

Summer
1977

A Franciscan Growth Opportunity

THE FRANCISCAN STUDIES M.A. PROGRAM OF THE FRANCISCAN INSTITUTE

AT ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY

CALENDAR

Pre-registration forms are available from the Office of Graduate Studies, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, New York 14778.

Registration	Saturday, June 25
Classes begin	Monday, June 27
Modern Language Exam	Friday, July 15
Final Exams	Saturday, August 6

COURSES OFFERED IN SUMMER, 1977

FI 500 Bibliography

1 cr., Fr. Conrad Harkins, O.F.M., Ph.D.: 8:00-9:05, Room 4, M-W
This course is required of all new degree candidates after June 1977. It must be taken in the first summer session attended.

FI 501 Sources for Franciscan Studies

3 cr., Fr. Regis Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., Ph.D. Cand.: 9:10-10:15, Room 1
This course is a prerequisite for 503 and 504.

FI 503 Early Franciscan Texts

3 cr., Dr. Duane Lapsanski, D.Th.: 9:10-10:15, Room 4
Prerequisite: 501

FI 504 Life of St. Francis

3 cr., Fr. Conrad Harkins, O.F.M., Ph.D.: 9:10-10:15, Room 2
Prerequisite: 501

FI 506 Survey of Franciscan History

3 cr., Fr. Lawrence Landini, O.F.M., H.E.D.: 10:20-11:25, Room 1

FI 508 History of Franciscan Thought

3 cr., Fr. George Marcil, O.F.M., Ph.D.: 10:20-11:25, Room 2

FI 511 Medieval Latin: Franciscan Texts

2 cr., Dr. Malcolm Wallace, Ph.D.: 11:30-12:35, Room 2

FI 517 Introduction to Palaeography

2 cr., Dr. Girard Etzkorn, Ph.D.: 11:30-12:35, Room 3

FI 521 Rule of St. Francis

2 cr., Fr. Maurice Sheehan, O.F.M. Cap., D. Phil., Oxon.: 10:20-11:25, Room 3

FI 523 Bonaventurian Texts

2 cr., Fr. Juvenal Lalor, O.F.M., Ph.D.: 11:30-12:35, Room 4

FI 532 The Lay Franciscan Movement

2 cr., Fr. Cyprian Lynch, O.F.M., M.A.: 8:00-9:05, Room 2

FI 534 Conventualism, Primitive Observance and Capuchin Reform

2 cr., Fr. Sergius Wroblewski, O.F.M., S.T.L.: 8:00-9:05, Room 4

FI 539 Spiritual Direction and the Franciscan Tradition

2 cr., Fr. Maury Smith, O.F.M., D. Min.: M-W-F, 7:00-9:00 P.M. Room 3

FI 552 The Franciscan Contribution to Peace and Justice

2 cr., Fr. George Marcil, O.F.M., Ph.D.; Fr. Roderic Petrie, O.F.M., M.A., M.S. Ed.; Fr. Maurice Sheehan, O.F.M. Cap., D. Phil., Oxon.: 11:30-12:35, Room 1

The M.A. Program is offered during the Autumn, Spring and Summer sessions.

The CORD

March, 1977

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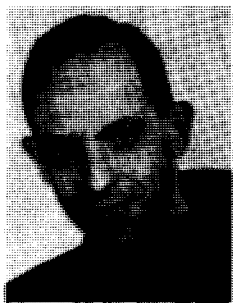
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The Other Side

“THE IDEA SOMETIMES heard today that darkness can be avoided and we should find God only in joy and celebration, in peace and comfort, is a grave delusion that perhaps reveals our present lack of experience.” This statement by Professor Morton Kelsey is found in his new and superb book, *The Other Side of Silence: A Guide to Christian Meditation* (Ramsey, N.J.; Paulist Press, 1976; viii 314 pp.; paper, \$5.95, cloth, \$8.95), p. 47. The context of the statement is a chapter called “Cracking the Husk: Man’s Need for God,” in which a forceful case is made for the inevitability of facing up to our own emptiness and the darkness within us (John of the Cross), so as to reach the true life and light to which we have been called.

This is a superb book, written as a practical (almost how-to) complement to the author’s earlier *Encounter with God*. Professor Kelsey is an Episcopal priest with thirty years of parish experience (twenty as rector of his own church) as well as extensive academic, counseling, and publishing experience. He knows first-hand whereof he speaks, and his advice is as compelling as it is sensible. The particular service he feels he has rendered us with the publication of this book is the integration of the insights of depth psychology (the doctrine of Jung, in particular) with those of traditional Christian spirituality.

Readers will perhaps recall the author’s earlier *Myth, History, and Faith* (Paulist, 1974), reviewed in our April, 1975, issue. In both books, and in so much else of what Kelsey has written, what stands out with sustained forcefulness is his personal experience of “the spiritual world” as the atmosphere in which we have our being. A good deal of this present book is devoted precisely to an explanation of that atmosphere—on the need not merely to express abstract intellectual belief in it, but to experience it as real in one’s own life. Now that so many of us have looked into what oriental mysticism has to offer, and have been forced in the long run to admit that it is not exactly what we have needed (which is not to detract from the very real benefits it does offer), perhaps we are ready once again to turn to our own tradition in all docility and humility.

It would be very difficult to find a more practical, up-to-date guide-book for this renewed journey than this latest by Morton Kelsey. After leading the reader gently through the introductory material (obstacles to even undertaking the journey, the character of the environment in which it is undertaken), the author spells out the individual, specific factors in disposing oneself for the divine Visitation: questions of the time for meditating, the need for silence, the keeping of a journal, etc. He then devotes a good deal of attention to the need to *understand* the experiences sought and attained, and here is where depth psychology has so much to teach us. After a fine discussion of the healing power of meditation, e.g., in overcoming depression and anger, he concludes with some “examples” of meditation—i.e., meditative applications of gospel passages, of passages from John of the Cross, Francis Thompson, and others.

The book is well written, by an author thoroughly at home in the Roman Catholic tradition (he teaches at Notre Dame) as well as the Anglican. It would seem impossible to recommend it too highly to any of our readers seeking either to begin the meditative journey or to gain a better understanding of what they have already learned to savor. Perhaps it is to belabor the obvious, if one were to point out that Lent is the ideal time to set out on this genuinely paschal journey, and that Easter is precisely the “other side” that we all hope to reach.

Fr. Michael D. Heilach, OFM

Two Gospel Haikus

I

Scratches in the sky
Are like the bottom of my heart
When the syrophoenician woman
Fills my dreams

II

Icy waves chiseled blue idols,
Sea gulls broke the rhythm of time,
As lovers transformed water into wine.

Roberto O. González, O.F.M.

"Words of Salvation":

Similarities between the "Sayings" of Brother Giles and the "Sayings" of the Desert Fathers

TIMOTHY JOHNSON, O.F.M. CONV.

WHEN BROTHER Giles left the active ministry to give himself wholly to the contemplative life, he did not act as an egocentric individual. Many friars, including Saint Francis, had spent time within the solitude of the hermitages to seek God above everything else. But when Giles entered the hermitage, he united himself with a tradition much deeper than that of the Franciscan eremitical life. He touched upon a highly respected and ancient tradition within the Church: that of the early anchorites or, as they are more commonly known, the "Desert Fathers."

There are many parallels which could be drawn between Giles and the early anchorites. Both Giles and the desert hermits agreed that no one should give himself to the contemplative life without undergoing some sort of purification beforehand. The reason for this was simple: The

"desert" of the cell was no place for an egocentric person. This would lead only to self-destruction.

