The Staff of the Franciscan Institute joins the Editors in wishing you A VERY BLESSED CHRISTMAS and every grace and blessing for A HAPPY AND FRUITFUL NEW YEAR



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On "Irrelevant Dogmas"

THE OTHER DAY I was discussing with a colleague the content of a course I'm teaching this term: "God in Process Thought." Pierre Teilhard de Chardin forms the subject matter of half the course; and, as I informed my colleague of that fact I detected the disconcerted expression on his face to which I've long ago become accustomed when I mention Teilhard. I hastened to launch into my customary defense of Teilhard's orthodoxy, only to discover (to my great surprise) that I had quite completely misinterpreted my colleague's chagrin. He was actually put off by the renowned Jesuit's adherence to traditional doctrinal and spiritual norms!

The evening's conversation then turned to the general issue of papal authority in doctrinal matters, and thence specifically to the only two Marian dogmas infallibly defined in the technical sense: the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception. Even if papal infallibility were itself plausible, not to mention relevant, my friend maintained, its use in these two trivial and irrelevant areas only went to show its lack of any real connection to people's practical lives and profound aspirations.

In celebrating the Feast of our Lady's Immaculate Conception this month, we surely could do well to reflect that the truth is quite the opposite of what my colleague asserted. Not that Mary's privilege is simply a functional reality with exclusive reference to others—no; but precisely as her own precious gift, which issued forth into such great glory for her in her co-redemptive act and in her triumphal Assumption to her Son's side, it redounds mightily and fruitfully to our salvation and spiritual edification.

"Our tainted nature's solitary boast," the Blessed Virgin Mary stands forever as our model of what graced human nature should be and ought to be. Enabled by the fullness of her primal grace to share as no other human being has ever done or will ever do in her Son's saving life and death, she has played a direct and intimate role in making possible the everlasting glory to which each one of us aspires.

The world-wide rejoicing to which the papal definition gave rise has not, then, been an instance of religion's opium-like tendency to withdraw people from the secular concerns that allegedly matter most. Precisely the opposite is true: while not detracting from the importance of

"building the earth," it has evinced clearly and forcefully that Christians do indeed have the accurate "sense of faith" and perspective on things "in the light of eternity" which enables us to put first things first and to draw our strength from the one source whence it is actually available.

This is why no papal definition can be considered "irrelevant": the Holy Father, entrusted with the care of Christ's flock, must be understood by any person of faith to have a unique awareness, not only of what is true in the realm of faith and morals, but also of just what is and what is not to be included in that realm. On the great Feast of December 8, therefore, far from assuming a stance of sophisticated disdain, we recall with deep gratitude both the papal solicitude which has embellished the Feast with such solemnity and, even more, the divine election of our Blessed Lady for so glorious a role as our model and our Coredemptrix.

Fr. Michael D. Mailack, afra

Three Days Rebuilding the Temple

When all the world had cried, "Depart from us, Ye Cursed" The Fig Tree withered and died— The Maiden Mother formed her prayer The faith of David, multiplied: "It is you, Lord of Hosts, God of Israel Who said in revelation 'I will build a house for you.' Therefore your servant finds the courage To make this prayer to you. Lord God, your words are truth You have made this generous promise; Do, then, bless the house of your servant That it may be before you forever; For you, Lord God, have promised, And by your blessings the house of your servant Shall be blessed forever."

Sister M. Mercedes, P.C.C.

The Vision of Saint Francis

WAYNE HELLMANN, O.F.M.CONV.

The Gospel Life is the main concern of Saint Francis of Assisi, and this life demands that one leave behind each and every possession. Such is Francis' first word of advice to those who wish to join him in following his vision of the gospel. He enjoins any who wish to be admitted into his fraternity to first go and sell all that belongs to them. Then they are free, as he says in the Rule, "to be received into obedience."

Saint Francis establishes the priority that in obedience one must first rid himself of any and all possessions. In Francis' mind there can be no obedience without poverty. In fact, poverty is fulfilled and completed in obedience. In his Third Admonition, he explicitly relates the two:

Our Lord tells us in the Gospel, Everyone of you who does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple (Lk. 14: 33), and, He who would save his life will lose it (Mt. 16:25). A man takes leave of all that he possesses and loses both his body and his life when he gives himself up completely to obedience in the hands of his superior.¹

Obedience, then, is the active poverty of stripping oneself of possessions. In Chapter 10 of the Rule, Francis reminds the friars "that they have renounced their own wills for God's sake." To renounce one's will is the poverty of renouncing self. In his Letter to All the Faithful, Francis again relates obedience to the giving up of self which is a fundamental condition of following Jesus:

We are bound to order our lives according to the precepts and counsels of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and so we must renounce self and bring our lower nature into subjection under the yoke of

¹All references and citations in this article are taken from the various writings of St. Francis as found in St. Francis of Assisi, Writings and Early Biographies (English Omnibus of Sources), ed. Marion A. Habig, O.F.M. (Chicago): Franciscan Herald Press, 1973). The first citation is from Admonition 3, p. 79.

Father Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M.Conv., is Assistant Professor of Historical Theology at St. Louis University. He is also presently serving as Guardian for the formation community at St. Bonaventure Friary in St. Louis.

obedience; this is what we have all promised God.²

Again in the praises of Virtues, Francis directs obedience toward the inner struggle of man to die to himself and to overcome his selfish Ego so that all that is not of God may be rooted out and a dwelling place for the spirit of the Lord be prepared within the heart:

Holy Obedience puts to shame all natural and selfish desires. It mortifies our lower nature and makes it obey the Spirit and our fellowman.³

Notice the priority here. Above, it was seen that the poor man who wishes to take leave of all that he possesses must lose both his body and his life. This he does by obedience to a superior. In the Praises of Virtues, Francis says obedience puts to shame natural and selfish desires. What Francis speaks of is the Pauline concept of sarx, flesh. In both of these texts, Francis uses the term carnis, which is translated into English as "lower nature" or "selfish desires."

