the CORD

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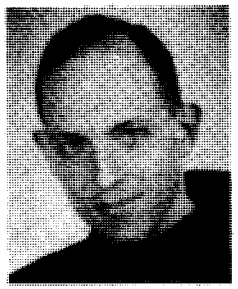

A REVIEW EDITORIAL

Religious Life and the Poor

IN LAST DECEMBER'S review editorial I said that Father Jerome Murphy-O'Connor had made a good case for his position that communal living is the essence of religious life. Two of that author's partners in dialogue took particularly emphatic exception to that fundamental position, but I agreed with Father Murphy-O'Connor's reply that the application of the term *essence* to community has to be understood with some subtlety—that it does not relegate the vows or the apostolate to the realm of the insignificant or render them dispensable.

That fundamental position, at any rate, implies two especially difficult issues: (1) Is a religious community primarily, as the author maintains, a community of *being* (more strictly speaking, of *becoming*), or a community of *action*—i.e., which takes precedence, community or apostolate; and (2) with particular reference to poverty, is the witness of common life so predominant (even over traditional categories of evangelical living) that poverty can no longer be seen as something to be embraced—e.g., in imitation of the poor Jesus—but must rather be viewed exclusively as something to combat and wipe out?

These two issues emerge with renewed urgency in a book just published by Orbis Books: *Religious Life and the Poor.* I'd like to return to them after giving a brief account of the book itself. The author, Father Alejandro Cussiánovich, is a Salesian, a native of Peru who has studied theology in Lyon. Hence his theological view of the religious life is explicitly "liberationist," and the words *on our continent* and *Latin America* appear on just

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Religious Life and the Poor. By Alejandro Cussianovich. Translated by John Drury. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979. Pp. viii-168. Paper. $6.95.

about every page. Will American and European readers therefore be repelled by the book's apparent "provincialism"? I found myself wondering, most of the way through it, whether Father Cussiánovich even meant for them to read it;and my misgivings were hardly allayed by his statement in Chapter Four that religious who work with people in the world's more affluent areas should be left to bury their dead.

To make up my mind, not only whether I should bother continuing to read *Religious Life and the Poor,* but also whether its message is applicable to the religious life as we know and live it in the United States, I was forced to recall and ponder another book, reviewed in this space last October and also published by Orbis Books: Father Michael Crosby's *Thy Will Be Done.* As I said in reviewing that volume, (1) the involvement of the author's Capuchin Province in political and economic "subversion" as well as the excellent documentation of his book does incline me to think that this "subversion" is as important and central to our lives and work as religious as he says it is; and (2) we ought to keep up to date in our understanding of the meaning of a balanced and mature Christianity, which may indeed be "liberationist."

Like Father Crosby's book, this one too has very impressive documentation. Frequently cited are the Medellin Conference, the Peruvian Bishops' statements, the Brazilian Conference of Religious, and the Latin American Conference of Religious. The author's tone is, as much because of this authoritative support as because of his extensive personal experience, urgent, confident, polemical, even belligerent. Not that he presumes to give us a definitive theological synthesis of the religious life—on the contrary, he insists that no one can do so at this juncture. His constant use of the progressive form of the present tense indicates how fluid the situation is, and how gradual is the emergence of the kind of theological awareness which forms the substance of his radical call to action.

In the first chapter, Father Cussiánovich insists that not only a theological understanding of the religious life, but all of theology must start from concrete experience rather than from disembodied revelation or theoretical speculation. And for him, concrete experience is the life of the poor. Religious life is, then, quite simply an "option that is not optional" *for the poor*—a thorough immersion in their life which results in our assimilation of their culture, their economic and political way of life, and course their own approach to religion.

RELIGIOUS LIFE is thus seen, in Chapter Two, no longer as either a withdrawal from the (relativized) world for exclusive concentration on the Absolute, or an evangelical radicalism that has fostered a certain elitism and seen the vows (in practice if not theory) as ends in themselves. It is a "project," an extension of the mission of the prophets and the Lord himself "to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favor" (Lk. 4:18; Is. 61:1f).

The third and fourth chapters spell this out in greater detail, moving from the more general to the more concrete and practical, to the point where religious are urged to take up quite specific political and economic challenges (not necessarily, but quite legitimately, party affiliation). It seems that there are two stages historically involved: first, an identification with the poor and an immersion in their life; then (the stage now emerging) active work to subvert the oppressive institutions and further the liberative process. Much of the language here is Marxist; but that in itself is no reason to reject the project to which the author summons us.

Chapter Five emphasizes the sign value of the religious life as witness to the kingdom of God present among us. Needless to say, this witness (in which the imitation of Christ, discipleship, and kingdom are strictly equivalent) must not be "spiritualized"—i.e., interiorized within the individual. The author's outlook is emphatically activist and collectivist. The theology of the religious life, at any rate, can be revitalized "only insofar as it is a theology of liberation" because "the poor are the bearers of the message of human solidarity." Each of the vows is considered here and its meaning revised in accord with Father Cussiánovich's perspective.

In his final chapter, the author concentrates on the spiritual life—the quest for holiness. Here too, it hardly needs to be said, a shift is urged from the individualist and interior view of sanctity—"the practice of the virtues"—to liberation praxis. Not that our transformation in Christ can be reduced to liberation; but, according to the author, liberation activity alone mediates the kingdom's presence and growth and thus is "the decisive factor in our love for God and in the sanctifying action of the Spirit." The old "flight from the world" to the Absolute now becomes a flight from the *present*, oppressive *condition* of the world toward a utopian society. (There is no claim that the goal is within easy reach or will be reached soon; but it must remain the motivating ideal for all our work.)

Worthy of special note, finally, are the author's occasional discussions of asceticism and prayer. The former is not a means to attain holiness—not something to look for and practice deliberately; it is rather the inevitable *result* of our radical commitment. That is, the opposition aroused by our combat will necessarily lend a paschal character to our lives. With regard to prayer, it moves parallel to liberation praxis and, as with the mystics, pervades our whole being in all that we do. I found no injunction in this book against "prayer apart" such as that practiced by the Lord himself—but on the other hand, prayer is said to "lose force insofar as it is removed from what happens every day," a claim which can surely be understood in an acceptable sense.

Religious Life and the Poor, which appeared in Peru in 1975, seems to be a quite competent, authoritative, and up-to-date reappraisal of the meaning of the religious life in light of liberation theology. Abundant reference is made by its author, not only to the weighty sources mentioned above, but to numerous theologians (including the Franciscans Leonardo Boff and William Baraúna). Its message is disturbing to me—something about which I know I have to do some more thinking. The book is well written, for sure, and one which I feel sure that all religious ought at least to read and think about.

IT IS TIME now to return to the two "especially difficult issues" mentioned at the outset.