Why would anyone desire to give himself to a wholly contemplative life? The answer from Giles and the Desert Fathers was to find oneself and God. It was the intention of both Giles and the Desert Fathers to leave the worries and anxieties of the world so that they could find their true identity in God. For Giles it was through "contemplation"; for the Desert Fathers it was through "quies," which means "rest." Actually both terms describe the same reality. For Giles and the desert hermits, finding their true self was discovering their "nothingness" when faced with the "Allness" of God. This experience of the "Allness" of God is called "contemplation" or "rest."

Giles and the Desert Fathers left the noise and cluttered ob-

structions of the world and sought out quiet and lonely places for their search for themselves and for God.¹ They were not, however, completely alone in their search. Giles lived within the context of a community, and the early anchorites lived in a community as well, though it was very loosely structured. For both, this search for their true selves and for God took on the added dimension of community. To leave out the aspect of community would have gone against their experience of faith; for, not only did they find themselves and God within the solitude of their cells, but they also found others in God.

It was this finding of others in God that allowed Giles and the early anchorites to share freely their spiritual insights with those who came to them seeking advice. It was from this constant flow of visitors seeking "a word of salvation" that we have today the *Verba Seniorum* and the *Golden Words of Brother Giles*.

With these similarities in mind, some of the different "sayings" of Brother Giles will be compared with some of the "sayings" of the Desert Fathers. The intention is not to draw out some sort of "theology" from these sayings (because neither Giles nor the Desert Fathers had this in mind when they uttered their "sayings"), but to approach these sayings as they stand and to show that these "words of salvation" have many common themes. These sayings should be approached as words which were uttered for the spiritual welfare of others and were lived by those who uttered them.

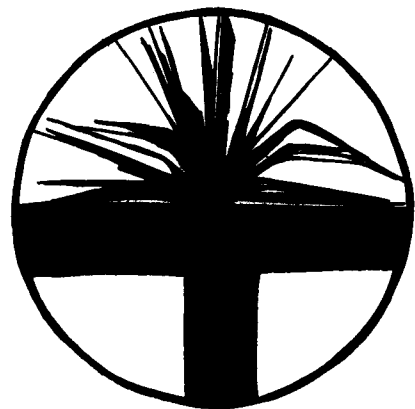
Humility

IN THE SEARCH for God, both Giles and the Desert Fathers saw the pre-eminence of the virtue of humility. Giles stated this fact quite plainly when he said: "Nobody can come to God except along the road of humility."² The desert monks had said pretty much the same thing, as can be

¹The idea of the "world" is used quite frequently throughout this paper. When the term is used it is not meant to suggest that the world in and of itself is evil. What is meant is that there are many things in the "world" which, because of their influence on man, can have a negative effect on his spiritual life.

²The *Golden Words of Brother Giles*, #28, p. 54.

seen from this "saying" of John of Thebes: "The monk must be before all else humble. This is the first commandment of the Lord who said: 'Blessed are the poor of spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God.'"³



Once Abbot Macarius was on his way home to his cell from the marshes, carrying reeds, and he met the devil with a reaper's sickle in his path. The devil tried to get him with the sickle, and couldn't. And he said: I suffer great violence from you, Macarius, because I cannot overcome you. For see, I do all the things that you do. You fast, and I eat nothing at all. You watch, and I never sleep. But there is one thing alone in which you overcome me. Abbot Macarius said: What is that? Your humility, the Devil replied, for because of it I cannot overcome you.⁵

It should be noted that Giles and the early anchorites saw humility as a powerful weapon against evil because, by means of it, they could distinguish between illusion (evil) and reality (good) with the experience of their individual "deserts."

Both Giles and the desert monks recognized the power to confront evil which comes from the virtue of humility. Giles expressed this insight well when he said: "Lowliness is like lightning. A thunderbolt hurtles and strikes devastatingly and is seen no more. That is how humility destroys every evil. It is the enemy of each fault."⁴

The Desert Fathers concurred with Giles (although each expressed it in a slightly different way), as can be seen in the following "saying":

³*The Wisdom of the Desert*, p. 52.

⁴#40, p. 56.

⁵Pp. 52-53.

The attempt to try to seize illusions in place of reality is sin; and this action is proper to the false self of man . . .

Through their humility, they came to recognize their true selves in God and so did not try to grasp at and possess illusions. The attempt to try to seize illusions in place of reality is sin; and this action is proper to the false self of man. Thus, through humility Giles and the Desert Fathers rejected their false selves and sin.

Temptation

THIS REJECTION of the false self and the evil which it predicates did not happen all at once, nor was it a painless experience for Giles or for the Desert Fathers. This rejection of evil placed them in the midst of deep spiritual conflicts which were in many cases highlighted by the severe temptations they experienced. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that both Giles and the desert monks viewed temptations as something necessary and even beneficial if they were dealt with properly. Giles expressed this thought when he said:

A mighty treasury cannot be maintained by peaceful means since struggles and fights re-

peatedly erupt around it. That is why, the bigger the graces a man has, the more daring are the assaults he endures from the Evil One. But he must not let this deflect from developing the gifts he has been given because the sharper the contests the grander the crown of victory—if he wins.⁶

The Desert Fathers agreed with the basic idea that temptations are necessary and beneficial. This can be seen in the following saying:

Abbot Pastor said that Abbot John the Dwarf had prayed to the Lord and the Lord had taken away all his passions, so that he became impassible. And in this condition he went to one of the elders and said: You see before you a man who is completely at rest and has no more temptations. The elder said: Go and pray to the Lord to command that some struggle be stirred up in you, for the soul is matured only in battles. And when temptations started up again he did not pray that the struggle be taken away from him, but only said: Lord give me the strength to get through the fight.⁷

It is important to see that both Giles and the Desert Fathers saw temptation in the same light be-

⁶#137, p. 74.

⁷Pp. 56-57.

cause they recognized that they could be used as stepping stones in the search for God. This is true because every temptation offered them the opportunity further to reject their false selves and thereby find their true selves in God.

Detachment from the World

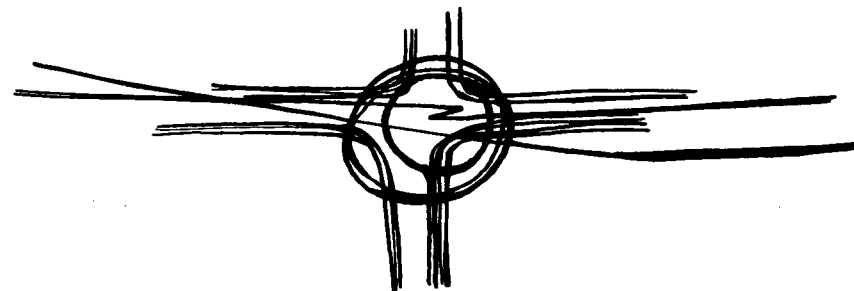
ALTHOUGH IT may not be true for all Christians, both Giles and the Desert Fathers saw great harm in involving oneself with the activities of the world. That is to say, they felt they had to remove themselves physically as much as possible from the world and its activities. Giles had this in mind when he said: "Trees along a beaten track are sometimes broken by the blows of passers-by, so that their first fruit does not ripen. In the same way harm comes from remaining in public."⁸ And the same thought was echoed by Abbot Anthony when he said:

Just as fish die when they remain on dry land so monks remaining away from their cells or dwelling with men of the world lose their determination to persevere in solitary prayer. Therefore, just as fish should go back to sea, so we must return to our cells lest remaining outside we forget to watch ourselves interiorly.⁹

Within the desire of Giles and

the Desert Fathers to flee from the world, there is no hint of a frantic attempt to run away from something that was good. On the contrary, it should be noted that they are not so much running away from something good, as running towards something they perceived to be better. That is to say, their search for God demanded the rejection of something "good" which would enable them to receive that which is the "best."