Obedience is thus the poverty whereby we do not cling to the spirit of the flesh with its selfish desires. In obedience, it is our sinful nature and selfishness that must be brought into subjection. Obedience is the active dying to ourself. This means obedience begins in that inner struggle of self to self where the old man must die so that in that place where the "selfish Ego" had once dwelled, the Spirit of the Lord may rule. Francis follows this order of thought in his Praises of Virtues. Through the poverty which strips the inner self, one can begin to obey the Spirit dwelling within. It is only in third place that Francis savs anything about obeying our fellow man. Obedience to men follows or rather flows from obedience to the Spirit once our sinful desires have been subiected to that Spirit. This is as it should be. The Spirit whom the friar obeys is to be the Spirit of Love; the subsequent obedience to men, as shall be shown, is an expression of obedience to the Spirit of the Lord, Divine Love, who dwells within.

Obedience and Divine Inspiration

OBEDIENCE IS the experience of kenosis. It is the emptying out of the "self" and the filling up of the Spirit of the Lord. Thus it is clear why Francis, whenever it comes to a decision about a course of action, speaks first of divine inspiration. Francis' whole concern is that the friar

²Ibid., p. 95.

³Ibid., p. 133.

follow not his own self-will, but rather the Will of the Father. as is proper for anyone who wishes to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Saint Francis' concern about obedience is basically his concern about the freedom of the Spirit of God to move in and act within each of his friars. Franciscan obedience is first and foremost a response to the Spirit of the Lord. In no way does Francis conceive of obedience in a functional or mechanical way. Obedience deals not with law but with revelation. This is at the heart of Francis' own experience as he relates in his Testament:

This is how God inspired me, Brother Francis, to embark upon a life of Penance... God himself led me into the company of lepers... God inspired me with such faith in his churches . . . the Most High Himself made it clear to me that I must live the life of the Gospel.4

Obedience is openness to the "Spirit of the Lord and his holy operation" (Rule of 1223). This is what Francis desires most. Francis was filled with joy when it was shown to him by God what he was to do. Thus in his instruction to the friars about the gospel life, divine inspiration

ranks of the highest order. He sees that all who come to him. come by divine inspiration, and Francis as their minister wishes to foster the work of the Spirit already begun with them.

Those who go to preach to the Saracens, do so by "divine inspiration." Francis views the life of Sister Clare as divinely inspired. The friars are to work according to "the grace given them." Even down to the details of clothing, they are to mend their garments "according to God's blessing." Francis synthesizes his view when in the Rule of 1223 he writes, "The only thing they should desire is to have the spirit of God at work within them, while they pray to him unceasingly with a heart free from self interest."5 This passage sums up the first elements of obedience already mentioned. Depossessing and subjecting the spirit of the flesh provides a heart free from self-interest. Thus, the Spirit of God may work.

Authority and Obedience

Thomas of Celano reports how . FRANCIS ASSERTS that obedience is death to self and life for God. Obedience is obedience to the Spirit. Yet he senses something else involved. Francis writes that God inspired him to live the life

The necessity of interior divine inspiration to be confirmed externally by the Church flows from Francis' fundamental vision of the inseparability of the gospel and the Church. In both the opening and closing statements of the Rule of 1223, Francis attests to this unity:

The Rule and life of the Friars Minor is this, namely, to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without property, and in chastity. Brother Francis promises obedience and reverence to his holiness Pope Honorius and his lawfully elected successors and to the Church of Rome. The other friars are bound to obey Brother Francis and his successors.6

"... And so, firmly established in the Catholic Faith, we may live always according to the poverty, and the humility, and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we have solemnly promised.7

Francis' life of the gospel was revealed to him. In obedience he reponded to the Spirit, but he goes into action only with the confirmation of the Pope, that is, in the midst of the assembly of the Church. For Francis, the gospel life of his inspiration can be genuine only in submission to the Church. The two must be fused together if there is to be a true and full obedience.

Francis' view is that obedience begins before authority enters. However, without the authority of the Church entering into this realm, obedience cannot be fulfilled or completed. The Spirit dwelling within the friar's heart is the same spirit the Lord sent to his Church. The individual divine inspiration must be some way be ecclesial. This is because Francis saw that the inspired gospel life can authentically be lived only within the community of the Church. Confirmation by authority makes the inspiration ecclesial, and thus within individual inspiration the Franciscan is related to his brothers and to the Church.

As Francis placed the whole Order in a personal relationship of obedience to the authority of the Pope of Rome through their obedience to "Brother Francis and his successors." Francis saw it as his ministerial role to confirm for his brothers the work of the Spirit in their lives. He

of the gospel, but he also writes in his Testament that "his holiness the Pope confirmed it for me." Inspiration in and of itself is not enough. The inspiration of the Spirit must be tested and conformed by the Church. Then there is true obedience.

⁴Ibid., p. 67.

⁵Ibid., p. 63.

⁶Ibid., p. 57.