First, is a religious community a community of becoming (being) or one of action? As I observed in October, this is not an exclusive disjunction; it is a subtler question than that, i.e., a matter of emphasis. If our common life is the essence of our witness, we are a community of becoming; if our apostolate is primary, we are a community of action. Now, Father Cussiánovich sees the religious life, in a felicitous phrase, as "a *sensus plenior* of the gospel message, i.e., a particularly radical interpretation of the gospel *read from the "standpoint of our option for the marginalized classes and races."* The entire thrust of *Religious Life and the Poor* is that religious must live with, work with, be thoroughly immersed in the entire being of, the poor classes (the author even refers to the French experiment with worker priests). It would seem, then—though I'm not sure about this—that this book sees our community as one of action. On the face of it, nothing could be more obvious. But as I said, the question is subtle: it could be that the liberation praxis to which we are summoned is one that we, precisely as religious, must do communally. If so, then communal gospel life would be primary and the font from which the liberation praxis would invariably and necessarily flow. The importance of this first issue is, of course, that in concrete practice, particular courses of action must be judged from one or the other viewpoint: if common life is primary, certain "apostolic" demands may have to be sacrificed; if apostolate is primary, common life may in certain circumstances have to be adversely affected "for the greater good." If Father Murphy-O'Connor is right, as I think he is, then no practical demand of the apostolate—in this case, the liberation praxis—can be allowed to infringe upon the ideal of communal living. I would like to think myself justified in reading *Religious Life and the Poor* in a vein compatible with this conclusion. To insist that religious are what they are "essentially" because of common life in no way compromises Father Cussiánovich's characterization of their *Christian and human* reason for being. But to take the opposite viewpoint—that the liberation praxis is their reason for being *religious*—

raises the obvious retort that, as Father Cussiánovich himself points out, there are innumerable dedicated Christians in Latin America following the path laid out for them by liberation theology without taking vows or living in community. Then why are there religious at all?

In the second place, is poverty an ideal to be embraced, not exactly for its own sake as an end in itself, but as a positive value in union with the poor Jesus and in identification with the poor members of his Body? Or is it plainly and simply an evil to be combatted? Again, we have here no neat disjunction. Father Cussiánovich's point, in fact, is precisely that to combat the evil which is poverty, we must assume it! Something similar was said by Father Joseph Nangle in our May, 1978, issue. "... with poverty the follower of Christ takes on himself or herself that very reality which must be overcome," though "how this is, lies at the heart of the mystery we call the Redemption," and here "there is no human logic ... only the logic of the Cross which is paradox."

The fourth chapter of *Religious Life and the Poor* opens with a discussion of the poor Christ, born into a "condition of poverty" which is no accident but "a necessity of all salvation history," for "the liberating love of God is even linked historically to the poor." What seems clear from Father Murphy-O'Connor's discussion of poverty, however, and the investigations of those he cites in the context, is that "real indigence is in contradiction with the very nature of the kingdom of God." The poor are blessed, "not because of their poverty, but because they have the infallible promise of release from its chains" (pp. 43-44). The story of the rich young man (Mk. 10:17-22 etc.) "is essentially a narrative revealing the true nature of faith ... [and] only incidentally concerns poverty" (p. 45). It is not clear, despite the "Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" statement, that the Lord lived a life of penury. His garment, taken from him on Good Friday, was of such good quality that the executioners didn't want to tear it.[1]

Note that the point here is *not* poverty of spirit or detachment. In *that*, surely, the Lord excelled; and we religious are called to imitate him as perfectly as we can. The question is, rather, our communal standard of living. The passage of Father Murphy-O'Connor's book briefly cited last October deserves more extended quotation here:

> [Religious and the poor] are working together towards something better. Merely to stand by and be poor says nothing. Not only is there no witness, but there may be the exact reverse. Respect is an essential ingredient of witness, and there can be no genuine respect where there is an element of fake. The poor may lack education but they are not unperceptive. They know that religious have the intelligence, the education, and the contacts to ensure themselves a comfortable living. Their first reaction to a group of religious living at their standard is one of suspicion. They suspect that they are being condescended to, that some sort of silly game is in progress at their expense. And this response will remain until it is modified by an appreciation of the quality of the motivation behind such a gesture. All of which goes to show that the gesture in itself has no impact, and therefore no witness-value. Living in a slum is just as bad as institutionalized charity in the sense that the individual or a group hides behind a material gesture. Paradoxically, it is the easy way out [p. 51].

Father Murphy-O'Connor's point is perhaps more easily discerned with the addition of the last part of the paragraph to the short reference I gave last October. The gesture *in itself*—i.e., as a gesture without proper underlying motivation—has no witness-value and may even be both offensive to the poor and a cop-out.

The next step in this enervating dialectic is easy enough to see: the solidarity with the poor advocated by Fathers Nangle and Cussiánovich must be permeated with love for them—motivated by the thirst to bring about (at least eventually) *their release from poverty—a condition not to be seen as positively valuable or even acceptable.*

Now the end is, at least for the time being, in sight: is this sort of solidarity attainable by a religious raised in an, if not affluent, at least bourgeois (Father Cussiánovich's term) society? One individual I talked with at length about this recently thought not, and a correspondent wrote, in one of Holy Name Province's communications bulletins, that "we friars, like other member of [the American Middle] Class fail to realize that our attitudes towards our own economic well-being are formed early and unconsciously."[2]

The conclusion to which I am forced frightens me. Is Father Murphy-O'Connor right—that our individualizing and interiorizing of the religious ideal (the vows, asceticism) has so distorted our understanding of the religious life, that it needs a radical reformulation along the lines suggested by Father Cussiánovich? Is the psychological difficulty mentioned by Father O'Shea so formidable (he draws no such conclusion!) that a large percentage of contemporary religious are unable to accept even theoretically—much less live out—the reality of evangelical poverty? And what, then, are we to make of the religious life as it is lived today? Your comments (for publication or otherwise) are most welcome.

Fr. Michael D. Meilach, ofm

[1]See, on this question of the Lord's poverty, Father Dismas Bonner's discussion in our issue of November, 1978. (He also cites Father Murphy-O'Connor.)

[2]Father Howard V. O'Shea, O.F.M., Letter to *Forum*, a Journal of Opinion for the Franciscan friars of Holy Name Province (New York: Franciscan Communication Office, 7/31/78).

Corpus Christi, Salva Me

MOTHER MARY FRANCIS, P.C.C.

NOW TO continue our series of reflections on the great prayer, "Anima Christi." We considered in the last conference how we should not allow ourselves to drift into vague conjectures or even to "hold" on nebulous concepts about the soul of Christ, the mind of Christ, as though this were the Divinity set down in the created human body as into some kind of cabinet. So too we cannot disengage the body from the soul. And in this inspired prayer, beloved of how many saints, we see this immediate progression. It is not as though we are to be concerned only with the soul of Christ, agreeing that he had to have a body to get about in—a kind of second class instrument necessary for divine locomotion as man and for carrying out the various enterprises of human existence. To guard us against any such lowly concept of our own body (and that concept depends upon our concept of the body of Christ), the prayer proceeds directly from "anima Christi" to "corpus Christi."

"Body of Christ, save me!" we pray. And that sets us back on our mental heels a bit, doesn't it? What do we mean: Body, save me? Was it not the soul that saved us? Again, dear sisters, there are depths to plumb here. The Church in approving and indulgencing this prayer has given us a great course in theology. We shall see this more and more as the prayer unfolds.

Our bodies are so noble. And we know that the infamous carnal sinners of history are not those who loved their bodies too much but those who loved their bodies too little. They are those who failed to respect or perhaps even to understand the dignity of this magnificent creation of the Father, the human body. It is a creation so marvelous that the Father did not hesitate to give it to his own divine, eternal, infinite, all-comprehensive expression of himself in the Incarnation of the Son in the same way that it is given to us and with the same senses and faculties possessed by our own bodies. The Father did not, as it were, think this unbecoming! No, his own expression of himself, his divine Logos, would become incarnate in a human body brother to our human bodies.

What seems to me to be meant in this prayer, "Body of Christ, save me," is not what might ordinarily come first to our minds—and that certainly a glorious consideration, to be sure—the Blessed Sacrament. Indeed, in this way "Corpus Christi"— the Body of Christ—does save me. But I think that there is also a revelation here about our own bodies as they are meant to be and which they can be only through the body of Christ, who is himself "the first-born of all creation" and whose created body was the perfect partner of his created soul.