The importance of being physically withdrawn from the world as much as possible is closely united with the belief that it is important for a man to be physically alone as much as possible. There are two principles at work here. The first is that the contemplative, as Giles and the Desert Fathers envisaged him, should be physically separated from the world. The second is that he should be physically set apart from other men—i.e., he should be alone. Giles stressed the second principle when he said: "Further, if a man were truly spiritual he would hardly ever force himself to see, hear, and entertain others except for some special necessity. He would always try to remain alone."¹⁰ The same idea is embodied in the following saying from the Desert Fathers:



A certain provincial judge heard of Abbot Moses and went off to Scete to see him. Someone told the elder that the visitor was coming and he rose up to fly into the marshes. But on the way he ran into the judge with his companions. The judge asked him, saying: Tell us, elder, where is the cell of Abbot Moses? The elder replied: What do you want with him? The man is a fool and a heretic! The judge went on and came to the church of Scete and said to the clerics: I heard about this Abbot Moses and came out here to meet him. And an old man heading for Egypt ran into us, and we asked where the cell of Abbot Moses was and he said to us: What do you want with him? The man is a fool and a heretic! But the clerics, hearing this, were saddened and said: What kind of old man was this, who said such things about the holy man? They said: He was a very old elder with a long black robe. The clerics said: Why, that was Abbot Moses himself. And because he did not want to be seen by you, therefore he said those things about himself. Greatly edified, the judge returned home.¹¹

It is important to realize that, in their desire to be alone, Giles and the Desert Fathers were not saying that man was evil. What they were saying is that they had to be alone to find themselves in God. This is why they fled from the world. When Giles and the early desert monks found their identity in God, they could then see the world in God and likewise find all men in God. In other words, they could not find the world until they gave it up, and they could not discover men as they are in God until they were set apart from men. This ideal is intimately bound to the virtue of humility. It has been said that through humility one rejects his false self to find his true self in God. Likewise, as Giles and the Desert Fathers viewed it, the contemplative must reject his false idea of men and the world so that their true identity can be revealed in God. For Giles and the early anchorites, this rejection took the form of a radical, physical separation from the world.

⁸#222, p. 102.

⁹P. 29—Abbot Anthony is Anthony the Great.

¹⁰#163, p. 82.

¹¹Pp. 35-36.

Although both Giles and the Desert Fathers insisted on the importance of being physically alone in the search for God, they did not turn their back on the reality of the Church as a community with Christ as its head. The tension which existed between the need to be alone and the reality of Christian community was eased by means of the virtue of love within the respective communities of Giles and the Desert Fathers. Giles and the early anchorites were aware of the importance of community and the help which it could offer in their individual search for God. This belief was brought out by Giles when he said: "One's confreres, too, help one toward virtue by their fraternal words inspired by charity, and by the example of their holy lives."¹² And the same belief was expressed by one of the Desert Fathers when he said: "In the beginning when we got together we used to talk about something that was good for our souls, and we went up and up and ascended even to heaven."¹³

It is clear that love, in the eyes of Giles and the Desert Fathers, served to strengthen and encourage them in their search for God. Both Giles and the early anchorites recognized that they

were neither angels nor islands unto themselves. They could see that they were not pure spirits but flesh and blood which demanded that they experience the love of God not only in the heights of contemplation but also within relationships with other men. Giles and the desert monks knew that if they were completely cut off from other men they would eventually turn in on themselves and experience, not the "death" of contemplation, but the death of self-contemplation.

It can be seen that love, for Giles and the Desert Fathers, expressed within a community of those who shared the same calling, eased the tension between the real need to be physically alone and the real need for Christian community.

Contemplation

BY FOLLOWING the road of humility, Giles and the Desert Fathers finally reached and experienced the peace of God which they had been striving to find. This peace was, for them, ultimately experienced within the heights of mystical contemplation, where they discovered their true identity within God and became immersed in his Mystery. This experience of the

contemplative is described by Giles in the following passage:

He does not miss anything the mind can think up in this world. He wants nothing beyond what he experiences and possesses in contemplation now. That's how it was with Mary, "who seated herself at the Lord's feet" (Lk. 10:39). She experienced such bliss at hearing God talking that none of her faculties were aware of, or chose to do, anything beyond what then engaged her.¹⁴

And again this experience described by Giles can be found in the following saying of the Desert Fathers:

They used to say of Abbot Sisois that unless he quickly lowered his hands and ceased from praying, his mind would be carried away into heaven. And whenever he happened to pray with another brother, he made haste to lower his hands lest his mind be carried away and he remain in another world.¹⁵

It was here, within the experience of contemplation, that Giles and the Desert Fathers found the peace of God. It was here, within the experience of contemplation, that they found their true selves, their "nothingness" in comparison to the "Allness" of God. Thus through contemplation Giles and the Desert Fathers were relieved of

the burden of their false selves, and they could find rest within the knowledge and experience of God's love for them.

Conclusion

IT IS OBVIOUS that there is a high degree of similarity between the "sayings" of Brother Giles and those of the Desert Fathers. Their view of the contemplative and his life style were remarkably alike although nine centuries separated them from one another. What then does this say to the world of today, and in particular to those who share as Giles did in the charism which the Spirit breathed into Francis of Assisi?

First of all, it must serve to validate the calling into the "desert" which both Giles and the Desert Fathers received. The fact that there is such deep agreement on the nature of this calling verifies that it was truly inspired by the Spirit of God. This profound agreement points to the fact that these men were not eccentric individuals or the victims of some historical "fluke," but, on the contrary, reasonable men who displayed a tremendous amount of docility to the prompting of the Spirit.

The union of these visionaries speaks aloud a message to the world of today because their

¹²#325, p. 132.

¹³P. 47.

¹⁴#170, pp. 84-85.

¹⁵P. 50.

worlds were in significant ways not much different from today's world.

The world at the time of the Desert Fathers had accepted Christianity at least in name when the Roman Empire had made it the religion of the State. Yet, despite this fact, many men felt the calling of the Spirit to turn their backs to a large degree on a world that was officially "Christian" and enter into the "desert."

The world at the time of Giles identified the Church as having temporal power. In the process, the Church became so identified with the world that it was in many places difficult to draw a distinction between the two. It was in this atmosphere that the hills and valleys of Europe became dotted with the hermitages of those who sought God and felt obliged to turn their backs on a "Christian" world.

What, then, of today's world? The message of Giles and the

Desert Fathers speaks clearly to those countries which masquerade under the banners of Christianity but, in fact, are anything but "Christian." In particular, they speak a word of warning to those who, calling themselves Christian, wish so to identify themselves with the world that in the process the witness value of the Church and the Cross of Christ is diminished if not extinguished. Instead of the world becoming conformed to and transformed by the redemptive wounds of Christ Crucified, the Church becomes conformed to and transformed by the hideous and deceptively destructive wounds of technological madness and egocentric secularism. The time is ripe—in fact, the time demands—that those who are inheritors of the traditions of Giles and the Desert Fathers enter into the "desert" and offer the witness to the world which Giles and the early anchorites offered to theirs.

ONCE AGAIN... it is with real regret that we are forced by rising production costs to increase the price of a year's subscription from \$4.00 to \$5.00. This increase will take effect beginning with 1978 subscriptions to THE CORD. We do hope that the increase will not prove an excessive burden to our faithful readers, and we look forward to continuing to provide you with enlightening and inspiring Franciscan essays, poems, and reviews.

1978 subscriptions to THE CORD — \$5.00

Ask Another Sign

See it:

earth deep, Heaven high,
Holy Cross, stretched aloft,
draw bridge, spanning space,
stumblers' sure foothold
to God's embrace.

