

*The Staff of the  
Franciscan Institute  
joins the Editors  
in wishing you*

**A VERY BLESSED CHRISTMAS**

*and every grace and blessing for*

**A HAPPY AND FRUITFUL  
NEW YEAR**

#### COVER AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

The cover and illustrations for our December issue have been drawn by Sister Marie Monica, O.S.F., OF THE Sacred Heart Academy, Klamath Falls, Oregon.

# the CORD

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## A Timely Prescription

WHEN THE venerable and redoubtable Frank Sheed gave a lecture in Madras recently that city's *Catholic Leader* decided he had discovered, like Parkinson, a new "disease," called "Sheed's disease." For that pathological condition which consists in a strange forgetfulness of Jesus Christ even among those who profess to be his followers, the author prescribes a powerful antidote in this "clinical study."

What he recommends is certainly nothing exotic: just that we rouse ourselves from our coma by reading the Gospels as though we believed them to be what we claim they are. Instead of letting the familiar words fly by, over our heads, as we daydream our way through a passage, we should feel their force—their challenge, their revelatory power. Part I of this book shows, in its fifty pages, the effect this can have on us.

The second major part comprises nine chapters that can be aptly described as "A Map of Life," which happens to be the title of one of the same author's earlier books, which I reported on for a sophomore English course. So impressed was I with that book that, as I recall, I felt the only way to do it justice was to create something literary myself; and the report was done in an allegorical genre: a description of the "wedding between theology, King of the Sciences, and literature, Queen of the Arts." It's a good few years later now, but Frank Sheed has lost none of his eloquence, practicality, and good, solid orthodoxy. A "map of life" is precisely what he gives us once again, in a timeless but timely way with references to the most contemporary of situations.

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Christ in Eclipse: A Clinical Study of the Good Christian. By Frank J. Sheed. Kansas City: Sheed Andrews & McMeel, 1978. Pp. x-158. Cloth, \$8.95.

Only when we have regained consciousness of the Lord and his role in our lives can we focus our attention once again on what life is all about, why we are here, where we are going, and how we are to get there.

In answering all these questions, the author manages in his brief 158 pages of scintillating prose to furnish a compendium of doctrinal theology (including a resoundingly and unabashedly orthodox trinitarian theology and a sky-high Christology), a moral theology that distills the best of what Häring and Gillemann so painstakingly worked out a decade and a half ago, and a spirituality that any Catholic, including the religious who fancies himself too "advanced" to need such basic reminders, can savor with great profit.

Of course a reviewer must have his chance to complain about something, and I did manage, even in this book, to find two gnats to strain at. First, there is the interpretation of "virtue" as implying (through its etymology, the Latin *vir*-man) humanness, whereas the proper emphasis is on strength. The Latin *homo* refers to human beings as such, and *vir* stresses the masculine specifically—hence power, strength. And secondly, I have trouble with the author's contention that the philosopher can attain no certitude about reality or about God (p. 55), a position that is surely contradicted on p. 116: "...you know from your own reasoning . . . that God is there."

Yes, that's all I could find! Before I conclude, though, I want to take advantage of this context to answer a question that has been put to me more than once: Why do I so often *recommend* a book after extensive discussion of what I consider its flaws (cf., e.g., last month's editorial, or pp. 223-24 of last July-August's issue)? The answer is that things are not just plain black or white. A book can have many flaws, even as regards its main thesis, and still offer a wealth of solid insights. Evaluating it is, then, a matter of balancing pros against cons. Sometimes the reading on the balance scale is pretty close to dead center, and "recommending" the book means that despite flaws, it should do you more good than harm to read it.

In this case, however, the verdict is solidly positive. Here is a book to give yourself or anyone you know for Christmas—an occasion for which nothing could be more appropriate. What better time to dispel the eclipse, than our celebration of the occasion when the people that walked in darkness saw, at last, a great Light!

Fr. Michael D. Mailach, *ofm*

## Christmas Has a Message

JOHN HARDING, O.F.M.

IT IS true that God is everywhere, but he makes himself present to us in many different ways. In this he provides a variety of opportunities for service. Saint Francis of Assisi knew this and found it wonderful to think on. More than this, he found it wonderful to *act* on! One of the ways in which Saint Francis acted out this awareness of God's presence is when he decided to represent the event wherein God himself acted decisively: the Incarnation.

The setting of this remarkable event—unfortunately *too* familiar to most of us Franciscans—was a small village named Greccio. It was here that Christmas, an occasion with which almost *all* Christians had become too complacently familiar, “came alive” in the lives of many people searching for meaning in their lives.

Francis was a natural poet and loved to express outwardly the exuberant thoughts which filled his heart and mind.<sup>1</sup> There are many events in his life which bear witness to this fact, but few are more vivid than his re-creation of the scene at Bethlehem. It was in this, and in his re-enactment of the Last Supper, that he expressed most profoundly his tender love for the incarnate, crucified, and risen Lord Jesus Christ. This all-consuming love was to reach its fulfillment when Francis was sealed with the Stigmata on the mount of La Verna in 1224.

