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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

COVER AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

The cover and illustrations for our December issue were drawn by Brother Robert G. Cunniff, O.F.M., Co-moderator of the Third Order and a member of the faculty at Bishop Timon High School, Buffalo, New York.



Franciscan Idealism Today—II

THE UNIQUELY SIMPLE IDEALISM of Saint Francis, we suggested last month is our privileged means of becoming ever more firmly rooted in the experience of Jesus present in our own heart and in our world—and hence of becoming what we are meant to be, and of succeeding in our mission of bringing the world to its completion in Jesus and returning it in him, through the Spirit, to the Father.

We also suggested that an insight into the simplicity of Francis' idealism emerges only from careful attention to his life. This month, as we prepare for our Savior's coming among us, we may profitably reflect on our Franciscan ideals in a global, unified manner so as to envisage them afresh precisely in the perspective of their power-imparting Christic source. It seems helpful first to sketch an outline of the "interior" ideals—those having to do with an individual's personal transformation; and then the "exterior" ideals, which bear mainly on the social, apostolic dimension of our life.

I. The Interior Ideals

The first "interior" ideal is liberty. The Messiah's mission was often understood by the prophets—as well as by the Lord Himself and his disciples—as "setting the captives free." Paul insists, moreover, that in freeing us, Jesus "meant us to remain free" (Gal. 5:1). We are never again to be caught under the yoke of slavery. And so our own vow of obedience takes on a positive cast; in the words of Cajetan Esser, we become "engaged" by it to liberty. We can hope, through it, to attain the only real kind of liberty: one which has a concrete context (unlike the illusory "liberation" sought so widely by various segments of contemporary society), in which it is but a condition for fulfillment in union with the glorified Lord.

Poverty, the second ideal for which Franciscanism is so well known, can likewise be seen in this unified perspective as a response to the concrete experience of Jesus and the resulting impulse to imitate him. No end in itself, it sets us free to concentrate our energies upon God and the service of his kingdom.

Finally, as *lesser* brothers, little ones, we entertain the ideal of humility—not in abstraction as a false absolute, but as a living of the truth, as a constant endeavor to bear in mind that we live, not for our own fulfillment primarily, but as members of the Lord's body, to contribute to its upbuilding in all that we are and do.

II. The Exterior Ideals

Faithful pursuit of these ideals under the impetus of the "love of Christ which drives us on" naturally issues forth in a threefold type of activity long recognized as essential to our Franciscan life. First, we are to be peacemakers. Francis insisted that it was the Lord who revealed to him that wherever he went he was to proclaim God's peace. We cannot, however, just run around saying "Peace, peace." To bring real peace and reconciliation to society, we must first possess them, and to possess them we must be firmly rooted in the inner experience of the living Prince of Peace.

In the second place, we are to "heal"—to make whole and sound what has been fragmented and weakened. Although this ministry has only recently emerged, in the Catholic Church, from a long eclipse, we cannot doubt that it was an essential part of the Lord's own mission (Mt. 11:3-5). Nor are his acts of healing to be understood in purely apologetic fashion as mere proofs of his divinity; rather, they are acts of compassion integral to the very meaning of his identity and mission. Those of us called to exercise this mission can therefore do so effectively only if it springs from the depths of a life lived in the real, experienced presence of Jesus, the Creator and Redeemer who draws all things to unity in himself.

Finally, we know that our Franciscan idealism is to find expression in preaching—most obviously, in the priestly or diaconal ministry in the pulpit, but also in that "homily" or "proclamation of the Good News" which our entire lives are meant to be. Just as formal preaching can be vacuous and superficial, however, so will the testimony of our lives be hollow unless what we "preach" is an overflow of a genuine inner experience. One must have been to the mountain-top to report faithfully to others what one has seen there.

Bethlehem, both in anticipation and, later, in celebration, affords us an ideal occasion to "begin, for up to now we have done nothing." In the irresistible intimacy of the stable there, we can approach confidently and joyfully the "mercy seat"—the Lord who awaits us. Amen: come, Lord Jesus.

Fr. Michael D. Mailach, OFM

Equality in the Church:

A New Gnosticism?

GERALD M. DOLAN, O.F.M.

I HAD INTENDED to say a straightforward word about some foundational realities supporting religious life in today's church. When it came time to sit down and do it, what originally seemed rather clear—even dull—began to fall away and become confused in the din of conflicting voices. The closer I came to writing a word, the stronger became the conviction that any word of mine must be probing and tentative. Religious orders and congregations of all sorts have undertaken innumerable actions in recent times to bring their various ways of life into conformity with the injunctions of the Second Vatican Council. To have witnessed the many changes in regimen, costume, and style is to know that there must have been the dawning of something new!

There has developed in the meantime a movement to ordain women to the presbyteral and even episcopal ministries in the

church. In the Catholic community significant groups of women religious have taken a public stand in favor of such ordinations. During the "Call to Action" conference, sponsored in Detroit during October of 1976, one of the resolutions stated:

That the National Conference of Catholic Bishops initiate dialogue with Rome to change the present discipline in the western rite of the Roman Catholic Church to allow women to be ordained to the diaconate and priesthood.

