talented artisan . . . The great power and wisdom and compassion of the Creator shines forth in created things. Physical perception announces this in three ways to our spiritual perception. Our physical perception, then, is of good service to our understanding as it searches rationally, believes faithfully, and reflects with awareness. The reflective person considers the actual existence of creation; the person of faith, the continuing evolution of creation; the reasoning individual considers the exceptional potential of creation.²

Therefore, "we ought to be 'taken by the hand' to see God in all of creation which enters into our mind through our physical perception."³ In these words, Bonaventure re-echoes and reaffirms the statement of Paul in his letter to the Romans: "Ever

since God created the world his everlasting power and deity—however invisible—have been there for the mind to see in the things he has made" (Rom. 1:20).

It is fitting, Bonaventure continues, that we move through God's "footprint" in creation which is "physical and temporary, and outside ourselves." Thus we are led "onto God's pathway." Building on the twofold need of constant prayer and intense observation by which we turn ourselves—or rather, allow ourselves to be turned—directly and most intimately towards God, Bonaventure expands, in these opening chapters of the *Itinerarium*, upon the idea of "footprint" and finally explains its function thus:

All creation in this physical universe leads the spirit of the reflective and understanding individual into our eternal God. For creation is shadow, echo, picture; it is footprint, image, representation—divinely given to us as our way to gaze upon God . . . so that, through physical objects which we can see, our minds are brought to understand things which we cannot see.⁴

Filled, moreover, with the grace of love and the knowledge of truth, we are able to use perceptible, tangible creation as "symbol"—inadequate yet real—

² St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, I, 9-10.

³ *Ibid.*, II, 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 11.

of that direct contact with God for which we are created. It is to aid and develop this directness, this contact with God in and through his creation, that we are called upon to develop all our capacities of "person" in response to his demand that we "love Yahweh our God with our whole heart and mind and spirit." This total response of the whole person requires of each one of us an openness not only

to one another but also, importantly, to all aspects of creation. The quality of "obedient in-listening" and responding to all the forces of creation with which the Lord has so bounteously surrounded us breaks apart our aloofness, our isolation, our fear of involvement and commitment. We become the land, the grain, the meadow, the harvest which the Lord has visited; and we sing, with the Psalmist:

You have visited the land and watered it;
greatly have you enriched it.
God's watercourses are filled;
you have prepared the grain.
Thus have you prepared the land: drenching its furrows,
breaking up its clods,
Softening it with showers,
blessing its yield . . .
Rejoicing clothes the hills,
the fields are garmented with flocks
And the valleys blanketed with grain.
They shout and sing for joy.

Psalm 65:9-13

It is this sensitivity to image, echo, footprint, and thereby to God's concrete presence here and now—before us as well as within us—that hears the voiceless message that "God is Beauty" and that, conversely in a way, Beauty is God; that sees in image and metaphor not just an awkward attempt to express that which cannot be stated in words and to explain, by lesser actuality, the incomprehensible vast-

ness of the Trinity. The perceptive, sensitive individual, in mind and spirit, sees and feels and knows, vibrantly and honestly, that metaphor and image are not "bare substitution, mere rhetorical figure of speech," but really "genuine and direct identification."⁵

It is in this light, I believe, that Bonaventure so frequently and so effectively—especially in his homilies—uses metaphor-

image to clarify and deepen the impact of his statements. He says, for example, that "the grace-filled birth of Christ, long and deeply desired by everyone, is described in Sacred Scripture through a many-faceted metaphor so that what one is not strong enough to express another may complete."⁶

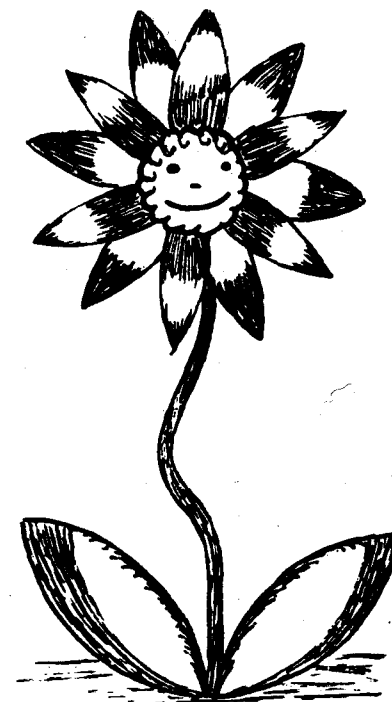
Bonaventure builds one of his Christmas day homilies⁷ on a flower-image which, although we have only the very short schema of the homily, touches deeply into our responsiveness. Let us listen with the "whole-person-ear" and let the expansion of theme and image grow and blossom within us. To the people of Lyons, he says:

I am the flower of the fields,
the lily of the valleys.
(Song of Songs 2:1)

Christ, born in the field of the womb of the Virgin in order that he might be the "flower" of mankind and the "lily" of the angels, in his birth and in his whole life appeared and in fact was, in the world:

—a shining flower of total purity

The flowers appear on the earth,
the season of glad songs has come.
(Song of Songs 2:12)



—a spring blossom of grace-filled beauty

like roses in the days of spring,
like lilies by a freshet of water . . .
(Ecclus. 50:8)

—the brilliant flower of deep wisdom

a shoot springs from the stock of Jesse,
a scion thrusts from his roots,
on him the spirit of Yahweh rests,
a spirit of wisdom and insight . . .
(Isaiah 11:1-2)

⁵ Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover Publications, 1953), p. 94.

⁶ St. Bonaventure, *Sermo 21 in Nativitate Domini*, ed. Quaracchi, t. IX, p. 122.

⁷ St. Bonaventure, *Sermo 8 in Nativitate Domini*, ed. Quaracchi, t. IX, p. 116.

—the fragrant blossom of life's sweetness

The blossoming vines give out their fragrance [i. e., the spirit and body of Christ, born].

(Song of Songs 2:13)

—a chosen flower of graced innocence

From all the flowers of the world I have chosen for you one lily.

(4 Esdra 5:24)

—the health-giving flower for eternal salvation

Support me with flowers . . . [i.e., with the redeeming fruits of Christ, born].

(Song of Songs 2:5)

That is all we have recorded of Bonaventure's words on this occasion. One cannot articulate the impact of such imagery. It is emotional and psychic; but also visual, rational, and mind-enticing. It summons forth unspoken response from heart and mind and spirit. The repetition of "flower" with varied adjective and phrase resounds through our mind's eye as we see, dramatically, a kaleidoscope of spring flowers: roses, lilies; purity, innocence, beauty; fragrance, predilection, salvation. The Incarnate Christ is created, creation, and

creator . . . And we see and touch and love.