There had been some strict pronouncements regarding drama, and even though it was made clear that this did not include the Nativity and Easter dramas (providing that these were carried out with due reverence), Saint Francis, out of respect for the

Holy See, as Saint Bonaventure informs us, “asked and obtained permission of the Pope for the ceremony, so that he could not be accused of being an innovator, and then he had a crib prepared, with hay and an ox and an ass.”<sup>2</sup> It was a fortnight before Christmas when Francis returned from Rome to the valley of Rieti. He asked that his friend, Giovanni da Vellita, lord of Greccio, come and see him at Fonte Colombo; he told him:

“If you want us to celebrate the present feast of our Lord at Greccio, go with haste and diligently prepare what I tell you. For I wish to do something that will recall to memory the little Child who was born in Bethlehem and set before our bodily eyes in some way the inconveniences of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he lay upon the hay where he had been placed.” When the good and faithful man heard these things, he ran with haste and prepared in that place all the things that the saint had told him [1 Celano, 84; pp. 299-300].

Thus the scene had been set. Word was sent to the friars and to the local people. St. Bonaventure tells us that “the forest resounded with their voices and that memorable night was lit up by brilliant lights and torches” (*Leg. maj.*, X, 7; p. 711).

Saint Francis, who was a deacon, preached on the humility of the “poor King” in words that were characteristically simple and direct, tender and devout. He succeeded in rekindling the love of his fellow men and women for Jesus Christ and for one another. Francis understood clearly the meaning of Christmas. He knew that it made real again the living memory of God's wonderful gift to mankind: himself.

Saint Francis was deeply moved by the humble ways through which the “Lord of Majesty” chose to reveal himself. The crib was one such way. The Lord “made himself lowly for our sakes” and, by doing so, raises us up with him. Francis loved the humanity of Jesus and sought always to bring men and women closer to him by encouraging them to meditate on these lovely mysteries, especially the crib.

Christmas, then, has a message for everyone.

- For those who are poor.
- For those who are broken by anxiety of heart, mind, or body.
- For those who have had their dignity trodden on and their relationships ruptured.
- For those who suffer in their powerlessness to cope, be it socially or in the ordinary problems of their personal life.
- For those who fear for the

<sup>1</sup>See, in this regard, Father Leander Blumlein's discussion of the poet and dramatist Francis, in the October, 1979, issue of *THE CORD*.

Brother John Harding, O.F.M., of the English Province, is a student for the Franciscan Priesthood and has contributed articles of Franciscan interest to other journals, including the Indian periodical *Tau* and *The Tablet*.

<sup>2</sup>*Leg. maj.*, X, 7. This citation is taken from the *Omnibus*, pp. 710-11, as are the others referred to in text.



future, who do not know hope, who have no one to understand them, to love them for what they are.

- For those who find it impossible to break out of their little world into the freedom of giving and sharing and, by this, to be more human.

- For those who suffer imprisonment for their actions, be it just or unjust; who are forgotten save by a few.

For these Bethlehem has a message: The Christ is born; he will free you!

- For those who are young and have nowhere to go or no one to meet and be with.

- For those who are not so young and want some certainty in life, who worry about the future but find it hard to cope with the present.

- For those who are elderly and have to face all the difficulties that this entails, for whom the future might be uninviting.

- For those parents who often struggle to provide for their families.

- For those children who feel unwanted or deprived of parental love.

- For those priests and religious who feel that much of the original zeal has gone and life needs a new beginning, who have become burdened with trials, for whom prayer is a pain and community life an endurance, who are lonely in the midst of their fellow priests or brothers and sisters.

For these Bethlehem has a message: God is with us! He will comfort you.

- For those who are divided from their families, friends, neighbors—either through their own fault or for reasons not known.

- For those who cannot forgive, who cannot be reconciled, who cannot celebrate—especially the Eucharist.

- For those who have hardened their hearts to those among whom they live.

- For those who must dominate others—have power, rule, fight.

- For those who prevent Christmas from being a time of rejoicing because they do not understand or do not wish to try.

For these Bethlehem has a message: Peace to all men of good

will!

SAINT Francis understood that all things have their origin in Christ and that, in the fullness of time, they will be brought to completion in him. Francis loved the very humanity of Jesus and sought to imitate it perfectly in his own life, that others might do likewise. People—and indeed, all creation—deserve to be loved on account of the Lord who became man in order that “nothing might be lost.”

This model, which has Jesus as its center, is at the heart of the Franciscan vision. Here the human acts of Jesus: his birth, his daily life as portrayed in the Gospel pages, his death as a rejected criminal, and his giving of himself in the Eucharist, all touch

the ordinary lives of mankind. Francis was “at home” with Jesus and tried to extend this security to include the whole family of mankind.