When we have a lowly estimate of our bodies, we are a prey to all manner of sins as a result. When we consider the body as a necessary adjunct so that the soul can get about, as I said before, we are doing our body a great dishonor. Again and opposite-wise, when we hold the body as supreme, we likewise do it a great injustice and, really, again a dishonor. Body and soul are co-related, coordinated from the act of creation forward; and both will endure. True, the human body will fall into dust in the burial vault, but it will be resurrected in glory for eternity. We shall have glorified bodies in eternity; we shall not be disembodied spirits. We hope to be there with Jesus who shows to his Father the glorified wounds of his human body.

The body is ordained for ultimate glorification, and the very act of its decay in the tomb is a fulfillment of the penitential curse laid upon it in Eden. One might say that decomposition is the protest of the body at being temporarily parted from the soul, a protest appropriate in its very horror to manifesting what such a dissociation really is. We recognize the horror of the grave easily enough. Do we likewise recognize the horrors we create in life when we do not allow the body to act with the soul, to be served by the soul, and in its turn to serve the soul? The body must be taught that the soul is its animating principle. To take a ready example from our own state of life, when the body asks for the pleasures and satisfactions it could very legitimately enjoy in the married state, it must be educated by the soul, led by the soul to understand that these wonderful expressions and rewards are to be foregone for a yet greater love.

Again, when the body has desires which go beyond the bounds of what the soul, its animating principle, knows to be rightful boundaries, it must be admonished by the soul, the mind. If the body desires more food than it needs and tends to be gluttonous, it has to be persuaded

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Mother Mary Francis, P.C.C., is a well known author and Abbess of the Poor Clare Monastery of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Roswell, NM.

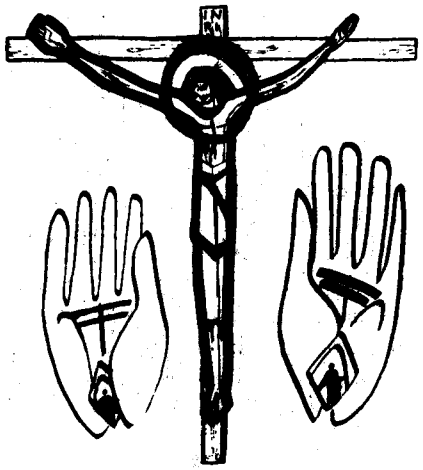
by the soul to say, "No." However, dear sisters, as the soul directs, educates, admonishes the body, so does the body need in its turn sometimes to admonish the spirit. We are an integrity of body and soul, one human being. And the body expresses through the faculties of mind and heart its own feelings. It is surely not difficult to illustrate that.

The body beholds something that makes it fearful, and there are bodily reactions: the heart begins to pound, sometimes a sweat gathers on the palms, the knees tremble, perhaps the muscles twitch and quiver. But there are also reactions within the incorporeal faculties themselves. For instance, a body subject to long and arduous strain will be accompanied in its duress by a tired mind. The intelligence will not be able to function as it ordinarily would.

Again, the incorporeal network of emotions are affected. If one is fatigued beyond a certain point, it is not possible to react with emotional élan except in a very artificial and even damaging way. When a person has been ill for a long time, the faculties of the mind also experience a kind of languor. Nor can we pray when the body is totally exhausted. We could go on multiplying examples. And to me, dear sisters, these are very beautiful considerations going in both directions. For when there is disappointment of hopes, the body becomes dis-spirited—a very precise expression. Lacking in spirit, it is not quite a body, so to speak.

Surely any superior has experienced that when she suffers disappointment in a sister's reaction or lack of response, she herself feels physically tired. On the other hand, when I am privileged to see a sister sincerely confronting the truth, to witness a truly humble reaction, to behold a real striving for holiness, my body becomes animated. I am not tired, even though work might have left me so. Reserves of strength come surging up in me. You, too, assuredly experience this when you are inspired by one another or when you suffer from one another the disappointments inevitable to fallen human beings wherever they dwell together. Body and soul act and interact. The incorporeal faculties admonish the body; but the body also in its way admonishes the faculties of mind and spirit.

A tired body admonishes the mind: "Stop working, now; let's rest together." And we know what happens when the mind refuses to follow the direction of the body. A very fatigued body can lie awake all night long because the mind says, "No, I will keep on thinking," when the body has said, "It's time to stop now and for us to go to sleep together." Body and soul cannot sleep apart, you see, at least not in proper



and healthful co-functioning.

Indeed it is the body of Christ which saves us in the Blessed Sacrament. But it is also the body of Christ in his human functioning during the historical period of his corporeal activity upon this earth, when his body perfectly served his soul and his animating principle perfectly coordinated its activities with his body, which saves us. We do not see in ourselves or of ourselves these perfect coordinations. I see you smile as I say that, because we know how often we are tossed about by our lack of coordination. The soul says to the body, "Do not pass this boundary"; and the body replies, "I will!" The body wishes to disobey the incorporeal faculties. Or, again, in the example I just gave you, the body rightly declares: "It's time to go to sleep now"; and the mind refuses to obey the advice and direction of the body.

It is only in Christ, the perfect Man, the Firstborn of all creation, that we see the perfect functioning of the body. And so it is his body which will save us, which will show us how to be whole. What does "salva" mean? Save us, make us whole. Salvation is wholeness of life, just as sanity is wholeness of mind. There is a basic shared root. *Salvatus*, saved. *Sanatus*, made whole. We are saved when we are whole beyond assault. And Christ was the perfect whole creature, body and soul working in perfect coordination. It is his body which will save ours that is so often unruly and disobedient to the incorporeal faculties. Just as his animating principle alone will sanctify ours, so when we are torn by temptation, racked by passion, weak in languor, disspirited with fatigue, when our bodily desires get out of hand, we cannot use ourselves as a punching bag. We cannot order: "Get in line, there, body!" We must say, "Body of Christ, save me!" I shall never save myself. And this beautiful body of mine, this creation of God, can become the enemy of salvation just as my incorporeal faculties can. But the body of Christ can save me. So, dear sisters, you might want to make that a favorite prayer in time of temptation, of languor, of frustration, of sensual attraction, of sloth—whatever.

It is possible that the body can truly be all that it is destined to be in the mind of the eternal Father, that it can achieve even here on earth some of the glory it will fully know only in heaven, but solely through the body of Christ. Love to look at that crucified body. Love to say, O "Corpus Christi, salva me." And he will—he will save us. May we all be made able to allow our bodies their beautiful fulfillment in God's plan through a frequent turning to Christ in the Blessed sacrament, but also through daily reflection on the human functioning of Christ's human nature as we see it in the Gospel. We shall be saved and be saving agents to one another, not of ourselves, but of Christ who literally dwells within us physically at Holy Communion, who presents himself to us throughout the Scriptures, and is present in all around us as the created Incarnate Word of God, the Firstborn of all creation.

★

The Anointing

For the poor always with You,
Christ,
it goes not hard.
I have costly perfume
of real aromatic nard
to fragrance all room,
balm for wounded feet.

Take this extravagant whole,
this poor man's mite:
my body, Christ, my soul.

Sister Mary Agnes, P.C.C.