But a toll bridge . . .
How pay the passage?
Unclang the gate?

A Body!

Fit a Body to the tree,
Fix a Pontiff,
Priest on the cross bridge.
Tolle, tolle, crucifige Eum.
Ask it.

Christ, Christ,
Savior named,
For this cause come
and slain;
lifted once for all
One for all,
Mercy,
cross us to our Father.

Sister Mary Agnes, P.C.C.

Gethsemane

I have not been.
I have never seen
Except in pictures, these lines of gothic trees
Arching the road, embracing.
I have passed the cemetery rain-stained angel,
Only in a dream.
For I have begged the silence to prevail
Over common taunts and taut travail;
I have sought to set the burden of these nights
Between the burning compline candles,
To rest my feet in monkish sandals,
To walk the cloister of the gothic trees.

I have not been.
I imagine
I have faced, unflinching, the address above the door—"GOD ALONE"
And known, before I saw the words, their meaning—
Taught by the song of men's voices,
Men who, from all love's choices,
Chose to love the dryness of this desert;
Voices reflecting the image from above
Of silence incarnate.

I have not seen,
Only pictured
The shaven men whose praise resounding
Bounds of listening finches' wings,
And echoes over stone walls and straw fields,
Through barns of stored yield.
I have thirsted for the wetness of sung words
That seep with silence through walls that heard
Divine quiescence speaking to these shaven men.



But I will never go.
It will remain
Unheard, unseen, this place that comprehends its meaning;
These men, the empty, receptive vessels, leaning,
Listening with ears against the silence.

Except as my release from the daily lie,
Except in thought, I have no courage to stay.
I who cater to the question pale at the answer.
I am content to sip the strength of men here
In this place so like the distant garden they remember—
This treasury of unbound beauty and sorrow,
Gethsemane.

William L. Beaudin, O.F.M.

Prophetically Living Franciscan Penance

THADDEUS HORGAN, S.A.

THE ROCK OPERA *Godspell* strikes me as a very Franciscan piece of music. One song in particular stands out:

Day by day . . . O Dear Lord, three things I pray,
To see Thee more clearly,
To love Thee more dearly,
To follow Thee more nearly.

The script of *Godspell* is based on St. Matthew's Gospel. The lyrics express the underlying theme of that Gospel. They also express Francis' ongoing conversion experience. In our lives they sum up how we prophetically can live Franciscan Penance.

Francis lived his change of heart every moment of his life. His sense of sinfulness and need for God were constant. He placed his living, his values, and his deeds always under the judgment of the Gospel. He never permitted himself to forget his encounter with the leper, his victory over selfishness, nor his human tendency to backslide.

Francis turned resolutely to God and responded to the grace of conversion by incarnating in his own person and personality the Gospel personified, the Incarnate Word. His prophetic living of the Gospel was life-long. So, too, is it for Penitent Franciscans.

In our day of instant cures by medicines, gadgets that do things for us instantly, and computers that can remember for us, the "ongoingness" of life can escape our consciousness. One of the countercultural realities of our chosen lives as Franciscans is to accept the fact of growth in ourselves and in our neighbor in the ordinary situations of living. So much of life today is reaction. Our vocation is to grow, like Francis, into living the Gospel. Hans Küng, in his book *The Church*, expresses this well for all of us who are the Church:

... it is clear that the need for reform in the Church, for which it always has ample grounds given that the Church is human and sin-

ful, does not arise from any kind of opportunistic or transient reason, such as an enthusiasm for progress, the desire for modernity, an automatic conformism, fear of temporal powers and so on. It arises primarily from the demands made in the Gospel by the Lord of the Church, the call to metanoia, to new faith, to new righteousness, holiness and freedom, to new life.

In pursuing his goal of total Gospel life, Francis turned to Sacred Scripture to learn there just what a life turned to God practically meant for one who day by day wanted to see, to love, and to follow his Lord. I would suggest that three realities sum up what he learned. These are Repentance, Belief, and the Kingdom of God.

Repentance

FRANCIS DID NOT merely speak or learn about repentance. He repented. The root of his action was acknowledging his need for God. How difficult this is for us in today's society! An acquaintance of mine, a young man who is prosperous, energetic, and ambitious, no longer goes to Church regularly. "I don't need God," is his comment. Fulfillment means independence: political, economic, and moral. Religion connotes restraint for him. He does not see the need for freedom in Christ because in our society freedom means

choice—the right to do or not to do what one wants. It does not necessarily mean the right to choose the good or what is better. This young man feels free. That is enough for him. Francis felt the same way once as the merchant's son.

Yet events in our lives make us aware of our need for God. With prayerful hope I am sure this will happen to this modern young man. It has happened to us who have responded to the call to be Franciscans. But do we keep it alive in us as Francis did, or do we succumb to that security which our life can sometimes claim to offer us? Unless we search for God day by day we may find ourselves more intent on getting "a piece of the rock" (as the Prudential Insurance Company commercial puts it) than on sustaining a real change of heart.

What did Francis do? He was an ecclesial man. He realized that God approaches us individually only to open us up to the expansiveness of the Body of Christ in us and in others. Francis turned to Scripture, to God's revelation, to his Word alive in the Church. It is in and through the Church that we fully become the People of God. Francis' and our call to repentance is ecclesial. Reading Scripture, especially St. Matthew's Gospel, brings this out. Jesus came to establish the reign

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of God in our hearts, the Kingdom of God. We are to be the living covenanted People of God celebrating our relationship with our Father and with our brothers and sisters.

In chapter four of Matthew's Gospel, notice that the first thing Jesus did was to correct the prevalent notions of what the call of God to repentance was all about. Despite the great prophetic preaching of first Isaiah (9:1-7), Jeremiah (23:5-6), Ezekiel (20:33), and others, the current values of power, dominance, and prosperity pervaded the attitudes of Jesus' hearers. Similar attitudes were held initially by Francis, and now perhaps by us. Because Hebrew thought saw God as the Lord of Creation, many saw themselves as lieutenants of a great worldly King. But the Kingdom of God would not be established according to the norms of superior might. Rather, it would be centered in the hearts of people, have its meaning in obedience to God and its practical expression in God's people living the way, the truth, and the life of God incarnate.

This was Francis' great discovery, the great key to sanctity for all the saints. But it was not easy for him because it meant *and means* a topsy turvy re-ordering of the life values which we have and which direct our lives. It amounted and amounts to changing (radically) all that is in

our hearts. In the writings of Francis "the heart" is the source of our dynamic energy for life. As such, it is where sinfulness, egoism, pride, anger or love, service, praise, and thanksgiving have their roots. That is the choice before the Penitent Franciscan.

From his reading of Scripture, from sermons and out of his own experience, Francis learned that God was full of pardon and compassion. Salvation-history and Jesus meant one thing: God's will to pardon, to bridge the gap of estrangement and alienation, to be compassionate with his People who struggle for life in abundance. This was the teaching of Jesus. His example deeply impressed Francis. Jesus not only exhorted men and women to repentance, he welcomed them and reconciled them to his Father. He healed to show that God's power to pardon was alive in the world. He instituted a new covenant relationship in himself by identifying himself with all humanity. He did it in his blood, the source of life in the Hebrew understanding. He rose, and with him all humanity, to a new life of union with the Father. Finally, he sent his Spirit into time so the Church would continue to preach repentance and communicate forgiveness, reconciliation, and life.