In addition, such a development was proposed as a matter of justice:

That the National Conference of Catholic Bishops offer leadership in justice to the universal church by providing a process which facilitates the formation of a more fully developed position on the ordination of women to sacred orders. To be credible, this position must evolve from an open exploration of the rights and needs of persons and of the Holy Spirit

in the Church, and a collative and interpretative study of the human sciences, of the experiences of other Christian Churches, of contemporary biblical exegesis, of theological insights, as well as of pontifical and episcopal statements. The study should involve appropriate organizations of scholars, lay and religious women, especially women who believe themselves called to the priesthood.¹

And then, on January 27, 1977, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published its Declaration *Inter Insigniores*, which communicated the negative judgment to the possibility of a female ministry bearing the presbyteral or episcopal character in the church. The Document, whose publication had been ordered by Pope Paul VI, recalls the strong tradition which has surrounded this dimension of Christian life. In addition, it brings forward two kinds of argumentation. In the historical order there is the fact that Jesus is a man and that he chose only men to be his immediate collaborators. At the same time it is remarked that his attitude toward women was so markedly different from the norm of his times as to arouse surprise and opposition. In the theological order there is

the analogy: the sacrament of Orders (Presbyterate and Episcopate) consecrates the ordained, i.e., establishes a participation in the mystery of Jesus who is Head and Spouse of the church.

This negative judgment has not been easily or quietly accepted by many. It has been accused of sexism. There are expressions of dismay that women should be excluded from serving the Christian community, particularly in areas of human concern where feminine awareness and sensitivity are so crucially needed. Isn't it a fact that women are now members of pastoral teams, and wouldn't presbyteral Ordination simply recognize a fact whose time has come? Individuals and groups of experts in the various theological disciplines are not convinced by the evidences and the lines of argument which the Roman Congregation presents. The faculty of a school of theology has termed the action a "serious mistake."² A Diocesan Sisters' Senate has written that it does not accept the pronouncement excluding women from sacramental priesthood as final.³ And Andrew Greeley has indicated that thirty percent of American Catholics favor the ordination of women.⁴

¹Cf. *Origins* (Washington: NC Documentary Service, 1976), vol. 6, p. 312.

²Cf. *The Tablet*, March 24, 1977, p. 2.

³Ibid., p. 3.

⁴Ibid., February 17, 1977.

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The clamor of conflicting opinions—each party obviously well intentioned—was an invitation to adjust my original project. The first and fundamental question is about the mission of the church and our ability to articulate this mission in significant language. And while listening to various dimensions of the controversy, I recalled words which John Henry Newman wrote in his essay of 1859, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*:

The religious life of a people is of a certain quality and direction, and these are tested by the mode in which it encounters the various opinions, customs, and institutions which are submitted to it. Drive a stake into a river's bed, and you will at once ascertain which way it is running, and at what speed; throw up even a straw upon the air, and you will see which way the wind blows; submit your heretical and Catholic principle to the action of the multitude, and you will be able to

WE HAVE A language problem in the church. The same words spoken by different people cause division and recrimination. Present discussion of *Inter Insigniores* is a case in point. To clarify its conviction concerning the sacrament of Orders, it states the following:

⁵J. H. Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, ed. Coulson (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1961), pp. 74-75.

pronounce at once whether it is imbued with Catholic truth or with heretical falsehood.⁵

It certainly does seem that a stake has been driven into the river bed of American Catholic life. Can the turbulence indicate something of the quality and direction of this life? I think that it can. And more, I think that calm reflection upon some of the issues which the present controversy raises can nurture in a new way a real appreciation of the Christian Mystery. And since today's turbulence arises from powerful concerns for service and equality in the church, I propose to address myself to the question: What are the operative models in contemporary conversations about "the priesthood of Christ," Christian ministry, and Christian service? It is my hope that discussion prompted by this enquiry will help to clarify a major value for religious life today.

The whole sacramental economy is in fact based upon natural signs, on symbols imprinted upon the human psychology: "Sacramental signs," says St. Thomas, "represent what they signify by natural resemblance (*In IV Sent., d. 25, q. 2, 1, ad 4*). The same natural resemblance is required for persons as for things when

Christ's role in the Eucharist is to be expressed sacramentally; there would not be this "natural resemblance" which must exist between Christ and his minister if the role of Christ were not taken by a man; in such a case it would be difficult to see in the minister the image of Christ. For Christ himself was and remains a man.⁶

Among the various objections which have been raised against the position and the arguments of this Document, the most angry reaction has been focused upon the term "natural resemblance." There is shock and anger that an organ of the Magisterium should buy into sexist oppression of women. And there is a feeling that such argumentation can only be harmful. The intensity of feeling may be gathered from what Sister Joan Chittister, President of the Leadership Conference for Women Religious, has written:

It is my contention that the use of sexist language in the church contributes to the continuance of a negative attitude toward women; affects the psychological development of women themselves; divides the church; limits its resources and perpetuates injustice.⁷

I propose that our problem is rooted in two dimensions which have contributed powerfully to

⁶*Origins* (see note 1, above), vol. 6, p. 522.

⁷Sister Joan Chittister, " 'Brotherly' Love in Today's Church," *America*, March 19, 1977, p. 233.



form the modern western mind. There has been the philosophical and theological movement since the Enlightenment which has promoted a discernible, though not always explicit, flight from bodyliness. In addition, there has been the development of the technological culture whose organizational principle seeks effectively to subjugate experience to the demands of expedient control. In any realm where technique guarantees success, religion included, efficiency and control are the foci. Attention is practically focused less on the end or the goal of what is done than on the most effective way of doing what needs to be done or getting where one intends to go.

