

The *Franciscan Herald*

The *Franciscan Herald* magazine, applying Christianity in the spirit of Saint Francis, is a monthly publication on practical Franciscan living for all Franciscans, especially the Secular members of the Order. It provides a Franciscan approach to contemporary Christian living, Franciscan opinion and research, and Franciscan people and ideas in action.

It is a valuable resource for leaders of Franciscan communities and a continuing education guide for all members.

The special emphasis for the next two years is the new rule for the Secular Franciscans.

The *Herald* is a perfect complement to THE CORD, for it aims to take the same high quality of Franciscan research and study and apply it to contemporary, everyday living.

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The cover and illustrations for our July-August issue have been drawn by Father Joseph Dorniak, O.F.M.Conv. As we went to press, Father Joseph was awaiting assignment after his ordination May 5 and reception of the Master of Divinity Degree from St. Anthony-on-Hudson, Rensselaer, New York.

The CORD

July-August, 1979

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Toward 1982

DEAREST Brothers and Sisters in Saint Francis,

As the eight-hundredth anniversary of Saint Francis's birth approaches, we, the four Ministers General, gave serious consideration to the matter at a meeting held on March 19, 1979, and deliberated about what we deem required to celebrate the event properly. This letter is to tell you of the decisions we reached.

—The commemoration of our Seraphic Father's birth will begin October 3, 1981, and end October 4, 1982; this will be the duration of the official celebration of the eighth centennial of Saint Francis's birth.

—Somewhat later on, probably during 1980, we shall issue an encyclical letter to the entire Franciscan order on the spiritual meaning of this historic event.

—We have set up an inter-Franciscan Commission of friars, sisters, and laymen to prepare an international Convention, both scientific and cultural in nature, to study "the vision and influence of Saint Francis down through the ages." Further details will be given you at a later date regarding this Convention.

—Here at the outset we want to urge the cooperation of Franciscans everywhere in the world in preparing for the celebration. We would, moreover, like all members of the Franciscan Families: friars, sisters, and seculars, to join their efforts both within each country and, to the extent possible, internationally.

Let us, then, not squander our physical or spiritual energies, but rather, as each of us devotes those energies assiduously to this project, let us bear strong witness to the unity of purpose that we all share.

We pray that the Lord will bless our serious efforts to discern more deeply the spirit of Saint Francis for our times, for he is indeed the thoroughly evangelical man.

Remaining always in the brotherhood of the Seraphic Father,

Fr. Constantine Koser
Minister General, O.F.M.

Fr. Vitalis Bommarco
Minister General, O.F.M.Conv.

Fr. Paschal Rywalski
Minister General, O.F.M.Cap.

Fr. Roland Faley
Minister General, T.O.R.

Rome, 23 March, 1979

Our Meditation

DACIAN BLUMA, O.F.M.

THIS PRESENTATION is intended to be brief and simple. Its purpose is to describe prayer as a growing experience in a relationship, a friendship with God. Within this broad understanding of prayer (meditation, mental prayer, etc.), and following the points taken up in Chapter 2 of our General Constitutions, the following areas are developed: (A) Prayer and Life, (B) Rhythm of Prayer, (C) Spirit of Prayer, (D) Franciscan Hermitage, and (E) Support for Prayer.

A. Prayer and Life.

The most basic purpose of prayer is to recognize God as my Lord and Redeemer and to give him worship by adoration, thanksgiving, contrition, and petition. To love him with all my mind, heart, and strength is the first commandment. To put him first in my life is to pray with a pure heart and mind.

This is a growing experience: to come to know him more intimately and understand his meaning (revelation) for me. Prayer calls me to discover who I am and what I can become by

relating his words and presence to my life and spirit.

This implies exclusive periods of time for me to stand apart from the occupations and pressures of my immediate environment in order to arrive at an honest image of myself and my God.

As a growing process through the years, such meditation deals with my life and experiences: where I am and what my circumstances, needs, and challenges are, the sum of my experiences. All this I bring under the influence of my relationship with God to be examined in the light of his word and put under his redeeming grace.