Francis realized in time that what Jesus did, he should do. It cannot be stressed enough

among people who have chosen to follow the Poverello's life and example that he not only pondered the life of Jesus, he lived it and experienced in deeds its meaning. He spoke from his experience, not merely from reflection! Living repentance for him was not just personal, it was ecclesial. The power to pardon, to forgive, to reconcile, and to be compassionate belonged to God but was concretized in the fragile efforts of God's People who had received these gifts. And God asks that they be used. This power to pardon was more in the consciousness of Christians in Francis' day than in our own. This perhaps is why confession is now less frequently used. Look at Francis' life. He confessed sacramentally, to his brothers, and even publicly in sermons. People pardoned one another. This willingness to pardon others should be the first fruits of our repentance. It is the healing force of Christianity whose power has never been fully in force. It is an imperative of Franciscan life.

The importance of confession, both sacramental and otherwise, should not be underestimated today. In his doctoral dissertation on the subject, Damian Isabel notes:

Confession was an integral part of being "in penance"; by it one

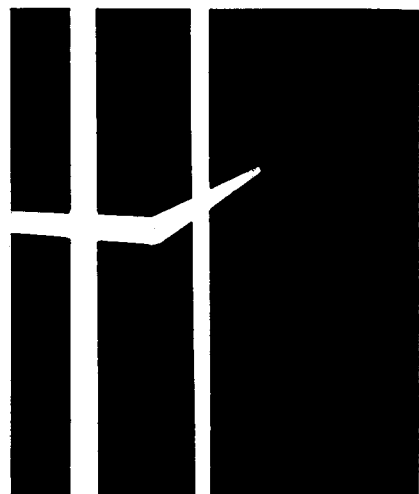
entered into penance and by means of it one continued to express his penitential attitudes. This attitude must be maintained "in the heart," that intimate sphere of man in which the word of God is received, retained and is brought to bear fruit" (1 Rule, 22).¹

In Franciscan parlance, confession maintains "purity of heart," or that steadfastness in repentance, desired by Francis. It was and is a way to "keep close watch" and to remain "vigilant." The practice of confession, both in the sacrament and among ourselves keeps alive the healthy humility one needs to sustain awareness of the need for dependence on God as well as the ready disposition to forgive because we have been forgiven and reconciled.

Biblical Forms of Repentance

FRANCIS HELD confession in high practical esteem for the penitential life. He also undertook penitential practices. They expressed his daily dying to self in order to live the life of the risen Lord. As such, they expressed his continual conversion. They were ecclesial as well because they reminded Francis of the fundamental relationship of loving union with the Father,

¹*The Practice and Meaning of Confession in the Primitive Franciscan Community* (Pont. Univ. Gregoriana, 1973).



with one's neighbor and all creation that the sacrificial life of Jesus established. It is no wonder, then, that Francis assumed the biblical forms of self-denial: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

a. *'Prayer* in the Hebrew Scriptures meant "to intercede for another," to ask for favor and mercy, and was always addressed to God alone. Yahweh was the God of the Covenant, the God who wills to save. Prayer was offered by a people conscious of their covenant and assured of an answer (e.g., Ez. 32:11-14). Daily they prayed the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4-9) lest they forget the covenant. In a sense Francis' life was his *Shema*. Franciscan Penitential living is our form of the *Shema* today. In the New Testament prayer is much the same, but with one unique difference: God is Father, the Father of Jesus who

unites us to himself in his covenant sacrifice. God who is Father (Mt. 6:9-15) is a central doctrine in Franciscanism. Discovering this great truth, Francis found the reason (Jn. 14:6) and not only the courage, to give all his earthly possessions to his natural father and turn to God, his true Father. This truth fully perceived and assimilated by Francis led him to do what he did before the Bishop of Assisi. The action that was signified by his conversion was his living faith in God as Father, rather than his stripping himself of all that Peter Bernadone gave him. Francis knew that God, our Father, could always be approached, would always listen, and would respond (Jn. 15:7; 17:16-26). The best statement of the meaning of Franciscan prayer that we have is Francis' paraphrased "Our Father." Francis, turned to God, sought God's Will which he knew was for his good and for that of all creation. His prayer reflects this inner faith. It was genuine prayer because within himself Francis found that integrity offered to the redeemed which leads to confidence.

b. *Fasting* is healthy, doctors tell us, and "Weight Watchers" say it is even fashionable! And fasting is part of the Christian life as it was of Christ's. Why? Fasting for Francis, and for anyone truly turned to God, is not a value in itself. Its value rests in that it expresses an interior dis-

position of conversion (Jer. 14:12; Jonah 3:8). Like true prayer, genuine fasting implies conversion of the heart. It is meant as an aid to assist us in reinforcing our commitment to the will of God. To take up our cross daily means more than imitating others or making ourselves feel the tinge of hunger. Rather we should find in our life's experience what God wills us to take up as our form of the cross. Nevertheless, fasting should be part of our lives. Jesus expected it of his followers (Mt. 6:16), even though his own attitude about it when confronted by the Pharisees was rather casual. For the Lord, whose example we should follow, fasting expressed true commitment. Like real commitment, he notes, it should be without display. Because Francis had a true understanding of human nature and our tendency to weaken, he fasted. In this way he continually felt in his body an expression of the need for God. There is another aspect of fasting, too, that the New Testament points out (Acts 13:2ff): fasting accompanied prayers of petition. In our efforts to be converted, we might well keep this in mind. For Francis life was a living petition for the grace to grow daily into a converted man. He fasted!

c. *Almsgiving* is a fascinating study in Scripture. The social makeup of biblical times did not

admit of a middle class. Wealth and power were held by the ruling class, and everyone else was a peasant. Jesus was a peasant, as were the vast majority of people before him and after him until the time of Francis. Power was absolute, arbitrary and often oppressive. Read Amos, Micah, Hosea, Zephaniah, and I Isaiah to learn about God's view of wealth and power. In our day, when these are still held or sought after as primary objectives both privately and internationally, allow yourself to wonder why the Son of God never attempted and even blocked attempts, to make himself more than a peasant. The answer is found in the meaning of covenant. All God's people are loved by him. True religion, the covenant faith, is so much more than social services or giving to the poor. It enjoins loving all people, trusting them as neighbors, and sharing with them in the same covenant relationship. Almsgiving manifests this interior disposition on the part of one who loves as God wills, giving of himself and out of his stores to the poor, being among them, caring for them, and giving them hope. All these activities are signs of faith in the covenant.

The poor were especially loved by God because their circumstances of dependence disposed them to realize our fundamental human need: dependence on

God. The real poor are those dependent on God, who honor him and fear him. Their fear is not dread, but respect, like a child's for a loving parent. Jesus' peasant status was another expression of his total and complete will to be dependent on God. In fact, he says that total renunciation of wealth, of power, and of self is the condition for becoming his disciple (Mt. 19: 27-29; Mk. 10:28-30; Lk. 18:28-30). Francis did this and required it of his first friars. It was a sign of what truly was within them.

Francis' almsgiving became himself. Franciscan almsgiving is giving of oneself, like Jesus, for the sake of the Kingdom. It means ministry and spending oneself for the sake of the Gospel. You may want to call this Franciscan poverty because it is more a giving than a denying. But whatever you want to call it, it is essential in our lives of conversion if day by day we wish to see the Lord more clearly.

Belief

IN OTHER PARTS of these papers I have shown how faith is the basis of Christian life; much more so is this true for religious life. Faith grows in a person. Francis' life reveals this. For two years he struggled with faith. He responded to its demands, but only gradually. With each surrender it became easier. "Surrender" is a hard word today, when individu-

ality, personalism, and independence are in the ascendancy. Yet practically this is what faith is all about. God asks us to see his past actions, to look upon his Son, and to examine the credibility of his revelation and its implications. He solicits belief. He asks us to accept the marvelous gift of our own creation, to respect it, and to affect it with belief. We do not lose our individuality, our person-ality; we enhance them by faith.

