

Summer **A Franciscan Growth Opportunity**

1977

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 Paleography**
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

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EDITORIAL



Community

S EVEN YEARS AGO IN THIS SPACE (October, 1970), we called attention to an attempt in our community to build better communal relations through "affective communication." In small groups and meetings, members shared feelings (as opposed to opinions and judgments) on religious life. As is the case with so many good ideas, implementation broke down under the pressures of apostolate, time, what have you. Turnover, attrition, the passage of time, the impact of attempting to be part of a process of planning, all have made us—and perhaps you—ready for another voyage into affective communication, or rather better community through affective communication *in the Lord*.

The "New Testament Way to Community"* is a twelve-step scripturally based program for volunteers to meet in small groups and share their reactions to biblical texts which they have (ideally) mulled over for a week. Developed by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Australia, the New Testament Way seeks to group affective sharing in response to meditation on God's Word. Groups are limited in size, and guidelines for listening attentively and sharing affectively are read at the start of each meeting. Each individual is guaranteed time to share (or remain silent), though our Franciscan desire for freedom has perhaps led us to keep our eyes off the clock. Trust is building slowly—the ideological gaps are large—but those engaged are beginning to feel free to say to some where they are in the light of God's Word.

The strength of this somewhat new approach, it seems to me, lies in the two features already somewhat emphasized above: its voluntary character (only those who want to participate do so—now about a fifth of our

* Distributed in the United States by the Oblate Missionaries, New Testament Community, Lewis Lane, Godfrey, Illinois 62035.

total community) and its biblical, evangelical basis. Both help to shift communication from issues to persons. Both ensure that the heart and will, not just the mind, will be addressed. Naturally there are risks, but in proportion to the risk that is community life itself, they seem minimal. The "New Testament Way to Community" is surely not *the* definitive answer to all our ills or needs, but it is an approach to the healing and growing to which we are called as friends and followers of Jesus Christ.

Julian Davis

New Hunger

Rich I have walked
beside Your poor
in the Breadline at dawn.

Always there was a Portion
even for my wealth.

Today in rags of contrition
I reach out for You,
free Bread,
delivered up, doled out.

Savior, Provider,
come,
fill the seven empty baskets
swinging on my heart.

Sister Mary Agnes, P.C.C.

A Question of Vocation

SISTER MARIE BEHA, O.S.C.

In the progress toward religious understanding one does not go from answer to answer but from question to question. One's questions are answered, not by clear, definitive answers, but by more pertinent and more crucial questions. In the case of the Zen master and his disciple, the disciple asks a general, abstract, doctrinal question—one which could admit of any amount of theoretical elaboration. The Master replies with a direct, existential concrete question to which there is no theoretical answer, and which no amount of verbalizing will be able to penetrate. It has to be grappled with in an entirely different way.¹

“WHAT DO YOU mean by love?” “How do you conceptualize God?” “What is your imaging of being poor for the sake of the kingdom?” To ask such questions is not to turn from reality, but to go below the surface of the thinking process itself in order to discover what is real. For it is a truism to say that the way in which we conceptualize sets up expectations, modifies our acceptance, makes possible our fulfillment or

determines, to some extent, our despair. In short, the way we think changes the way we live.

This principle, which is operative on all levels of perception, becomes even more important when we are dealing with those spiritual realities which are less subject to empirical verification. If we think, for instance, that “85° in the shade is hot,” then we adjust our activity to suit our perception of reality; another's view that “85° isn't hot

¹Thomas Merton, *Opening the Bible* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1970), pp. 19-20.

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at all; you should live where I live” doesn't change our feelings of discomfort. However, a thermometer does give some kind of objectification to temperature, a point of departure for further discussion.

But no such starting point is found in terms of less quantified realities. “What is a great work of art?” can never be objectified, only exemplified. And even this much objectification is not possible when the subject of discussion is more spiritual still. All that can be done, it seems, is to examine carefully our conceptualization process, so that the way in which we image reality can be taken into account. All of which is to say that our theology and our philosophy do make a real difference!

The present article will attempt to examine the way in which our imaging of the reality of vocation affects, not only our theologizing—i.e., our conceptualizing—but also our living out of vocation with all of its implications.

Traditionally, vocation has been presented in terms of call and response. And no one can deny the solid etymology behind this approach, nor its usefulness in many contexts. To call someone has all the gracious overtones of invitation, desire, re-

quest; it also has some of the dimensions of summons, demands, pressure. Call also may imply something predetermined in the mind of the one who calls, some plan, a project, something to be shared. Consequently, the call image of vocation has led some persons to expect that God was inviting them to something already determined; that he desired one specific response, and so that a mistake in response would be “failure,” even if it lacked the moral implications of outright refusal. As a consequence of this theory of vocation, one felt a responsibility to set out on a serious search for the specifics of his own call. After all, no one wants to be so deaf that he finds himself making an inappropriate response, simply because he never heard what was said in the first place.

Many times this search for the specifics of God's call led to very unrealistic expectation and to unnecessary strain. Even though persons say that they do not expect an angelic visitation, it seems that anything less would be inadequate! Valuable energy goes into spelling out and evaluating possible responses. In this type of searching can be absorbing that it might negate the freedom to lose oneself in responding to

and to others.

By way of reaction to such anxious soul-searching for the right answer, some contemporaries seem to feel that anything that is personally fulfilling is automatically signed with the seal of vocation. Such is the permissiveness that says "Do whatever you want to do" and adds "continue doing it as long as you find it fulfilling." In such a theology of vocation, "concrete activity is felt to be too much beneath God's concern and human life becomes a landscape under a divine sun . . . where all landmarks are blurred to indistinctiveness. Our religious pilgrimage is deprived of milestones."²

Such are some of the disadvantages of the call theology of vocation; obviously there are counter-balancing good points in such an imaging. It is the purpose of this article, however, to examine another model which may incorporate the strengths of the call image and, at the same time, avoid some of its weaknesses. The model that I am proposing is that of vocation as question.

To begin with, the model of question and response offers a less determined structure. To ask someone a question, if that question is honest, is not to predetermine the answer. For ex-

ample, if a teacher raises a question which is meant to call forth some previously determined answer, which answer is necessary to "pass the test," no question is really being asked; all that is being given is a framework for stimulus-response.

In contrast, an honest question implies that the one who asks waits on the answer of the other. He does not know what that answer will be. More accurately, even though he knows *an* answer, he still does not know the answer of the one who is being asked. Such questioning implies that the reply of another makes a real difference in the unfolding of the dialogue.

The other's answer may range from a complete refusal to say anything, which, of course, is an ultimate sort of answer, to the guarded response of "I don't have anything to say"; "Fifth amendment"—which hints that the other could say a great deal if he so chose! A question may also elicit such unexpected replies as a seemingly irrelevant response, even a complete change of topic. The answer may well be couched in a counter question as Scripture evidences: "How shall this be done?" (Lk. 1:34). In fact, such questioning of the questioner may well be the only honest thing to do.

Another way in which the analogy of question seems apt for a theology of vocation is the paradoxical presence of both permanence and transitoriness in the very process of questioning. On the one hand, once a question has been asked, it cannot be erased; even if it is ignored, as we have seen, it is answered! So the question of vocation remains a constant; a man may wish that he had never heard it, never been asked, but he has heard, has been questioned.