To quote again from the *Itinerarium*:

Whoever is not enlightened by such great splendors of creation is, indeed, blind. Whoever is not awakened by such great voices is, indeed, deaf. Whoever does not praise God in all these gifts is, indeed, mute. Whoever does not consider God, the First Principle, from such great evidence is, indeed, a fool. Open your eyes, concentrate your spiritual ears, open your lips, and arouse your heart to see your God in all of creation and thus to hear and praise and love and cherish him, making known his glory and honor. Otherwise all of creation may rise up to condemn you.⁸

Contemplation, then, is the acute awareness of God as he is in himself and as his creation is in him. The flower, the stone, the shell, the cloud provide for us that "long, loving look at the real" which enraptures us by his concrete presence and transports us into our God. Thus does

*a voiceless flower
speak
to the obedient
in-listening ear.*

But the "whole-person-ear" must be "empty enough of itself to hear clearly."⁹

⁸ St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium*, I, 15.

⁹ Richards, p. 58.

But I Have Called You, Friends (John 15:15)

Mother Mary Francis, P.C.C.

VIII

WE ARE OBLIGED TO GIVE a good example to one another. This is really an obligation, a responsibility in community. But, dear sisters, if there is one thing that is particularly calculated not to promote growth in community, not to establish an atmosphere of understanding and genial friendship, it is aggressive good example—if you know what I mean. There is in all of us this tendency to react to aggressive "good example" by going the exemplars one better yet. If someone is pointing out by her choleric virtue that we are doing the wrong thing, there is some devilish strain in each one of us that tends to respond by doing worse than we were doing before. This is a common reaction to "aggressive good example."

Now, suppose two sisters are in the novitiate and get carried away into talking in a recreational way when this is a time of silence. Another sister comes in, and she realizes that she has a responsibility. Let's say that this is an older sister (not that a younger one wouldn't have a responsibility too, but it would call for a

different expression). Well, this older sister can do any number of things. She can look at the talkative sisters and hoist her eyebrows. "Recreational talking in time of silence," comment the eyebrows. She hasn't said a word, but she has registered disapproving superiority. She may not even do that. Maybe only looks at them and tightens her lips in a prim way. Or she may glance at the clock and then go very deliberately to her own place, take out her work, and sit down with "virtue" exuding from every pore. Well, she is giving an aggressive good example, and if these other sisters are normal sinners, something in their interior is going to want to say to her, "Hsst!" The sooner we recognize this little devilish strain in ourselves, the better.

On the other hand, this sister doesn't have to come in and think "I can't let them think that I am better than they are." And so she draws up a chair and says, "Well, pals, what's it all about?" What she can do is come in, and in a completely unartificial way that doesn't try to pretend,

"I don't know you are here; I don't know you are talking; I am just hotly pursuing my own holiness, I'm not judging you," and simply go about her business. This type of thing also can stand out like antennae. You know what I mean. "It's perfectly obvious that you are doing the wrong thing, but I will not judge. I am too holy to do that." Women can do these nasty little things which are very harmful in the aggregate in community. But the sister can come in, simply smile at the two sisters acknowledging their presence, and go about her business. Ninety-nine times out of hundred this is the thing which will immediately bring to the mind of the little sinners there that their occupation is not the work to be pursued at the moment. Yet, the other sister hasn't said a thing. She has not been aggressive in her good example. She hasn't been prim; she hasn't been hale-fellow-well-met. She has simply kept a warm atmosphere that doesn't question, doesn't judge, and doesn't "excuse" in a saccharine way, either. That latter is also very wounding to our proud dignity. Someone can get this across without a word that, "Poor little weak things, they just haven't scaled the heights; they don't even realize they are doing the wrong thing." We can be so "kind," if you know what I mean, that it is very repelling.

What we want to be is kind, but we don't want to come in like we are selling kindness. This, too, has a kind of aggressiveness in it.

Now, that is just one little example. Other times it may be the better part of silence to say something. Suppose it is a little work situation where a sister has flubbed it up and got something all wrong although it was clearly explained. Now we all have to work longer to get this done. Far from being an infraction of silence, it could be very sisterly just perhaps to whisper to that sister as the occasion presents itself, "Don't you feel a perfect fool when you get such clear directions wrong! But you are such a comfort to me—sometimes I think I am the only one who does that." Now this isn't artificial, because I am sure that this has happened to each of us on some occasion that what is clear as the daylight was a fog to me. I think that to step into a sister's embarrassment with that kind of affection is part of what Holy Mother Clare means by nurturing one another. This establishes an area of friendship, and that sister is not likely to forget it. No normal person enjoys feeling foolish, feeling stupid. We may know that this is good for us in the abstract, but nobody eats it up like a chocolate soda. You wouldn't be normal if you did.

The next thing on our little agenda here is knowledge of the real person. Brushing aside the little things we tend to dislike about one another begets love. There is a beautiful chain here. Knowledge discovers something lovable in a person. Then, this gives us a basis for discovering that the *person* is lovable. That there is not just some lovable thing in her, that once she did something right, once she was very clever (because she agreed with me, perhaps!), or once she was very wise because she quoted something I had said. No, we discover something lovable in her which gives us the basis for understanding that she herself is lovable. Then the next progression is that knowledge of the real person is not concerned just with something about her but with the person herself. This is what engenders love, real love, the love of friendship. Now this can be built by silent understanding, too. I gave you a little example last time of how twenty-five years later I remember pressure on my second finger by another young person. There is also the light in the eye that can mean so much either for healing or for wounding. Who of us doesn't know how we can be affected by a look, by a glance! I would really prefer a sister to fail in charity by a quick word, by a vexed word, by an expression of

annoyance which will later humiliate and hopefully humble any normal sister, than that without a word she should correct, offend, judge by her eyes. This is far more wounding, far more subtle, far more proud. If a sister says something that is out of place, I would much prefer that a sister, forgetting her own spiritual poise and slipping in charity, would give back a snappy word to the other sister rather than give her a cold look. This is very much more wounding than words. Be careful of that.

Of course, that has a happy inverse. So much can be said by a ten-second locking of the eyes. How much understanding can be given when a sister has said the wrong thing! Sometimes just a meeting of eyes with warmth that conveys that you are not offended. A gracious look can say a whole paragraph: "I have done this same thing. I have said things that came over like a lead balloon." All this is part of womanliness. It is part of promoting life by friendship.

Now let us do a bit of reflecting on the matter of emotional impoverishment on which I touched before. I want to dwell a little more on that this morning because, dear sisters, we are too inclined to set that aside. Maybe we even think that there is something wrong with God's creation—that the Lord gave us a soul and a body which was very good,



but then he slipped up and gave us emotions. That he made a really bad slip in some people and gave them very strong emotions. We want to get away from that negative idea and come over to the opposite.