God does not make us believe. There comes a point in our lives when we are confronted with the decision to believe. There are many moments in our lives when belief asks us to go one step further in living out what we believe. For two years Francis went through this type of struggle. Celano vividly and candidly notes that "he bore the greatest suffering in mind and was not able to rest until he should have completed in deed what he had conceived in his heart; various thoughts succeeded one another and their importunity disturbed him greatly" (1 Cel. 6). How like ours was Francis' struggle! But he was open to faith. Little by little, as the richness of what living faith implied impressed itself upon him, he surrendered to God and embraced what God called for.

This leap of faith is loving obedience to the will of God. It is never-ending, as Francis' later life shows. It is the source of joy.

As we experience this call to living faith we can hesitate, we do hesitate. But we can always resume the adventure of faith because God draws us with love, not threats. Because each of us is different, we may be drawn to a greater or lesser degree. But God does always call us to a greater following of Christ according to his gifts of grace and creation. Total and constant conversion to God is always before us, because God's love is divine and we are finite.

God's love communicated to us through the mediation of the Church which proclaims our faith is what draws us to him. The leap of faith is an act of love, the giving of ourselves to God. Opening ourselves to do this involves prayer and reflection on the Word of God. This was the experience of Francis (Acts 7:10). As Franciscans, this should be our experience. Like Francis we will discover that values and things we desired or treasured may have to be exchanged for the treasure of God in Christ alive in us by the power of the Spirit to a degree we never imagined. Francis' encounter with the leper made all this clear to him. He knew he could love more, more than he ever thought, and he knew he could love God because God had first manifested his love to Francis and to all creation in Christ.

The wonder of it all was that

God first loved us. Francis' leap with faith revealed his capacity to love.

Before all else Francis appreciated the depth and extent of the love of God. The cross represented this (Jn. 3:16). It showed how totally Jesus emptied himself for our sake. As much as one could, Francis felt he should give back to God in kind. Francis' poverty, his love for poverty, and his personification of Lady Poverty all have their meaning in the significance of the cross. The love of God literally poured out for us in the Crucified could be returned only by a literally lived poverty in this world. To live in the world, yet not to be of it: what better way to exemplify this than by poverty? This is what Jesus did. And like his Lord's, Francis' poverty had meaning because of its purpose, not of itself. Poverty was Francis' expression of love for God. It was a graphic expression of faith that grew into love.

In the cross, too, Francis discovered the humility of God. Jesus was the suffering servant. His suffering proclaimed a servanthood that was love expressed. Jesus took on the form of a slave, as Saint Paul notes in Philippians, the lowliest type of servant, and in this capacity waited upon humanity. He took humanity and raised it to his exalted position of filiation to the

Father. Being a slave excluded no one from redemption. Being a slave would cause the effects of redemption, which we, the Church, are to minister to one another and to all humanity, to be effectively communicated. Francis, with the clear vision of faith, saw in this his charismatic mission. When he banded about him a fraternity, he called his brothers "minors," "lesser ones," and charged them with the ministry of proclaiming the Kingdom. They were to be like Christ. Their mode of ministry, as a result, would always have

"that human touch" as Christ's did, because they would live the Gospel.

Francis' belief tells us what ours should be. It does not mean being poor or being humble in the sense of putting on an act. Rather it challenges us on our pilgrimage of conversion to love God totally and to dare to express that love by literal poverty. It calls upon us to see ourselves as servants of the Cross, humble as our Lord was, so that like him and with him by the power of the Spirit we can give new life and hope to our brothers and sisters. This leads us now to the third thing that Francis learned about a converted life and that shows how totally ecclesial he was.

Kingdom of God

DAY BY DAY, as Francis loved the Lord more dearly, he knew that day by day he had to follow him more nearly, as the song from *Godspell* puts it. Following Christ meant doing what Christ did for the reason the Lord did it. Jesus came into time to proclaim and effect the Kingdom of God, to re-establish the relationship of love between himself and humanity, and in this way to overcome all alienation among people. It was a mission of peace. Francis, like Christ, was impelled by faith and love to be an instrument of that peace, first by following Christ literally (witness)

and proclaiming his Good News to all (ministry).

His starting point was himself. Like Jesus he had to exemplify the requirements for participation in the Kingdom which the preaching of Jesus had announced (Mt. 5-7). Jesus was the personification of the Kingdom. To be like him was to inaugurate in oneself the Kingdom of God.

In summary and in practical terms, to be like Christ is to be gentle. Matthew stresses this throughout his Gospel. Jesus is humble and gentle of heart (Mt. 11:29); when he is hailed as the messianic King (Mt. 21:5) he enters Jerusalem humbly; and in his role as suffering servant he accepts death gently. Gentleness is a spirit or attitude born of love; it is the opposite of inconsiderateness and force. It is persuasive and effective. Rather than a sign of weakness, gentleness is an indication of sureness and confidence in oneself and one's purpose. THE Lord was gentle because he embodied all the requirements of the Kingdom.

Gentleness in Franciscan terms is to be "Poor in spirit." The poor "in spirit," biblically, are those who live in humble expectancy of God's mercy or of the Kingdom of God. All those who live a life of conversion are characterized by the practical and practiced meaning of the Beatitudes. They have been called a summary of Franciscan

life because they declare what were the values in Christ's life.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." This is the root of that joy which should characterize Franciscans. The world flees sorrow; but for the Franciscan the greatest sorrow is the loss of or lack of awareness of God. Our joy is living in God. The Franciscan accepts the fact that happiness is found in the Good News of salvation which shows that sacrificial love, giving oneself for others, and accepting God is the cause of peace. The world rejects mortification, but the Franciscan accepts living poorly because that facilitates the realization of true values in life, the ones God has revealed. In a word, the essence of Penitential Franciscan spirituality is summed up in three words: Poverty, Love, Joy. This is what the Beatitudes are all about. If we assimilate the values they represent, we become *bearers of peace*, of God's peace or of his will that all men be saved; and we participate in God's own joy. It means being children of God. It includes that openness called for by Francis' prayer for peace. Finally, poverty in spirit means *patience* for the sake of the Kingdom. Today we would call this zeal, or an apostolic spirit.

Franciscan ministry results from an assimilated Christ-like gentleness, or the goodness of

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God alive in the person. The poor in spirit are not the "poor spirit-ed," but those who recognize that they can do no good without God's power in them. They are anything but proud, self-sufficient, or arrogant. Rather, they are compassionate (Mt. 18:35), merciful with the mercy of God in action clothed in deeds (Mt. 23:23). They can be so because they are forgiven and know that in securing God's mercy they are called to extend that mercy to others by the gift of themselves. The Franciscan minister is pure of heart or innocent of all evil in fact and in deed. "Steadfastness," "singlemindedness of purpose," or "fidelity" (Mt. 10:22; 23:13) which is sincere is another way to say the same thing. A true peacemaker works consistently to reconcile (Jn. 17:21) and to enlarge human good will (Rom. 10:13-17), because he or she knows the consistency with which God has offered his own peace and love to him or her.

Two facts from the life of Francis should impress us. The first is that he did not offer to others what was not first given to him, assimilated by him, and embodied in his life. To be converted means to make part of oneself what God proposes as the attitudes and deeds of one totally and continually turned toward himself. Secondly, Francis' assimilation of God's peace plan for

humanity made him an ecclesial person. This is what distinguished him from other reformers who bolted from the Church and found themselves on the bleak road to heresy, schism, separation, and discord. This was so because of Francis' deep appreciation of and faith in the Body of Christ. To be united to Christ and the Father meant to be united to men and women to whom the Spirit has been given so that the Kingdom of God could be fully arrived at. Jean Mouroux expressed it this way:

Living in the Church means living surrounded by mystery, and hence—because the Church is the Act of Redemption made permanent, lasting from the Ascension to the Parousia—it means living at the very centre of the movement that carries mankind forward. For Christianity, of course, there is only one mystery of salvation; it is a tremendous divine action that takes place, one may say on three different levels . . .