DOCUMENTATION

Pope John Paul II at Assisi

HERE I AM in Assisi on this day that I have wished to dedicate specially to the Patron Saints of this country, Italy; a country to which God has called me in order that I may serve as St. Peter's successor. Since I was not born in this land, I feel more than ever the need of a spiritual "birth" in it. And therefore, on this Sunday, I come as a pilgrim to Assisi, at the feet of Saint Francis, the Poverello, who wrote Christ's gospel in incisive characters in the hearts of the men of his time. We cannot be surprised that his fellow citizens have wished to see in him the Patron Saint of Italy. The Pope, who, owing to his mission, must have before his eyes the whole universal Church, the bride of Christ, in the various parts of the globe, particularly needs the help of the Patron Saint of Italy in his See in Rome; he needs the intercession of Saint Francis of Assisi.

AND SO HE arrives here today.

He comes to visit this city, which is always a witness to the marvellous divine adventure that took place between the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century. It is a witness to that surprising holiness that passed here like a great breath of the Spirit: a breath in which Saint Francis of Assisi participated, as well as his spiritual sister Saint Clare and so many other saints born from their evangelical spirituality. The Franciscan message spread far beyond the frontier of Italy, and very soon it also reached Polish soil, from where I come. And it still operates there with abundant fruits, as, moreover, in other countries of the world and in other continents.

I will tell you that, as Archbishop of Krakow, I lived near a very ancient Franciscan church, and from time to time I went there to pray, to make the "Via Crucis," and to visit the chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows. Unforgettable moments for me! One cannot fail to mention here that it was just from this magnificent trunk of Franciscan spirituality that the blessed Maximilian

This address, reprinted from L'Osservatore Romano *of 11/16/78, was delivered by Pope John Paul II on November 5 in the Basilica of St. Francis, in the presence of religious and civil authorities, clergy, and a very great multitude of faithful.*

Kolbe came, a special patron in our difficult times.

I cannot pass over in silence the fact that just here, in Assisi, in this Basilica, in the year 1253, Pope Innocent IV proclaimed saint the Bishop of Krakow, the Martyr Stanislaus, now the Patron Saint of Poland, whose unworthy successor I was until a short time age.

TODAY, therefore, setting foot here for the first time as Pope, at the sources of this great breath of the Spirit, of this marvellous revival of the Church and of Christianity in the thirteenth century, linked with the figure of Saint Francis of Assisi, my heart opens to our Patron Saint and cries: "You, who brought Christ so close to your age, help us to bring Christ close to our age, to our difficult and critical times. Help us! These times are waiting for Christ with great anxiety, although many men of our age are not aware of it. We are approaching the year A.D. 2000. Will they not be times that will prepare us for a rebirth of Christ, for a new Coming? Every day, we express in the eucharistic prayer our expectation, addressed to him alone, our Redeemer and Saviour, to him who is the fulfillment of the history of man and of the world.

Help us, Saint Francis of Assisi, to bring Christ closer to the Church and to the world of today.

You, who bore in your heart the vicissitudes of your contemporaries, help us, with our heart close to the Redeemer's heart, to embrace the events of the men of our time. The difficult social, economic, and political problems, the problems of culture and contemparary civilization, all the sufferings of the man of today, his doubts, his denials, his disorders, his tensions, his complexes, his worries. . . . Help us to express all this in the simple and fruitful language of the gospel. Help us to solve everything in an evangelical key, in order that Christ himself may be "the Way—the Truth—the Life" for modern man.

THIS IS ASKED of you, holy son of the Church, son of the Italian land, by Pope John Paul II, son of the Polish land. And he hopes that you will not refuse him it, that you will help him. You have always been kind, and you have always hastened to bring help to all those who appealed to you.

I heartily thank His Eminence Cardinal Silvio Oddi, Pontifical Delegate for the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, and Bishop Dino Tomassini of Assisi, and all the Archbishops and Bishops of the pastoral Region of Umbria, with the priests of the various dioceses.

A greeting and special thanks to the Ministers General of the four Franciscan Families, to the Community of the Basilica of St. Francis, to all Franciscans, and to all Religious Families—men and women Religious—inspired by the Rule and the lifestyle of Saint Francis of Assisi.

I TELL YOU what I feel deep down in my heart:

The Pope is grateful to you for your faithfulness to your Franciscan vocation.

The Pope is grateful to you for your apostolic activity and evangelical mission.

The Pope thanks you for your prayers for him and according to his intentions.

The Pope assures you that he remembers you in his prayers.

Serve the Lord joyfully.

Be servants of his people gladly, because Saint Francis wishes you to be joyful servants of mankind, capable of lighting everywhere the lamp of hope, trust, and optimism which has its source in the Lord himself. May your, our, common Patron Saint, Francis of Assisi, be an example to you today and always!

I then extend my cordial and respectful greeting to the civil Authorities present here:

—to the Lord Mayor of Assisi,

—to the Members of the City Council and Board,

—to the civil Authorities of the Umbrian Region and the Province of Perugia,

—to the Members of Parliament of the Region.

Thank you! Thank you for your presence, thank you for having wished to join in common prayer at the tomb of Saint Francis!

To the sentiments of my deep gratitude I join my most fervent wishes of happiness, prosperity and progress for their persons and for the whole beloved population of Umbria.

From Assisi, from this sacred place so dear to all Italians, a heartfelt greeting and a special blessing for the whole of Italy, for all Italians spiritually present at this meeting of ours for prayer, for the whole Italian people.

I wish to address an affectionate thought, and a special memory to Italian emigrants, to Italians scattered in every continent of the globe. I know that in their homes, often so far from Assisi and Italy, there is always a souvenir brought from Italy and connected with Assisi, an image of Saint Francis, and in their hearts a sincere and active devotion towards the Poor Man of Assisi. And then a greeting to all those who have the honour of being called "Francis," finding in our Patron Saint an example of life, a heavenly protector, a spiritual guide, an inner inspiration!

For everyone, in Assisi, a special prayer of the Pope!

And to everyone, from Assisi, a special Apostolic Blessing!

✠ ✠ ✠

The Active-Contemplative Life:

A Living Out of the Gospel

SISTER M. THADDEUS THOM, O.S.F.

At the Portiuncula, Francis believed he would really be able to carry out his dream of living the Gospel. Located in the midst of a wood, the hermitage was made up of the chapel of Our Lady of the Angels, a large thatch-covered cabin which served as the community house, and as many huts as there were religious. The large cabin was of puddled clay; the huts were made of wattles; and the whole was surrounded by a hedge. And that is the way the Saint would have liked to see all his residences. Even the churches he always wanted to have "small and built of earth or wood."

—Omer Englebert, *Saint Francis of Assisi*[1]

THE SUPERIOR of the brotherhood was, of course, Francis. But Francis did not spend all his time giving orders. He delegated part of his authority to a friar who bore the name of "mother" and, like a mother, looked out for the community's needs. The "mother" played the role of Martha and led the active life. Thus the others could, like Mary, give themselves to the contemplative life. From time to time, to reverse the roles and even things up, the "children" became "mothers"; and the latter, "children."

This arrangement was kept up for a time in the hermitages, where the number of religious was limited to three or four. But the "mothers" were soon replaced by the "guardians" or "local superiors" ("superior" is not a word used by Francis). Their name came from the fact that they "guarded" the door and watched over their brethren.

In 1222 or 1223, about three years before the death of Francis and approximately one year before his reception of the stigmata, Francis deemed it necessary to write a rule for the Religious Life in Hermitages just as he had written a rule for the Friars Minor and for the Third Order, since he saw it as having a place within the Order. Because of the increase of activity even during his lifetime, Francis wished the continuance of these places of retirement so that "some at least, of the friars, could lead a life of seclusion, . . . to which others could retire at least occasionally."[2]

After five years of establishing, planning, and experimenting, this proposed Hermitage Community Program for the Active-Contemplative Synthesis seems to be the most realistic and workable for those in our day who have the inclination to follow it and for those who are given permission to live in this manner in a prayer apostolate for the sake of their communities and for the sake of the Kingdom. We thought that readers of THE CORD would be interested in the following practical details as we have worked them out in our own community.