Christmas is a time when these and related ideas are once again brought to the fore. Another year has almost passed, and we await the new year of grace—that is, another’s dignity. This is no easy task. But the events surrounding the birth of the Messiah indicate how it is possible, in the midst of such hardship, for there to be a peace and a joy which man cannot give. This peace is in the sublime mystery of the Incarnation. The crib is a “sign of peace” to the nations and gives us our hope: Jesus Christ, Son of God made Man—Emmanuel, God with us!



## Christmas Dialogue

Babbling Baby on the straw  
Gurgling things no man can know  
Waving hands and kicking feet  
Smiling lips and shining eyes—  
What a man-like God disguise!

As You hold the universe  
Safely on its winding course  
Arms do gather you to rest  
On a maiden’s virgin breast.

Whisper softly, as You draw  
Men from lands of long ago,  
To a child whose wish for You  
Is as real as gifts of gold.

*Sister Mary Thaddeus, O.S.C.*

## O Bone Jesu, Exaudi Me

MOTHER MARY FRANCIS, P.C.C.

WE HAVE come now in our reflections on that loved prayer, "Anima Christi," to a very simple invocation which one might think is a kind of rest point in this very daring prayer. We have called upon the soul of Christ to achieve something in us, we have turned to the body of Christ in a very particular way, we have asked to be made drunk by the blood of Christ and to be enabled to flow out in life through self-giving death by the power of the water from the side of Christ. We have begged to be made strong in the passion of Christ. Is this particular place to which we have come in the prayer indicative of a time to sit down, relax, and serenely say, "O bone Jesu, exaudi me": "O good Jesus, hear me"? No, dear sisters, I do not think at all that this is a pause between imprecations, invocations, and the ardent petitions of a lover. I think, rather, that we are rising to a climatic point where we look back upon what we have already asked in order that we may go forward to make even bolder prayers.

And so we cry out on this bridge of the prayer, "O good Jesus, hear me." A bridge, as we know, spans waters. We are supposed to walk across a bridge. It is a place for action. On little rustic bridges over small streams, one may perhaps pause to dream and reflect. This is not that kind of bridge. It is a bridge for immediate crossing over. A bridge is never meant to be an end in itself, but a means of going toward, a method for arriving.

When we say, "O good Jesus, hear me," we want to be reminded of what we are asking, where we are daring to go. We have on one of our little folders from our silkscreening department a word from someone you know: that "hearing increases with listening." And we have been reminded in our times more than once about the importance of listening, it being in many areas a lost art. We even have a book called *The Art of Listening*. We

*Mother Mary Francis, well known author and Abbess of the Poor Clare Monastery of our Lady of Guadalupe, Roswell, NM, has kept to a minimum the editing of these conferences given to the Roswell Poor Clares so as to preserve their spontaneity.*

know that often, dear sisters, what we hear is not what the person means. We hear only words. And we need to become adept in hearing to a point where we can listen to what is beneath the words, to what the person is actually saying and which may or may not be fully known even to the person speaking.

Let us take some ready examples from the human condition. We have the bully. Sometimes there are bullies among children, sometimes there are bullies among adults. We have a lot of bullying "thinking" in our times among those who, chronologically speaking, have left childhood far behind. And what we hear coming from the mouth of the bully is domination, the determination to dominate, to back someone to a wall, to look down at this person and oblige him to do what the bully wishes. And so his words bespeak domination, aggressiveness. But if we have learned to listen beneath the words and actions of the child-bully or the adult-bully, what we will hear is something quite different from his words. We shall hear about that person's inferiority, because only the person who feels inferior has the need to domineer. We hear; or, rather, we listen if we have learned to hear acutely enough, to something under the domineering words and actions of the bully: fear, insecurity. And so, dear sis-

ters, in this facile example, we see that we cannot be convinced that we have listened just because we have heard some words, just because we have seen certain actions.

Again, there is the example of the coward. We often hear from the mouth of the coward a great deal of boasting. If we have learned to listen to the coward, beneath what our ears hear from the coward, then we hear about a fear of truth. The coward has to boast because the truth seems far beyond him. I think you will remember that in another of our shared reflections, I gave the example of one of the generals of modern times, General Marshall Foch, I believe, who said that "any soldier who tells me that he has never been afraid in battle either has never been in battle or is a liar." Marshall Foch or whoever was able to confront the truth and admit that in battle one's normal and healthy response is to be afraid. A brave person does not hesitate to confront this healthy truth and to say: I am afraid. The coward has not reached this liberation of truth; and so we often hear from him boasting, sometimes sheer fabrication. However, if we listen in love, we may hear a plea to be liberated into the truth, into an ability to face and express the truth.

A third example would be the slothful person who very often

speaks with insolence. At least this is what our ears hear from the slothful person. But what the ears of a listening heart will frequently hear from a slothful person is the fear of being recruited to generosity. One encounters this insolent casualness. Under that, to the listening heart, is the fluttering fear of being captured to do something that costs, a fear of being recruited into a liberation of self which that person is not willing to accept and which she must be helped by love to face.