Of course, a man may not have heard what he was being asked. Who of us has not experienced at one time or another being so taken aback by a question addressed to us that all we could do was to ask for a "Please repeat"? Or, at other times, we may have attempted an answer, only to be interrupted by a "but what I asked was. . . ." Still, even in such cases, we have changed by becoming involved. Such is the permanence of the questioning process that it makes a difference that the question has been raised no matter how we respond.

But the question image also brings out that vocation, by its very nature, is process and so also has an element of transitoriness. This is not to say that vocation is temporary; only that vocation is always a passing beyond, a going on. When one question has been replied to, another is raised.

And the reply to this new question calls forth still other challenges. Each new answer goes deeper, is more comprehensive, and, at the same time, more personal and more specific.

In all such asking and responding to vocation, the initiative is God's. It is he who raises the question, begins the dialogue. In so doing he sets a certain framework, and this not to limit a man's freedom but to make that freedom operational by setting up some boundaries. Here again the question model seems a useful way of dealing with the mystery of freedom in both God and man. God freely chooses to initiate the process (the logic of his choice, as we shall see later in this article, is beyond our rationalizing just as he himself is beyond our conceptualizing). But this very initiation of the creative process is always for the sake of growth in freedom.

In an analogous way, a good question, just by being asked, makes possible a certain level of response. It creates a capacity in the one who answers; it calls to mind whole areas that a person may not have been aware of, or it may open up other areas that an individual has never questioned before. On the other hand, it may also call forth the reassuring experience of knowing that one has already faced this question and given an answer.

²Robert Ochs, S.J., "Experiments in Closing the Experience Gap in Prayer," *Review for Religious* 30 (Nov., 1971), p. 994.

A good question, then, is revelatory; it reveals something of the one who asks and something to the person who hears it. For instance, a sound question may help a man to discover his own ignorance, and such a discovery—even if it is painful—is still better known than unknown, better revealed than concealed. For ignorance that is known is an improvement over ignorance that is ignored.

The divine vocational question, then, is always an enabling of man's capacity to respond. It is asked, not to trip or to trick, but to open the way to further revelation and to fuller freedom.

Part of the latter function of the good question is its existential character. A good question touches life; it is not just an intellectual game, an exercise in abstraction. It is not a puzzle to be solved by piecing together the parts in some vague hope of discovering the key pieces. God's questions point toward life and are answered in life. His revelatory grace enables us to live out our answers and so to discover still deeper questions.

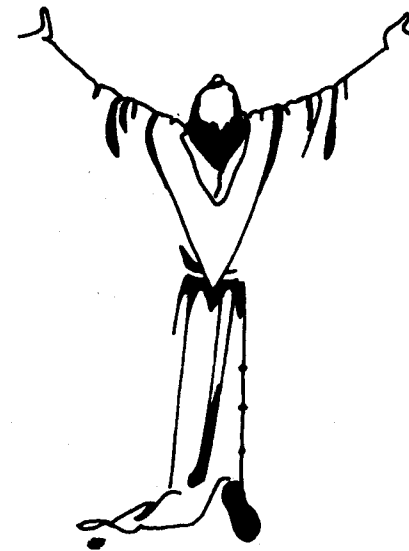
Just as the initiation of the vocational question belongs to God, so too does its finality. In a very real way every question implies an eschatology. It is pointing toward something, has some goal of discovery. Only the trivial is lacking in this purpose-

fulness, and such a question is not worthy of an answer.

But the creative question of God's activity in our lives is the purpose behind every question and every answer asked of us. Who are we? Where are we going? And why? Every answer brings us closer to that final response which will include, "summarize," the meaning of our lives and reveal the end of all of our questioning.

There is a definite progression in this life-long process of vocational questioning, from the more general to the more personal and ending, as has just been suggested, in the most personal revelation of the name by which the Father addresses each of us. In this progression, vocation is rather like an achievement test where the easier questions are asked first and then the increasingly difficult ones. Or, better, it is like a dialogue where two people begin to get acquainted with a series of polite and rather innocuous questions. As acquaintance deepens into friendship, the dialogue becomes more personal. And more of a risk both for the one who questions and for the one who responds.

So vocation seen in the framework of question-response allows for a process of growth, indicated by greater specificity. By this is meant, not so much the presence of additional detail, but rather a



greater awareness of one's own life direction. Too much spelling out of detail in answering the vocational question may simply be an escape, rather as too much verbalizing can indicate that a person doesn't know how to answer the question! On the other hand, a person who finds that the question of vocation calls forth his deepening understanding of himself can answer briefly and to the point.

Such progress toward vocational responsiveness is, then, in the direction of greater self-awareness, which can then be expressed in concrete life-choices. But the process cannot be hurried. To ask a man to be specific in his response before he is ready is to risk a certain

dangerous "fixation." Or an answer that cannot be interiorized.

A man's true and unique response to the vocational question must come from within. It must be as clear and specific an answer as the life of the individual's present will permit. By this is meant that it cannot be left to vague generalities that carry no commitment. On the other hand, it cannot be made so definite that it precludes any further "questioning," any further progression of divine challenge.

The first question that God asks of a man is the fundamental option of "to be or not to be?" And like all the other vocational questions it is a query that is repeated over and over. Will we choose to exist, as fully as we can exist, i.e., as fully as God both asks and enables us to be, or do we prefer to limit our existence to what is safer, more under our control? It is certainly one of the basic ironies of the gravitational pull of sin in our lives that we tend to choose safety over the growth possibilities of transcendence.

If our answer is a refusal to go along with God's creative action, we slow down the development of our vocational potential. But we do not stop the questioning process. We will be asked again . . . and again . . .

again . . . will you choose to be or not to be? Will you choose life or death?

One of our temptations, of course, is to temporize, delaying the choice and its consequences. So we say, "Maybe." "Some-day." "Later." But the divine questioning goes on, repeating this option until such time as we are able to sum up our life's response in one final option: "Do you choose eternal being—or eternal non-being: yes or no"?

To begin to answer "yes" to the question of being is to discover further questions and further possibilities of response. If we are to "be," then we are asked to be as human persons. And so the next level of vocation is that of basic humanness. Such a saying "yes" to being human is also a saying "no" to what is less than human. Similarly, it is a saying "no" to what is more than human, to those desires for a god-like perfection that is always beyond us.

These, then, are a few of the vocational questions that our basic humanness asks of us. Perhaps they can all be caught up and summarized in the question of our willingness to continue growing, maturing, as a human person.

Such personal growth seems to focus on the complementary areas of self-acceptance and self-forgetfulness in loving concern

for others. So further vocational questions asked of the human person are those of: "do you accept yourself?" "feel comfortable with yourself?" "love yourself enough to let go of yourself?" Such are the essential vocational choices. But the phrasing of the questions is often more subtle. What we are asked is more like: "Can I accept, be comfortable with, a self that continually makes mistakes, that will never be 'perfect'?" "Do I have enough perspective on myself to laugh at myself?" Can I keep my balance, when the world around me threatens my peace?" "Am I secure enough within to risk meeting others, where they are?" In short, does the center of the world have to be "me," so that my world doesn't fall apart; or am I whole enough to be in real relation with others, a relation that has its center outside myself, my concerns, my perception of reality?