If a sister is highly endowed intellectually everyone will acknowledge that this is a good thing, but it will likely be pointed out to her that she should guard against intellectual pride. However, it is not so likely to be pointed out to us that if we are richly endowed emotionally, this is also a very good thing and contributory toward community; but that just as we guard against pride not in a negative sense but so that the gift of high intellectual endowment may be truly and humbly used before God, so do we act with the emotional endowments we have. Now, if a sister is less endowed

intellectually, it is the most normal thing in the world that in community we try to build this up. Why do we have cultural reading? Is it because every once in a while I can't figure out what to do with some time so I announce: "Well, let's read a book; it might do us some good." No, we do it simply because we really want our minds to grow. And we try to vary this reading, feeding our minds on the richness of highly endowed minds in one field or another. We need to do the same with emotion, but this is often neglected. Perhaps we are far too much occupied with reining in emotions and not enough with building up emotional strength. No one would disagree that it is a good thing to build up intellectual strength, though maybe we are too lazy to want to do it sometimes. At least we wouldn't conceptually deny that this is a good thing. But we could conceptually deny that it is a good thing to build up emotional strength. If we have persons who do not react to things, who just do not care, this is an impoverishment which must be built up in community, which must be enriched by the love of her sisters, by the understanding of her superior.

Let us go back to this atmosphere that we create. It is not a marvelous thing not to feel anything, my dears. Rather, it is something that we should reme-

dy. Perhaps it is a great occasion of joy: you don't react. Suppose there is a message of sorrow that is communicated: you don't react. Well, dear sisters, then there is something anemic about your emotions. This is not something to confuse with poise, with recollection, or with prayerfulness—by no means! You have to take something for it. If you don't take something for physical anemia, after a while you don't have a problem with the anemia because you have ceased to be. If you don't take something for emotional anemia, then you will cease to grow as a woman. And it would be a tragedy indeed to be just walking around, a shell of a woman, without real womanly love and real womanly friendship growing stronger within us all the time.

How do we help the emotionally impoverished person? Well, not by an overcharged: "I am going to draw her out" kind of thing. The person who is less equipped by nature to react to a group or to contribute to various enterprises or subjects of conversation is to be helped in a very unobtrusive, loving way, and not by setting out to help her like a kindly bulldozer. The therapy needed is much more gentle and relates most of all to this atmosphere of understanding. As I said last time, we are all mysteries, each one a separate mystery of God; and I would add

to that that we are very precious mysteries of God, very fragile mysteries of God. None of us can gauge (we will know only in eternity), how we are affecting one another all the time, all the time. There is much talk right now about inter-personal relationships. This is good because I think that this has been neglected in many areas of religious life, but I think it is sometimes presented in a very superficial way. Real inter-personal relationships are what do promote growth, and for this we have to grow in a sense of our responsibility to one another. As I have said so often, we are here to help one another to be holy; and you don't enter a community to be holy in spite of the people who are there, but with the help of the people who are there. My community should be the area in which I can always feel at ease even when I am most awkward. Part of friendship is knowing that I will always be forgiven. There's no doubt about that. And, far from encouraging us to just live willy-nilly, haphazard, without caring how many emotional bricks we throw around, because we know that we will be forgiven, the assurance begets just the opposite attitude.

Dear sisters, we are all knowledgeable about how differently we feel, and I have touched on this before at different times. We are so much conditioned by how

many different things: by the way we feel physically, by our emotional state on that day, by our monthly cycle and the rise and fall of our emotions and our passions that this turning cycle brings with it, by external things, even by the weather. We just feel differently on different days. But we have to make a continuing effort to realize that all these other sisters have the same problem. Very obvious, isn't it? But, dear sisters, for really grasping it, you couldn't find a more abstruse truth. It seems like it just eludes us. We can understand how *we* are conditioned by our moods, how *we* have to struggle, how a thing we could do so easily yesterday we have to struggle to do today, how we could be so amiable last Wednesday and are so cussed on this Wednesday. And we understand that and we do one of two things: either we excuse ourselves to the full extent which is bad, or we are extremely hard on ourselves which is also bad. But the failure to recognize the same conditioning in our sisters is something that is there and against which we must work.

We had in today's psalms, something which struck me again with great force. You recall that the psalmist speaks very severely about the person who adds to the suffering God has entrusted to another person. It really shivers the spine, that psalm which says

that God will expunge such an assailant from the book of life. He will wipe this person out who adds to the pain that God has already allowed someone to have. "He added to the pain of him whom you snote . . . expunge him from the book of the living" (Ps. 68). A terrible anathema from God.

Surely no one of us would consciously do this. If we use a physical comparison it is certainly obvious that if a sister cut her finger no one in her right mind will run and get salt to shake in it. It is true that we may have to bring a remedy which will be painful, but we wouldn't add to the pain for no reason. But we can do these things emotionally and psychologically without realizing the harm that we are doing. If the bodily cut is there, we can see it; and everything womanly in us comes forward to heal the cut. If a sister turns her ankle, we do not say, "Why don't you run into the house?" No, we help her in, because we know she can't step on the ankle. We can see the sprained ankle. But because we cannot see temptations, we cannot see inner strain, we cannot see psychical weaknesses (true, we can see their manifestations sometimes, but we cannot see emotional states), we are likely to wound one of our sisters to whom God has entrusted a particular suffering

that day. As the psalmist says, God has smitten for His own reason, for His own spiritual, strengthening reason. But God is so zealous that we not add to the pain he allows, that he says; if you do, I will wipe you right off the page. If we would translate the psalms into everyday language this is what we would have.

Dear sisters, this is something I want you to think about. It is an atmospheric awareness that you want to develop, something of the same calibre as an abiding sorrow for sin. That is the exact opposite of continually looking back and numbering my sins, remembering the conditions, being full of bitter remorse, going back over and over and over things. That doesn't produce an abiding sorrow for sins, but rather either complete discouragement or a kind of unhealthy self-depreciation or even self-hatred which locks all our human movement. An abiding sorrow for sinfulness is a deep, gentle awareness. Well now, the parallelism to the point we are speaking of now is not that we go around and say, "Sister doesn't really look like herself today and any of ten things could be the matter with her." Rather it is that we have this abiding awareness that just as we are sometimes torn and tossed interiorly, just as we are sometimes tensed and strained by circumstances at one time

and not at another, just as we are sometimes conditioned by circumstances that would not affect us at another time, so are these things continually happening to these most precious mysteries of God with whom I live.

Remember, we are drawing down this anathema of God by really wounding a sister at a time when she can't take another wound. We don't know, looking around at one another, being with one another at the work, what is happening in a sister's interior. Perhaps she is having a tremendous struggle with charity in some particular aspect that day, maybe she is really having a fiery little encounter with herself over a point of obedience, maybe she is really tortured at that hour by unchaste imaginations and is raw and suffering. A lack of understanding, a roughness with that sister at that time might be just too much. And think what this could do. Now I don't want this to create any rigid alarm in you, but I do want you to try to add to your sense of womanliness, of this loving geniality, and to remember that we really can harm one another.

We have in our new Constitutions a text that chastity flourishes better in an atmosphere of love. Well, you can't just say that is a lovely sentence and we all believe it, but not really bring it into all the prac-

tical details of daily living. So does charity grow where charity is, and so does obedience flourish where obedience is being practiced. You see, dear sisters, we do have this tremendous responsibility for our sisters' emotional growth. If a sister is hurt at a moment when she can simply not afford another hurt, you could abort her emotional growth besides doing her spiritual harm by your lack of consideration.