More than self-reflection, prayer makes me aware of the quality of my relationship with God. When I always have before me the assurance of his love, I am encouraged to respond to him by listening to his Word made flesh and discovering his way of seeing and acting, so that I come to understand his call in my life (discursive). It is a call to friendship, appealing to my will and desire, my feelings and emotions,

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and inviting me to a growing confidence in faith (affective). It is a dedication of my whole being, by which I literally give away my life, wasting time in the holy leisure of enjoying his presence, his goodness, and his love (contemplative).

To enter into this world of faith, I look for spiritual reading to acquire a taste for prayer, a growing conviction of the reality of his love for me, and his constant presence in me. Under the guidance of spiritual masters and saints, I recognize the validity of my approach and find light for my own experience.

B. Rhythm of Prayer.

A friendship, to be living and dynamic, calls for frequent communication. Such contacts include a substantial amount of time during which, instead of imposing my own ideas on God, I assume the role of a listener (disciple) at the feet of the Master. It must be long enough so that I recognize his love in my life, experience his presence and acquire a taste for prayer, rather than merely fulfill my time as a duty to be done. And it will be frequent enough so that my awareness in this relationship and the fruits of my experience can be continued in a growing way.

Our General Constitutions present a basic rhythm of prayer: a period of personal prayer each

day, a day of recollection each month, and several days of retreat each year (19:2). The regularity of my prayer is basic to the honesty I have about my growth. Without it, I lose the vitality of my relationship with God, easily forgetting who I am before him (James 1:24) and assuming illusions of myself from what I think others expect or think of me.

This rhythm calls for a discipline of regularity in my contact with God, a constancy or faithfulness in attending to his will, and a gentleness of disposition. Such a rhythm influences the body as well as the spirit and helps me to cope with the violence, haste, and anxieties that arise from my own selfishness.

I stand naked and alone before God. I need courage to accept myself as God sees me. The support of my brothers is vital, then, to my perseverance in prayer. Francis asked a friend to stand by the cave where he prayed in his early years and had brothers for support throughout his life. The intensity of his exhortation to give God the highest place in our consciousness is clear in chapters 22-23 of the Rule of 1221. And when we are unable to maintain this priority and rhythm of prayer, Francis insists that we appeal to our minister (Rule of 1223, ch. 10).

C. The Spirit of Prayer.

The awareness of myself as God's disciple carries over

beyond the time of prayer into my daily life and activities. It is here that I am challenged to adjust my attitudes and responses according to the Master's words and spirit (Rule of 1223, ch. 5). To be recollected means to maintain a wholeness, a consistency, and a faithfulness to this relationship. There is this dialogue: my prayer influences my life's attitudes and actions, my attitudes and actions provide my prayer with material for discernment — i.e., where I clarify what is of the Spirit of the Lord and what is of my own selfishness (Rule of 1221, ch. 17).

The spirit of prayer consists primarily in an attitude of a listener. It is the fruit of contemplative prayer where, in the leisure of longer periods of prayer, I have learned to wonder, to be in awe of God and his love. It is a receptive stance, rather than an aggressive action. I become cautious about imposing my views, judgments, and responses on others. I come to realize how selfish such instinctive reactions are, and in the asceticism of waiting on the Lord, I learn to reverence his Spirit above my own impulses (Rule of 1223, ch. 10). The spirit of prayer helps me to see things differently, with a pure heart, i.e., according to his purpose (Admonition 16).

It is especially within my own brotherhood and in daily life that I will be conscious of the pres-

ence of the Spirit; and, in contrast, it is here that I will recognize my own selfishness that easily shows itself in the environment of familiarity, where my carelessness is revealed. I can expect that my weaknesses will betray me most often here, and that is why Francis calls us to quick reconciliation, not only for the sake of charity, but also to witness to one another to the primacy of the Spirit in our fraternity (Rule of 1223, ch. 10; Rule of 1221, ch. 11).