To begin to answer who we are as human beings is to face the challenge of accepting our bodies, their unique needs, their strengths and weaknesses. It is a process of realizing and, at times, transcending, our needs for such things as food and sleep, comfort and security. For our answers to questions along these lines will incarnate in everyday ways, the meaning of our lives and our call to grow. Another question about our bodies centers around our

sexuality. Here again we are challenged both to accept and to transcend. We need to accept ourselves as male or female and also to accept the ways in which this dominant sexuality shapes all of our vocational responses. How do we respond . . . as men? as women? How do we answer life's questions out of that unique blend of male/female that is our own personal sexual orientation? Here it seems particularly important for us to discern what we are really called to affirm and what is simply a conditioned response to the expectations of our environment or culture.

As human persons we are also asked vocational questions in the whole area of emotional response. On the one hand, how we "feel" is by no means an adequate picture of the way things are—only of the way we experience them to be. But our present emotional experience is rooted in the whole of our body's past. So the vocational question we must face is: first of all, just what are we feeling? And this is not a simple, nor an easy, answer. For knowing what we are feeling is, very often, to walk back down a road of past associations which have clouded and colored our reactions. This awareness of what we are experiencing enables us to make some judgment about whether our immediate response is proportionate to the present

situation. If it is not, then we must ask further questions about where this present fire is being fueled.

Further, if we are to grow in our emotional response we need to turn away from those emotions which are destructive of our unity; and we need also to foster and give expression to those emotions which are healthy and productive of our growth as persons. All of which presupposes that we have learned to distinguish between suppression and control, between control and healthy release. Even more fundamentally, it presupposes that we are able to say "yes" to our being human and so being emotional.

Such are a few of the vocational questions asked of the maturing person. And since these questions are asked in life, their accents become very concrete and particular. It is in specific instances that the individual is asked to turn away from an emotion that has gotten all entangled with meanings read in from the past. On a particular day and time, a person becomes aware that he has made a mistake and chooses either to forgive or to hold a grudge—against himself and probably against another. The choice of laughing at self that implies a going beyond self-centeredness toward self-forgetfulness is made over and over

again in the concreteness of life situations. All of this is response to the vocational question: "Will you become a fully human person, or do you choose to settle for something less?"

Such growth in humanness is, of course, intimately bound up with the vocational choices of the Christian vocation. To be called to become Christ is to be called to become a man, a man in special relation with the Father. On the one hand, the Christian must ask himself that basic question asked by Christ himself in the Gospels: "Who do you say I am?" And his answer must be a profession of faith that is not only expressed in words, but is made real in his own life. For the Christ who is real for any individual is the Christ who is realized in his own life choices. So the vocational question addressed to the Christian is translated from the abstract, "Who do you say I am?" to the more specific, "Who is the Christ you are called to become?"

Some of the answers to this question are basic to any man's acceptance of his Christian vocation. Every man is called, in Christ, to relate as son to the God who is his Father. As a son he is called to live in trustful reliance on his Father's care, to accept a divine love that will include growth through suffering, to open himself to some re-



sponsibility for the world of his Father's continuous creation.

In addition to such putting on of Christ in ways that are basic to the life of every Christian, an individual will be challenged to live the gospel in other still more unique ways. How am I to embody Christ? Am I asked to be a bearer of the good news, teaching, preaching, journeying to other places and other peoples? Or am I called to a more settled sort of life, with my "preaching" done in the critical atmosphere of

the local setting? Am I to be Christ in a family situation or in celibacy, living in a community of others whose only bond is this common call to be one in Christ? Will the questions I am asked by Christ's life be answered in a life-style or radical poverty? Or will the works of mercy call me to receive and spend my substance in giving of myself, my goods, my talents, to those who need such services?

In a general way an individual's answers to these questions can be summarized in what have been traditionally called the states of life. Perhaps these could better be called states or stages of further questioning about life's values. In such a conceptualization each response channels further questions and gives them a certain orientation, a certain direction. In short, each question-answer calls for still more dialogue, which dialogue follows from what has already been said. Each answer brings the individual a little closer to that call which is his own.

In any case, the ultimate vocational question asked by God of each individual calls for a response out of the depth of his own personhood. It can be phrased something like this: "Who are you for me and for others?" The answer is a whole life's giving. And it takes a whole life to give. As has already been

suggested, even in the areas of commonality, such as that of being human or being Christian, the response is still uniquely personal. But even beyond that, each man must come face to face with questions that are addressed to him, as this present moment, at this present place in his life. Here, vocation as a process of constant, on-going questioning is particularly revealing. For each time a man faces these most personal questions and responds out of his own truth, he discovers that still further questions have been raised. At first sight, this might seem an invitation to constant frustration, a being doomed to take unending examinations. But this is to miss the true nature of the process. For when questions are divine they are revelatory; each reveals still more of a person's truth.

Phrased in still another way, the whole question of individual vocation could be summarized as one of on-going dialectic between gospel values and the reality of a person's life. How can I incarnate these values in a way that is real for me here and now? For example: the gospel value of poverty must be realized in the life of every Christian; for me as an individual, the question becomes one of, how is this done most really, most honestly, given the circumstances of my life, my respons-

ibility toward myself and toward others? Then all the other practical day-to-day questions are focussed in terms of my reply to this first one: questions, for example, like further education, type of job, kind of car to buy, etc. These answers must make sense *in* my life, make sense *of* my life.

All this may sound easy on paper; it is anything but easy in actuality. So again the temptation will be to evasion. I may find myself attempting counter questions: the "what if" kind of stalling that will keep the whole thing in the realm of the comfortably theoretical. Or, again, I may try to anticipate the questions with too ready answers that prevent the real questions from ever being asked.

But the divine Questioner is not easily put off. Certain questions may be repeated over and over again despite our reluctance to hear them. Sometimes this reluctance may be so unconscious that all we experience is a certain vague familiarity about the phrasing; we know, on some level of our being, that we have circled this issue before. Or we may recognize that a great deal of our past has been summarized in a certain question and so we recall how our life has come back again and again to this certain point.

Once a question has been

recognized as hauntingly familiar, it must then be faced in all of its most pressingly personal applications. For vocational questions are addressed to me, must be accepted by me. They are not rhetorical questions, nor are they general questions, intended for "every man's" answering. This personal element, already discerned in a certain familiarity of accent, is further evidenced in an acute awareness that I am not able to answer this question out of my own immediate resources. Such is one of the authentic notes, it seems, of any vocational discerning. I recognize that I am being asked; I also recognize that I am being asked for something that is beyond me. So my first response may be a protest of poverty. I cannot do this thing. And this is correct. The individual cannot answer of himself. He is not being asked to. He is only being asked if he is willing to try. And even this willingness, like the question itself, is already graced. Furthermore, the very hearing of a vocational question is promise that strength to answer is already being given. In fact, it seems that such recognition of personal poverty, joined to a confident trust in the enabling power of God, is one of the strongest signs of authentic vocation and promise of enduring consecration.

It should be noted, however, that the poverty of the individual

who is called is real; it is not just a lack of self-confidence, nor excessive fear. It is not simply an excuse, much less a disguised need for too much affirmation. Rather, it is an experience of the trust that "without me, you can do nothing."

Just as the question of vocation is addressed to a man in individual terms and in ways that will draw him beyond himself in growing trust, so too the response of the individual must be specific and ongoing. Even a question that may seem to be very spiritual and abstract requires a flesh and blood answer. "Simon Peter, do you love me?" was meant to call forth a very definite response in the life of Peter. On the one hand, we may be tempted to temporize by being too spiritual; on the other, we may evade the sacredness of the present by a canonization of the past.