It occurred to me in praying about this morning's conference, that the qualities which our Holy Mother Clare set down for the abbess particularly to cultivate in herself are also the qualities of friendship. It belongs to the atmosphere of friendship in a community, that the sisters are available to one another, that they are accessible to one another, that they are to one another a refuge in weakness. We can build up this availability, this accessibility in many ways. How will the other sisters feel that you are available? Well, from your general manner, that is true, but sometimes by specifically showing them.

Suppose it is just a matter of physical service. You know that it is getting close to the bell for the Divine Office and you see that a sister has a lot of work to do and she is getting strained about it, which will unfit her for her prayer. Well, show yourself available. Why can't you come up

to her and say, "It just happens that I have ten minutes free—would you like to have them?" And, dear sisters, when you yourself are offered something like that, accept it, receive it. What we do every morning at the sign of peace at Mass, our symbolic gesture of giving and receiving, is supposed to mean something. I have said before that sometimes we are readier to give than to receive, sometimes there are these other proud little devils in us that say, "I can do it; I can finish." Be ready to accept help from one another; then you are mutually available.

Without reasoning it through, one sister knows that another sister is aware of her small need in a certain area. Day by day we just keep on building this kind of atmosphere. Maybe some general work has been assigned and it is the kind of work in which you don't excel. So, you are getting about half as much done as the sister next to you. Now, she can show very warm charity if she has finished her allotment of that work by helping you, not in a, "My dear, I am all finished; do you want me to help you?" way, but in the tactful, simple, warm way that love teaches. "Looks like you're not getting finished, and that is just my problem in some other kinds of work. Could I help you with this?" You see, you don't have to run around in psychological

circles about it. "How can I help her, and not let her feel that she is slow?" Just be simple, dear sisters.

The healthiest thing in the world is to have a sense of inferiority in certain areas. I am not talking about an inferiority complex. However, admission of particularized or specific inferiority is as healthy as the acceptance of qualitative or pervasive inferiority is harmful. Have you got that? The admission of a specific inferiority is a healthy thing. When we say, "Guard against an inferiority complex," we don't mean that we have to build up in every sister a conviction that "I am very capable in all practical work; I am adept at handling machinery; I am very talented at art." We are all inferior in some areas, there is no doubt about it. And that is not a matter of a complex; it is as healthy as it can be. It is only people who are very insecure who are unwilling to admit that they are inferior in many ways. Let me repeat that this is very different from a pervasive inferiority complex which is very harmful—thinking that I am just no good, am inferior to everybody in every way. This can smell a bit like

humility, but it isn't. It is something ersatz, something that is squirted out of a can. It is not the real fragrance of humility, because no one could be here and grow and thrive with a pervasive sense of total inferiority. It is the specific kind that is very healthy. And it is perfectly ridiculous to pretend that we are not all inferior to others in some areas.

We are all inferior in virtue, and some are more inferior in one virtue than in another. It would be too bad if we were all grossly inferior in the same thing. Again, this is part of the meaning of community. And so a person who has not an inferiority complex, who knows there is much good in her because God created her good, and is helped by her sisters to realize this, to grow, not only spiritually, intellectually, socially, but emotionally, is a sister who can afford to say, "I am very inferior in many ways," and not because this sounds good but because it is the truth. And the truth shall make you free, says the Lord. All this is part of the beauty of friendship in the mystery of community. Now, go and proclaim the mystery to one another



Kolbe House: A New Beginning

Kieran M. Kay, O.F.M.Conv.

I WAS PRIVILEGED, recently, to preach at a gathering of friars. I spoke of the interrelationship of prayer and community. As we grow in the kind of community that Jesus longed for and prayed for us to have, I observed, so we will grow in the kind of prayer that deeply affects our lives. Afterwards, one of the friars said to me: "Your homily disturbed me." I thanked him for saying that; I considered it the richest kind of compliment.

As I ponder it, perhaps that is what Kolbe House of Prayer is essentially meant to be: a place to disturb people. Not to disturb them in the sense that their equilibrium is destroyed and they begin to throw stones (we have had enough of that!), but to disturb them by asking the kinds of questions that all of us must face so that they can throw their stones away.

During the past year or so, I have traveled the length and breadth of our land, praying with people (some priests, many sisters, many lay people); and I

have witnessed something of the fulfillment of the prophecies of Ezechiel and Joel: "I will place my spirit within you that you may live . . . I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh." Everywhere I go, I find people who are longing for prayer, longing to be real, longing for the kind of life that Jesus said he had come to give, and give in abundance. They are people who are tired of running, tired of make-believe, tired of empty ritual, tired of living on the fringe of life, and sick unto death of pitiful promises that life in frenzied, fitful America holds out to them.

It is to these people that Kolbe House addresses itself: those who have lived with possibility in their heart and have never been able to realize it; those who have lived forever on the edge of sorrow and pain; those who have never found themselves; those who have dreams and visions; those who are fragmented and spent; those who have wasted their lives inanely seeking honor and prestige and status;

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those who have had positions of honor and now, in the twilight and quiet hour of truth, see something more substantial to hope for.

Kolbe House, then, is an oasis for those who have the courage to seek the desert, knowing full well the frightening prospect of inner struggle that the desert demands. To be alone before one's God, to be stripped of all the subtle defenses and masks, to see with alarming clarity the emptiness of one's life, to stand unsifted amid the sand of one's selfish heart—all this takes courage. But it is the beginning of a new creature in Christ, for only when one stands before the Lord in one's emptiness, like Mary, can one be filled with the Lord. All the sophistry, all the pretense, all the self-importance must be shorn so that one can cry with a full voice: "My heart is overflowing with praise of my Lord; my soul is full of joy in God my Saviour. . . . He has swept away the high and mighty. He has set kings down from their thrones and lifted up the humble. He has satisfied the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away with empty hands" (Lk. 1:49, 53-55).¹ To be continually hungry for the Lord is to assume

one's proper stance before him. Jesus called that kind of person "blessed."

Thomas Merton rightly observes:

If we know how great is the love of Jesus for us, we will never be afraid to go to him in all our poverty, all our weakness, all our spiritual wretchedness and infirmity. Indeed, when we understand the true nature of his love for us, we will prefer to come to him poor and helpless. We will never be ashamed of our distress. Distress is to our advantage when we have nothing to seek but mercy. We can be glad of our helplessness when we really believe that his power is made perfect in our infirmity.

The surest sign that we have received a spiritual understanding of God's love for us is the appreciation of our own poverty in the light of his infinite mercy.²

An atmosphere of quiet is imperative for any house of prayer. One must learn to walk alone in silence in order to listen to one's heart, to hear the reverberations of the Lord in one's spirit, and to see what the clamor of the world has blinded one to. "For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: by waiting and by calm you shall be saved, in quiet and trust your

¹ This and all subsequent quotations from the New Testament, except the last (JBV), are from Phillips's translation.

² Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Image Books, 1968), pp. 37 - 38.

strength lies. The Lord is waiting to show you valor, and he rises to pity you: for the Lord is a God of Justice: blessed are all who wait for him!" (Is. 30:15, 18). Again in Isaiah: "Come to me heedfully; listen, that you may have life" (Is. 55:8). The little prince spoke wisely when he said: "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."³



RITIRO

With the clarity that quiet brings, one begins to see the uniqueness of his own spirit and his place in the plan of God; the Word opens to him in an amazingly new way; the Spirit is released into every corner of his being, and the lavish gifts that He has given become operative as one begins to walk in

the power of the Resurrection. Jesus becomes SOMEBODY, a tremendous lover whom one longs to be with and attend to and tend toward. One learns to stand on the word of Jesus, who said before he ascended to the Father that he had much more to tell his disciples but that they could not bear to hear it yet. But he promised to send them—and us—the Spirit of Truth, who would be with us all days, and who would reveal *all* that the Father had communicated to Jesus about the very life of God (Jn. 16:12-13). It's staggering to realize that revelation is still going on, that Jesus is still alive through his Spirit, still fulfilling his promise each day of leading us into a fuller understanding of the predetermined plan of the Father to give glory to Jesus and to bring all his brothers into the richness of his kingdom. Paul prays in Colossians: "We are asking God that you may see things, as it were, from his point of view by being given spiritual insight and understanding. We also pray that your outward lives, which men see, may bring credit to your master's name, and that you may bring joy to his heart by bearing genuine Christian fruit, and that your knowledge of God may grow yet deeper. As you live this new life, we pray

that you will be strengthened from God's boundless resources, so that you will find yourselves able to pass through an experience and endure it with joy. You will even be able to thank God in the midst of pain and distress because you are privileged to share the lot of those who are living in the light. For we must never forget that he rescued us from the power of darkness, and reestablished us in the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Col. 1:9-13). Each day, then, is a new revelation of Jesus and of the Father's love for us, a new understanding and awareness of what it means to abide in Jesus and in the Father as they abide in one another, a new entering into that union with the Father that Jesus prayed for us to be established in. Each day one discovers a new room in the Father's house, and comes home in a new way.

Coming home to oneself is perhaps the single most important element in the whole house-of-prayer movement, which began as a concept in the Fall of 1965. At that time Father Bernard Häring presented the idea to the Conference of Major Superiors of Women. Slowly but inevitably the idea caught on, and the concept became a living reality, starting with the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Monroe, Michigan, until today there are numerous houses of

prayer dotting the globe, most of them in the United States. Each house has its own unique gift and direction, as one might expect to find in such an important work of the Spirit for the renewal of the Church. Some of the houses are temporary, e.g., for summer renewal experiences; others are continuous, with a core group to feel the pulse of the Spirit and to direct the house according to the lead of the Spirit. In all houses of prayer there are certain constants: the shift from institution-centered to person-centered communities; an accent on letting each individual become himself to assume his responsibility before God; sharing of faith experiences leading to inner growth and interiorization of one's beliefs; enjoying the luxury of doing nothing except being with the Lord and with others, being present to others as the Lord is present to us; being alone to stand on the Word and be silent; singing the praises of God together, in traditional forms and in new, creative forms of prayer.

In the houses of prayer that I have experienced, and in all the accounts that I have read of those who have been in houses of prayer, there is an important distinction that needs constant stress. It is this: saying prayers together *presupposes* and *expresses* community; shared prayer *creates* community. It all sounds very

³ Antoine de Saint Exupéry, *The Little Prince* (New York: Harbrace Paperbacks, 1943), p. 87.

simple, but in far too few communities is this principle operative. Saying prayers side by side does very little to create the kind of community where Jesus, as head and center, lives. Yet we continue with the illusion that somehow, some way it will happen. We must learn, experientially, that only as we are open to each other, trusting and loving one another as brothers (Francis said it a long time ago: "The friars should confidently make known their needs to each other"), can we come to prayer with the joy and life and expectancy that it is meant to be and to bring. For some people this is extremely difficult; it is something that they have never experienced and is considered an invasion of privacy. For them, spontaneous prayer and shared prayer are foreigners, never to be touched, to be avoided at all costs. One suspects that they are afraid of this sort of experience because it involves an investment of self, a certain transparency, a dropping of defenses, the high cost of mature love. They would much rather hide behind ritual, say all the words, and be done with it. Prayer, for them, is seemingly compartmentalized: a small section of each day that, all too often, becomes a kind of tokenism. The prophets—and Jesus—had something to say about that.

Paul's vision of prayer is some-

thing quite different. For him to live is Christ. It is to experience the paschal mystery; if we have lived in the likeness of Christ's death, so we shall live in the likeness of his resurrection and share in his glory. To die to ourselves from moment to moment, to face life with all the pain that is involved in growing, to rejoice in our infirmities so that the power of Christ may be manifest in us, to lose our lives and become fools for Christ's sake—this is to live Christ, this is to pray. Paul states in his second letter to the Corinthians: "The Christ you have to deal with is not a weak person outside you, but a tremendous power inside you. He was 'weak' enough to be crucified, yes, but he lives now by the power of God. I am weak as he was weak, but I am strong enough to deal with you, for I share his life by the power of God. You should be looking at yourselves to make sure that you are really Christ's. It is yourselves that you should be testing, not me. You ought to know by this time that Christ is in you, unless you are not real Christians at all" (2 Cor. 13:3-5). Again, earlier in the same letter: "All this [suffering] we want to meet with sincerity, with insight and patience; by sheer kindness and the Holy Spirit; with genuine love, speaking the plain truth, and living by the power of God. Our sole defense,

our only weapon, is a life of integrity, whether we meet honor or dishonor, praise or blame. Called 'imposters' we must be true, called 'nobodies' we must be in the public eye. Never far from death, yet here we are alive, always 'going through it' yet never 'going under.' We know sorrow, yet our joy is inextinguishable. We have 'nothing to bless ourselves with,' yet we bless many others with true riches. We are penniless, and yet in reality we have everything worth having" (2 Cor. 6:6-10). Paul could entreat us to pray constantly, to pray always in this sense of union with Christ in all the events of life. We have no excuse, if we are Christians, for not praying always.

This is the kind of prayer that we are meant to share with others so that Jesus may live in our midst and work through us. When this kind of prayer is experienced, we build each other up in faith, we come to know the power of prayer, and we come together with the joy that we are meant to have in singing the praises of God. Then common prayer has meaning and achieves its end: it *expresses* a community already founded in Jesus. And we learn to pray not for the sake of praying, but for the sake of listening—to the Lord and to one another—and of being heard.