D. Franciscan Hermitage (Ritiro, House of Prayer).

It was Francis's practice to set aside longer periods of time for prayer in solitude (1 Celano 71, 91, 103). This was a deliberate plan (rhythm) he formed after having solved his question about living an exclusively contemplative life (1 Celano 34-35, St. Bonaventure, *Leg. Maj.*, 12:1-2). The qualifications of this practice were these: he insisted on getting away periodically beyond the reach of contact with people, he chose companions (friars) to be with him, he spent a considerable amount of time at such solitary places, as he followed there a pattern of solitary prayer and fellowship with his brothers (Religious Life in Hermitages).

The hermitage offers the opportunity to break away from the tight schedule of activities, to experience time in a new way, to

discover leisure for freedom of spirit, to bring myself out of fragmentation into a wholeness of being, to heal wounds of the past, and to reflect on life in the presence of a God who calls in love. At the same time it is a purifying experience, because in solitude I stand alone before God, where in awe and wonder, as in a holy place, I recognize him as a "consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

Our General Constitutions provide for such hermitages, based on Francis's simple rule and adapted to the needs of our time (28-30).

E. Support for Prayer.

Credibility in the importance of prayer depends in great part on our Ministers. The theory must be made to apply in practice: that prayer holds top priority in our lives. Ministers hold the best position for expressing this, and they can do so most tellingly by their own practice, their attitudes and decisions, and the willingness they show in responding to their friars' needs in this area (CG, 20).

Two other means of support for prayer that deserve our special attention today are the House Chapter and the Confessor.

The House Chapter holds a major influence on the climate for prayer. It is at the level of our daily lives that prayer is practiced and tested. Thus the local fraternity can gather in Chapter to

speak about prayer to one another, arrange times of silence in respect for prayer (CG, 44:2), share experiences in spiritual growth, and discern together how as a fraternity it reflects gospel values (CG, 22). It becomes easier, then, to speak of penance as a means of simplifying personal needs and subjecting various forms of selfishness to the life and work of the Spirit within the fraternity (CG, 25:2).

The position of Confessor, or spiritual director, has always been a vital means of growth in prayer (CG, 26). Today this takes on more significance as a means for discernment because we have opened up our structure in the community and have given the individual friar more freedom to make personal choices. The risk of being misled by one's own prejudices and narrow judgments is that much greater.

The Confessor's role is to guide the individual in prayer, suggest means, point out difficulties, offer encouragement, help in discernment. He is available to review the condition of the friar's soul and his relationship with God. He may be the only person the individual friar can find to speak with openly and frankly about his most basic needs for growth.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation has lost its meaning and value for many today. A valuable means of developing their

conscience is lost to them at a time when it is most critical. And not having the courage to speak to a spiritual director, they are left in the apathy and helplessness



THE AIM OF the foregoing paragraphs has been to show that prayer is a relationship with God, that it is dynamic (i.e., we are called to grow and mature in this relationship), and that it is a growing experience which leads to a contemplative attitude, whereby we become listeners, more sensitive to the Spirit and more alert to his presence and work in us.

In what follows, we seek not so much to describe prayer as to speak to the needs of our friars regarding prayer. The question before us is this: What can we do to encourage and support the practice of mental prayer—i.e., of reflective or contemplative prayer?

We know that relying on legislation is not enough. When we write laws or documentation, we sometimes feel excused from something that is far more important: an on-going vigilance, a personal concern for the spirit of prayer. The grace of prayer is a gift of God that must be treasured. The need today is to create a climate of interest in prayer, an enthusiasm that flows from a personal involvement and dedication.

ness of their state. The new rite offers an opportunity to reintroduce this vital means with new possibilities for the growth of friars in prayer.

The strongest, most compelling inspiration and incentive for prayer comes not from documentation, but from contact with persons who pray, who spend much time in prayer every day, who govern their lives by the spirit of prayer.

As the Word became flesh, so example is more powerful than words. We must, then, seek out and encourage men of prayer. For it is in this way that God will speak to us, that the Spirit will enlighten, guide, and strengthen us in our life and work. And we believe that it is in prayer that we arrive at our deepest convictions, discover our mission and calling, offer the most fruitful kind of service and direction for the community. We believe that!

Vigilance, then, is the first duty of Ministers and of all friars. What is the Spirit saying to us today? is the question before us. To be alert to his presence so that we may minister according to his direction is the most positive way for us to view our responsibility of leadership.