Such a pull toward security in response remains an element of danger in any vocation. The specific expression of consecration can become so confused with its realization that a man called to a life of striving for perfection may think himself assured of its accomplishment. A marriage once celebrated can begin to fall apart. The counter-tendency, however, is equally dangerous. To fail to give expression to one's life-answer, is to allow it to evaporate. Better to be in-

complete, even mistaken, than to be found "deaf" or "hard of heart."

What is important is that an individual's response be ongoing, that he be faithful in answering every question when it is asked. Just how critical any particular response may be in an individual's life is part of the basic mystery of his vocation. Something that may be a serious matter in the case of one person, may be much less important for another. But no fidelity need be "hopelessly" endangered; for even in serious matters, the grace of God is waiting, continuing to call in these changed circumstances, still offering an opportunity for us to become the person we are capable of becoming.

Just as infidelity may be more or less critical, but never (in this life) fatal, so too fidelity may be more or less life-giving. At times a great part of an individual's life may be caught up and expressed in a particular response, either because that particular response marks a crossroads in a person's life choices or because it may be a particularly significant expression of a person's freedom. In such circumstances we come to know that a specific response, or lack of it, is especially revelatory of our desire to choose, or to refuse, life.

In discerning that such is; in-

deed, the case, the individual may experience both a feeling of inner necessity ("I need to respond—it is important") and a sense of dread, followed by freedom and joy once the answer has been given. But the presence of only one or the other of these signs can be dangerously misleading. A feeling of "oughtness," for example, may indicate only unfreedom and evasion of personal responsibility; dread may signify nothing more important than a human reluctance to change; joy and peace may be only a temporary reaction to the easing of tension. It is the conjunction of both rightness and reluctance that comes closer to authentic response to the question of individual vocation.

As our vocation becomes more personal, both in terms of divinely initiated questioning and in the specifics of our own response, so too does it become more truly communal. I will become increasingly responsible to and for others. And this will give impetus to my search for a community of others who can help me realize my response. It is to this community that I already belong; I simply have to find this, my "homeland."

In all of this, I will be asked to set aside any image of myself, or of my ideal community, in order to discover my vocation in the real world where God is at

work. Here too, the ideal may become the enemy of the real. I am not being asked to discover a perfect community, or to found one. I am being asked only to try to grow in and with others away from false gods and toward the one true God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The direction of our vocational discovery, then, is first conversion from the false self and a corresponding movement toward the true self. And then, paradoxically, a letting go of self, a surrender of self, a dying to self for the sake of greater identity with Christ, a living in him. These stages of growth are real in the sense that they are necessary, that they cannot be skipped over, that they will come, unless we refuse them. In short, the laws of growth and development in the life of the spirit are somewhat like those we see in all of human life: there is process and sequential development, but rate and amount of growth are variables.

In every situation in which he finds himself, a man is being asked over and over again, "Who are you—for me? for others?" In his own life, his talents, his weaknesses, the needs of others around him, the response of his heart to the Word of God, the counsel of those to whom he can speak of his deepest mys-

teries, the individual begins to discover something of what is being asked of him. For vocation, ultimately, is not so much a matter of being married or celibate, being busy with one work or another, but of living as I am being asked to live for the sake of being most myself and so contributing my best to the building

up of the Body of Christ. As Thomas Merton has phrased it, "Each of us has an irreplaceable vocation to be Christ; and this Christ that I am supposed to be has got to be *my* version of Christ, and if I don't fulfill that there is going to be something missing forever and ever in the kingdom of Heaven."³

³Thomas Merton, "A Life Free from Care," *Cistercian Studies* 5 (1970), p. 219.



Saint Francis

May you listen
To beckoning silence,
As a man entering a cave
Strained in deepest darkness
Toward a stifled secret
Overheard in whispering stillness
Brought his cave out into day,
Ran in naked clarity
Heralding a treasure,
A Father newly found free
For orphaned ears.

Anthony Augustine, O.F.M.

Asceticism

JULIAN A. DAVIES, O.F.M.

IN HIS BOOK, *OUR LIFE WITH GOD*, Father Constantine Koser makes much of practical atheism as well as theoretical atheism, which—being in the atmosphere we live in—has to affect our thinking and doing. It strikes me that an essay on asceticism needs both to prove and to explain that concept. As there are no few atheists who are so because they have a wrong concept of God (e.g., as Big Boss or capricious tyrant)—a concept so bad that it would be bad for them to believe in such a being—so there are those who, when they hear the word *asceticism*, conjure up images and caricatures that are so distorted that they cannot but reject the notion. The Gospels and the lives of the saints both teach and exhibit what self-denial (to use one term almost synonymous with our main topic) is all about.

One of the goblins with which asceticism is often associated, even viciously identified, is formalism: preoccupation with externals even to the neglect of charity—love—and compassion, the very marrow of the gospel.

The Pharisees, who were so roundly criticized by our Lord, were formalists par excellence; they had no more religion than a pony, as Father Victor Mills, an illustrious confrere of mine, used to say. Every human institution, we ought to note, is plagued with such creatures. In government we call them bureaucrats. In society, we call them snobs or sticklers. In religious life, they are particularly obnoxious—but they are really few and far between. And I think this is so, not only in my province of which I have first-hand experience, but also of just about all the religious groups among whom my readers are to be found. (It may be worth reflecting, incidentally, that most of our formalists were, not vicious hypocrites, but just plain oddballs.)

But formalism, we must remind ourselves, is an attitude—a stance taken by a person toward forms—rather than forms as such. To care about forms isn't to be a formalist (love, surely, always wants to do what's right!). To be preoccupied with forms is, however, close to formalism; and to deify forms is

in very fact the ugly reality. Actually, we can't help caring about forms; to do so is part of our cultural conditioning. Even the abandonment of religious garb for modern dress means an attempt to be "modern," to conform to what professional—"smart"—people wear. And handshakes, hugs, and kisses are all of them *forms* of affection, which may be mocked but hardly replaced.

It seems that in our times a dread of formalism has led to a dread of forms; and many of us have experienced the religious vacuum stemming from the reckless abandonment of forms of prayer, dress, penance. I fear that on the personal level as well, we have all of us run a little scared in this matter: we are afraid to admit we *care* about forms; we are afraid to follow out our impulses to take on ourselves the mortification that observance of forms so often puts on us, e.g., a prescribed amount of prayer, appropriate chapel wear, participation in the community silliness called recreation, sharing in the drag that can be a community meal. There's a song about big bad Leroy Brown, "the baddest guy in the whole darn town." We are leery of being the goodest guys or gals in the whole darn town, but we surely know that doing all the right things doesn't in itself make us

good—even though it very frequently is a result of goodness pouring itself out.

Perhaps it is not the forms we fear, but ourselves—we're afraid of being hypocrites—or maybe, more precisely, we're afraid of being thought better than we really are. We all want to be loved, but not to be canonized, and we back off from forms for fear of being overestimated. But that is a trap. Giving someone reason for thinking kindly about us isn't bad. Sometimes, we avoid the forms because we dread being accused of formalism—because we really aren't all that we have promised to be. Well, that last is the truth; but hypocrisy is rendered maningless if it makes hypocrites of people who try to do what they can but fall short, as every human does. It isn't really hypocrisy, is it? to be a person who has promised to do all for God and is basically operating on peer pressure. Isn't it crooked to feign a disdain for forms you don't really feel—and to try to cover up what is a basic cowardice by some fancy words about formalism—or to hide one's own reasons from oneself by a tissue of rationalizations?