Frequently the psalms use the word *vacate*. It is an invitation

to let loose, to unwind, to enjoy the presence of the Lord. When we let loose, our false inhibitions disappear and we can focus on Him who is the source of our life. We will pray together because we will *be* together, and we will discover the source of our life: not our community work, not our priestly and religious function, not even the love that each of us has for God. Rather, the love with which He has first loved us. One sister has given this account of her prayer experience

Outstanding and unique to our house of prayer were the daily liturgies. On special days festal Masses were celebrated but on other days themes which had been the subject of morning discussion were opened and shared more fully in the Eucharist. Some of the themes used were the sacramentality of the modern city, building the universe, prayer, death-resurrection, names, poverty, climaxing in a day emphasizing openness to the Spirit. Our Mass always began in the community room where the liturgy of the Word was shared. The Mass began with the Reconciliation Service, followed by readings which were often drawn from contemporary sources. Then there was a long sharing or breaking of the word, in which together we gleaned new insights into what Jesus is really saying. It was here that we learned over and over that unless we know our own poverty, we are unable to hear the

Word of God. Here, too, we realized more fully that the Kingdom of God is within us, that prayer is much more God's initiative—His calling us—than our calling to Him; that we, too, are sent, but where we are sent He is already there waiting to be recognized. Here, too, we became conscious that through prayer we learn who we are—our name, and that all reality is a sign of God's love and that through awareness of the real we become real.⁴

Of significance in the development of prayer life in the various houses was the universal longing for deeper and more prolonged silence concomitant with shared prayer. Silence—most of the time alone, sometimes shared with others—was a felt need, the fruit of true community, bringing delight because it was not an empty silence, not the mere absence of words; it was a promise—crammed silence, filled with the presence of mystery. It is out of this kind of self-imposed, desired silence that the simplest, and perhaps highest, kind of prayer springs from the heart—the prayer of praise. No one can praise God unless he is open, willing to be led, and aware of his life and all of life as gift—

and is grateful. Merton said it well:

It is not speaking that breaks our silence, but the anxiety to be heard. The words of the proud man impose silence on all others, so that he alone may be heard. The humble man asks nothing but an alms, then waits and listens.⁵

In the silence of Kolbe House, specifically where are its roots? What is its direction?

I spent a year in retreat—four months alone, eight months in community—seeking the face of the Lord. In the pain-joy of that desert experience, it slowly became clear that the Lord was calling me to the house-of-prayer apostolate. I had to rediscover myself as a person, as a Franciscan, as a priest—and it took the wilderness to do that. As I wandered in the wilderness, I met many of my own friars who were spiritually exhausted, functioning on a seemingly mechanical level as priests with no apparent Franciscan thrust in their work. I found threatened men—worried over the state of the Church, the rebelliousness of young people, the deterioration of authority. I listened to homilies that left me limp, devoid

of the Good News of Jesus, seemingly without any anointing of the Spirit, seemingly spun off the top of the head, not emerging from the bottom of the heart. I saw people herded in and out of Sunday Mass, going through all the motions and seemingly untouched by the un-celebration. I listened to men who cringed at the mere mention of houses of prayer or the charismatic renewal; who quickly withdrew from people whose prayer life was infinitely deeper than their own, people who obviously knew Jesus in a very personal way, who were experiencing the joy and peace that the baptism in the Spirit brings, who needed and wanted direction in their new walk in the Spirit, who obviously showed in their lives and gifts and fruits of the Spirit. These men, after many subtly compromising years in religious life, knew that there was something missing, felt their own hollowness. With Alfie, they were asking, What's it all about?

The answer to that question, for me—and hopefully for others—was Kolbe House. Thomas Merton has said, "The house of prayer question is becoming the focal point for the re-examination and recovery of the identity of all religious life today."⁶ If people are to cope with a rapidly changing society and a rapidly

If you would like further information on the use of the Kolbe House facilities, please write to the author at Kolbe House, St. Anthony Center, Auburn, Ind. 46706. Tel.: (219) 925-2463.

changing Church—and not just to bear the shock of it, but to lead it in the right direction—they evidently must have their roots sunk deep in Jesus. They must have a place of quiet to retreat themselves, to re-new themselves, to re-think their lives, to re-seek a deeper union with the Father, as Jesus found it necessary to do occasionally. They need to listen again to the Word and experience its power to transform. They need, through silence and peace, to become aware of others and their needs and the effects of a loving community, aware of the joy of sharing and the joy of living, aware of the rhythm of nature and the process of growth, aware of what it means to celebrate, especially the Eucharist. Indeed, the whole house-of-prayer movement could be looked upon as an attempt to bring people into intense awareness.

Kolbe House is blessed to be united to and integrated with our novitiate. Those who come to pray are supported by the novitiate community, which in turn is supported by those who come to

⁴ Sister Ann E. Chester and Brother David, *Exploring Inner Space*, 3rd ed. (Monroe, Mich.: Clearing Center for the House of Prayer Movement, 1969), pp. 88-89.

⁵ Merton, p. 88.

⁶ Sister Ann and Brother David, p. 122.

pray. At the present time there is no "program" for those who come to the House; it is felt, and felt deeply, that a tight structure would inhibit the work that the Lord wants to do with each person individually. He is invited to pray with the novitiate community (morning, evening, night prayers), to celebrate the Eucharist, and to share the meals of the community. There is someone available to talk to in prayerful dialogue and to direct his reading and tape-listening if he so chooses. Each person sets his own pace, as the Lord directs him, and stays for as long as it takes him to unwind and refill. In the sense, then, that Kolbe House has not been founded with ready-made blueprints and preconceived ideas about how a person is best formed, it is a new beginning. It is founded on the rock which is Jesus, and will move in the direction that he bids us to go. We have the assurance of the Lord on that: "I will instruct you and show you the way you should walk; I will counsel you, keeping my eye on you" (Ps. 32:8).

I somehow feel that this is something of what Francis had in mind for his brothers. His was a rich, naturally contemplative spirit. There was a spontaneity about him that welled up with joy at the sight of the most simple of God's creatures, for in all of them he saw the richness

of God. That is why he could spend his nights in that truest of outbursts: "My God and my all!" That is why he could insist in his Rule that the friars should give themselves wholeheartedly to the spirit of prayer, "to which *all* temporal things must be subordinated." That is why poverty was so important to him—not as an end in itself, but as a means of bringing a man to realize that unless his gaze is first and always on the Lord, he cannot love God's creatures in the way that they were meant to be loved. And that is why the brotherhood of Francis was meant to be founded in true fellowship—sharing with each other, building each other up in faith, pressing each other to more generous giving—so that their community might be a reflection of the giving and receiving that marks the life of the Trinity.