A final example is that of the insecure person who batters our ears with excuses, even fantastic fabrications, who can cross the line into sheer prevarication. What the loving heart that listens will hear beneath this flood of excuses and manipulations of reality is the pathetic little cry of the one who feels she has no margin for error. The secure person has a very wide margin for errors, knows that she will make many mistakes in life, and is able to confess them with mature good humor born in healthy humility. She is liberated into the truth, and so we do not hear those little bleating cries of weakness.

In any of the four examples I have given you: the coward, the bully, the slothful, the insecure, what we hear is often the opposite of the truth. Our ears hear on an upper and often superficial level; the listening

heart hears something very different and sometimes even opposite. The bully is the one who feels inferior; the coward is the one so afraid of the truth; the slothful is the person with the fear of being led into generosity, the insecure is the person with no margin for error. We want to be good listeners, going beneath the surface of mere hearing.

Now, in this prayer, the "Anima Christi," we ask Jesus to hear us. What we really ask him to do is to listen to us in what perhaps we dare not articulate, what maybe we ourselves do not even understand at this point in our lives. And so we say, "You are a good Jesus. When you hear, you listen." Returning to our four examples: what should we do if we were really listening to the interior cry of these persons? What response would we then make? It would surely be quite different from the response of merely hearing which for example, would want to super-dominate the domineering bully, whereas the listening heart would desire with love to establish the bully in his own personhood which is rooted in Jesus whose Personhood is God. Having helped to establish a person in his own radiant personhood, we have helped him discover that he has no need to domineer.

If we are really listening to the cowardly person instead of

just hearing the embarrassing boasting, we shall want to respond with understanding so that he may be able to arrive at a normal response. We shall try to help him with our own normal responses, our own quickness to confess our faults, to register our errors, to ask pardon for our mistakes. If we are really listening, not just hearing words and so being annoyed and disaffected by the slothful person, we shall try to establish for him a good of givenness, not by preaching but by showing forth in our own lives that we have a goal of givenness and that we are always striving, if not always successfully, to achieve it. If we listen, instead of just the facile fabrications and excuses of the insecure, then I think that by our own faith in Jesus we can show him, too, that he really can, just as everyone can, do all things in him who strengthens us (cf. Phil. 4:13). We shall teach, again not in words or homiletics, but by our own way of living, that a person really can do all that he is asked. One can afford to say that one is wrong when he fails. We help him to arrive at saying, "I can!"

A superior certainly must listen to the cry of her spiritual daughter which may be the exact opposite of what the sister is saying. With the aggressive person spouting her aggressiveness, the superior must not stop at hearing this

eruption of psychological lava but must listen to the crying need for disciplining that aggressiveness into the beautiful strength and leadership that it was designed by God to be. She has to listen and to teach that truth does not destroy but makes us free. She has to listen in the way the saints listened and were able to say, like Saint Philip Neri, "Hold me by the hand today, Lord, or I shall surely betray you." She has to help the one who tends to be cowardly to know that this is what we all must face: fear. Our Father Saint Francis was never more chaste than when he prayed, "Pray for me, for I may yet have children." The superior must help by listening to the true need and leading the sister to achieve the truth. She must respond to the real need in one who is perhaps slothful and ungenerous—the need to feel a greater need than that person's own need—and to help her rejoice at being driven by a love which is so much more impelling than the love of her own convenience, her own designs, her own unselfish purposes.

If a superior—or anyone else, for that matter—hears only words, she can easily become very discouraged. But if she listens to the little crying need that says, "I do not know yet what it is to experience needs greater than my own. Will you help me?" she will be urged to respond on a

profounder level to a deeper need. She needs with the insecure to make the person greater than her weakness by bringing her to an ability to acknowledge that weakness and infidelity. She requires especially to listen to that person's great need to be assured that she is still loved when her weakness, her infidelity, her failures have high visibility. For there is that wonderful security of realizing that others see our weaknesses and failures and so, in loving us, are not loving a phantasm or an illusion, but the real person—the stumbler, fumbler, babbler, sinner. Yes, dear sisters, that is a wonderful thing! Above all, wonderful to remember that God holds the complete folio of our miseries and still loves us—and that he, this good Jesus, listens to something beneath what we are saying, hearing the real cry of the heart even when we do not hear it ourselves.

We have to love enough to be able to listen to the real need which is often enough the very opposite of what is being expressed in words. So, in the inevitable little "situations" in community life which must occur where real human beings live an authentic life together, a sister will hopefully learn to hear beneath an impatient word the need to be disciplined and will respond to what her listening heart has heard, not to what her

ears have delivered to her brain. And so she will sometimes respond with a smile, sometimes with humor, sometimes with an expression of disappointment. How will she know which is the proper response? Only by being herself a person of prayer. When we are persons of prayer, it will be given us in that hour what to say and what not to say, what to do and what not to do. We shall know how to listen so that we may understand how to reply. Our listening will have gone far beneath hearing. We shall be good hearers like Jesus, which means that we shall be listeners.