We conclude, then, that asceticism is *not* formalism. If we have that misapprehension out of our minds, we have indeed made progress. Now, let's look at another misapprehension, viz.,

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that asceticism is equivalent to pain. An ascetic, this line of thought goes, is one who makes a career of suffering, particularly by pains he/she inflicts on his/her own self. How do the Gospels actually talk to us about carrying a cross, denying ourselves, losing our lives? The answer is not quite as simple as some may try to say. Modern psychologists, e.g., tell us that pain is really necessary for growth. I think they are right: pain and suffering do have to be integrated into our life. But they don't—ever—have to *become* our life; and the same goes for self-inflicted pain, mortification, self-denial.

Asceticism aims at training, disciplining, correcting. It does *not* aim at pain. We all shrink from pain (or the thought of it); for that's the way we're built. Proper upbringing teaches us to evaluate pains, however—to take a long- and a short-range view of pain—to take something that we don't like for a tummyache, to do things right away rather than let them hang over our heads, not to fight city hall, or at least to take as few stands as necessary. Yet pain is reluctantly accepted. And if asceticism is identified with pain, no wonder we shrink from it, accepting it only when no other choice is available.

Asceticism, however, means self-control, self-discipline, self-

correction, self-improvement, self-surrender, and hence self-fulfillment. The Apostle Paul tells us to deny ourselves intelligently as athletes and soldiers do to win prizes and ensure survival. Red-blooded American boys are still willing to forego beer for a few months to keep in shape for lacrosse or football; calisthenics and crawling are still part of soldiers' lives; and there are probably few of us who have never dieted out of sheer desire to look better (few of us over 35, that is—which is about the time I first tried to do anything about weight).

Old-time spiritual writers used to talk about asceticism as medicine for the spirit—bitter tasting but helpful. I suspect the limp in that analogy is that we not only resent what is bitter, but kind of suspect we aren't so sick as to need medicine. Today, of course, medicine-taking doesn't connote anything bad—in some areas it's a status symbol and a crutch—so perhaps we should begin again to say our ascetical practices are just medicine to heal our sinful tendencies.

We are nearing the point when I'll have to define asceticism. I have already said there are such things as ascetical practices, which may bring to your mind hair shirts, fasts, long hours of prayer and silence, avoidance of recreation, and

shunning fun like the plague. Well, some of these do qualify, and some don't; but before we work out the distinction, we ought perhaps to reflect about St. Francis' definition of perfect joy to Brother Leo—a joy that included endurance of pain with an eye to participating in the sufferings of Christ.

We also have to consider, here, another view of asceticism that would turn anyone off—asceticism as doing something *extra* for God: doing more praying, fasting, etc. Paul told his readers rather dramatically that it wasn't doing more than others, being more heroic than others (giving one's body to be burned, selling all goods to give to the poor) that made one God-like—but love. Ascetical practices are rooted in love and flow from it. If we try to force ourselves beyond our strength we end up either exhausted or quickly discouraged and the biggest laxists to come down the pike. In these days of liberty you must have seen, as I have, some of the people who lived poorest becoming the biggest spenders, and the meekest becoming the biggest operators—probably in self-defense, but maybe too in reaction to excessive demands they had put on themselves. I've resolved the asceticism bit, personally, by saying I'll wait till I love as much as the saints to give as much as they did. Till then, I'll

settle for what my rule prescribes (even if it doesn't bind under sin), what my apostolate demands, and what my personal life needs. Now, sometimes my needs may be "more"—but the call to asceticism and holiness is not a call to give, give, give; do *more*, do *more*, do *more*. It's got to be a response to a whisper from within, and it's got to work its own way out.

One last note on what asceticism is not: it is not doing penance for one's sins. Atonement, reparation, showing you are sorry in deeds as well as words is necessary. Love does need to say I'm sorry, and to put some money where its mouth is. When the late Pope John said that without discipline one is not a man; without penance one is not a Christian, he was calling attention to a real spiritual need that genuine Christians feel, and one that is genuinely Christian. Saints do penance for their own and for others' sins. This is not taking away from Jesus' sufficiency, or trying to bribe God, or at least twist his arm; it is a response to an inner demand. Still, even though we may include the atonement for sin as part of what it means to be an ascetic, we cannot simply identify penance and asceticism.

In positive terms, then, let us repeat it: asceticism is self-denial, self-discipline, self-abandonment

to and for God. True, in using such "self"-centered terms to define asceticism, one may seem to force ascetics in on themselves and away from Christ. But asceticism does of necessity focus on the self. There is a risk in it, but a risk it is cowardly and un-Christian not to take. If our asceticism is sincere and not too unintelligent, it will bear good fruit—or rather, God will bring to fruition our honest efforts. Asceticism doesn't mean pulling oneself up by one's own bootstraps, but it does mean *doing* something with ourselves—even to ourselves—as part of our effort to be imitators of Christ. Jesus himself was an ascetic—he opened his public life with a 40-day fast; he prayed early in the morning; he did not have his own money but used the common purse; he had no place of his own; he ate *in* and not *out* because he wasn't a big spender; he took the trouble to go to Jerusalem for the feasts. He, of course, was not a fanatic, and was chided for his lack of austerity (as his disciples also were) and his willingness to associate with people who were clearly sinners. He did accept death on a cross, and didn't work a miracle to defend himself.

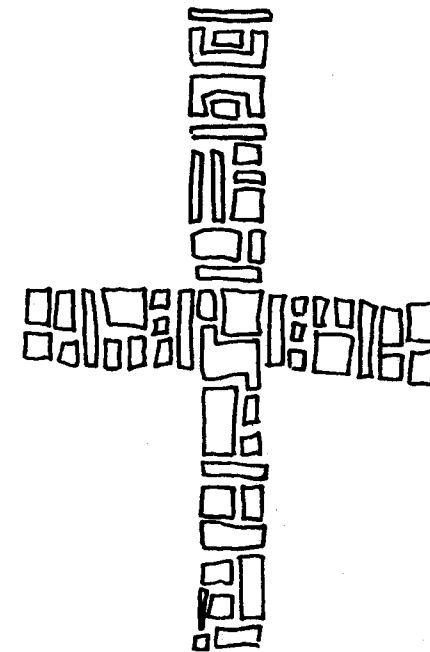
The saints in turn, who were so enamoured of Christ—like Francis of Assisi—desired to imitate him, and that desire led

them to ascetical practices. Not long ago one of the collegians on my dormitory floor dropped in and said to me: "It's something, having priests in class. You find out they are human, they can catch colds, just like other people." And I could add, lose their temper, complain about students, and much else. The image the boy had of a priest was of a person really removed from the world. Some pious folk have thought of Jesus that way, but looking at the bible should dispel any such notion. Jesus wasn't a professional ascetic; he radiated, not austerity, but warmth and firmness. The saints generally went around spreading, not the frown, but the smile of religion. Few have denied themselves to the extent that Francis of Assisi did, and few have attracted as many to religion and to Christ. The point is, ascetical practice does not make one cold, forbidding, stoical—nor does it demand that one try to put on such an attitude.