⁷Ibid., p. 64.

laments those friars who without his confirmation "wander about the world outside of obedience," and with love he confirmed Brother Leo in whatever the Spirit was leading Leo to do by givng to him an obedience to do just that:

... I want to say this to you: In whatever way you think you will best please our Lord God and follow in his footsteps and in poverty, take that way with the Lord God's blessing and my obedience.8

The Limits

FRANCIS' INSIGHT into authorityobedience introduces certain limits. In this whole question there is the value of the Spirit of the Lord who reveals God and acts within the soul. Francis presumes the presence of the Spirit and the necessary death of the Ego before any authentic obedience can even begin. Thus he writes in Chapter 5 of the Rule of 1221:

A friar is not bound to obey if a minister commands anything that is contrary to our life or his own conscience, because there is no obligation to obey if it means committing sin.⁹

The friar cannot act against the Spirit within him, and the criteria Francis gives to the friar to

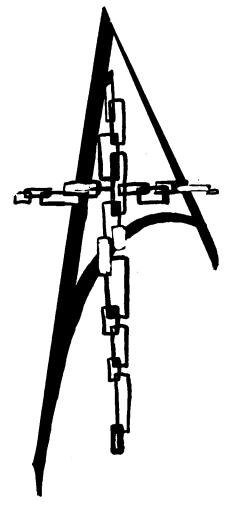
discern if a command is contrary to that Spirit is to ask if such a command is contrary to our way of life or one's conscience. If so, this means such a command was given "according to the flesh" rather than "according to the Spirit." For this reason, in the same Chapter, Francis admonishes the friars to keep watch on the ministers to see that they themselves are living according to the Spirit. "If they see that any of them [ministers] is leading a worldly, and not a religious life, as the perfection of our life demands, they should warn him three times."10 Both minister and subject must be spiritual men, if there are to be the two elements of true obedience: inspiration and confirmation.

Just as the minister cannot command anything contrary to our way of life, so it is also true that he cannot refuse to confirm what he sees to be the grace or inspiration of God in his firars. The Rule makes this clear. Those friars who have the grace to work, Francis lets work. Those friars who by divine inspiration are called to go among the Saracens must be confirmed by the ministers if the ministers see that they are fit. The ministers are not free to refuse confirmation. In the question of confirmation by

authority of the ministers, the question is the discernment of the divine inspiration, not that of the needs of the Order or Province nor the desires of the minister. If the ministers act on this level, they are acting "according to the flesh" and should be warned. They are being disobedient to the Spirit of God acting in the lives of those entrusted to their care.

Just as the ministers are not free to refuse confirmation if they see divine inspiration at work, the friars on the other hand are not free to act without confirmation. To go to the Saracens or to act on the grace of a call to preach or teach, the friars must receive confirmation from his minister who alone can confirm his inspiration with the authority of the Church. To act without confirmation would separate him from his brothers and from the Church. He would thus be "outside of obedience" where the Spirit of Love breaks apart. No one can appropriate anything to himself. To act without confirmation is to possess, to appropriate.

The other side of the coin is just as true. Just as the minister cannot command anything against the Rule or our way of life, neither can he permit, tolerate, or confirm anything in the lives of the friars which is contrary to the rule and our way of life. If the minister were to confirm or tolerate anything clear-



ly contrary to the life of the Spirit, he would himself be acting according to the flesh. As the one who ministers authority, the minister is to test out and discern what is of the Lord and what may possibly be of the selfish Ego. His role is described very much by Saint Paul in his

⁸Ibid., pp. 118-19.

⁹Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁰Ibid.

second Letter to the Thessalonians (5:19:22): "Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesving but test everything: hold fast to what is good, abstain from every form of evil." The one who ministers authority cannot quench the Spirit, nor can he tolerate evil. The minister should be aware that one is moved more easily by "flesh and blood" than by "divine inspiration." When the friar acts according to divine inspiration, the minister merely confirms an obedience to the Spirit already begun. When he sees a friar acting according to the flesh, however, Francis speaks in other terms. He sees no obedience to the Spirit, and thus he is not afraid to command obedience in the name of God. "Accept this as a command from God and from me," are the words Francis writes in the Letter to the Minister in which he refuses to grant what the minister has requested.

Authority Is Ministry

THE MINISTERS do not make obedience, but rather they serve and assist the friars in their obedience to the Spirit of the Lord. By confirming the friars (in their unique divine inspiration) the ministers establish a relationship which makes the friars united with the Church and bound to one another and

strengthens their fraternal life. Established thereby within the realm of obedience, the friar never acts alone. He lives rather in unity with his brothers. The Spirit of the Lord does not divide. He unites. In regard to those who disobey the Spirit of the Lord and thus act "according to the flesh," the minister is bound to call them to obedience by admonition, exhortation, and command. It must be a call tempered by readiness to forgive. This is the policy Francis sets forth in his Letter to a Minister:

I should like you to prove that you love God and me, his servant and yours, in the following way. There should be no friar in the whole world who has fallen into sin, no matter how far he has fallen, who will ever fail to find your forgiveness for the asking, if he will only look into your eyes. And if he does not ask forgiveness, you should ask him if he wants it. And should he appear before you again a thousand times, you should love him more than you love me, so that you may draw him to God; you should always have pity on such friars. Tell the guardians too, that this is your policy.11

The relationship of minister to friar is a very special one. All the friars are to minister to the needs of one another, but it falls upon the brother who holds the office of minister to instruct the friar who joins this fraternity to go and sell all that he has. This admits him into the relationship of obedience which is a relationship of "spiritual brothers," that is, a fraternity of brothers dead to themselves and their selfish desires but very much alive to the Spirit of the Lord.

The ministers are appointed to follow through and assist the friars in their life of obedience to the Spirit. This is a big responsibility on the part of the minister. Francis writes in the Rule of 1221:

They should remember, too, that they have been entrusted with the care of the souls of the friars. If any one of them is lost through their fault or bad example, they must account for it before the Lord Jesus Christ on the day of judgment.¹²

The friar sees in his minister one who is to assist him in opening up himself to the Spirit of the Lord. Just as Francis commands the ministers to "visit them [the friars] often, giving them encouragement and spiritual advice," so too he commands the friars to respond to the direction the minister give, lest they fall back into the selfish Ego. In their minister the friars are to see one who is working for their

salvation. And so we find in that same Rule the following:

My other beloved brothers must all obey them [the ministers] in all that concerns the salvation of their souls, and is not contrary to our way of life.¹⁴

The minister is to lead the brother to continue to do God's will, which for him is this way of life, as encapsuled in the Rule, expanded upon by the Constitutions and norms of General, Provincial, and friary chapters.