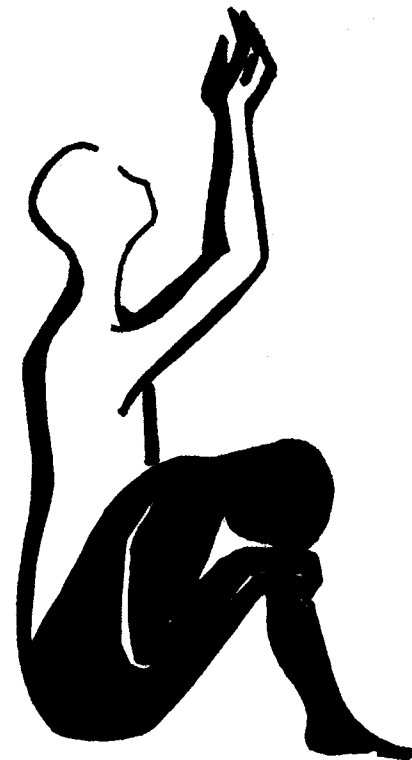
So, when we are praying, "O good Jesus, hear me!" what we are really crying out is: "Jesus, only my *words* are saying that I need to be pitied, coddled; I've had a hard time and I need to be soothed." We are making another dangerous prayer. For we are saying: "O good Jesus"; and because he is so good, he responds not to the articulated need but to the real one. He does not just hear, he listens. To our expressed need to be soothed and coddled, he responds with the occasion of greater sacrifice.

You recall how, in those recent notes from our sisters at our new foundation in Alexandria, we all laughed a little when they wrote: "We have our straw mattresses now, and already there is a great

improvement in muscle tone!" I thought about that in a serious way afterwards, reflecting that this is how good Jesus answers us. We are saying in one way or another: "I am tired. I need an innerspring mattress." But Jesus knows the need for muscle tone, and he gives us a hard bed to lie on. He listens deeply because he loves us deeply, because he is our good Jesus. Being good, he often could not give what our words are asking. He listens to the heart, and he always responds. When our words, articulated aloud or spoken only in the chamber of the

mind, complain: "I am misunderstood," Jesus listens and replies, "I understand you perfectly. And I still love you. You have no need to play-act." Our words cry out to him, "O Jesus, I cannot do it." But we are talking to a good Jesus who listens to the true need of the heart created by the Father in his own image and partaking through him of his omnipotence, part of his image, so that we can do whatever he asks of us. This is the work of his creative grace.. And so our good Jesus, hearing the words, "I cannot do it; get me out of this," listens to the spirit, the heart made in the image of the Father and knowing that it *can* do it. Being good, he responds to this cry and not to the spoken one.

Thus, in reviewing our prayer we see that we have made a number of very daring petitions. We have asked the soul of Christ to be our own animating principle—oh! that's another story. We have begged to be made humble enough to listen to the cautions of the body: "Corpus Christi, salva me." In praying, "O blood of Christ, inebriate me, make me drunk," we have desired to be lifted out of ourselves, to surpass our own possibilities in this sacred inebriation. When we have asked the water from the side of Christ to wash us, we have pleaded to be made capable of total giving so that every drop of us



flows out upon others. And lately we have asked that the passion of Christ should strengthen us and, therefore, petitioned to take on the responsibility of those who have been made strong.

Now we say, "O good Jesus, hear me," which is to entreat: "Do not stop at hearing my words. You are a good Jesus; so listen to the heart which you have made and which often does not understand itself, though you understand it. Listen to the spirit whose capabilities you know be-

cause it is the image of your Father with whom you are One." So, dear sisters, when we call on our good Jesus to hear us, we need to remember that he is a good hearer, which means a listener. Therefore, he hears more than we can say, sometimes the very opposite of what we say, often enough what we would fear to hear ourselves. He listens to the voice of our own possibilities. He hears and sounds the deeps of our God-given potential. And he answers appropriately.



## Christmas Lullaby

Harps wing-struck and songs interlock;  
Angels have their skies to rock.  
Jesus small has a cradle stall.  
Lum la la. Lum la la. Lum la la.

Shepherds have pipes and dancing feet,  
know how to put their sheep to sleep.  
Jesus small has a cradle stall.  
Lum la la. Lum la la. Lum la la.

Magi ride on camels that sway;  
starlight guides them all the way.  
Jesus small has a cradle stall.  
Lum la la. Lum la la. Lum la la.

Ox and ass have naught at all;  
God's own Son needs their stall.  
Jesus small has a cradle stall.  
Lum la la. Lum la la. Lum la la.

O wonder and joy in the whole world's Boy!  
I am Lord Jesus's cradle.