But ascetical practice does demand self-denial as opposed to self-indulgence, self-control as opposed to self-pampering, self-immolation as opposed to self-adoration. These three pairs may be a hang-over from my exposure to medieval philosophers, but I think they can help us clarify our thinking a little bit. For the remainder of this

present article, then, we devote our attention to the first pair: self-denial as opposed to self-indulgence. Next month we can consider the other two.

In speaking of self-denial as opposed to self-indulgence, I am obviously talking about the relationship between ourselves and our senses, or, more broadly speaking, ourselves and pleasure. Obviously we have foregone the pursuit of sexual pleasure (if you haven't, then it isn't chastity that you have pledged, vowed, promised); and we have also (perhaps less obviously) foregone the pleasure of luxurious things (the feel of fine fur on your back, the best in stereos, and the comfort of a Continental) and the pleasure of being our own boss (a pleasure that very few people actually ever get in its fullness anyway). But as Christians we are also obliged to watch those smaller indulgences that worldly people make light of: over-indulgence in alcohol, for example; dirty movies and books; gossiping; petty quarreling; petty theft; little white lies. And we are encouraged to deny ourselves some lawful things from time to time, and some lawful uses of things, as a way of atonement and of denying ourselves and so imitating the self-denial of Christ. Food, drink, entertainment have proved popular fare for self-denial in the history of the



Church. Fasting for a cause, such as peace in Vietnam or justice in the lettuce-fields have even become a vogue! But the practice of asceticism is a personal rather than a social protest—a protest against one's own weakness.

Personal self-denial, we can establish as a principle, ought to be as personal as possible—as unostentatious and hidden as possible. Sudden changes in patterns ought to be avoided unless they are really called for. It's probably better to switch to a smaller glass than to duck dinner and drinks; or to pass up sneaky snacks than collations whose purpose is community rather than chow. When it comes

to entertainment, the social dimension always has to be considered. Thus resolute self-denial which pulls you away from community is suspect. If a lonely confrere wants to go to a movie, that loneliness is more important to assuage than the desire you have to avoid the cinema. The same holds for television where it is a community affair, and for just plain recreation.

If we have some special hobbies, it might not hurt us to forego these on occasion—to leave a camera behind on a trip, to miss one or the other of our favorite TV shows, to give away a few records or tapes (or miss a few sales), to say no to a bargain suit or dress that would really make us stand out. (Weren't our lives simpler when all we had to worry about was looking clean and neat?) When it comes to lawful things and practices, the old axiom of Father Faber comes in: If self-denial makes you unhappy, skip it; better you keep your disposition than pile up merits on forced marches that make you mean and miserable. But let's not be too quick to excuse ourselves from self-denial on these grounds, blaming our indisposition on the self-denial. Many things bother us, and our

(to be continued)

self denial may have nothing to do with the way we feel. By all means, we should avoid the sensational—Saint Francis made his friars turn in the chains which they wore around their waists to punish themselves, and in his rule he dispensed friars from corporal fasting and the penance of bare feet and of walking when necessity hindered those practices of asceticism. Still, we shouldn't set our sights so low that anything like giving up drinking, or snacks, or movies, or excessive travel, is judged to be heroic. God may ask something big of us, and we have to be open to hear such a call. If we think he is doing this, we should check it out with a confessor or spiritual director who will certainly let us try anything for a little while.

Of the self-denial that is involved in the careful fulfillment of our duties I have said nothing, because I am convinced (from my own experience and the example of the saints) that such enduring, while sanctifying, is not enough *all of the time* even if for *some* periods it is all we can manage. Absorption in work too often weakens the life of prayer to which penance is supposed to contribute, not be detrimental.

Francis: A Man of Tenderness

SISTER MARIE THERESE ARCHAMBAULT, O.S.F.

IN THE PAST several years we have been challenged to answer deep questions about the real Franciscan meaning of our personal lives and of our life together in community. For this reason, many of us have engaged in long term study, reading, and prayerful reflection on the earliest Franciscan sources. The following article is a short reflection on one Franciscan's reading and the meaning derived.

The Francis that I met in my reading is a man of great tenderness, gentleness, and affection toward all persons, especially his Master and Lord Jesus Christ, his brothers, and then toward all living creatures and the whole cosmos. He is a man of extraordinary freedom who can easily and without hesitation take up a womanly quality of "mothering" into his own behavior and easily recommends it to his brothers: "If a mother cares for her child in the flesh, so should a brother all

the more tenderly . . ."¹ Whenever he wants to express the care and affection needed in the relationships of the brothers, he uses feminine terms. In his letter concerning the hermitages, he says to the friars living there: "Two of these should act as mothers, with the other two, or the other one, as their children. The mothers are to lead the life of Martha; the other two, the life of Mary Magdalen."² Immediately in the use of these feminine words one senses the quiet, loving environment Francis wants in the hermitages. They are to be places of brotherly concern, and not places of willful isolation.

In his own relationship to his brothers we sense this same freedom and open affection expressed in feminine terms. Celano writes that in his later years "Francis had chosen Brother Elias to take the place of a mother in his own regard."³ Francis would here play the child's role under the watchful "motherly eye" of Elias,

¹Rule of 1223, *Omnibus*, p. 61.

²*Ibid.*, p. 71.

³1 Celano 98, *Ibid.*, p. 313.

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particularly regarding his advanced illness. His relationship with Brother Leo was also one of deep affection and care, as shown in his letter to Leo, where he says, "Leo, as a mother to a child, I speak to you, my son."⁴ For Francis, the qualities of a good mother: tenderness, nurturance, care, and gentleness, were unquestioned; they flowed from within his being in response to a greater gentleness that he had himself experienced. He exhorts

⁴Letter to Brother Leo, *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁶1 Celano 115, *Ibid.*, p. 329.

⁷1 Celano 77, *Ibid.*, p. 293.

⁸1 Celano 61, *Ibid.*, p. 280.

his brothers in the Rule of 1223 to be as members of one family to one another: "Look after one another as though looking after yourself."⁵

Celano states that Francis also was consumed by a great and tender love of Jesus. Particularly in his later years he wanted to speak of Jesus always and to dwell with him constantly.

The brothers, moreover, who lived with him knew how his daily and continuous talk was of Jesus and how sweet and tender his conversation was, how kind and filled with love his talk with them. His mouth spoke "out of the abundance of his heart," and . . . indeed, he was always occupied with Jesus . . .⁶

This tender love for Jesus manifested itself particularly in his love for non-rational creatures that reminded him of Jesus. For example: "So, all things, especially those in which some allegorical similarity to the Son of God could be found, he would embrace more fondly and look upon more willingly . . ."⁷ In his letter to the brothers announcing the death of Francis, Brother Elias recalls to them how Francis, as a good shepherd, a comforter, "carried us like lambs in his arms."⁸ One gets the same pic-

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 61.

ture when reading Celano's account of Francis holding a rabbit with such "motherly affection" that it did not want to leave him, but kept returning to him. He adds that Francis had the same tender affection for the fish also.⁹

The whole Canticle of Brother Sun, line after line, speaks of his extraordinarily loving attitude toward all creation. The entire universe had become a personal relative to Francis; so he easily and naturally spoke to its various parts as members of his own family: Brother Wind, Sister Water, Brother Fire, and so on. In the Francis I met, I do not sense the slightest willful violence toward any being—only a deep gentleness that rises from the wellsprings of his inmost being. There, in those wellsprings, dwells God, "Yahweh, a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in kindness and faithfulness" (Ex. 34:6).