In the ralationship between the minister and the other beloved brothers there is the work of salvation—the work of the Spirit. Both the minister and the other brothers must be spiritual men dead to themselves. Thus their relationship is unlike that of authority and power proper to the world. Obedience is based on the liberty of divine inspiration. Therefore, there is no distinction between minister and the other brothers. "No one is to be called Prior. They are all to be known as 'Friarr Minor'....'15 The minister is forbidden to dominate or impose himself. He must rather be fully dead to himself and ready to kiss and wash his brother's feet:

All the friars without exception are forbidden to wield power or

¹¹Ibid., p. 110.

¹²Ibid., p. 35.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 37.

authority, particularly over one another. Our Lord tells us in the gospel that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them (Mt. 10:25);. That is not to be the way among the friars. Among them whoever wishes to become great shall be their servant, and whoever wishes to be first shall be their minister (Mt. 20:26-28), and he is their servant. Let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest (Lk. 22:26).16

The relationship of ministers and the other brothers is meant to be the model spiritual relationship. This means "trust," so much so that the minister, as in the case of Francis to Brother Leo, can confirm in advance whatever the friar may be inspired to do; it also demands a trust to the extent that the friar, putting himself into the hands of his minister, senses the abandonment of himself into the hands of God.¹⁷ Brother minister and friar must sense and recognize within one another the presence and revelation of God. Then there can be true obedience.

The Fraternity

OUR FRANCISCAN fraternity is not functional, nor is it a mechanism to accomplish a certain goal. It is rather relational, that is, its call is simply to be and to act as brothers. It is a brotherhood built on the denial of self and selfwill which enables one to let the Spirit of God live in him, by the power of whom the friar becomes subject to all. Thus Francis writes that all the brothers are to obey one another. They are all "spiritual brothers," and so they are to obey all the brothers and not just the brother minister. This is true even though the authority to confirm the work of the Spirit resides in the minister alone. He is the one singled out as the visible contact point whereby the Church confirms the divine inspirations of the brothers with the authority given her by Christ and entrusted to Peter. It was Pope Honorius who confirmed Francis' inspiration, and through their ministers today the friars in their form of life and inspiration continue to receive that ecclesial confirmation whereby their individually inspired gospel life becomes and remains ecclesial. The Spirit residing within them does not separate but unites.

Francis' fraternity is built by obedience and guaranteed by authority. This is the goal, and so Francis expects that even in those cases in which the minister may not be fully spiritual and commands what is less good and profitable to one's soul, the friar

is nevertheless for the sake of the brotherhood called to respond accordingly. The fraternity of brothers united in love and harmony is worth any sacrifice which is not sinful or contrary to conscience. And so in the Third Admonition Francis writes the following:

A subject may realize that there are many courses of action that would be better and more profitable to his soul than what his superior commands. In that case he should make an offering of his own will to God, and do his best to carry out what the superior has enjoined. This is true and loving obedience which is pleasing to God and one's neighbor.¹⁸

Notice that Francis writes about "loving obedience." This is what obedience is all about. In his view, obedience and the authority of the Church which confirms obedience does not have the goal of "common life" as in the monastic or Augustinian (canons) tradition, but rather obedience is to foster that goal of the gospel life of love. Obedience keeps the brothers from "going back to their own will which they have given up," and it keeps the flesh dead and the

Spirit alive. In this way, the friar can love his "spiritual brother all the more tenderly."²⁰

It is hardly accidental, but rather fundamental to his thought that in the Praises of Virtues, Francis makes obedience the sister to charity: "Lady, Holy Love, God keep you, with your sister, holy obedience."²¹

Obedience serves love, as love can never be present if one clings to possessions; obedience rids us of that last and most treasured of possessions, the flesh or spirit of self. Francis says it all so simply in Chapter Five of the Rule of 1221:

Far from doing or speaking evil to one another, the friars should be glad to serve and obey one another in a spirit of charity. This is the true, holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ.²²

Some Practical Conclusions

SOME PRACTICAL conclusions follow from the foregoing observations:

1. Franciscan obedience presumes death to self and openness to the Spirit. It is primarily to this divine operation of the Spirit that the friar must be obedient.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Cf. Admonition 3, p. 79.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 80.

²⁰Ibid., p. 61.

²¹Ibid., p. 133.

²²Ibid., p. 36.

- 2. Authority is simply the ecclesial confirmation of divine inspiration as exercised in the office of minister.
- 3. The minister must obey what the Spirit does in his brother.
- 4. The friar cannot act independently of confirmation by authority lest the ecclesial dimension be lost. This means he must sacrifice for the brotherhood even if he sees a better course of action. This applies to all which is not contrary to our life and one's conscience.
- 5. The minister should be aware, as Francis writes in the Third Admonition, that "religious who under the pretext of doing something more perfect than what their superior com-

mands, look behind and go back to their own will that they have given up."23 Here the minister must remain firm and speak with the same conviction as Francis spoke in his Testament: "In virtue of obedience, I strictly forbid..." whatever it may be that goes contrary to our Rule and life and is therefore of the flesh and not of the Spirit. At the same time, he cannot get angry or upset but must rather offer constant forgiveness.

6. This means that the minister must be the most spiritual of men. He must be dead to self and always ready to wash the feet of his brothers and to give them an example of what it is to love and obey.



The Mystic's Flower

The flower of the mystic is the rose in birth in plenitude of life in death

When the flames of winter consume it in wonder!

Roberto O. González, O.F.M.

The Mission of St. Francis within Salvation History

DUANE V. LAPSANSKI

T HE CIRCULAR letter of Brother Elias is a deeply biblical reflection on the person and mission of Saint Francis. In this letter, Elias places Francis—but also his brothers—squarely within the context of Salvation History, for he views the saint and his companions as special instruments which God is using to bring many persons to Himself.