I have come to think that contemporary men and women are lost in a world where technology dictates political and social slogans entice them to become lost in a whirl of mental abstractions. We need to be careful lest we be betrayed into becoming simply persons who manage what they can and control others as objects and means.

And, while thinking about this, the thought has occurred: how consistent it is that, as women seek liberation from the many impediments which have bound them in tutelage for so long, the wantonness which reduces the feminine to nakedness should convince them that freedom is to be had by adopting the technological mind-set. To be man or to be woman is no longer of significance. We are to become project-oriented persons. We are in retreat from our bodies. Is it too much to say that Christian awareness is once again challenged by that ever present manichaeian and gnostic temptation to get away from what is bodily, and to seek refuge in an ideal world of technology.

If it is true that we are in flight from our bodies, it must be said that such flight betrays the human reality. The goal of equality among men and women, together with the affirmation of human worth, cannot be pursued at the price of the primordial

fact of human sexuality. And more, to be man and to be woman is integral to the relationship of God with humankind. Sexuality and bodyliness are linked to the dynamism of salvation. Ultimately it is this dynamism which is at stake and is threatened by the technological mind. If the mystery of Christ is effective in the world today, it is effective in the bodyliness of those who are related to Christ in organic unity. The aphorism with which Irenaeus of Lyons confounded the gnostics of his day, and which expresses the essence of Christianity, bears re-statement: "God made himself man, that man might become God." New Testament realism may not be blurred. We are redeemed in the flesh of Christ. Because of this we may not separate human individuals from the richness of their enfleshed historical existence—even in the name of some "higher" wisdom.

We have grown used to talking about shared life and love in the gospel. Life and love are communicated through power which becomes evident in the human touch, in the charm of visible goodness, in the ring of words sounding in the ear. Bodyliness is the condition for this. And if we despise the flesh because it limits and separates, we do away with the possibility of affection and trust which bridge

the separateness of human individuals. There will continue to be communication, but it will happen on the level of intellect and be influenced by social habit and custom. The real world will give way to the notional world. Thought will give place to data and information. Concentration upon system effectiveness and technological means will cloud the ability to perceive the purpose of it all. In the long run men and women will be worth their functioning, and will be made to take their places among other things useful.

It should not be surprising that some reverberation of the technological mind be felt among Christians. In the realm of theological reflection there has been, for the sake of science's detachment, a widespread speaking of God and revelation by ever-lengthening strings of speculative propositions. In a recent lecture B.C. Butler has written about *The Data of Theology*:

The Christian tradition is not, therefore, to be simply identified with—the name "tradition" is not to signify solely—the external "monuments of tradition" and the public preaching and teaching of

the Church. Its core is an interior reality communicated, with the help of exterior means, from heart to heart. The heart of our fellowmen, the heart of Jesus of Nazareth, is to some extent accessible to us through the external indications that are within our reach. These external indications are to be interpreted in the light of our own religious experience; we speak of course in the awareness that none of us is a separate atom enjoying a totally incommunicable interior experience, but that each and all belong to a fellowship of believers that spans the continents and the ages, and that has its essence not just in external signs but in a shared life and has its source in God self-revealed.⁸

Theology must arise from a critical and objective reflection upon "God self-revealed to human faith and discernible in the human act of faith."⁹ The knowledge of God and the handing on of this knowledge can be notional and academic. Notions must be tested, however, not only according to the canons of science, but in a conformity of heart to him who is, in his own flesh, the eternal Word of God.¹⁰ There are two ways of knowing God, the one notional and conceptual, the other a knowledge of the heart, a

⁸B. C. Butler, in *The Clergy Review* 61 (1976), pp. 175-76.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 171.

¹⁰Cf. Vatican Council II, "Dei Verbum," ch. 1, §4. *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1975), pp. 751-52.

“knowing by intimacy.” It is of this that G. Philips remarks:

This latter form [of knowledge] goes beyond the concept, and so remains obscure where the concept is clear. It comes from God as infused grace that attracts the knower to the known by means of a charity that makes man similar to God. Numerous theologians draw back at this point, fearing to enter the realm of mysticism. They seem to forget that every act of faith brings with it a quasi-experience which ought to be called “submystical” and which enables us to savor the joy of contact with God the Father.¹¹

When these two ways of knowing conspire, i.e., when the academically and conceptually precise theology is not isolated from the Object of its study, and when the Object of theological reflection is within the personal experience of the theologian,

DURING THE fourth century the great Athanasius took Irenaeus’ recapitulation of the gospel and gave it even leaner form when he spoke of Christ as “God bearing flesh,” and of the rest of men as “men bearing Spirit.”¹² There is here expressed what the Second Vatican Council would proclaim concerning the relation

theology can hand on, in its way and its measure, spirit and life. There are two “words” to be said, the scientifically clear word which informs and makes intelligible and the direct sacramental word which, as bearing the reality of which it speaks, deepens and corroborates the other. It is because of the second word—we may call it mythical—that theology can be, in its recollection of Jesus, liberating. It is a quality of this word that it can never be altogether clear or measured. It is often spoken in poetic form, and it may be the least inadequate language with which to speak of God. When combined with a human gesture it becomes the performed word which we call sacrament. And, contrary to our first inclination, it is this world which enables discursive reasoning and scientific language to make sense.

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which those who are the church have with Jesus the Lord:

...the society furnished with hierarchical agencies and the Mystical Body of Christ are not to be considered as two realities, nor are the visible assembly and the spiritual community, nor the earthly Church and the Church enriched with heavenly things.