It seems to me that the Spirit achieved within the soul of Francis what Galatians 3:28

states: "In Christ there is neither male nor female," i.e., he was not a man bound by society's definitions of maleness and femaleness in his response to God, but he moved where the Spirit led him and became a man of exquisite, reverent freedom, meeting God himself, "who lies hidden within" all things.¹⁰ What Adrian van Kaam describes here was true in the life of Francis:

To be at one for the One, to know and taste with the whole being—like the scribe praised by Jesus—that there is no other than He, is the aim of poverty of spirit. The tender flower of this total presence blooms in a climate that is mild and even, a climate of equanimity. A spirit absorbed in the Divine is a gentle spirit.¹¹

Thus Francis, by surrendering to the Spirit, became like a finely tuned instrument of the Spirit who "Strove for peace and gentleness toward all men,"¹² and in this unique giftedness "he diffused the Gospel waters over the whole world by his tender watering . . ."¹³

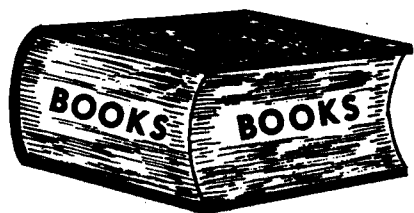
⁹Elias' letter (private trans. distributed in class), §2.

¹⁰St. Bonaventure, *Retracing the Arts to Theology*, tr. Sister Emma T. Healy (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1955), p. 41.

¹¹Adrian van Kaam, C.S. Sp., *Spirituality and the Gentle Life* (Denville, N.J.: Dimension Books, 1974), p. 63.

¹²1 Celano 41, *Omnibus*, p. 263.

¹³1 Celano 89, *Ibid.*, p. 304.



Christian Prayer. By Ladislaus Boros.
Trans. David Smith. New York:
Seabury Press, 1976. Pp. vi-121.
Cloth, \$5.95.

Reviewed by Father John F. Marshall, O.F.M., Assistant Pastor at St. Joseph's Church, Wilkes-Barre, Pa., and author of some widely acclaimed series of spiritual conferences for religious.

"Prayer is not so much an activity as a state of being." Once our author proposes this as his premise, he can evidently go on to treat of prayer as a reality deep and broad as life itself. Given this as a radical point of departure, any book that has ever been conceived could be called "Christian Prayer."

Since the converse is not necessarily true, however, there is reason for insisting on manner, method, style, and schools of prayer. And this of necessity if we are to arrive at a more balanced perspective on prayer as it is actually prayed. We cannot strive for diversity at the expense of unity, security at the expense of risk, coziness at the expense of courage. For if prayer is a state of being, then it must involve all these.

I found the last two chapters, on Human Fulfillment and Providence, especially engrossing because of their profound insights. They capped an escalating experience in the

reading that went from the initial mere acceptable to the more enlightening. In fact, I believe, these last chapters served to set the book off from the mediocre and run of the mill.

This is a book worth reading, since it gives a fullness and satisfaction to prayer, as it must, since prayer is coextensive with life. It posits the burden of the effort to pray more on the mind than the memory and leaves to the reader the essential task of placing his heart into it.

The chapter topics have a progression to them that is both realistic and logical. They strike at where life is really lived, would it be a Christian life.

If one were to place this book alongside that of Gregory Baum's acclaimed *Man Becoming*, it would be not only complementary but also much in accord with the latter's thesis: nothing is beyond the influence of God's grace, influence, and support. Once the first and ultimate gift, life, is gratefully accepted, there remains but to nurture, sustain, and enjoy that life by converting it to prayer—always with the trust and conviction that God will provide the increase.

Not Without Parables: Stories of Yesterday, Today, and Eternity. By Catherine de Hueck Doherty.
Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 1977. Pp. 187. Paper, \$3.50.

Reviewed by Father Wilfrid Hept, O.F.M., a member of the staff of St. Francis Chapel, Providence, Rhode Island.

Not Without Parables is a book of

stories gathered by Catherine de Hueck Doherty, founder and Director of Madonna House, Combermere, Ontario, over a long life of dedication to spreading the good news of the gospel. At first glance some adults might dismiss this book as a story book for children. It truly is a book for children, but they must be children of the kingdom of God, for Jesus said, "I assure you, unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of God" (Mt. 18:3). For such a reader who is familiar with her recent books, *Poustinia* and *The Gospel without Compromise*, this new book gives concrete examples of the faith she explains in the earlier ones.

This book is divided into three parts: Stories of Yesterday, Stories of Today, and Stories of Eternity. In the first part the author recalls stories which she remembers from her childhood in Russia. In the first chapter she writes, "As a child, I remember sitting wide eyed at the feet of the pilgrims, listening to their tales about God, about Our Lady and the Saints." The reader, too, will be fascinated by these stories. The first, heard when Catherine was nine years old, relates the experience of an elderly lady. Wandering about the forest the lady encounters the devil in the form of a sinister looking man. He predicts terrible bloodshed in Russia because of religion. She sprinkles him with holy water, at which he screams and vanishes. Later the Blessed Virgin appears as a beautiful lady and foretells: "There will come a day when, under the sign of my Son, I will lead Russia to show my Son's face to the world." Is this a true story, or are any of the

stories of the pilgrims true? There immediately rises to mind those famous lines: "To those who believe, no explanation is necessary; to those who do not believe, no explanation is possible." Catherine is one of the believers, and to her such a question would only occur to the "Western mind," for what is really important is the message of the stories. These pilgrim stories and the others as well, are one of the several ways that Catherine Doherty uses to share with others her understanding of the gospel.

The second part is devoted to stories or happenings in the many foundations or Friendship Houses the author has established. The door of each of these houses is painted blue in honor of Our Lady, and so she calls these stories the "Blue Door Stories." Everyone who passed through these doors had a story to tell. Some of the most interesting of these are recorded in this book. In a time when we are feeling the energy crisis, one story especially stands out, which occurred in the first Canadian Friendship House during the great Depression. The cook had announced that the coal for the heater and cook-stove was just about exhausted. Having no money, Catherine and some others had recourse to prayer. Suddenly a deep, mocking voice made itself heard, challenging her statement about praying to God. She had set the time for the delivery at 4:00 P.M. The coal was delivered one minute before the deadline. I'll leave the unspoken outcome of this story to your reading of the book. In the other "Blue Door" stories, the blessings are not always so visible, but it is a true joy to

read about them.

The third part contains stories of "eternity." These stories are from the fertile imagination of the author. The reader soon realizes that the virtues personified here are not the abstract concepts of a book of ascetical theology, but the everyday lived experiences of a woman in love with God. Such story titles as "How Death Became Life," "How Sorrow Became Joyful," "How Ugly Lady Pain Becomes So Beautiful," give an idea of how diversified the topics are. To hear her address Death, Sorrow, Prudence, and Humility as "Lady," moreover, reminds one strikingly of another Romantic aflame with the love of God—Saint Francis of Assisi, who addressed his poetry and prose to the praise of the various Virtues as well as of Brother Sun and Sister Moon. Perhaps some Franciscans will see in this volume a modern version of "The Little Flowers" of Saint Francis. At the very least the stories are a delightful change from the sex and violence ridden stories of so much contemporary writing. They are in the great tradition of the greatest story teller of them all: Jesus, of whom the gospel says, "In all this teaching to the crowds Jesus spoke in parables; in fact he never spoke to them without parables" (Mt. 13:34).