*Sister Mary Agnes, P.C.C.*

## The Recluse John of Aremea

on occasion of his last visit to the Garden of Gethsemane—to a young disciple.

DAVID RUSSELL, S.F.

IT WAS here, in the Eternal Garden, that our Savior came to pray, and to drink of the Cup of the Will of God. Here, giving its shade, the patient Olive Tree, praising the year in its fullness, has distilled the Holy Oil in its fruit, its balm welling gently up through the centuries passing, to condense the First Light of Creation into the healing and the anointing. Each of us comes thus, seeking the Will of God in the stillness of our own Garden, being anointed with the Oil of Light, and going then forth in the Will of our Father.

But you have asked me of the Kingdom:

- You come seeking where you yourself are being sought, and find not. That you find him who is seeking you: this is the lesson of Life.

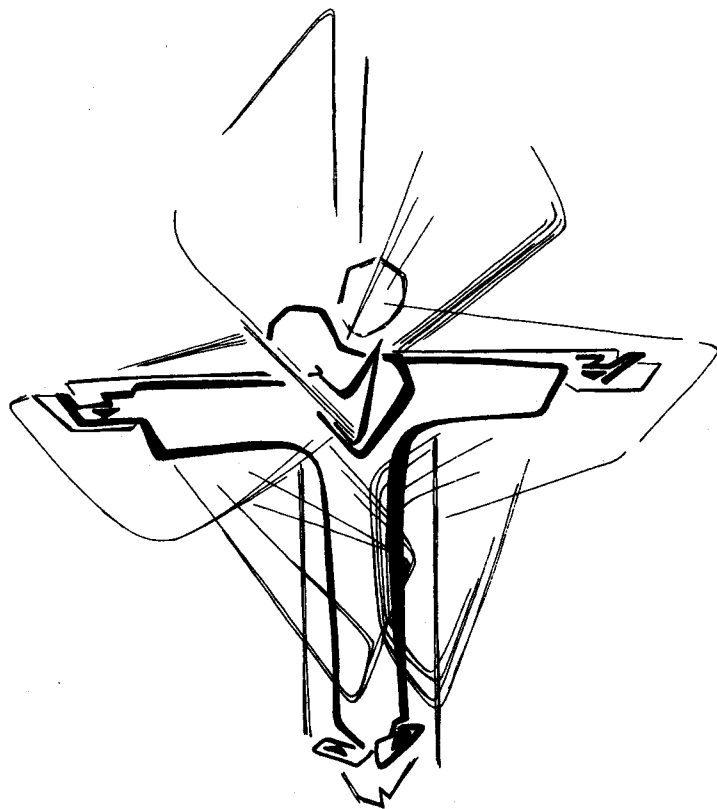
- You have taken the yoke of the Law without taking its

Spirit. That you live the Law of the Spirit, this is the lesson of the Soul.

- Your steps have tracked even the trackless sands, and yet you find no shelter. That your very going becomes your shelter: this is the lesson of the Cross.

Now you must know, my son, there is a Guardian, a Keeper, whose domain is Earth and whose Mother is the Moon. He guards her wish which is the measure of longing in the heart of Man for all that is Shadow and not Substance, all that is the Taste and not the Nourishment, all that is the Reflection and not the Source—even as the Moon is no light of itself but is a reflection of the Great Light; even as the Lesser Light can cast shadows yet reveals none of the Colors of Life but only the sleeping shapes, so does he the Keeper fill the disciple with the Dream

*David Russell is a tertiary, the only Catholic living on the Danish island of Mors, which has 25,000 inhabitants. There are only four secular Franciscans in all of northern Jutland, he tells us, and they are unable to meet or communicate on a regular basis after Profession. In their isolation, they can make good use of any literature you can spare. Write David at Molbjaergvej 9, 7950 Erslev, Denmark.*



but not the Reality, with the Form but not its Substance, with longing but not the Hope.

Yet there shall be no sign given, for the Son of Man cometh only to the Waiting Heart, in the time which only his Heart knows. Our Hope therefore is not in signs but in the Word which He has sent among us.

Touching at our life, speaking of that which only the heart can bear—secretly in the dead of Night where the soul cries out in the Dark, he comes, transforming every past to Future, every death

to Life.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the Beginning, is Now, and ever shall Be, World without End.

And the Kingdom of God is of the Father—the One which is greater than One. Not the living, nor the life, but the Word: the place out of which Life arose.

The Kingdom of God is of the Son—the Self. The Life made manifest in me. I am my Father's child, was born in Christ before the Beginning. The Self knows

itself by two conditions: the Soul which aspires to know the Father, and the Body which is the Soul's being-of-its-knowing.

The Kingdom of God is of the Holy Spirit: My Father's Word in me, that of which the Soul knows, that which knows the Father within his Temple.

It is asked:

• Master, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?

And it is answered: Thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. How shalt thou Love the Lord thy God?