St. Francis as the Anti-type of Biblical Personages

IN THE COURSE of his letter, Elias interprets the person and work of Saint Francis by comparing him to several heroes of the Old Testament. For example, the dying Francis, blind from sickness yet blessing his spiritual sons, was like the patriarch Jacob, who,

blind from old age, also blessed his sons on his deathbed (Gen. 49:1-32). Because of the sufferings and disfigurement brought about by his stigmata, Francis resembled the Suffering Servant (Is. 53:2-5). After his death, however, the previously disfigured members became so beautiful that they reminded the beholder of the young David (1 S 16, 12, 17, 42). As in the case of Solomon, so too Francis name was spread even to the far distant isles (Sir. 47:16). Like Aaron, who was called by God himself (Heb. 5:4), Francis too became a great leader of his people. Well-beloved of God and men, as was Moses (Sir. 45:1), Francis too gave his followers the law of life and discipline

This is an analysis of the circular letter which Brother Elias sent to all the provinces to announce the death of St. Francis. The Latin text of the letter is found in Analecta Franciscana 10, 525-28. The most accurate English translation of the letter—and the one used in the present study—is that found in Auspicius van Corstanje, The Covenant with God's Poor (Chicago: Fvanciscan Herald Press, 1966). In this analysis biblical texts are italicized to emphasize Brother Elias' use of the Old and New Testaments. Dr. Duane V. Lapsanski holds a doctorate in theology from the University of Munich. At present he is on the staff of the Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University, and is the author of the recently published book, The First Franciscans and the Gospel, reviewed on p. 359 of this issue.

²³Ibid., p. 35.

(Sir. 45:6) as well as the covenant of peace (Sir. 45:30, 6).

In paragraph three, which, together with paragraph five, forms the theological core of the letter, Elias parallels the mission of Saint Francis with that of John the Baptist, the precursor of the Lord. Like the Baptist, Francis too was sent by the true Light (Jn. 1:8-9). "Like the true noon-day sun," Francis brought light to those "who were in darkness and seated in the shadow of death, in order to guide their footsteps in way of peace" (Lk. 1:79). Finally, what the angel prophesied to Zachary concerning his future son, Brother Elias here applies to Francis: He "turned the hearts of the fathers toward their children, and of the unforseeing to the farsightedness of the just and prepared in the whole world a new people for the Lord" (cf. Mk. 14:9; Lk. 1:17).

The same paragraph, however, shows that in Elias' mind the person of John the Baptist is insufficient to explain the full significance of Saint Francis. The first indication that Elias has a deeper typology in mind is his use of Eph. 2:17. Whereas Saint Paul refers these words to Christ, who brings peace to his people, Elias applies them directly to Saint Francis. Francis' presence, says Elias, was "a light [cf. Ps. 112:4] not only for us who were near him, but also for those who

were far away from us because of their profession and life." Secondly, Elias not only maintains that Saint Francis was sent by the true Light (Jn. 1:8-9), but goes so far as to identify him with the Light: "Erat enim lux; he was a light." The Gospel of St. John, however, clearly identifies the lux vera with the Eternal Word, while of John the Baptist it states. Non erat ille lux he was not the light (In. 1:8). If Elias wished to identify Saint Francis merely with the Baptist and not with Christ, he surely would have made use of the word testimonium, which the Gospel of John uses several times in reference to John the Baptist.

Finally Elias states that Saint Francis preached the Kingdom of God (cf. Mk. 1:14). In the Gospels, it is important to note, it is Christ himself who preached the Kingdom of God. John the Baptist, on the other hand, preached the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 3:2) or the baptism of repentance (Mk. 1:4). Elias' use of these New Testament texts indicates that already in this paragraph he was laying the groundwork for the almost shocking theme which he develops fully in paragraph five: viz., the correspondence of Saint Francis to Christ himself.

To summarize what has been said in the above analysis of paragraph three, but also to show how compact Elias' symbolic thinking really is, the paragraph is here quoted in its entirety:

Yes, indeed, the presence of our brother and father Francis was a light (Ps. 112:4) not only for us who were near him, but also for those who were far away from us (Eph. 2:17) because of their profession and life. In fact, he was a light, who, sent by the true light (In. 1:8-9), lighting up those who were in darkness and seated in the shadow of death, in order to guide their footsteps into the way of peace(Lk. 1:79). This he did like the true noon-day sun; the Sun rising to the heights illumined his heart and embraced his will with the fire of his love (Sir. 2:10; Lk. 12:49). By preaching the kingdom of God (Mk. 1:14-15), and turning the hearts of fathers towards their children, and of the unforeseeing to the far-sightedness of the just, he prepared in the whole world (Mk. 14:9) a new neonle (Lk. 1:17) for the Lord. His name was spread even to the far distant isles (Sir. 47:16) and the whole earth marveled at his wonderful works (Gen. 13:9; Ps. 139:14).

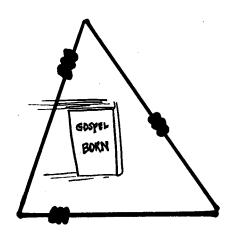
In two minor passages, Brother Elias strengthens the correspondence between Saint Francis and the Divinity. Like God who carried the children of Israel in his arms (Hos. 11:3), so did Francis carry his brothers in his arms like sheep (cf. Lk. 15:5). Then too, it was Francis who consoled the friars in all their tribulations (2 Cor. 1:4). This

work of comforting the faithful, Saint Paul predicated of God.