We know that in the beginning Francis was unsure whether the Lord was calling him apart from the world for himself or into the world for others. It finally became clear to him that the Lord wanted him and his brothers to preach the Gospel, and to live it, in the midst of the people of God. Even so, he was fearful that his brothers would become over-involved in the world and be taken in by its secular values; that they would become blind to the priorities that they had promised to observe; that they

would lose the simple, uncluttered life that he envisaged; that the life of the Spirit would end up in the flesh. Hence, Francis's insistence that the brothers constantly be nourished in prayer, that they be open to each other and enjoy each other, that they live together in ongoing reconciliation. *Then* they could go out to the people to share with them the love that they had experienced with their brothers—and they could return to their brothers to tell of the wonderful things that the Lord had done through and in them. The text of Isaiah was fulfilled in Jesus and in Francis and is meant to be fulfilled in every friar, whom He sends on mission even as He was sent: "The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favor" (Lk. 4:18-19).

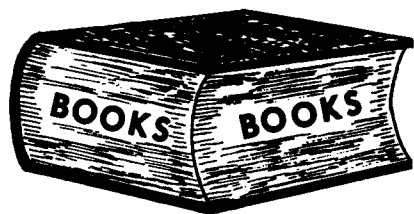
It is not by coincidence that Kolbe House has been so named: Francis's love for Mary was tender and true and enduring—a love that was continued in a special way in the life of his favored son, Maximilian Kolbe. As Queen and Mother of Franciscans, Mary will doubtless have a great deal to do with the

miracles of grace that will happen each day at Kolbe House. Hers is a privileged place in the House, for she herself was the first house of prayer. Her outburst of praise in the Magnificat, which sums up beautifully the life of the Spirit, shall continue to be sung each day, as Kolbe House opens its doors to the men and women who come seeking the Lord.

At this point, having barely begun to pull aside the veils of inner space and not knowing what the future holds—though confident of its outcome—I can with ease pray with Thomas Merton:

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.⁷

⁷ Merton, p. 81.



Surprised by the Spirit. By Edward J. Farrell. Denville, N.J.: Dimension books, 1973. Pp. 130. Cloth, \$3.95.

Reviewed by Father Raymond E. Hirt, O.F.M., S.T.L. (Catholic University of America), Directory of Pastoral Ministry at Holy Name College, Washington.

Surprised by the Spirit is a surprisingly simple but deeply profound and challenging little book. The reader will find it hard just to read the book, proclaim that it has been said before, and go away without a real twinge of conscience. If the book is taken up in earnest, there is something that will continue to prod the reader until he begins to live what he has read.

In the Foreword Father Farrell speaks about the Pilgrim of the Holy which each one of us is if we are attuned to what is deepest within us. The model set forth is that of the hermit whose vocation is to be the appointed witness of the Spirit

and whose aim is simply to seek God. The Pilgrim in all of us cries out for the hermitage, for periods of aloneness because there is a presence of God which can be experienced only in silence and solitude. The author's awareness of the role of the hermit and the importance of solitude in everyone's life stems from his personal experience on isolated Cat Island in the Bahamas, in the Sahara Desert, and in other places of solitude.

The Pilgrim of the Holy must taste the beauty of adoration (Chapter 1). Contemporary man is indifferent to and lacking in understanding of adoration. It is not part of his religious experience and emotional development. Farrell continues in the following vein: "Adoration is a gift: yet God is apprehended only if there be action and response on our part. It demands time and patience, patience with ourselves, a waiting for God. It is not a moment, but a cumulative process. Each day we must come to Him, and wait,

allowing Him slowly to deposit His presence in us. Our fidelity to prayer creates a receptiveness in us..." (p. 31). This chapter furnishes some very basic and important material for anyone wishing truly to live a life of prayer under the breath of the Spirit.

The kind of prayer that leads us to become true adorers depends to a great extent upon the Beatitudes (Chapter II) and the Gifts of the Spirit (Chapter III). Father Farrell's treatment of these realities is totally biblical, eminently concrete, bluntly direct, and personally challenging. In few words and quite simply, the importance, the role, and the practice of the Beatitudes and the Gifts in the spiritual life of the prayerful adorer stand forth.

Two brief chapters take up the question of Discipleship (Chapter IV) and the ways of the Holy Spirit (Chapter V). The final chapter (VI) is devoted to Meditation Exercises. These are meant to be done by the reader and are practical and conducive to a deepening of the life of prayer. They include an exercise in adoration, in sacramentality, in community, and in listening to one's own prayer.

This is a small book—by design, I'm sure, because it has to be fleshed out by the reader's experience of his own life of living in the presence of God. The author keeps asking questions that only the reader can answer out of his personal life and experience; keeps leading to water that only the reader can drink; keeps showing the road that only the reader can walk. This book will become

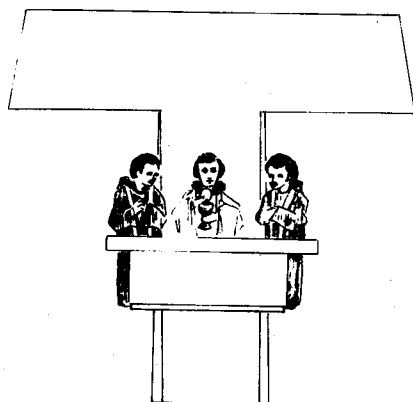
useless only when the reader's life has become the challenge that the book is. This book will remain incomplete until each reader has "written" his part of it. Heartily recommended for all those seriously interested in living the life of the surprising Spirit in today's world.

Together at Mass (with 24 Liturgies of the Word). By Eugene S. Geissler and Kenneth W. Peters. Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 1973. Pp. 141. Paper, \$2.50.

Reviewed by Mrs. Frank (Kim) Eyler, C.C.D. coordinator for St. Elizabeth's Parish, Wyckoff, N.J. Mrs. Eyler, a mother of two, is currently enrolled in the graduate religious education program at Fordham University.

The day before I received a copy of *Together at Mass* a fellow coordinator asked me if I knew of any good basic book on the Mass to use with his teachers. I told him that I didn't know of one. Now I do.

Together at Mass is a much needed book. With the changes in the Mass since Vatican II we have congregations of people who have adjusted to the new Mass but who have little or no idea as to why the changes were made. The Mass is full of signs and symbols and unless they are understood, one's participation in, and appreciation of the Mass will not grow. This book reveals the meanings of the parts of the Mass, the gestures, the words, the readings, and offers insights into



these various parts. The Mass is a uniquely Christian assembly, full of beauty and life, truly a celebration of a redeemed people, and yet our people are still somewhat centered on the idea of an "unbloody sacrifice" which does not even begin to show the fullest meaning of the Mass.

The author's one-column explanations of the rite of the Mass explain better than I have seen done anywhere, exactly what is happening, and why. It is not deeply theological but written in an easy style, simply, and in many instances beautifully. Parents and any teacher who has struggled to teach the Mass as only sacrifice and meal would benefit greatly from these excellent synopses.

I particularly like the divisions of the Eucharistic prayer. The seven divisions seemed at first glance to be artificially drawn, but rather than losing the meaning the authors have, by pointing out each step, brought greater meaning and understanding to the prayer. The explanations here are beautifully done; in fact, they could be used as readings themselves. They are deep without being ponderous. They are thought provoking yet explained so well that one

wonders why the obvious was not so obvious before.