• With all thy Mind, for it is the Mind that sees the Father's Hand. It is the Mind that hears his Voice speaking in the tongues of the Teachers raising up the Child to the Man. Honor thy Mind.

• With all thy Heart, for it is the Heart that feels the gentle Voice

of the Spirit and hears its Song singing to each and to all, making them One: One in each other, One in the Father. The Heart is the Way.

• With all thy Heart, for it is the Heart that feels the gentle Voice of the Spirit and hears its Song singing to each and to all, making them One: One in each other, One in the Father. The Heart is the Way.

• With all thy Soul, for it is the Soul that hears the Word of the Father, and the whole Man bows in prayer. It is the Soul that fills the Eye with its Seeing, and the Ear with its Hearing. It is the Soul that knows the Days of the Lord and perceives his Way. Live in thy Soul.

And the last is this: Love thy neighbor as thyself. This is the greatest Wonder in the Kingdom, for it is in this alone that God is made manifest. Our Savior said to us, "Love one another as I have loved you." In this alone are we made One, One in God.

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- Hebblethwaite, Peter, and Ludwig Kaufmann, *John Paul II: A Pictorial Biography*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979. Pp. 128, including index. Cloth, \$14.95; paper, \$7.95.
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## End of the Exile

He walks through familiar throngs  
of Known or similar face  
envisioning the homeland of all  
while the vestige of a homing beast  
obliviously sure-footed  
carries his Master's wife  
in lulling pace.

Neither is known:  
neither far lands nor home  
indistinguishable to hope,  
finds himself an amnesia victim  
where his forefathers have grown—  
justice of the ripened age  
once more in a mother's womb  
awaits rebirth.

His silent wife expects a different birth  
More than return  
beholds the true visage  
of son or daughter in passerby  
Neither boundless dream nor bounded fact  
indistinguishable by hope  
she thus confuses his life.

Though a man leave father and mother  
for dusty roads  
to sit by his lady's side  
She will cause him to return  
where David's spiritual town  
Materializes sheer Majesty  
about their feet  
Now Joseph and Mary have entered Bethlehem  
we are enrolled in our ancestral home.

*Hugoline Sabatino, O.F.M.*

## A REVIEW ARTICLE

### A Commentary on *True Joy from Assisi*

VALENTINE LONG, O.F.M.

IT LIES on a hillside, the little town of Assisi, peaceful in its golden sunlight, suggesting an air of pride, as if remembering Francis. It has known scarcely any change since his day. It is satisfied to remain what it was when he walked its narrow streets, so that today many a tourist walking the same streets almost expects at the next turn to meet the saint in person.

His spirit dominates the town, the ridge above, the broad valley below: the theme, indeed, of Raphael Brown's *True Joy from Assisi*. No thoughtful visitor can breathe the air of so blessed an environment, the book goes into detail to show, without catching the spirit of Francis. It is a feeling of nearness to God, which engenders a deep inner joy not of this world. The author felt that joy himself, often, every time he lingered at the favorite Franciscan haunts. The title of his book acknowledges the fact.

But in speaking for himself, Raphael Brown speaks the sentiments of the many who have shared his experience. He quotes not a few of them. Luigi Salvatorelli happened to be in Assisi at an autumn sundown when out of the bright silence there came to him from the belfry of San Fran-

cesco the sweet, solemn tolling of some indefinable message, "very near yet seeming to resound from a mysterious distance, directly from heaven." The music blending with the splendor of the landscape afforded the stranger in town an entrancing moment. "For that moment," Assisi had become for him "the vestibule of eternity." It made him want to write a *Life of St. Francis*, which he did.

As for Johannes Jorgensen, another biographer of the saint, he felt impelled to prolong his first visit to Assisi through three weeks. He had good reason: into his agnostic soul had stolen the grandeur of a strange joy. It happened one day at noon. First, too eager to wait a moment longer, the thin little notes of a single bell began the Angelus alone, when presently a symphony of louder bells joined in, reaching the ear from every direction. The fascinated Dane caught their meaning, and it brought him a taste of ecstasy. We have his own word for it. "All the high towers and all the small belfries, in which one sees the bells swinging in and out, all of them ring, all of them chime, all of them rejoice, all of them play before the Lord and praise His holy Mother: *"Ave Maria, gratia*

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*True Joy from Assisi*. By Raphael Brown. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1979. Pp. xlii-268, including appendices, bibliography, and index. Cloth, \$8.95. Father Valentine Long, a Jubilarian of Holy Name Province, has written many fine spiritual books and been a regular contributor to *Friar*. His article "Thank God for the Pope," appeared in last July's *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*.

plena . . . and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus!"