¹¹G. Philips, “Reflections on Purely Conceptual Theology and on ‘Real’ Theology,” *Louvain Studies* 2 (1969), 265.

¹²St. Irenaeus, *De Incarnatione contra Arianos*, 8 (PL 26, 996).

Rather they form one interlocked reality which is comprised of a divine and human element. For this reason, by an excellent analogy, this reality is compared to the mystery of the incarnate Word. Just as the assumed nature inseparably united to the Divine Word serves Him as a living instrument of salvation, so in a similar way, does the communal structure of the Church serve Christ’s Spirit, who vivifies it by way of building up the body (cf. Eph. 4:16).¹³

To speak of analogy is to speak of comparison, but not of the comparison of one idea with another. The comparison made here is between the reality which is Christ in his flesh and that reality which is the visible community of those who believe in him. If Jesus is in his flesh visibly the Word of God to men, the social unity which is the church, his Body, is visibly a Word of God for men. By tracing the homogeneous elements of these realities we can discover more deeply what the church is really about.

Any word which would convey what the Christian life is about must be spoken according to the measure of what Jesus said and did. Many an analytical and discursive word has been spoken and written about the Christian phenomenon, and many have yet to be said. The word, particular-

ly the human word by which God’s Word becomes our word, is an instrument of power. It is not meant to lie in the pages of a book or to be stored as a magnetic impulse in a data bank. The word of which we speak is creative and receptive. The prophet perceives something, and he structures what he sees as a word spoken to others. This word which he speaks, as a prophetic word, betrays the fact that he has *seen* something. This is its power which enables the listener to receive, to accept, and to cherish this word. The believer hears God’s Word in the prophetic witness and accepts it as such. God testifies about himself to the prophet so as to assist him in forming the human word capable of touching each human individual. The prophet receives insight into God and reveals the truth of a friend! We know that God is active in the hearts of all men; theologians have always spoken of an “inner light.” Thus, to hear the prophet’s word is not to create the meaning of what he speaks about, but to accept a handing on which gives witness to God. The ongoing drama of God’s Word includes, therefore, prophetic insight and revelation, and from this the development of Tradition wherein repeated individual events are rich with

¹³Vatican Council II, “Lumen Gentium,” ch. 1, §8 (ed. Flannery, p. 357).

the power of God to attract and enlighten every man and create for them the possibility of grasping his Word.

The Word which is God's revelation to men and man's acceptance is concretely, in Christ, the church. In his own flesh Jesus is the author of salvation by pure grace; the church, the community of new life established in Jesus, is the central event of revelation. The concrete church is the visible Word, the epiphany of the Word of salvation. Throughout her time the church continues in events through which the holiness already realized in Jesus the Lord is dramatically etched upon a still rebellious world.

We may more readily grasp the significance of this by considering what H. Mühlen highlights as the two hypostatic functions of the incarnate Word.¹⁴ Jesus' offering and immolation on the cross depicts and manifests that "belonging" which is his within the divine Trinity as Son of the Father. The Word is always with God (Jn. 1:1), and the translation of this in the visible register of creation is that obedience which Paul hymns in his Epistle to the Philippians (2:6-11). Jesus is also the one who "sends" the Holy Spirit from the Father to be, among those who accept Jesus' Word, the expression of what the

Spirit is within the divine Trinity: him in whom Father and Son are one. To look on Jesus is to discern two functions which are not identical and whose difference can help us express what it means for the church to be present to the world today. In the flesh of man Jesus is at once the Father's visible Word addressed to the world (cf. Jn. 1:14-18; 14:8-13, etc.), and mankind's visible word spoken to the Father! Coming into the world, he is still always *toward* the Father (cf. Jn. 14-16). In the difference of these functions and in their relatedness we find the meaning of his priesthood and grounds for correcting the overly notional concept of ministry and service which technology has made to seem unavoidable.

Recall the Statement of Vatican II cited above:

... by an excellent analogy, this reality [i.e., the concrete church] is compared to the mystery of the Incarnate Word. Just as the assumed nature inseparably united to the Divine Word serves Him as a living instrument of salvation, so, in a similar way, does the communal structure of the Church serve Christ's Spirit, who vivifies it by way of building up the body (cf. Eph. 4:16).

If the Incarnation of the Word manifests the being of the Word who is one with the Father, the

sending and manifestation of the Holy Spirit tells who the Spirit is within the divine Trinity. It is in the Spirit that Father and Son are one Lord. The New Testament tells us that Jesus received and was guided by the Holy Spirit throughout his life and that in the power of the same Spirit he was raised from the dead. Any living organism already contains in a real way the full reality of what is yet to be.

III

WHAT HAS BEEN said means, of course, that between Christ and the church there is a union so close that we can correctly speak of them as "one mystic Person." But we may not forget that in the understanding of this oneness there is an unbridgeable difference. Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God, because of whom we have been *made to be* sons and daughters of God! As we may discern Christ's priesthood in the two functions which are his, so can we trace the meaning of priesthood—the priesthood of all the faithful and the priesthood of those consecrated by the sacrament of Orders—by considering two dimensions of this "one mystic Person."