Henceforth, time and the human race and the universe itself have only one purpose, the fulfillment of this mission; and when it is complete, time will reach its consummation, the universe will pass away and the New Jerusalem will appear before God in all its glory. Meanwhile, however, there is work to be done, and all the faith that Christians can muster, all their love, all their industry, all their pleasures and pains, all their hope, are to be thrown into this task, which is

always there to be continued, and pushed forward and begun again from the beginning. This active mission introduced like leaven into the dough of history is the Church herself, the mystery of the Act of Redemption, in labour.²

It is in this context that Jesus' life proposes evangelization be done. It was in this context, too, that the total expression of Francis' vocation developed. Francis knew after reading the gospel imperative to proclaim the Good News (Mt. 16:15) that Jesus gathered together the new People of God, the Church, for one purpose: to bring about the Kingdom of God (cf. the Decree *Ad Gentes*, §35). The greatest significance of Francis and his early followers in this regard was their understanding that bringing about the Kingdom began with their own human persons and personalities.

Conclusion

FRANCIS HAD A healthy and honest view of human nature. For this reason, he wrote his admonitions, which constitute a clear statement of his realism. Great and lofty ideals are contained in fragile human vessels. I would recommend to the reader the questions related to these Admonitions, in the *Workbook*

for *Franciscan Studies* (pp. 68-72), so that his or her appreciation of Franciscanism may remain true, concrete, realistic, and concretely practical. In themselves, the Admonitions show us our need for constant and continuous conversion. This also is the nature of our vocation as Penitent Franciscans.

Francis did something else as well that we should perhaps take more seriously in our day-to-day living of Franciscan life. He gathered his friars together periodically and restated and explained the Christian truth of his inspiration (Leg. 3 Comp., §§57-60). Then together they reflected commonly on the meaning of the Gospel, examined their living, experience, and ministry in its light, and sought together to discern what behavior and tasks God willed of them now. They then decided how they would live and minister on the basis of what they had discerned. This is how Franciscans should see the Lord more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly, day by day.

Francis and Franciscans are called to be a sign of conversion to God among all the Peoples of God, by sharing in the life of Christ, proclaiming his Good News, and witnessing by their lives of mercy and gentleness in

²J. Mouroux, *The Christian Experience: An Introduction to a Theology* (tr. George Lamb; New York; Sheed & Ward, 1954), p. 186ff.

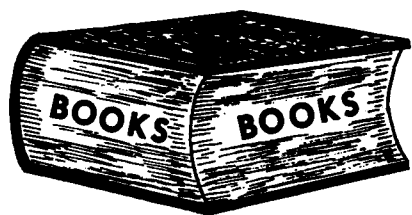
the midst of a world that needs reconciliation in every way. This is the one mission of the Church, but the roles and the ministries to achieve it are multiple. (1 Cor. 12:4-7). This is why there is a variety of communities in the Franciscan tradition. A survey paper of this kind cannot, and I believe should not spell out how in each instance we are to fulfill our service of witness and ministry. Like Francis and his first friars we should seek to discern this among ourselves. The spirit is given to us. In our community gatherings,

general, provincial, and local, let us keep that in mind.

By way of conclusion to this discussion, I can do no better than to cite Dr. Paul Löffler's remarks after a scholarly study of "The Biblical Concept of Conversion":

... fellowship [fraternity], minus the passion for conversion, leads to ghettoism; service minus the call to conversion is a gesture without hope; Christian education minus conversion is religiosity without decision; and dialogue without the challenge to conversion remains sterile talk.³

³*Mission Trends*, n. 2: "Evangelization" (Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1975).



Saint Francis: Nature Mystic. The Derivation and Significance of the Nature Stories in the Franciscan Legend. By Edward A. Armstrong. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973. Pp. 270, incl. index & 19 plates. Cloth, \$13.50; paper, \$5.95.

Reviewed by Father Hugh Eller, O.F.M., Ph.D. (Athenaeum Antonianum), a member of the Staff of the Franciscan Institute.

This book's imposing title is somewhat misleading. The main focus of the book (stated in the Introduction) is not so much Saint Francis or his mystical life, but the relationship of Francis to animals *as this is presented in the Franciscan Legend*, i.e., the stories about him and recorded details of his life and teaching. The work is Armstrong's appraisal, as a naturalist and historian, of the significance of Franciscan nature stories, and of how Francis's hagiographers use them in portraying him.

The initial chapter is about "Saint Francis, Nature Mystic." The next concerns "Traditions that Influenced Saint Francis"; and the remaining six chapters treat of Francis and birds (3), animals of household

and farm (4), the "small deer"—worm, bees, and flies, scorpion, ants, and the cicada (5), fish, "reptiles," and the dragon (6), the furred beasts (7), and the Cantic of Brother Sun (8). The black and white plates reflect the Francis-animal relationship and are accompanied by helpful notes (pp. 245-51).

Chapters 3 to 8 are full of interesting information. The author's erudition and experience as a naturalist combine to provide abundant material on natural history as well as popular beliefs on the subject from different cultures, and all of this is related to the Franciscan Legend. Woven throughout, too, is Armstrong's conviction that the Irish tradition, transmitted through Irish pilgrims and monks, had an influence on the early Franciscan movement and its hagiographical tradition. Scholars will express reservations about his argumentation on this point; yet the reader can draw benefit from the many allusions to the Irish tradition and its possible influence in early Franciscan hagiography.

The section on the Wolf of Gubbio (pp. 199-217) and the chapter on the Cantic of Brother Sun (pp. 218-43) merit special mention for their systematic exposition of theme. One wishes that the book's first two chapters had a similar quality. This reviewer felt a lack of cohesion in them which weakens the reader's interest.

Specialists in the field of Franciscana can find points to criticize and expressions of opinion that will raise dissent, but it is not our purpose to detail them in this review. One point is that the author nowhere clearly states his principles for

judging the biographical sources for the life of Saint Francis; nor does he indicate that all are not of equal value. Contrary to most scholarly opinion on the matter, he favors the *Fioretti* and *Mirror of Perfection* over Celano and Saint Bonaventure. Within pages 165-169 he gives a brief statement of principles for understanding the nature and aim of medieval hagiography in general, and Franciscan *Legenda* in particular. This should have been developed and given prominence in an earlier chapter. In this whole matter one notes the omission of any reference to Delahaye's *Les legendes hagiographiques*. We cannot agree in any way with Armstrong's depicting Bonaventure as presenting Francis as a "wizard," "wonder-worker," or "magician." Perhaps his viewpoint as a naturalist hindered his appreciating the broader context in which Bonaventure sets Francis' miracles. At times the author shows some appreciation for Bonaventure's effort in the *Legenda Maior*, but one fears the general reader will not receive a favorable impression of the Seraphic Doctor.

Despite these observations and some minor flaws in the work, we can only be grateful to Armstrong for the love and sympathy he brings to this work of deepening our understanding of the nature stories in the Franciscan Legend. In achieving his purpose he has not lost sight of the deepest dimension of Francis, that he is a *saint*, and that "single-minded devotion to Christ gave unity to his life" (p. 219). It is heartening, too, in a book of this nature, that its author should remind his readers of "the positive, creative, redemptive

aspects of the missions of Jesus and Francis. 'Christ for the joy that was set before him endured the cross' (Heb. xii.2), and joyfully the Poverello followed."