Yet it was a different occasion, a completely silent occasion, that clinched the poet's resolve to embrace the faith. Down on the plain below Assisi he was kneeling in the chapel of St. Mary of the Angels, the little chapel now within a larger church, when into his soul flowed "an awesome power," an intensity not to be resisted, "a marvellous peace." Immediately the favored soul understood what Friar Thomas of Celano meant by these strange words in his biography of the saint: "Although Francis believed that heaven's graces are imparted everywhere to God's chosen ones, he had learned nevertheless that the church of Saint Mary at Portiuncula was filled with more abundant grace and visited more frequently by heavenly spirits." Johannes Jorgensen was feeling something of it himself, and eighteen months later in Copenhagen embraced the Catholic Faith.

Another Assisi convert, a talented sculptress and writer from England, the first cousin of Winston Churchill, climbed the steep grade to the upper reaches of the town and went into the Basilica of Saint Francis and down into the crypt. She emerged not the same Clare Sheridan. What happened to her down there we know from her own account: "I only remember that I exhausted myself on those stone steps. I lost consciousness of time." That sense of eternity, an inner sweetness of joy, which others had felt in the shrines of Assisi, she now felt—with an urgent desire for the faith of Francis. Mrs. Sheridan did not follow out her desire at the time. But fifteen years later,

in 1946, after an interval of longing, punctuated by the death of a son, the bereaved mother was kneeling again before the saint's tomb. She announced to him in a faltering voice: "Here I am, back! Help me!" He did. She returned to England a fellow Catholic.

Down in San Damiano at the lower edge of Assisi the same blessed influence prevails. In its little chapel, where the divine voice from the crucifix had requested Francis to repair its former ruins, a Franciscan priest and author from France knelt to pray only to grow conscious of "an immense, intense peace," much as Clare Sheridan had known it in San Francesco high up on the hill. "I would gladly stay in this dark chapel for hours," wrote Alberic Dubouis in retrospect as if he were still living the experience. "Christ is speaking here yet. He speaks to me." Afterwards in the adjoining cloister, in which Saint Clare and her Poor Ladies had prayed out their years on earth, he felt "beyond time, already in eternity."

The sense of a superior world, experienced by tourists to San Damiano, San Francesco, Santa Maria degli Angeli, awaits also the sightseer who brings an open mind into the Carceri up on the mountain ridge above Assisi. These are the cavernous haunts where Francis used to commune alone with his all-lovable God, with only the angels his attendants. They are fraught with grace, as many too who found out for themselves have testified by word or deed. The friar, for example, who escorted Monsignor Wiseman into one of the rugged hermitages reports that the future Cardinal sat for a long

while in awed silence, the serenity of a profound contentment visible on his face. When he did come out of the reverie he reached to the ground to dig out a flower by its roots with his pocketknife, careful not to loosen the soil from the flower, because, as he explained, it was "holy soil" and he wanted a souvenir from the hallowed cave.

So runs the testimony of a mere few of the visitors to Assisi who have supplied Raphael Brown with a wealth of material for his theme: that the environment is holy and induces in the unlikely as well as the likely an urgent longing for God—a longing infiltrated with a strange joy. "Here we feel we want to be good," says Maria Sticco to the point. *True Joy from Assisi* includes a succession of such quotable tidbits from known and unknown alike, and all to the same effect. "He who comes here," is how Camille Mauclair expresses the common experience, "feels seized with reverence and yields to a mysteriously healing magic which revives in the most forgetful a sense of childhood innocence."

The author himself says of the hundreds of pilgrims known to him in Assisi, that he has yet to meet one "who has not had this experience to some degree." The joy of the place takes possession of them sooner or later during their stay, be they worldly or pious, of this temperament or that, and of whatever nationality. Raphael Brown has done his readers a great service in bringing his enormous mass of evidence together in a single book, though not always with perfect coherence. His effort, certainly, required an indefatigable research

which merits from his readers their unstinted admiration. And I, an admirer, am additionally grateful that his research did not overlook Alfred Noyes.

Of the many writers who at whatever time fell under the spell of Assisi, none to my knowledge has acknowledged it more dramatically and therefore more impressively than Alfred Noyes, not of course in his poem "At Assisi," nor in his grateful essays on the subject, but in the final twelve pages of his apocalyptic novel, *The Last Man*, which in its American edition bears the title of *No Other Man*. This English convert who wrote a forceful prose as well as verse spent three days at Assisi in the March of 1938. When a year later the Second World War broke out in full fury, he conceived the idea for his novel. It features episodes of nearly total destruction by means of an irresistible death-ray used by the warring nations, so that a mere remnant of mankind survives.

This brings the plot to its denouement. Where on all the earth does the remnant survive? In Assisi, no less. If the human race deserves to start over and to renew itself once again, as after the Flood, then where better than on that blessed hillside in Umbria, which still exudes the spirit of Francis. Alfred Noyes carried away from his visit the conviction, which his novel portrays, that such a spirit alone could exert the influence to create a new worthwhile order. *The Last Man* sold well in our most turbulent of centuries, and the most atheistic; and after the first atomic bombs exploded on Hiroshima and Nagasaki it was reprinted. Raphael Brown, a Franciscan tertiary