There is one unique reality which we can draw upon to be the matrix for our thought. The fact is that the author of Genesis

A living organism remains quite what it is through all the changes by which it comes to full growth. The same must be said about the saving Body of Christ. The salvation of the world is already fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus; yet this salvation is bound to the time of the church—that flesh and blood reality in which Christ the redeemer of all men comes to full stature (cf. Eph. 1:23; 4:13; Rom. 8:22, etc.).

had already perceived it when he put into Adam's mouth the words: "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23). In the union of man and wife the prophets found the picture they needed to express their experience of God's covenant union with men. This union of man and woman in marriage became the principal means by which the Scriptures were able to speak of God's union with his people. And when Paul described the union of Christ and Christians, he spoke of a new Covenant in terms of a new People who are related to Christ as was the first woman to the first man—they are one nuptial body (cf. Rom. 7:1-5; 2 Cor. 11:2-3; Eph. 5:22-32). Paul's struggle to express the new reality he had experienced in Christ centered upon the need to describe the relation of the church to its source and originator. Christians are

¹⁴H. Mühlen, *L'Esprit dans l'Eglise* (Paris: Cerf, 1969), vol. 2, p. 33.

related to Christ as wife to husband. Recall what he writes to the Ephesians: "Husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves *himself*. Observe that no one ever hates his own flesh; no, he nourishes it and takes care of it as Christ cares for the church—for we are members of his body" (5:28).

There is, however, distinction in this union. Jesus is the head of his body. To speak of the church as spouse is to insist on the paradoxical nuptial union in which the church remains ever distinct from him. He is irrevocably source and root from whom by the communication of life develops the totality of Christians who form one body. He is origin and archetype (cf. Col. 1:18; Acts 3:15; 5:31) because it is from him that the church coheres as one organic whole (cf. Eph. 4:15-16). The Scriptures struggle to capture the nuances of this many-hued relationship. In the Spirit the church derives *from* Jesus; she relates *to* him; she is embraced *by* him; she is an exile on pilgrimage *toward* him.

The two hypostatic functions of her Lord reverberate sacramentally in the church as her service in the world of every time. We, her members, are not so much concerned with providing services, however

needful these are, as we are with communicating life. The gospel is of life. As life is not so much a matter of transactions as it is of presence and touch. Neither is life an abstraction, and the abstractions of a technocratic age cannot communicate it. Only the flesh and blood of living men and women communicate life. In the power of Christ's Spirit all—faithful men and women of all ages and every occupation—are his Word visibly addressed to the world and mankind's visible and worshipping response through Christ to the Father. In this reciprocating action must we locate and come to understand more fully what we have come to know as the priesthood of all the faithful. The stuff of which the lives of all Christians is made betrays something of Christ's own life and light. This is quite simply to say: "By the relationship with Christ, the church is a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all mankind."

When we speak of activities which make visible the life of the gospel, we point to whatever forms the texture of each one's life in communion with others. This is what is seen. It is in this that faith discerns the power of Christ. It is this which strengthens other men and women to speak their "Amen"—to believe and hope in Christ the Lord. In

the Church something is seen and something is believed. Grace is embodied! The man and woman who are married in Christ show forth in their struggle for fidelity the faithfulness of Jesus to the world for which he gave his life. In their way celibates who are true to their charism show forth that earnest attentiveness and full-hearted obedience to the Father's Word which identified Christ and all who have been chaste after his example. The priesthood of all the faithful is the partaking in the anointing which Jesus received in the Holy Spirit so that every good work can be a word proclaiming some dimension of Christ's fullness to the world and fostering its acceptance in truth and in love.

If faithful men and women are to be the nuptial Body of Christ, there must be some visible enfleshing of what makes this relation fast and true. It is at this point only that we may speak of that ministry for which bishops and presbyters are consecrated. This is the point where the language problem and the ridicule remarked on earlier are

particularly acute. To speak of sacrament is to speak of sign, fundamentally the sign value of Jesus' humanness. The words and the actions of Jesus give us access to the Person who thereby expresses himself. If the matrix for revealing the relationship which constitutes the church to be the Body of Christ is the imagery rooted in the nuptial union, this imagery must become manifest. It was Augustine who said that unless the sacraments had a certain likeness to what they signified, they would not be sacraments.¹⁵ It has been the understanding of the church that the one consecrated in the church to act "in the Person of Christ" receives a participation in the anointing which Jesus received in the Holy Spirit to be head of his nuptial Body. This understanding is certainly evident in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council,¹⁶ and in the Document published by the Bishops' synod of 1971 concerning Ministerial Priesthood.¹⁷ In preparation for the Synod of 1971 the International Theological Commission, in October, 1970, approved a series of propositions related to

¹⁵Cf. St. Augustine, *Epist.* 98,9 (PL 33, 363).

¹⁶Cf. Vatican Council II, "Sacrosanctum Concilium," ch. 1, §33 (ed. Flannery, pp. 11-12); "Lumen Gentium," ch. 2, §10 (pp. 360-61); "Presbyterorum Ordinis," ch. 1, §2 (pp. 864-66).

¹⁷Synod of Bishops, *The Ministerial Priesthood—Justice in the World* (Washington: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1971), part 1, §4; pp. 13-14.



of the word and pastoral care are ordered to the Eucharist, for the latter consecrates the whole of the Christian's existence in the world.¹⁸

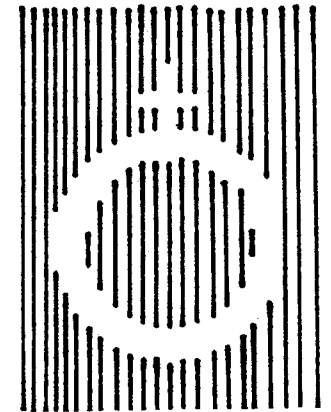
The precise question concerning the ordination of women is recent. That it should be asked today is not unexpected. The quality and direction of life in the church have been from the beginning an indication of what the response should be. More than this, the question which has been asked, together with its response, calls for an enquiry into the data which history provides *and* into the mind which gives form to the data. This is ultimately to perceive the inner harmony among the data which makes them to be not mere facts but elements and tokens which bear sense. This discovery, in its turn, calls into question certain assumptions which were ours when first this question was asked.