Schedule

Rising and breakfast—on your own.

5:30 Morning Prayer and Meditation.
6:15 Leave for Mass.
6:30 Mass at Immaculate Conception Church.
7:00 Travel to Apostolate. (schedules for the day to be discussed by the core group).
4:45 Evening prayer and Rosary.
5:15 Supper and Recreation.
6:00 Office of Readings. Quiet time: read, walk, pray, prepare for apostolate.
8:30 - 9:30 Adoration, followed by Night Prayer.

Retire at pleasure

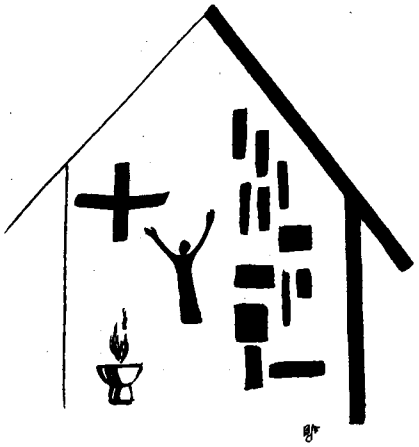
Weekends
(First Friday all night adoration—sign up for hours.)
Saturday

7:00 Mass (Rising and breakfast on your own).
8:30 Morning Prayer and Meditation
9:30 - 11:30 Charges, etc.
11:30 Little Hour (Midday Prayer)
12:00 Dinner, followed by Recreation.
1:00 - 4:30 Quiet time: pray, read, walk, prepare classes, etc.
4:30 Evening Prayer and Rosary.

[1]Omer Englebert, *St. Francis of Assisi* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1965), pp. 136-37.

[2]Placid Hermann, O.F.M., introd. to St. Francis, "Religious Life in Hermitages," *Omnibus*, p. 71.

Sister M. Thaddeus Thom, O.S.F., formerly Chairman of the English Department at Assumption Catholic Academy, Syracuse, NY, and presently residing with the Poor Clare Nuns in Lowell, MA, pioneered her community's development of its ritiro at Fayetteville, NY.



Supper on your own.

7:00 Office of Readings, sharing (if desired), reading of the Sunday readings, Night Prayer.
(Sisters may rise for a holy hour at any time.)

Sunday

8:00 Mass at St. Mary's Church in Minoa (Rising and breakfast on your own).

9:30 Adoration all day until supper; sign up.

4:30 Evening Prayer and Rosary.

5:15 Supper and Recreation.

7:30 Office of Readings; study of the Rule for Religious Life in Hermitages or some other Franciscan work; Night Prayer.

Retire at pleasure.

(This schedule should remain flexible enough for personal prayer and for adaptation to circumstances. Each sister may take one hermit day a month and during vacation two sisters may take advantage of being isolated hermits.)

Resolution of Possible Conflicts

SCHEDULED activities for our Community's apostolates have to do with education; they include PTA meetings, clubs, and faculty meetings—the usual types of meetings which a school teacher would be obliged to attend. PTA meetings are generally not more than once a month and take place during the evening. Club meetings (cheer leaders, Third Order, History or French Clubs) and faculty meetings are held immediately after school—again, usually once a month (except for cheer leaders or a special meeting for a project). These extra activities should be made known to the group so that all may work together to adjust to one another's needs in a family spirit.

A school calendar is generally sent out the June before the next school year begins, and it is only rarely that unscheduled activities creep in. If this should occur, the individual sister should make it known to the group, and provisions will be made to help her fulfill her obligations for the apostolate.

Economics

SINCE THERE may be an inequality in salary due to poverty missions or the type of work in which a sister is engaged, it woud seem advisable that these salaries be forwarded to the Bursar General, expenses estimated for the year, and the Bursar send the agreed-upon salary to the Hermitage Community for its support.

Transportation

AS EXPLAINED in II above, under "Conflicts," we will be a one-car family unit which must share obligations and plan our daily program for commuting.

Placement within the Area

IF ALL ARE school teachers, we have a number of schools in the immediate area for placement. It would be good if they could be rather close for the purpose of commuting.

Correction

The title of Father Sergius Wroblewski's article (the cover article) in our February, 1979 issue should be, not "Franciscan Unity," but "The Spiritualization of Worship."

Alverno

Where can I mark
it
to remember
Jesus loves me?

Where can I write
it
big enough to know
and not forget?

Where is a
sign
to say it new
forever?

Fresh for always
sensible and real

In the body, be it!
cross-engraved,
passion prompted
francis-follower.

Open
multiplied by five.

Certain signs
of love

(do not forget!)

Sister Carol Ann Munchel, O.S.F.

Easter Vigil Mass

Here
in this very darkness
where I grope
the Light is risen.
Now
in this time
that is my own
the Christ is given.

Lo . . .
my tomb of heart
all rent apart,
and self-died-to-sin
rises with Him.

O Radiant Christ!
Forever shine
in me.
Your Easter peace
every day be
gift that is given . . .
given through me.
Proof You are risen,
living in me.

Mother Mary Clare of Jesus, P.C.C.

The Liturgy of the Hours in the Franciscan Tradition

ARTHUR ANDERSON, O.F.M.

MUCH DISCUSSION has been raised among friars lately over the relevance of the Divine Office to their communal prayer life. Apart from the juridical questions of detail (what part of the membership has to say the Office; when may it be dispensed with, etc.), the deeper question being raised is whether the Canonical Hours have any real part to play in our lives as Franciscan friars. The present article is an attempt to answer that question through an examination of the earliest sources in our tradition.

In prescribing the recitation of the Divine Office, Francis adopted a practice which had developed within the monastic tradition, but he omitted many of the trappings of that tradition. The Office did in fact constitute the prayer life mainly of the monks, but the notion of Canonical Hours has its origins in the life of the early ascetics.[1]

Several factors influenced the development of this practice during the time of Saint Francis. First, what was formerly and solely the public prayer of the monks was adapted by the clerics for use in large churches or other places connected with secular or monastic communities.[2] Before long, they began to follow the monastic *cursus* of the Office, which consisted of morning prayer (a combination of matins and lauds), the day Hours (prime, tierce, sext, and none), evening prayer (vespers), and night prayer (compline). Secondly, the books used for the Office underwent many changes, mostly due to the

[1]Stephen J. P. Van Dijk, O.F.M., *and* J. Hazelde[illegible]r, "The Daily Office," in *The Origins of the Modern Roman Liturgy* (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1960), p. 15.

[2]Ibid., p. 17.

Brother Arthur Anderson, O.F.M., a member of the Sacred Heart (Chicago-St. Louis) Province, who teaches math at Hales Franciscan High School in Chicago, is pursuing graduate studies at the Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University during the summer sessions.

increasing number of prayers, psalms, and feasts.[3] The revision most closely related to Francis is associated with the reform of the breviary by Innocent III. Thirdly, the legislation on reciting the office began to reflect new trends. At first, only the public prayer of the monks in choir was recognized as the official form of the Office. But with the inception of itinerant preachers and the mendicant Orders which introduced the element of mobility in religious groups, no longer would choral recitation be the sole manner of saying the Office. Moreover, circumstances of literacy affected the manner of praying the Hours.[4] It is interesting to see how these developments unfold during the time of Francis.