In addition to explaining the Mass the book tries to show the relation between the parts of the Mass and the life of Christ. After each section on the Mass there follows a liturgy of the word centered around the events of Christ's life. This was the only part of the book for which I saw no need. It interrupted the train of thought in the book itself and I feel should not have been included in this book.

The book is divided into five main parts: the introductory rites, the liturgy of the word, the liturgy of the Eucharist, the rite of Communion, and the concluding rite. Each of these five parts is then further divided so that the Mass is seen as twenty-four distinct actions which build, each on the preceding one, and grow into one Eucharistic celebration. This division of the Mass does not fragment it at all. Rather it lets one see each part as distinct and necessary to the unified whole.

For each of the twenty-four parts the authors give on the left page the words of the priest and people. On the right page there is a brief but excellent explanation of the section and then, in a gray box, a short meditation on that particular section of the Mass. I especially liked the ones included with the Penitential rite, the Gloria, the Eucharistic prayer, and the dismissal. These meditations—in fact, the entire book—stress not only the action of the priest but also *our response* to that action.

All in all *Together at Mass* was a delight to read, informative, clear, not over-simplified, a really much needed and beautifully done explanation of our celebration of the Mass. My copy will be well used.

My Conversations with Teilhard de Chardin on the Primacy of Christ: Peking, 1942-1945. By Gabriel M. Allegra, O.F.M. Translated by Bernardino M. Bonansea, O.F.M. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971. Pp. 126. Cloth, \$3.75.

Reviewed by Dr. Ewert H. Cousins, Associate Professor of Theology, Fordham University, and President of the American Teilhard de Chardin Association. A member of the International Bonaventure Commission for the Seventh Centenary of Bonaventure's Death, Dr. Cousins is an affiliate of Holy Name Province and was for the past year Resident Scholar at the Ecumenical Institute for Advanced Theological Studies in Jerusalem.

Since Teilhard's writings began to appear, theologians have detected a striking affinity between his vision and that of the early Franciscans. Like Francis, Teilhard had a profound awareness of the sacrality of the universe; he sensed the presence of God in the cosmos as a whole and in each of its parts—even in the least particle of matter. Teilhard's *Hymn to Matter* reminds one of Francis' *Hymn of Brother Sun*. For Teilhard, as for the early Franciscan, God is present in the material universe, shining through its sacramental structure. Teilhard's own formulation of this sacramental vision bears basic similarities to that developed by Bonaventure in *The Mind's Journey into God*. But the most striking similarity is between Teilhard's doctrine of the cosmic Christ and the position of Duns Scotus on the primacy of Christ in creation.

For Scotus the Incarnation was willed by God as the first reality in creation, since the Incarnation is primary in dignity and value. It is not an afterthought in the divine

plan, or merely a remedy for the sins of men. The primacy of Christ provides the theological basis for extending the classical Franciscan Christocentricity into the sphere of the universe as a whole. This means that Christ is the center not only of the spiritual life of the Christian but of the universe taken in its entirety. The present order of creation, in all of its constituent parts, is centered on Christ.

This sounds very much like Teilhard, for he too sees Christ at the center of the universe. It is as if the Jesuit scientist had grasped the same first principle and developed it in a contemporary context. True, Scotus' methodology differs from Teilhard's, and the Franciscan was involved with scholastic debates that are far removed from the scientific research of the Jesuit paleontologist. As a medieval theologian, Scotus speculated on the divine decrees and whether Christ would have come into the world if Adam had not sinned. Teilhard did not pose questions in that way. As a scientist with a profound religious vision, he studied the dynamic structure of creation—of physical and human energy—to see how the mystery of Christ manifests itself in evolution. Although the angle of vision was different, both Scotus and Teilhard seemed to have penetrated to the same dimension of the mystery of Christ.

Certain questions naturally arise: Did Teilhard know Scotus' position? If so, did he ever explore it in a professional way? Was he influenced by it? Or did he develop his position independently? Did he perhaps come into contact with Scotus' thought later, after he had formulated his own position? If so, what were his reactions? Answers to these questions are given in the book by Father Gabriel Allegra, *My Conver-*

sations with Teilhard de Chardin on the Primacy of Christ, translated from the Italian by Father Bernardino Bonansea. This small book not only fills out an important chapter on Teilhard's intellectual development, but sketches in a warmly human way scenes of his life in Peking during the second World War. Furthermore it affords the reader a fresh glimpse into Teilhard's personality reflected through the author's own appreciation of Teilhard as a man and a thinker.

Father Allegra is a Scripture scholar who for many years was director of the translation of the Bible into Chinese. In 1942 he was asked by the Apostolic Delegate to China to be censor of Teilhard's *The Divine Milieu*. Although much impressed with the book, Allegra judged that it should not be published. The Delegate asked him to meet with Teilhard and convey his response personally. This meeting began a warm friendship and launched a series of regular conversations between Allegra and Teilhard from 1942 to 1945.

Allegra's book is a report of these conversations, written in dialogue form. It deals chiefly with the doctrine of the primacy of Christ in the universe, seen in Teilhard, Scotus, and Scripture. As the discussion progresses, the reader is struck by the similarity between Teilhard's position and classical Franciscan Christocentricity. This similarity is acknowledged by both Allegra and Teilhard. Allegra also explains the difficulties and problems he sees in Teilhard's thought.

This book makes a unique contribution to our understanding of Teilhard's thought, life, and personality. The public will be grateful to Father Allegra for preserving a sequence of Teilhard's life that might easily have

gone unrecorded. Beyond this, the book also makes a contribution to theology. Although it is brief, non-technical, with a relaxed conversational style rather than detailed analysis, the book nevertheless draws into sharp focus the doctrine of the primacy of Christ in creation. As the conversations unfold, the reader shares in the dialogue between the Franciscan position and Teilhard's doctrine of the cosmic Christ—both seen in relation to Scripture. The reader can grasp the core of the position, view its shaping in two major formulations, and glimpse something of its significance.

In the opinion of this reviewer, the doctrine of the primacy of Christ in creation is of utmost importance both for understanding the history of theology and for dealing with certain contemporary theological issues. In studies of the history of theology, the doctrine has often been glossed over, and its significance for the Christian vision has not been underscored. As a result certain tensions in the history of theology have not been brought to light. The contemporary theologian has not been alerted to search out the implications of this doctrine when he deals with such immediate problems as the relation of Christ to secular culture, the role of Christ in building the future of mankind, and the relation of Christ to non-Christian religions. In my opinion, these areas cannot be adequately explored unless one seriously takes into account the doctrine of the primacy of Christ in creation.

Father Allegra has thus done a service to theology by showing us in interaction the classical Franciscan position and Teilhard's attempts to come to grips with contemporary problems precisely through the doctrine of the primacy of Christ.

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