Among the issues which come to the fore when this single question is raised are the following. Is our language stabilized by a sense and a reason which are rooted in the reality we experience? Only when this question is spoken can we know its cutting edge. If our language is so rooted, we may confidently say that man can discern truth

in what he experiences; if our language is not so rooted, we are condemned to cynicism or to the endless futility of ever constructing experience according to our own measure. The presentiment that reality does make sense is confirmed by the doctrine of Creation. The world, created in the power of the Father's Word, cannot be without sense. And mankind—men and women—created in the image of God to be his vice-gerents of creation, is not free to change or relativize the inner logic of what has been created. It is for this reason that I have insisted that sexual identity is deeply significant for the dynamism of salvation. Christian thought insists that the relation of God to man is grace does not deny the sense of being created. And to be created is to say that one's being is "received." This fact has been most dramatically depicted in the image of creation in all its dimensions as Woman. And in the picture of the Woman who is at once virgin and mother the Fathers and theologians of the first Christian ages speak of the whole Church mediating salvation. In his commentary on the theology of the church in Vatican II, Bonaventure Kloppenburg highlights the womanliness of the church—"mystery of the Moon" is the ancient phrase

—as boldly focusing attention upon the church precisely in its relation to Christ who is Head of his Body.¹⁹

For Christian theology, to speak in this manner is to say that it is through the concrete reality of the church that God grasps the individual. In this process the church is simply the instrument. Whatever she does is done because of the fullness which she has received. It is to say that the service of mediating salvation belongs in principle to the church in its concrete reality. It is to say that whatever service is given for the good of men and women is more than the transaction which conveys it; the transaction is the instrument of a deeper mystery; the transaction is itself a visible word. To speak this word belongs to all believers,



the ministerial priesthood. Among them is the following:

The Christian who is called to the priestly ministry receives in his ordination not a purely external function but a new and unique share in the priesthood of Christ. In virtue of this sharing he represents Christ *at the head of the community* and, as it were, *over against the community*. The ministry is thus a specific way of living a life of Christian service in the Church. Its specific character appears most clearly in the minister's role of presiding at the Eucharist (a presidency that is required if Christian worship is to have its full reality). The preaching

¹⁸B. Kloppenburg, O.F.M., *The Priest, Living Instrument and Minister of Christ, the Eternal Priest* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), p. 178—emphasis added.

¹⁹Idem, *The Ecclesiology of Vatican II* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), pp. 19-22.

even if each one does not give expression to it in the same way. In general, the divine work of salvation for men continues along three interdependent activities: the Word of God which convokes men and women to be the church must be proclaimed; the sacraments which manifest and

convey Christ's promise of life must be celebrated; the life which the gospel enjoins must be lived. There have been various opinions concerning the interrelation of these three dimensions and their relative importance. A more precise determination must await another time.

Recognition

So short a while, Holy Child,
have you been with us,
and yet we see right through You
to the Father.

Flesh-shade on eternal splendor,
You are His bearable light.

Yours is the face we have sought
in a thousand changing skies.
These Infant cries, —
strains we have caught
under prophecy's thunder,
in unbroken silence of Bread.

Your small shoulders
are His overshadow.
If we bend low enough,
O hear it: God's heartbeat!

Emmanuel, Emmanuel,
You are here, You are come,
great beginning of our way to the Father,
His final Word.
Truly with us all is well.

SISTER MARY AGNES, P.C.C.

A Peasant at Greccio

TIMOTHY JAMES FLEMING, O.F.M.CONV.

I WAS ONE of the throng of peasants from Greccio who was captivated by that holy man—Francesco, the "poverello," they call him—on that cold Christmas Eve. There was something in his simplicity of spirit that grasped our hearts and beckoned us to leave our warm homes on that cold December night and make the long, torch-lit trek to that makeshift manger scene which his friars had set up in order to relive the Incarnation of our Lord and to become united to him and to each other by the sharing of his eucharistic presence. Francis, himself a deacon, chanted the Gospel in a most melodious voice and then proceeded to deliver the sermon. Unlike other preachers I had heard, he did not drown me with a procession of complex words whose meanings I could not comprehend, nor did he try to impress any of us with his eloquence. Instead he spoke simply, from the heart, telling us how we should rejoice that the Child of Bethlehem saw fit to be born no different from ourselves—of lowly and

humble status. The force of his words and the tears in my eyes caused a lump to begin to rise in my throat. And I'd almost swear I saw him holding the Christ Child close to his breast.

Looking into the loving eyes of that holy man, I began to come to an understanding about myself. I thought back on all the times I cursed this peasant life of mine and envied so many others who seemed better off. Now this person was telling me I had a happy state! But I came to realize he was right. It was the innkeeper, he said, who closed the door on the Holy Family, and wealthy King Herod who ordered the massacre of all those innocent babies. His words were still racing through my mind as we stamped the cold out of our feet and began to make our way back to Greccio. How strange, yet wonderful, that the Christ Child should choose to fill my heart with his love. Now with that holy man I too could pray that all men open their hearts to the Child of Bethlehem.