Our holy Father was not unfamiliar with the practice of reciting the Divine Office. During his formative years, he participated with other members of his local church community in saying the Office as well as assisting at the worship services. Moreover, in those days, his reading primer was the psalter, and his manuals of religious instruction were the liturgical books.[5]

Francis retained much of what he learned in his early experiences, as Thomas of Celano tells us:

> At times he would ready the sacred books and what he put into his mind he wrote indelibly on his heart. His memory substituted for books, for he did not hear a thing in vain, for his love meditated on it with constant devotion.[6]

Celano does not explicitly refer, here, to the recitation of the Hours, but he does allude to Francis's early prayer experiences, which were to influence the prayer life of his early community.

Two of that community's members were familiar with the Office: Sylvester, a priest of Assisi, and Peter Catanii, a former canon of the cathedral.[7] Francis and his early followers, however, did not take up this practice until later, largely because they had no breviaries. Instead, they practiced mental prayer and used common, familiar prayers of the Church:

[3]P. Salmon, "The Divine Office, Roman," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1967), IV, 919.

[4]Van Dijk, "The Choir Breviary," op. cit., p. 38.

[5]Idem, "Franciscan Practice and Legislation," op. cit., p. 180.

[6]2 Celano 102. This and all the following citations from the early Franciscan sources are taken from Marion A. Habig, O.F.M., ed., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972).

[7]Cf. the footnote in the *Omnibus* (ibid.), p. 33.

> At that time, walking in simplicity of spirit, they did not know as yet the ecclesiastical office. [Francis] said to them: When you pray, say Our Father, and We adore thee, Christ, here and in all thy Churches which are in the world, and we bless thee, because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world [1 Celano 45].

Celano also describes an occasion when a poor mother approached Francis for alms. When Francis asked his confrere Peter whether they could fulfill the woman's desire, the latter replied. "There is nothing left in this house that could be given her. . . . We have one New Testament from which we read the lessons at Matins since we do not have a breviary" (1 Celano 91). This passage is cited not only in confirmation of the fact that the friars had no breviaries, but also as illustrative of how they creatively improvised in compensation for that lack. Once, e.g.,

> in the beginning of the Order St. Francis was with Brother Leo in a little place where they did not have any books to use in saying the Divine Office. One night when they got up to recite Matins, St. Francis said to Brother Leo: "Dear Brother, we have no breviary with which to say Matins, but so as to spend the time in praising God, I will say something and you must answer what I tell you, and be careful not to change my words. I will say this: 'O Brother Francis, you have done so much evil and sin in the world that you deserve hell'—and you, Brother Leo, shall answer: 'It is true that you deserve the depths of hell' " [*Fioretti*, IX].

Francis, then, obviously needed no breviary to fulfill his obligation to pray.

In all these episodes, we see the friars following the Canonical Hours with simple prayer forms and exercises. But the Order's rapid and vast expansion rendered impractical the continuation of this sort of prayer exercise, which had allowed the friars to master a

love for prayer and to deepen interiorly their personal dedication to the Gospel life by spending their time "praying continuously, devoting themselves especially to fervent mental prayer" (*Leg. maj.*, IV, 3).

Clerics continued to join the Order in greater numbers, however, and Francis had to accommodate both their desire to say the Office and their obligation to do so, which had been so integral a part of their lives. He spells out this requirement in chapter 3 of the Rule of 1221. Notice, in this somewhat lengthy passage, how he tries to avoid a distinction between clerics and laics and still accommodate the various groups on the basis of literacy:

> . . . all the friars, both clerics and lay brothers, must say the Divine Office with the praises and prayers, as they are obliged to.
>
> The clerics should celebrate the liturgy, praying for the living and the dead, like the clerics of the Roman Curia. Each day they should say the *Miserere* and one *Our Father* for the faults and failings of the friars, together with the *De Profundis* and an *Our Father* for the dead friars.
>
> They may have only those books which are necessary for their religious exercises. The lay brothers who can read the psalter may have a copy of it, but those who cannot read are not allowed to have one.
>
> The lay brothers are to say the *Creed* and twenty-four *Our Fathers* with the *Glory be to the Father* for Matins. For Lauds they are to say five; for Prime the *Creed* and seven *Our Fathers* together with the *Glory be to the Father*. For Tierce, Sext, and None, they are to say seven; for Vespers, twelve; and for Compline, the *Creed* followed by seven *Our Fathers* with the *Glory be to the Father*. For the dead they must say three *Our Fathers* for the faults and failings of the friars [1 Rule, 3].

Included in this legislation, in addition to Francis's concern that all the friars should pray for their brothers, are several items that call for explicit mention. First of all, Francis seems to presume that the clerics possessed breviaries. This is not difficult to imagine, for as Van Dijk notes, some of the clerics "were not so convinced that voluntary poverty relieved those in holy orders from their canonical duty."[8] These clerics are, at any rate, to say the Office "like the clerics of the Roman Curia."[9] To do so, they probably had access to the reform breviary of Innocent III, which combined a good deal of material from other breviaries while omitting many of the prayers which had crept into these earlier texts, and which had been prescribed for use at the Roman Curia.[10] Secondly, we note that Francis allows the literate lay brothers to have a psalter from which to say the Canonical Hours. This psalter was a book used commonly by lay people[11] and was probably the same used by Francis while he was yet associated with his local church. In the third place, for those who couldn't read, Francis prescribes the Office of Our Fathers. This office was not uncommon in other religious orders during Francis's time.[12] Finally, Francis was not about to encourage learning for the sake of saying the Office. He was saddened, Celano records, if "learning was sought to the neglect of virtue. . . . To a lay brother who wanted to have a psalter and asked his permission for it he offered ashes in place of the psalter" (2 Celano 195).

Although he does so in less detail, Francis prescribes the use of the Canonical Hours also in his Rule for Hermitages. The basic emphasis here is on ordering the daily prayer life of the friars who occupied these places for as long as they remained in them:

> At sunset, they should say [the] Compline of the day. They must be careful to keep silence and say their Office, rising for Matins. Their first care should be to *seek the kingdom of God and his justice* (Lk. 12:31). Prime and Tierce should be said at the proper time, and after Tierce the silence ends and they can speak and go to their mothers. . . . Afterwards, they should say Sext and None, with Vespers at the proper time [Rule for Hermitages. p. 72].

It is interesting to note that there is no specification regarding the content of these hours. Perhaps this rule presumes that the hermits had breviaries or some sort of prayer book divided according to these hours, or perhaps they followed the prescriptions of the Rule of 1221. In any case, it is clear that Francis endorses the canonical Hours as an expression of fraternal community in his hermitages.[13]

In his Letter to the Whole Order, too, Francis firmly emphasizes the importance of the Office:

> And so I beseech the Minister General, my superior, to see that the Rule is observed inviolably

[8]Van Dijk, "Franciscan Practice and Legislation," p. 184.

[9]See Kajetan Esser, O.F.M., "The 'Novelty' of the Order of Friars Minor," in *The Origins of the Franciscan Order* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1970), pp. 104-05.

[10]R. T. Callahan, "Breviary, Roman," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967), II, 791.

[11]Cf. the footnote in the *Omnibus*, p. 34.

[12]Esser, p. 106. This is probably the Office to which Celano refers in the passage cited above (1 Celano 45).

[13]Ibid., p. 104.

> by all, and that the clerics say the Office devoutly, not concentrating on the melody of the chant, but being careful that their hearts are in harmony so that their words may be in harmony with their hearts and their hearts with God. Their aim should be to please God by purity of heart, not to soothe the ears of the congregation by their sweet singing. I myself promise to observe this strictly, as God gives me the grace . . . [p. 107].