Feminine Spirituality: Reflections on the Mysteries of the Rosary.

By Rosemary Haughton. Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1976. Pp. ix-93. Paper, \$1.95.

Reviewed by Sister Donna Marie Woodson, O.S.F., B.S. (St. Louis University), who is working in the

field of Home Care on Chicago's Southside.

We have here another book of reflections on the mysteries of the Rosary, one which does not follow the usual pattern of thoughts to be used at the time of recitation. Rather, this book is for reflective reading apart from the prayer—reading which will enrich the prayer or lead one to his/her own personal meditation. Today, when many women are searching for the specifically feminine aspects of their personality and for role clarification which is feminine, they can find some leads in this book.

Rosemary Haughton brings us a book of fifteen brief chapters, each more or less based on one of the mysteries of the Rosary. Feminine qualities are mentioned or alluded to throughout its pages. The joyful mysteries are presented as a "yes" to God and the growth which occurs within a person as a result of hearing and responding to the Word. Reflections on the stages of growth, human and spiritual, are interwoven with feminine aspects of parenthood.

The sorrowful mysteries are presented as different aspects of one event. Thoughts on death, the avoidance of thinking about it, and possible responses to the "successive dyings" occurring throughout life, are part of the section. Death is seen to be necessary for a full life—to go forth peacefully to whatever is demanded. "We will have to make the choice of carrying deliberately what we picked up without much thought."

The glorious mysteries are covered

as a sequence: Resurrection-Ascension-Return to the Father, and Mary's role as an essential symbol of redemption is highlighted throughout. The human body is capable of glory, even though capable of suffering and afflictions, if it hears the Word and responds. The mystery of Mary assures us of this. She means, for us, the tenderness and yet toughness of God's handling of us, as a mother has to be tender and tough to raise her family properly.

Feminine self-awareness is strug-

gling to find its full meaning. The first five chapters and the last two in this book are of real help toward this end for women of today. The author notes that an idea must be "taken home" and "lived with" in among all the good, tested, familiar ones, and its relative value will gradually become clear. I feel this holds for her latest book as well and would recommend it to anyone interested in discovering the uniqueness of the feminine personality, whether the reader be male or female.

Shorter Book Notices

JULIAN A. DAVIES, O.F.M.

The Imitation of Christ. By Thomas a Kempis. A modern version of the important spiritual classic by Harold C. Gardiner, S.J. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976. Pp. 213. Cloth, \$6.95.

What can you say about another edition of the Western World's number two best seller? Father Gardiner's version is readable, and it has a particularly valuable introduction. In it he makes clear the author's presupposition that his readers have a background in the Catholic Faith—that a Kempis stresses a healthy mistrust of self which is never to be separated from a deep confidence in God. Gardiner, in brief, gives a context into which this spiritual classic must be set if it is to produce the abundant fruits of holiness in the present that it has in the past.

Christian Morality and You: Right

and Wrong in an Age of Freedom. By James Finley and Michael Pennock. Notre Dame, Inc.: Ave Maria Press, 1976. 2 vols.: text—pp. 191; paper, \$3.50; teacher's manual—pp. 95; paper, \$1.95.

This is a quite sophisticated and orthodox treatment of Catholic morality designed as a high-school text, but suitable for adult education, colleges, or seminaries. Explanation of the concepts of man, freedom, responsibility, relationships, conscience, law, sin, sexual morality, respect for life are found combined with cases and value clarification exercises. The authors are very much aware of the influence of our society and of their peers on teen-agers' (and adults') moral viewpoints, and they clearly show how Christian morality as found in the Catholic tradition at times sets one at odds with society and friends. Anyone ex-

posed to a course taught from this text would have a most substantial moral grounding—provided of course that the teacher was as well grounded as the authors.

Jesus Christ, the Gate of Power. By Ernest Larsen. Canfield, Ohio: Alba Books, 1976. Pp. 127. Paper, \$1.75.

Father Larsen's book of five short chapters in verse-like form calls our attention to the need to get Jesus, Church, and Sacraments really to mean something to us. He summons us to know Jesus, not just about Jesus; to realize that the rituals of religion are doors to Jesus, that His Spirit is one of freedom, patience, balance, love, and sacrifice. Although it is aimed at those in parochial settings, the book can serve the wider audience of all reflective Christians.

Between You and Me, Lord: Prayer-Conversation with God. By Flora Larsson. Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1976. Pp. 106, illus. Paper, \$1.45.

The sub-title accurately reflects the kind of thing that the author is doing: talking out loud to God about anything in her life. Among the topics are human situations that all can relate to—not only matters like deciding for Christ and forgiving your enemies, but also reflections on having the flu and bugs in the garden. Basically about feelings—and the sharing of them with God—this book has an appeal for any mature adult who wants to integrate prayer and daily life.

How to Be Friends with Yourself and Your Family. By Jean Rosenbaum, M.D. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1977. Pp. 79. Paper, \$1.35.

Written by a psychiatrist, this little book deals in readable and clear fashion with positive self-image, fear, anger, loneliness, and human relationships. If its lessons were as easy to carry out as to read, there would be no need for books like it. Recommended for all who are ready to take an open look at themselves.

St. Anthony of Padua: Wisdom for Today. By Patrick McCloskey, O.F.M. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1977. Pp. viii-120. Paper, \$1.75.

This is a book on "everybody's saint" for everybody. After briefly explaining the Catholic teaching on devotion to the saints, Father McCloskey sets the scene for and sketches the life of Anthony—a life like most of ours with many ups and downs (you have to read between the lines to spot the downs, but they are there). Then follows a series of reflections on short texts from Anthony's sermons. These reflections constitute a summary of the spiritual life. Particularly fine are the explanations of prayer, penance, and the Eucharist. Also included in the book are a historical account of devotions to Saint Anthony and the most popular such devotions. *St. Anthony of Padua* is a book not only for clients of the Paduan, not only for priests in search of mini-homilies rooted in Franciscan sources, but for anyone who wants to draw closer to God.

BOOKS RECEIVED

- Corbishley, Thomas, *The Prayer of Jesus*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977. Pp. 119. Cloth, \$5.95.
- Foley, Leonard, O.F.M., *Sincerely Yours, Paul*. 124 Sunday Readings from St. Paul, with Commentary, Arranged according to Topic. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1977. Pp. xiii-166, incl. liturgical, scriptural, and topical indices. Paper, \$2.35.
- Jones, Alexander, gen. ed., & Fannie Drossos, illus., *Illustrated Psalms of the Jerusalem Bible*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977. Pp. 379. Paper, \$6.95.
- Kelly, George A., *Who Should Run the Catholic Church?* Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1976. Pp. 224, incl. index. Cloth, \$8.95.
- Laurentin, Rene, *Catholic Pentecostalism: An In-Depth Report on the Charismatic Renewal*. Trans. Matthew J. O'Connell; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977. Pp. 239, incl. bibliography & chronological table. Cloth, \$6.95.
- Marsden, George, and Frank Roberts, eds., *A Christian View of History?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975. Pp. 201, incl. indices. Paper, \$4.50.
- Pennington, M. Basil, O.C.S.O., *Daily We Touch Him: Practical Religious Experiences*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977. Pp. 115. Cloth, \$5.95.
- Vanderpool, James A., *Person to Person: A Handbook for Pastoral Counseling*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977. Pp. xii-156, incl. bibliography. Cloth, \$6.95.

COVER AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

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