A New-Calendar Proposal

*(being the simultaneous dating of events After Einstein
and Before Christ, whose "coming" he prophesied.)*

lest you and I have missed him
by some antique hour-glass
I offer an advent calendar
valid till not needed

major divisions will be between stradivarian cords
minors retain the second
but it must not be uniform

the happy second will be much quicker than sorrow's
and the pensive second which goes unobserved
cannot figure on the graph

medium divisions will be the days
distinguished by their color
on an oscillating spectrum

the first day is sun yellow
streaking toward orange
the second is blue
(shades will vary from melancholy to horizon)

at least one day will be restful green
but I leave such details
to an interplanetary commission

meanwhile I'll accelerate to one hundred
and eighty six thousand
two hundred and eighty four
miles per second
to brighten up your world

for time syncopates at its end
about to swallow its tail
drinking the January days
like a Vedic hymn reversal
of September Song
or a train whose cars have been switched
in front of the engine
then smashed with the cattle puncher
against a blissful mountain
compressing their Godstuff

and even though you reach the year one
before me
you wait
till our days intertwine
like color-crepe streamers

then we kiss and sing
happy new year

Hugoline Sabatino, O.F.M.

the CORD . . . A Franciscan Spiritual Review

Siena College Friary ♦ Loudonville, N. Y. 12211 ♦ 518 - 783 - 2300

Fr. Michael D. Mailach, O.F.M.
Editor

Thanksgiving Day, 1977

Dear Subscriber,

It is with genuine thanksgiving that we look back over the past dozen years of our association with this periodical. In the spirit of today's observance, we reflect with fond and grateful memories upon God's goodness to us, first of all, in providing, on the one hand, both the physical strength and the mental stamina--as well as whatever slight talent we may have brought to the task; and, on the other hand, whatever material and financial resources it has taken for us to continue publication over the years.

We reflect, similarly, with deep appreciation, upon the selfless dedication and generosity of our numerous contributors: the ever-reliable and talented artists, the competent and objective reviewers, and the many authors with their originality, candor, varied interests, and generous willingness to give so freely of their time and energy to share with us--and with you--the fruits of their contemplation and their experiences.

Finally, but with equally profound gratitude, we call to mind the unflagging, consistent support which you, our faithful readers, have given us over these years. For a brief time, in 1965 and 1966, we tried to supplement that support with paid advertising from book publishers. The venture did not prove feasible, however, and we had, in addition to whatever St. Bonaventure University was able to provide by way of subsidy, only you on whom to rely for the ever-mounting costs of printing and subsidies.

Now, unfortunately but inevitably, we find ourselves bereft of even the University subsidy. This is why, as announced earlier this year, we've been literally forced to raise the annual subscription rate to \$5.00. We continue to hope both in God's providence and in your own faithful support.

Your contribution has, however, not been limited to financial help. From time to time, in one way or another, you have let us know of your preferences, you have told us of your appreciation for one or another feature, and you have offered us your valuable suggestions. We appeal to you, therefore, to consider the "questionnaire" on this month's inside back cover and, in the event that you do have some definite preferences, to communicate them to us in one or another of the ways suggested. Thank you, and God bless you!

Sincerely in Saint Francis,

Fr. Michael, O.F.M.



Random Thoughts on Contemplation

CONRAD A. SCHOMSKE, O.F.M.

IN THE DECREE on the renewal of religious life, Vatican II encourages us to go back to the charisms and spirit of our founders. As we Franciscans do so, we find among other things that contemplation was very important to Saint Francis. To grow in closeness to the Lord, Francis spent some months each year in hermitages, such as Mt. Alverna, the Carceri, Fonte Colombo—about twenty such places in all.

These were out-of-the-way places, where, removed from the noise of the world and the press of people, Saint Francis could seek the Lord in solitude and silence. So close were these “retreats” to his heart, that he wrote a special Rule for Hermitages. He even thought seriously of living this life exclusively until, through the prayers of Saint Clare and others, he came to consider it more Christ-like to live an active, apostolic life along with that of a hermit. And so he combined the two.

When we say that Francis lived the life of a hermit—in a Hermitage—we do not mean that he lived by himself. Rather, he lived

with a couple of other friars, while spending a good portion of the day by himself, with the Lord. There were times, of course, when he went off completely by himself for days on end, just to pray and to be with the Lord.

The purpose of Francis’ quest for silence and solitude was to satisfy the longing in his heart to live in the Lord, to be totally immersed in the Lord, to be habitually united with the Lord. This passion of his to be rapt in the Lord, he summed up in the words: “My God and my All.” And this is contemplation.

This tradition begun by Francis himself has carried down through the past 700 years, as friars preserved the eremitical way of life in places called houses of recollection and *ritiri*. A *ritiro* was like a mountain retreat, where in prayer and penance friars gave themselves completely to the Lord. They were striving to calm the restlessness of their hearts by resting in the Heart of the Lord. They were seeking the Lord of peace and calm. When we speak of contemplation, this is what we

mean: resting in the Lord, being aware of his Presence within our hearts, all around us, in the Eucharist, or in others.

Some people are very conscious of God dwelling within them. The Carmelite Elizabeth of the Trinity is a good example of this. It seems as though she just could not pull her attention away from God dwelling in her soul. She had a lively understanding of the words of Saint Paul: “Know you not that you are temples of God and the Spirit of God dwells within you?” (1 Cor. 3:16). Saint Augustine, too, had sought God everywhere and finally found Him within himself.