Although Francis says nothing here directly to the lay brothers about saying the Office, he does address himself to the clerics, admonishing them not to extinguish the spirit of prayer through the performance of the Office in chant. Perhaps we can see here that the clerics were beginning to say the Office in the manner of the monastic communities, as Francis implies they might perform the Office merely to edify the lay people in attendance.

As the Office developed into a substantial medium of prayer through which the friars encountered God in his holy Word, Francis desired that the friars, with their minds wholly intent upon and thoroughly attentive to the prayers, should deeply integrate the contents of these prayers into their hearts.

Still, Francis was not opposed to singing the Office. On the contrary, singing the office reflects another increment in the friars' developing prayer life. As Celano observes, "Because in choir we sing in the sight of the angels, [Francis] wanted all who would do so to come together in the oratory and there sing wisely" (2 Celano 197).

In parallel legislation of the Rule of 1223 one can readily notice a change from the previous Rule of 1221. This later legislation is at once more precise and more brief than the earlier:

> The clerics are to recite the Divine Office according to the [ordo of the Holy Roman Church], except the Psalter, because[14] they may have breviaries. The lay brothers are to say twenty-four *Our Fathers* for Matins and five for Lauds; for Prime, Tierce, Sext, and None, for each of these, they are to say seven; for Vespers, twelve and for Compline seven. They should [pray for the dead] [2 Rule, 3].

Note the change from "like the clerics of the Roman Curia" to "according to the ordo of the Holy Roman Church." This clarification means that the clerics should follow, not merely the *example* of the curial clerics (which the former legislation seems to suggest), but the *rubrics* of the curial

[14]Van Dijk's translation of "ex quo" is here accepted in preference to the *Omnibus* rendition of "and so." Cf. below for further discussion of the point.

Office. It was because they had no community ordo of their own, as Esser points out, that the friars had to adopt this Roman ordo, which was principally that of the breviary of Innocent III.[15]

Notice, too, the clause "because they may have breviaries"—"ex quo habere poterunt breviaria," about which there has been much discussion. The preceding phrase, "except the psalter," refers to the Roman psalter.[16] The whole sentence is important here. In previous legislation it was the educated lay brother who employed the psalter; now this provision forbids the clerics to use this psalter, and it also highlights the fact that the distinction between clerics and laics no longer depended upon the degree of literacy, but rather upon the former's juridical status. "Because they may have breviaries," then, suggests that the clerics will no longer *need* psalters with this permission to have breviaries. No doubt there may have been a polemic between Francis, with his concern for poverty, and the clerics who realized their canonical duty. But Francis, who was after all a cleric himself, here clearly accommodates the latter's concerns.[17]

A third important feature of this passage is that the Office of Our Fathers is prescribed for the lay brothers, regardless of whether or not they could read. We find here no specification of the supplemental prayers mentioned in the former Rule; and in the varied number of Our Fathers set forth by Francis we see clearly that this was simply the lay brothers' way of reciting the Canonical Hours.

The influence of Cardinal Hugolino in the draft of this Rule is evident in the precision and clarity of its language. Yet the substance of this prescription is basically consistent with Francis's own desire that the friars pray according to the custom of the Church the Office which had become the friar community's prayer.

Francis regarded the Office as of no less importance than Scripture itself for his spiritual life. Even in infirmity, we read, he "recited the Canonical Hours no less reverently than devoutly."

> He did not lean against a wall or a partition when he chanted, but he always said the Hours standing erect and without a capuche, without letting his eyes roam about and without interruption. When

[15]Esser, p. 106.

[16]Van Dijk, "Franciscan Practice and Legislation," p. 106.

[17]There were some clerics who could not read, of course, and this provision implied that they would have to learn to read the Latin of the Office since they could not avail themselves of the psalter.

> he went through the world on foot, he always stopped to say the Hours; when he was on horseback, he got down upon the ground. . . . For he used to say at times: "If the body takes its food in quiet, which, along with itself, will become the food of worms, with what great peace and tranquillity should not the soul take its food, which is God himself [2 Celano 96].

Francis had always reverenced the word of God, in whatever form it was presented to him. Now the Canonical Hours became for him one more means by which he would take time to nourish his soul.

It is in this sense of reverence that Francis expresses his experience with the Divine Office in his Testament: "Those of us who were clerics said the Office like other clerics, while the lay brothers s aid the *Our Fathers*." Francis does not embellish this simple statement with allusions to the distinction between clerics and laics. If there was any distinction at all in his mind, it was that he was conscious of this development in the Church. His ensuing observation that "We were only too glad to find shelter in abandoned churches"[18] is directly relevant to what precedes it, moreover, since it was still customary at this time to recite the Office in churches. His love for the Church and his devotion to the Office are thus seen to be intimately intertwined, and both are rooted in "God's holy operation," of which he speaks throughout his Testament.

One may draw many conclusions from this integration of the Liturgy of the Hours into the Franciscan way of life. Most immediately, Francis's use of the Divine Office illustrates his love for prayer and the importance he attached to it as the wellspring of his Order's apostolate. From Francis's earliest days in the movement, it is prayer which allowed him to aspire to the greatness to which God had called him. The way he went about prescribing the recitation of the Hours shows that he intended the Office to be an integral part of the friars' constant practice of prayer, even apart from any juridical obligation involved.

But, in the second place, we also see from the legislation contained in the Rules that Francis in no way minimized the juridical obligation to recite the Office. When the clerics sought to do so, in spite of all that this implied with respect to poverty, he saw in their request a desire to maintain their obedience to the Church—and Francis was not one to deter anyone from living in obedience. As a matter of fact, in his Letter to the Whole Order, he considers the obligation so important in the life of the friars that should one of them neglect it, he would not "regard him as a Catholic or as one of my friars."

In all this, thirdly, Francis maintains his notion of spiritual poverty and extends it to the obligation of saying the Office. A merely external observance of this, as of other, prayer exercises can prove to be naught:

> There are many people who spend all their time at their prayers and [the Office] and mortify themselves by long fasts, and so on. But if anyone says as much as a word that implies a reflection on their self-esteem or takes something from them, they are immediately up in arms and annoyed. These people are not really poor in spirit [Admonition XIV].

Sheer performance of prayer is insufficient, then, for a life of poverty. One must be so poor that his very fulfillment of the duty to pray fosters detachment and poverty of spirit.

Finally, and of immediate practical import today, we see that, even though the practice of reciting the Office had been bound up with monastic usages, its development within the Franciscan movement is rooted in the unique charism of the Poverello himself. This is what this article has been designed to show. With Kajetan Esser, we would insist that, just as the Divine Office was from the beginning a bond of unity among the friars, so its inclusion in our prayer life today "must not be considered a betrayal of [Francis's] ideals."[19]

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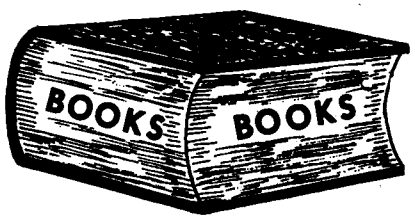
[18]This may not be the best translation of the Latin, "Et satis libenter manebamus in ecclesiis," but my main emphasis here concerns the fact that the early friars stayed in churches, most likely to pray.

[19]Esser, pp. 104, 109-10.



Songs of the Peacock. By Patrizia de Rachewiltz. Illustrations by Tien. New York: Paulist Press, 1977. Pp. 160. Cloth, $9.15; paper, $5.95.