Letters from the Desert. By Carlo Carretto. Trans.- Mary Rose Hancock. Foreword by Ivan Illich. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1972. Pp. xxi-146 Cloth \$4.95; paper, \$1.50.

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

Carlo Carretto is a Little Brother of Jesus who has been called by God three distinct times in his life and has obeyed that clear call with no regrets. Before becoming a Brother, Carlo had been actively involved in the apostolate of Catholic Action. Now, after some years of prayer and solitude, he wants to share with the many friends he left behind, the story of these past years of his life, the stages he has reached, and the trials he has undergone.

In laying bare his spiritual life, Brother Carlo teaches the timeless truths of our life in Christ. In their preface, the publishers state that they "were at first tempted to request the author to 'update' and modify what he has written in solitude," because so much had happened in the Church since the first printing of the book. After much consideration, they did not make that request. They ultimately came "to believe that the type of spirituality Carlo Carretto lives and writes about

is perhaps more relevant, more needed than it was in the seemingly serene pre-Conciliar Church" (ibid.).

The fact that *Letters from the Desert* has gone through twenty-four editions and has been translated into eight languages is more than adequate recommendation for the book. The style is exceptionally clear and easy to read. The reader does not have to stop and ask himself, "Now, what does he mean by that?" And yet the spirituality is profound. This reviewer was particularly impressed with certain chapters: Chapter 1, "You will be judged by love"; chapter 3, "You are nothing"; chapter 4, where the author gives this striking advice: "Don't worry about what you ought to do. Worry about loving." Chapter 12, "Nazareth," has some new insights into lay spirituality, as does chapter 15 on forgiveness, and chapter 17 on faith. This is not to say that the other chapters are weak. They are not.

Those who hunger for a deeper prayer life should add this book to their reading list.

Padre Pio: He Bore the Stigmata. By John A. Schug, O.F.M.Cap. Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1976. Pp. 256. Paper, \$4.95.

Reviewed by Father Evan Roche, O.F.M., Ph. D., Professor of Philosophy at Siena College, Loudonville, New York.

Of the many books written about Padre Pio in English, this is the best to date. Such is the opinion of this reviewer, who has read all he

can find about Padre Pio. Much more significantly, it is also the definite opinion of the Capuchin priest who was Padre Pio's constant companion—day and night—during the last six years of the Padre's life. This priest, mentioned throughout the book, is Father Alessio Parente, publication manager and English language correspondent for *The Voice of Padre Pio*, a magazine emanating from the Capuchin Friary of San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy. Father Alessio very recently visited the United States, and this reviewer had the good fortune of meeting with him for several hours. Father Alessio discussed the book at length. He had read all the proofs and had also aided Father Schug in his research in the archives of the Friary and in many of his interviews with townspeople who had personally known Padre Pio.

I asked Father Alessio if he had any criticisms of the book. He himself had nothing but praise for it and for its author, Father Schug. He did inform me that the Postulator General of the Cause of Padre Pio—Father Bernardino of Siena—had also read the proofs and had made some corrections in the chapter dealing with the difficult years during which the Holy See had restricted the public, priestly activities of Padre Pio. If there is any portion of this brief biography that can be faulted as being too incomplete and a bit puzzling, it is the treatment of these shadowy years. Despite or perhaps because of the delicate questions regarding the steps taken by Rome, it is to be hoped that the author will write again at greater length and remove these shadows.

All of the other chapters are a delight to read and a work of spiritual edification. We can hope that they, too, will be greatly enlarged in some future book. The dominant sentiment

FRANCISCAN PLAYS

Several new Franciscan plays are now available, based upon the original sources and commended by Franciscans who have read them. Brother David Paul Benzshawel, O.F.M., holds a degree in drama, and from his studies at the Franciscan Institute, has written the following:

—*Sacrum Commercium*, adapted from the work by the same name as a medieval mystery play.

—*Clare's Song of Songs*, in analogy with the Old Testament Song of Songs, portraying Clare's conversion.

—*Lord or Servant*, dramatizing Francis' conversion and transformation into the leader of a new Order.

Scripts are available in mimeograph form for \$2.00 each. All rights of production and performance with purchase of script. Scripts are suited for dramatic presentation, choral readings, or private reflection and meditation.

Write to
Bro. David Paul Benzshawel, O.F.M.
St. Paschal's Friary
3400 St. Paschal's Drive
Oak Brook, Illinois 60521

of one who has finished reading this book is the hope that there will be much more forthcoming.

The author does an excellent job of selecting and pruning his material. He manages to give a true and clear picture of Padre Pio, while limiting himself to the best authenticated incidents in Padre Pio's long and revealing life. He handles the most sensational happenings in a calm and scholarly manner. This book is a biography and not a theological work; yet everything in it is in complete accord with sound theological principles.

Others have written uncritically about Padre Pio in a way that gave

ammunition to his critics and detractors. Then too, much has been written in poor and even dreadful English. Lovers of Padre Pio can be grateful for the excellence and clarity as well as for the soundness and authenticity of Father Schug's writing. Those who are leery of any popular accounts of the miraculous will be hard pressed to fault this book. Those who are devoted to Padre Pio will of course welcome it and hope for more from the pen of the author. Those who are unfamiliar with Padre Pio will find this book an excellent introduction to his life and deeds. But without exception all who read this book should find it an inspiration.

COVER AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

The cover and illustrations for our March issue were drawn by Sister Marie Monica, O.S.F., of Sacred Heart Academy, Klamath Falls, Oregon.

BOOKS RECEIVED

- Doherty, Catherine de Hueck, *Not Without Parables: Stories of Yesterday, Today, and Eternity*. Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 1977. Pp. 187. Paper, \$3.50.
- Freburger, William J., and James E. Haas, *The Forgiving Christ: A Book of Penitential Celebrations*. Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 1977. Pp. 128. Paper, \$2.95.
- Gaster, Theodor H., introd. & notes, *The Dead Sea Scriptures in English Translation*. 3rd rev. & enlarged ed. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1977. Pp. xvi-580. Paper, \$3.50.
- Gelpi, Donald L., S.J., *Charism and Sacrament: A Theology of Christian Conversion*. Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1976. Pp. x-258. Paper, \$5.95.
- Hales, E. E. Y., *Chariot of Fire: A Fantasy*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977. Pp. 191. Cloth, \$6.95.
- Heymans, Betty, *Bittersweet Triumph*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977. Pp. 191. Cloth, \$5.95.
- Kilby, Clyde S., *Tolkien and the Silmarillion: A Glimpse of the Man and His World of Myth*. Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1976. Pp. 89, incl. index. Cloth, \$3.95.
- Larsson, Flora, *Between You and Me, Lord: Prayer Conversations with God*. Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1976. pp. 106, illus. Paper, \$1.45.
- MacDonald, George, *Creation in Christ: Unspoken Sermons*, ed. Rolland Hein. Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1976. Pp. 342. Paper, \$4.95.
- Scanlan, Michael, T.O.R., and Anne Thérèse Shields, R.S.M., *And Their Eyes Were Opened: Encountering Jesus in the Sacraments*. Preface by Leon-Joseph Cardinal Suenens. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Word of Life, 1977. Pp. xi-119, incl. bibliography. Paper, \$1.95.
- Shaw, Luci, *The Secret Trees: Poems*. Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1976. Pp. 80. Cloth, \$3.95.
- Talley, James M., ed., *Jesus, The Living Bread: A Chronicle of the 41st International Eucharistic Congress, 1976*. Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1976. Pp. 159. Leatherette, \$14.95; cloth, \$9.95.
- Taylor, Kenneth N., paraphraser, *My Living Counselor: Daily Readings from the Living Bible*. Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1976. Unpaginated. Paper, \$4.95.
- Watson, David, *How to Find God*. Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1976. Pp. 158. Paper, \$1.95.