St. Francis as the Image of Christ Crucified

IN PARAGRAPH five Elias reaches the highpoint of his letter. Like the angel announcing the birth of the Savior, Elias announces to the friars a great jou (Lk. 2:10). namely the miracle of Francis' stigmata. Never has the world heard of such a sign (Mt. 12:39: cf. In. 2:18), "save in the Son of God (cf. Mt. 16:16; 26:63) who is Christ our Lord" (Lk. 2:11). The reason for this joy is that not long before his death, Saint Francis appeared crucified: apparuit crucifixus. Elias goes on to explain that the five wounds which Francis bore on his body were truly the marks of Chirst (cf. Gal. 6:17). The hands and feet of Francis bore "the holes of the nails," while his side appeared to be pierced by a lance" (cf. Jn. 19: 34). Truly, in Elias' mind, Francis is the faithful image of the crucified Christ.

Brother Elias reaffirms the same theme in his lyrical description of Saint Francis' death. Like the true believer in Christ that he was, Francis "has passed through death to life" (Jn. 5:24). He has "passed over" to Christ and "has been ushered into a more lightsome dwelling place." Indeed, Francis "has not really disappeared, but has gone to the heavenly market..."; this



obviously refers to Francis' holiness of life, his merits. Then Elias continues: "...in order to return at the time of the full moon." Why does Elias, one is led to ask, use this particular biblical text? What kind of significance, if any, does he place on the word reversurus? Does Elias' cryptic passage apply merely to Francis' "return" at the end of time, at the final resurrection? Or is Elias here hinting that Francis is about to "return" by taking part in Christ's resurrection in some special way?

When one recalls that according to Elias, Francis was a light, that Francis preached the Kingdom of God, that he bore the stigmata of Christ and appeared crucified, it is not too far-fetched to suppose that Elias has here offered his brothers a veiled reference to a special kind of resurrection on the part of Francis. This interpretation is at least an intriguing possibility. In any case, Elias emphasizes that Francis has been raised up "among men" and glorified "in the presence of angels." The friars therefore are not to weep for him, but rather for themselves: and they are encouraged to pray not merely for him but also to him, for he can and does intercede for them.

The Order of Friars Minor as a "New People"

WHILE STRESSING the fact that Saint Francis was a unique phenomenon, Elias also situates him firmly within the context of his brotherhood. Elias refers to him over and over again as "our brother and father." By his death the friars have become orphans: ... we are children without a father (Lam. 5:3), deprived of the light of our eyes" (Ps. 38:10). By stressing the intimate relationship which existed between Francis and his brothers, Elias was able to apply the biblical typology which he used to reveal the significance of Saint Francis to the brotherhood as a whole. In this way, sometimes explicitly and at other times only implicitly, Elias molded the selfconsciousness of the friars; he applied biblical symbols to the brotherhood and thereby fashioned and strengthened the friars' self-identity.

For instance, the brothers can truly look upon themselves as

"the sons of Jacob" blessed by their dying father. Deprived of their consoler (Lam. 1:16), they are like the exiles of ancient Ierusalem. More significantly, they are the new people of Israel; for Francis, like Moses, left them his Rule of life and his Testament of peace. Then too, like the Israelites of old, who mourned their leader Aaron and Moses, the friars are to mourn the passing of their own great leader. Furthermore, the friars are a numerous people, a nation, who them a new Macchabeus to lead them into battle (cf. 1 Macc. Francis, says Elias, was a "light" 6:29-30: 4:21). Most significant of all, the friars are "a new people" (Lk. 1:17) which Saint Francis prepared for the Lord by preaching to them the Kingdom of God. As such, they are to rely fully on God, for he, "the father of orphans (Ps. 68:6) will give us his holy consolation" (2 Cor. 7:6-7). And they are to praise God, "for he has acted with mercy (Tob. 12:6) towards us . . . "

Conclusions

brothers.

within the framework of Salvation History. Francis was like another Jacob, David, Solomon, Aaron, Moses, and even like John the Baptist, for he actually carried on the work of these biblical heroes. Elias means by this that Francis did for the people of his own generation what these persons did for the people of Israel. Clearly, Elias considers Francis as a special instrument which God used to further his plan for saving mankind.

2. Elias also insists that Francis must now pray to God to send even resembled and carried on the work of Christ himself. sent by the Father to preach the Kingdom of God and to bring peace to the world. He bore the spectacular signum in his body, namely the stigmata. He thus appeared "crucified," like Christ before him. Francis also suffered, died, "passed over" into life, "ascended" to the Father, was "glorified" in heaven, and now intercedes for his followers. In this way Francis "recapitulated" the entire transitus Christi to the Father. In a word. Francis was THE PRECEDING analysis of the "sent" into the world by God as circular letter reveals that Christ. During his life on earth, Brother Elias has some exciting by his preaching, in his suffering and significant things to say and death, and in his return to about Saint Francis and his the Father, Francis did what Christ himself had done. In this 1. In the first place Elias in- way did Francis "follow" in the sists that the life and work of Saint "footsteps of Christ" and thereby Francis can be adequately attain the height of "evangelical explained and appreciated only perfection." The Friars Minor, of course, must follow in these same footsteps, for only by being faithful to the example of Christ and Francis can they hope to fulfill their gospel life.

3. Because the Friars Minor had such a great saint for their brother and father, says Elias, they too must be viewed as an effective and beneficial force within the context of Salvation History. The Friars Minor are a "new people" which Francis

formed by preaching to them the Kingdom of God. They are a "numerous nation" and the "flock" of Yahweh. By remaining faithful to the "Rule of life" and the "Testament of peace" which they received from Francis, the Friars Minor strengthen the "covenant" which exists between their Order and God. Finally, like the anawim of the Old Testament, the Friars Minor are always to praise the Lord and to place all their trust in him.