Reviewed by Marigwen Schumacher, author/translator of Bonaventure, Rooted in Faith *(Franciscan Herald), a Consultant in Humanities with the Indiana Humanities Project.*

This fascinating book is both enjoyable and puzzling. Thus it is difficult to review adequately. Patrizia de Rachewiltz has written a collection of seventeen stories reflecting, as she herself expresses it, "not an escape from reality but a magical way of being in communion with the surprising beauty of Nature's subtleties, its secret happenings from which so much can be learned and understood" (quoted on the book's back cover).

The black/white line drawings by Tien which accompany the stories are enchanting—perhaps enchanted. Although each series reflects the individual story it surrounds, there is a refreshing continuity of design themes (e.g., flower faces in the leaves) throughout the whole small volume.

The stories deal with eternal verities in the guise of very simple stories. We are again caught in the world of fable and fantasy where animals talk, trees weep, time coalesces. The author tells us that "each one of these tales is a symbolic vision of reality" (again, from the back cover), and we are wrapt in joy and sorrow, delight and longings of dreams, events, happenings, ponderings, all told in the utmost simplicity of word and phrase. Some of the stories are easily "decoded"; the meaning is transparent at surface level:

> Two tiny tadpoles came to life one sunny April day, in a ditch by the waterfall./ They stared at each other, fascinated, and slipped out of the soft water lily's net./ "You are joy," said the more imaginative, squeezing his little eyes for the great occasion. So Joy, happy to have a name, waggled his tail and called his companion Life . . . ["Two Tiny Tadpoles," p. 11].

Several others, however, are teasing in their puzzlement—probing in the remembrance for days afterwards. In this group, I include "The Star Carver," "Lilliput Lee," and "Tsuki San," amongst others. When "the light dawns," the thought proves nourishing!

It is rash and unfair to pick favorites from such an interesting variety of stories, but I must share some since, in a short review, I cannot mention all. "The Dwarf's Sign" recounts the story of "the little dwarf of the wood, whose name was Risk," who was caught in a "cobweb among the branches of an oak tree. . . . This cobweb had been woven by the elf of loneliness, who passed from branch to branch, holding a very thin thread in his hand, so that he might not get lost" (p. 17). The manner in which "Risk" freed himself from that web spun by the elf of loneliness speaks directly to each one of us who has ever encountered that primal fear of "risk-taking"! Again, in the title story, when the peacock and his Lady finally take the time to really look at each other instead of being engrossed in individual vanities, "they faced each other and discovered that they were both beautiful in each other's eyes" (p. 109).

Humor is not lacking in stories such as "The Teasing Crows," nor is beauty, as in "The Poet of the Desert," and wisdom can be found in . . "Lemonpips" and in "The Deer with a Thousand Horns" have we but ears to hear and hearts to comprehend. Like *Hope for the Flowers, The Little Prince*, and other books of their genre, *Songs of the Peacock* should be read on multi-levels of understanding from the simple delight of children to the reflective, prayerful inquiry of contemplatives. The book is a treasure—worth the exploring, worth the mining.

The Koran in the Light of Christ: Islam in the Plan of History of Salvation. By Giulio Basetti-Sani, O.F.M. Trans. W. Russell Carroll, O.F.M., and Bede Dauphinee, O.F.M. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977. Pp. xiv-223. Cloth, $8.50.

Reviewed by Karl K. Barbir, M.A. (American University of Beirut), M.A., Ph.D. (History, Princeton University), Assistant Professor of History at Siena College and author of Ottoman Rule in Damascus, 1708-1758, *to be published by Princeton University Press.*

It is rare that an author conducts the reader through both the treatment of a topic and the process by which the author was led to take up that topic. Such personal revelation is most often confined to a preface or appears only indirectly, usually unintentionally, in the text proper. Father Giulio's study is therefore as much the story of a spiritual and intellectual journey as it is a scholarly investigation of the Qur'ān. The reader will find here much to ponder, and to admire, whether or not he accepts the interpretation offered.

The starting point of Father Giulio's book is the perennial problem of a non-Muslim's approach to the Qur'ān in particular and to Islam in general. In the past, that approach was either dictated by polemical and apologetic considerations (particularly in medieval times) or the application of the techniques of biblical criticism developed during the last century and a half. The former approach was militant and often characterized by ignorance; the latter has tended to avoid the difficult question of the Qur'ān's place in the history of monotheistic religions and has treated it simply as a text. Father Giulio recounts his education in Islamic studies and his experiences in Egypt and elsewhere, as well as showing the weaknesses of the two approaches so far prevalent—approaches which he successively adopted before discovering what he describes as the "key" that permitted him to pursue studies of the Qur'ān without the limitations of the past. That "Key" was to see the Qur'ān as a work in which the theme of Muslim expectation and anticipation of Christ was of great importance and often overlooked. Furthermore, the

key permits Christians to enter into dialogue with Muslims without the mutual recriminations of the past. In this respect, Father Giulio follows in the footsteps of his teacher, the late Louis Massignon, Christian ecumenist and one of the greatest scholars of Islam in this century.

What, then, of Father Giulio's interpretation and of his contribution to scholarship on Islam? Because of his approach—his ecumenical concern for dialogue—it would be difficult to fault his interpretation unless one did not accept his premise. First, his scholarship and understanding are beyond reproach: he has given most of his life to this study and clearly knows his subject matter thoroughly. On the other hand, his apparent assumption that the Qur'ān alone is the basis for understanding Islam may be questioned. It is important to mention that there is a vast body of Qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsir*) developed over the centuries by Muslim scholars to explain and interpret the text, not to mention popular religious beliefs or folk Islam and Sufism. Given the historical context in which the Qur'ān and its exegesis evolved, the role of Jesus was determined for Muhammad the Prophet by his knowledge of both Christianity and Judaism. Of the former, Muhammad knew little, by word of mouth and contact with isolated Christians who were either Monophysite or Nestorian; hence Muhammad's assault on the Trinity as composed of God, Jesus, and Mary. Of Judaism, Muhammad knew considerably more, and Old Testament stories figure prominently in the Qur'ān. The traditional Muslim interpretation of the two monotheistic faiths is that Judaism was exclusive, that it rejected Jesus (whom Muslims consider to be in the line of Old Testament prophets), and that Christianity was polytheistic. Muslims, then, cannot accept the Christian doctrine of the Word's becoming incarnate. On the other hand, Islam, as another monotheistic faith, claims for itself the finality of revelation; Muhammad is the "seal of the Prophets," the last in the line. What precedes Islam, then, is imperfect. Yet the Qur'ān *does* contain verses of expectation; it *does* accept the eschatological theme of the Messiah who will come to judge mankind at the end of time. In popular Islam, this has been a powerful theme: the *Mahdi* or Messiah is expected to inaugurate an age of justice and punish the unrighteous. Father Giulio reverses this interpretation and, to put it in summary form, sees Islam as a milestone on the way to Christianity: the *Mahdi* is Christ, and Islam waits in expectation of Him. Thus, Islam is the imperfect religion awaiting perfection and completion in the knowledge of Christ.

To sum up, Father Giulio has written a work of importance to Christian ecumenists who hope to engage in a fruitful dialogue with Muslims. Setting aside the difficulties of the past, his interpretation offers Christians an opportunity for the future. Whether this hope and opportunity bear fruit is a matter for speculation, for what is involved is the confrontation of rival faiths, each demanding exclusive allegiance.

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COVER AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

The cover and illustrations for our April issue were drawn by Brother John Francis Tyrrell, a professed member of the Franciscan Brothers of Sacred Heart residing at St. Anthony's Novitiate, Riverton, Illinois.

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