Others are more aware of God all about them. For them the world is alive with God. Saint Francis surely felt this way, as he poured out his soul in the Canticle of the Creatures. For him, to speak of Brother Sun and Sister Moon was so natural because he saw God in them as their Father and his. It was because of the God he saw in a worm, that he could not bear to see it crushed, but would remove it to the side of the road for safety. Francis saw God in every blade of grass.

Then there are those who find God in the events of their everyday lives. Maybe John Bannister Tabb was thinking along these lines when he said, “My life is but a weaving between my God and me.”

For others, God is most alive and close to them in the tabernacle. There they behold the same Jesus born in a stable, living at Nazareth, walking the by-roads of Galilee: the Jesus who wept over his friend Lazarus, who delighted in children, who was hurt when only one leper came back to thank him, who prayed that the chalice might pass from him, who suffered and died for us. Charles de Foucauld was enamored of Jesus in the tabernacle. He would spend seven to eight hours a day before Jesus there; on Sundays, as long as twelve to fifteen hours. (He must have brought his lunch with him.) So real was Jesus in the tabernacle to Saint Francis, that he could not bear to see a dirty church; and this is why, too, when he saw a church off in the distance, he would kneel right on the road to adore the Lord from there.

Again, there are those who really and truly see Jesus in their neighbor. I have heard Mother Teresa of India say, on TV, in all genuineness and sincerity, that her heart goes out to every dying infant and sore-ridden derelict, because in them she sees Jesus whom she loves.

Some people, as a matter of habit, meet the Lord in one of these ways more than another. Needless to say, they should follow the way which suits them best. Others encounter the Lord

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at one time within themselves, at another time in the world of nature about them, at another time in the events of everyday life, and at still another time in people. There are those who when alone address themselves to God within them; when before the Blessed Sacrament, they turn their attention to Jesus present there; when outdoors, they find God in the grandeur of nature; when touched by sorrow or moved by joy, they meet God in these; and, finally, when they are with people, they perceive God within these people, mindful of the Lord's words: "When you did it for one of these my least brothers, you did it for me" (Mt. 25:40), and also mindful of the fact that these people are temples of God and that the Holy Spirit of God dwells within them.

We have to find out for ourselves where and in what setting

the Lord is most real to us and then meet him there and give him our full attention. Experience tells what is best for us. Since the Holy Spirit leads each of us by a different way, there is no single way in which each one must approach God.

Elizabeth of the Trinity, we said, was especially attracted to God dwelling within her; the divine indwelling became the essence of her spiritual life. Yet she could say: "Nature seems to me full of God: the wind rustling among the trees, the songs of the little birds, the beautiful blue sky— all speak to me of Him." And again, "The sign which proves that God dwells in us and that we are possessed by His love is: that we take what hurts us not only patiently but gratefully. To reach this state, we must long for and lovingly contemplate Christ crucified. This contempla-

tion, if genuine, must infallibly lead us to a love of suffering."¹

And so we see there are various places where we encounter God. For some it may be one place exclusively; for others any one of several, depending on circumstances. We have to discover which is best for us personally and pursue it. Some, however, may question localizing God—restricting his presence, e.g., to one's own heart or to the tabernacle—since God is present everywhere. But I think we need to remember that in contemplation there is a person-to-Person relationship, growing to the point where the human person is as it were absorbed into the divine Person. We relate best to God as a Person—the Beloved, the Spouse, Bridegroom, Father, Brother. This is easier than trying to maintain contact with the Supreme Being who is somewhere "out there" or simply (even though this is ontologically true) omnipresent.

It is this close, personal, intimate meeting with the Lord, that we call contemplation. This is not something we can force to come about. The Lord makes his presence felt when and where it pleases him. What we can do, however, is try to prepare our

souls by much prayer, penance (fasting, e.g., or giving things up—especially our own will—insofar as they stand in God's way), striving to practice the virtues of charity, kindness, patience, humility, forgiveness, and so forth. The more effort we expend on these things, the more we prepare our souls and make them at least somewhat worthy to experience God's presence. We dispose ourselves to respond to God, we sensitize ourselves to him, we attune ourselves to him.

This does not of course mean that God literally "comes" to us as though he were not there before. In so far as we are in the state of grace—free of serious sin—God is always present within us. What happens in contemplation, is that God reminds us of his presence. He lets us *know* he is there. He makes his presence felt so powerfully that we become aware of him. We become more conscious of him, so that we cannot help noticing him within us, around us in nature or events, in the Eucharist, or in other people.

This is contemplation. It is as if God taps us on the heart and says: "Here I am." As we think of this, all we can say is, "How wonderful are you, O Lord!"

¹These citations are from a book called *Praise of Glory*, memoirs by Elizabeth's Superior, which is no longer available to me.

A Child Is Born

A Child is born
A Child from all eternity
Breathed in the Creator's Breast
Now clothed in flesh
rests
in a manger poor

A Child is born
Who even as He lives and
Breathes
Within the shadow cross
rests as
The blood tinged setting sun
Plays
With the Holy One

A Child is born
Within His anointed hands
Each day the chalice-mold holds
His Precious Blood
And He
Is born again
For men

A Child is born
And souls in ecstasy
Reach out to touch
And feel the manger straw
And Love
Sets all aflame
The Child's Name
is
JESUS

SISTER M. THADDINE, O.S.F.

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