Learning Francis

Wind cornered brown—
the season and my soul
break, stripped bare
for judgment.
Impoverished now,
we hasten through
long months, panting
after glory not
even our own.

loyce M. Latham

Vigil of the Nativity

Rock the cradles, rock them, Mothers

-Gertrude Von le Fort

Eternal Father, send the Man Child to your barren daughters.

We are rocking empty cradles, We are crooning lonely songs.

The days are complete.

Other Eves, we are ready to be redeemed.

Other Marys, we are in labor and travail to bring forth the Savior.

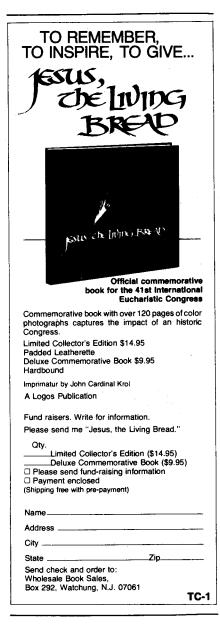
The lonely room of womankind is listening for an Infant's cry.

Father, we are the cradles rocking, rocking, and we sing for the promise to come.

Tomorrow Your Child will dry our tears
Tomorrow Your Child will sleep in our song.

Tomorrow the arms of the barren will be filled with a Son.

Sister Mary Agnes, P.C.C.





Called by Name. By Peter G. van Breemen, S.J. Denville, N.J.: Dimension Books, 1976. Pp. 277. Cloth, \$6.95.

Reviewed by Father Paul J. Oligny, O.F.M., a member of the staff at St. Francis Chapel, the Northway Mall, Colonie, New York.

The jacket on this book rightly makes the claim that with the publication of his first book, As Bread That Is Broken, Father van Breemen became "recognized as one of the most important Catholic writers of our generation." Anyone who has read his first book will undoubtedly never forget the first chapter, entitled "The Courage to Accept Acceptance."

Called by Name might be likened to a necklace of gems held together by the golden thread of "Doing God's Will." Abraham (the "father of belief") heard God's call, God's will in his behalf, and responded to it. He became convinced of God's reliability.

Chapter 2 deals with the first believer of the New Testament— Mary, Abraham's counterpart. Here we have a down-to-earth, in-depth treatment of Mary's faith.

Then comes Christ, our model-

the one who is totally absorbed and dedicated to the will of his Father. No reader will finish this book without a deeper insight into the personality of Jesus, a greater love of Jesus, and a stronger desire to love him.

This inspiring book is definitely not meant just for religious, because, as the author points out, since Vatican II the Church has abandoned its concept of the twofold way of living the gospel: the way of the commandments for the ordinary Christian and the way of the counsels for religious. Yet the author does offer most valuable insights for religious on the questions of celibacy, obedience, and the mission of today's religious.

This is not a book that will be read only once and forgotten. It will be read more than once, and many of its ideas will be chosen for points of meditation.

The First Franciscans and the Gospel. By Duane V. Lapsanski. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1976. Pp. 160. Cloth, \$6.95.

Reviewed by Father Regis Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., Ph.D. Cand., Professor at Maryknoll Seminary, Institute of Contemporary Spirituality, Dunwoodie, N.Y., and presently involved in research in Franciscan Spirituality in Rome.

In the opening paragraphs of the Legenda Major Saint Bonaventure describes the mission of Francis as "an example to those who follow Christ perfectly." The fact that Bonaventure, the astute, precise, and brilliant theologian, describes the

saint of Assisi in such bold terms cannot be easily dismissed. It implies the unique role of Francis in the spiritual tradition of the Church and his unique example for those who have already embarked upon a life of evangelical perfection.

Bonaventure wrote those words in the years between 1260 and 1263, some thirty-four years after Francis' death. The growing awareness among the friars, including Francis himself, of a life according to the perfection of the gospel is the subject of The First Franciscans and the Gospel, by Duane V. Lapsanski. The book covers the years between Francis' discovery of the gospel call (1210) and the election of Bonaventure as Minister General (1260), when "there began a new generation of sources which created a new synthesis of the Franciscan ideal." During those years numerous authors attempted to refine the ideal of Francis and to capture in words the foundations of such a gospel way of life, what this life would encompass, and how it should be expressed. Sifting his way through the writings of Francis and Clare, the early Franciscan and non-Franciscan biographers and chroniclers, as well as the documents of three Popes, Dr. Lapsanski attempts his own analysis of the concept which affords him "a fascinating mosaic depicting the life and values of the primitive Franciscan brotherhood."

The author initiates the study with an examination of the experience of God as the foundation of the friars' gospel life. God is experienced by Francis and the early friars as God, as the Great Almsgiver, as Father, before whom all men must come in a total response of heart and soul, mind and strength, in a life of worship and love. And from this foundation, the author attempts to describe the total response of Francis which is captured in his own words-to live "a life according to the form of the gospel" and "to follow in the footsteps of Christ." Dr. Lapsanski treats of the concept of this "form of the gospel." that is, evangelical perfection, by examining the various expressions of the same concept in twelfth and thirteenth century consciousness. He treats of the precise image of Christ which emerges in the writings of these early friars so that "following the footsteps of Christ" might be more easily understood, and, again, he does this through an examination of the earlier traditions of Christian spirituality.

What follows in Dr. Lapsanski's treatment is the living out of these ideals through the life of a friar minor and through a life of poverty. These two chapters are perhaps the most valuable in the book, since the author carefully traces the development of both concepts, as well as the later equation of evangelical perfection and poverty as it emerged in early Franciscan thought. Although he does not provide much detail to this exposition of poverty, his suggestions and his interpretations provide much food for thought, particular biblical images of Francis which fascinated the early friars and from these images suggests an image reflecting the early brotherhood.

Readers of this short, compact book will do it an injustice if they go no further or look upon it as the final word in Franciscan research.

The author states explicitly in his opening remarks that it is not meant as a systematic and well-rounded study. It is meant as an introduction, as a map to the *Omnibus of Sources*, and as well, as a sharing of dynamic insights into the evolution of the Order.

The difficulty in attempting such a project is that the author tends to be too encyclopedic or too superficial. At times Dr. Lapsanski is both, and this reader wishes that he were more consistent. If the author intended the book to be an introduction and key to the Omnibus of Sources, as he suggests, he might have limited himself to the works within "the big, red, ominouslooking" book, as he calls it. If the author intended his book to be an introduction to Franciscan sources in the broad sense, that is, considering the non-Franciscan sources such as the papal decrees, the writings of Clare, etc., then the footnotes could be more extensive and more clear for the benefit of the less proficient Franciscan scholar. In this regard, a bibliography might well have been included for the encouragement of further research.

The introduction of "inspirational" material is most helpful in relating the themes proposed by the author, but this reader found them distracting at times. The same difficulty of approach is perhaps at the heart of this distraction, for the author shifts abruptly from the academic approach to the inspirational one. Thus the material which is presented is frequently disjointed.

This small book is definitely a step in the right direction of Franciscan understanding. It takes a basic, fundamental idea and develops it from the writings of the early friars, including Francis, and it places this same idea within the milieu of the early thirteenth century. Thus it provides an approach which is based on Franciscan sources and not the interpretation of the Franciscan ideal through other traditions. Hopefully, there will be more scholars, professors, directors of formation, and other mentors in the Franciscan tradition who will follow the same approach.

However, The First Franciscans and the Gospel is not the definitive word, and it is hoped that the author will translate and publish his scholarly Perfectio evangelica: Eine Begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung im fruhfranziskanischen Schriftum as he has indicated. It will be a distinctive service to the English-speaking members of the Franciscan family, and The First Franciscans and the Gospel will then be seen as an introduction to a much more scholarly and important work.

The Teaching of Christ: A Catholic Catechism for Adults. Edited by Ronald Lawler, O.F.M.Cap., Donald W. Wuerl, and Thomas Comerford Lawler. Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1976. Pp. 640 incl. appendices & bibliography. Cloth, \$9.95; paper, \$5.95.

Reviewed by Father Julian A. Davies, O.F.M., Ph.D., Head of the Philosophy Department at Siena College and Associate Editor of this Review.

In the Introduction the authors describe their work as "a compre-

hensive summary of Catholic doctrine" (p. 19); and that it is. Catholic creed, code, and cult are all explored thoroughly with extensive scriptural background and frequent citations from Church Councils, particularly Vatican II. Aimed at an adult audience—in my judgment, college-educated adult—this large book contains valuable appendices on the Bible and the Church Councils, as well as an extensive bibliography.

It is hard to single out special areas of excellence in such a work, but the chapters on Faith, the Church, and the Eucharist appealed most to me. The authors, as was their aim, have done a fine job in integrating the developments in Catholic Faith regarding ecumenism, the liturgy, and the sacramental life with familiar Catholic teaching. Moreover, as the teaching instrument that it is, the Catechism avoids theological disputes. If there is a weakness to the work, it might be in the constant quoting of Scripture.

The Teaching of Christ can serve as an updating course for priests. sisters, and educated laymen. And it does present to the world at large in a clear and readable manner what it is that Catholics believe.

Careers in the Christian Ministry: An Ecumenical Guidebook for Counselors, Pastors, and Youth. Wilmington, N.C.: Consortium Books, 1976. Pp. 289. Cloth, \$12.00.

Reviewed by Father Richard Mucowski, O.F.M., M.A., M.S., Cand. Ed. D., Lecturer in Sociology and Counselor at Siena College and Fellow, Albany State University.

This book comes as a welcome addition to the library of vocational literature. It discusses six types of ministerial work: pastoral ministry, mission work, teaching, social action, monasticism, and church administration. A special section is devoted to minorities in the ministry: Women in the clergy, Black clergy, the Spanish clergy. The book is sensitive to the differences which exist in the many Christian denominations and discusses differences with a respect for various traditions. For example, the topic of celibacy and a married clergy is reviewed in terms of the various denominational traditions which call for these life styles from those who carry out a ministry under their specific aegis.

The book includes a section on the preparation for ministry. This section contains names and addresses for theological schools. The only criticism which I have is that the list may be somewhat incomplete. Additionally, the book contains two sample training programs for the ministry, as well as information on places to write for brochures on special ministries.

Material contained in this book was provided by writers from various Christian denominations. Each of the chapters is very readable and generally does a fine job in discussing the positive qualities as well as the drawbacks associated with a particular ministry.

Guidance counselors, pastors, religious education co-ordinators, and those involved in vocational counseling will find this book to be a valuable asset to their library. The price of the book is the only prohibitive factor.

The Future of the Religious Life (Concilium, vol. 97), By William Bassett and Peter Huizing. New York: Seabury Press, 1976. Pp. 96. Paper, \$4.95.

Reviewed by Father Iulian A. Davies, O.F.M., Associate Editor of this Review and Head of the Philosophy Department at Siena College.

Following an introductory editorial, nine brief essays explore topics pertinent to religious life. Two of these center around monasticism. The others address themselves to Commitment and Fidelity, Celibacy, Poverty, Community, Legislation about religious life, Renewal, and The Future of religious life. The most impressive of the pieces are those on Community (small vs. large), Celibacy (whose irreversibility is stressed, as well as its human origins), and Fidelity (the "forgotten virtue").

The title essay is sketchy and based too much on the European experience. In fact the whole work bears the imprint of those defects: a brevity and compactness one doesn't expect in a book, and a dependency on too many European observers of religious life. The value of this number of the New Concilium series will be in offering a discussion starter, or thought stimulator. It is too dry to serve as spiritual reading, and too tentative to serve as any kind of guide. Nevertheless, the library of a religious house should have it on the shelf.

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