To clarify our thinking, we must face such questions as these. Do we really want our friars to be men of prayer? Will we support

them in their desire to grow in prayer? Does prayer have a high priority in our policies and programs in the community? Am I willing to schedule into my life serious periods of prayer, to stand behind what I say?

The following reflections are placed under headings that suggest responsibility.

A. In Each Conference (Language Group).

We are in need of material on prayer drawn from Franciscan sources (see CG, 20). We know that growth in prayer depends on spiritual reading to expand the mind and motivate the heart. Spiritual reading has a powerful influence on prayer: it encourages us, it broadens our understanding of God, and it deepens our knowledge of ourselves.

Specifically, we need to know how the Franciscan saints have prayed, what they said about prayer, how Franciscan authors have interpreted and explained Francis at prayer. We need examples, approaches, and methods of prayer according to Franciscan tradition. After Vatican II, a new interest in prayer has sprung up, as we know. Our young and not-so-young people are searching for methods of prayer even among non-Christian traditions. Our need is to search out, bring together, and publish in readable style the experience and wisdom of the saints of our Order.

This is an excellent way to stimulate new interest and offer our directors and teachers guidelines on which to build in the present.

B. Within Each Province.

1. *Retreats* (CG 19:1). To avoid letting the annual retreat become a routine, we must give it special importance. In fact, the annual retreat is intended to call us out of the routine and enable us to stand aside and above, to evaluate our life and rededicate ourselves.

Retreat is as sacred as the Sabbath, as wholly apart from everything else as the Lord Jesus in solitude on the mountain. Leisure, freedom of spirit, and a whole new way of seeing things should be some of what we experience. Most of all, retreat is a longer and uninterrupted time for prayer, where the dispositions Francis asks of us can be experienced (Rule of 1221, ch. 22, 23).

To make this possible, the province community and the local fraternity must cooperate in helping and supporting the individual friar in planning his retreat, away from his usual duties and apart from his own friary. Discussions among all the friars on this important topic can offer new possibilities for a good variety of forms, programs, and places that will meet the real need of the friars, and which can be supported by the province (CG, 19:2).

The value of the monthly day of prayer and renewal is to break the rhythm and pace of work, to remind us of our own rhythm of prayer. It is an occasion for the local community to reflect together on mutual needs as well as common spiritual goals (CG, 20). To allow for habitual neglect is to fail our friars and to lose ground in the struggle for a spirit of prayer (Rule of 1223, ch. 5).

2. *The Franciscan Hermitage* (*Ritiro, House of Prayer* (CG, 28-30)). The Franciscan Hermitage is a contemplative program in our apostolic Order. It includes fraternity even in solitude. It consists of a withdrawal from activities for a longer period of time for prayer in leisure, silence, and solitude. Francis found this necessary from his own experience and drew up a plan for his brothers where, in fraternity, they could support and protect one another's privacy for prayer in the interchange of roles of Martha and Mary (Religious Life in Hermitages).

Throughout the history of the Order, adaptations of this plan have been made and have given fresh inspiration to growth in prayer both for the individuals and for the community as a whole.

Today, for example, it might be conceived as a form of apostolate of prayer in itself, where individual friars dedicate themselves to prayer and penance for a longer or shorter period of time (CG, 94).



It can also be a fraternity formed by a group of friars who constitute a nucleus (core members) for friars who come for such special retreats. Such a core group provides the environment for prayer, protecting one another's solitude and silence and sharing the facilities and services of a library and spiritual direction. It answers many of today's needs because

a. it is primarily for professed friars, who have spent some years in the ministry and are looking for the opportunity to build up their spiritual growth;

b. it offers the opportunity for those who sense a calling for the contemplative life, to dedicate several years or a lifetime to prayer and the ministry of prayer for the friars; and

c. it is more than a place; it is a fraternity of friars, who give

living witness to the reality of a faith community. Its very existence makes the primacy of prayer in our Franciscan life credible today.

3. *Training Program for Spiritual Directors* (Medellin Documents, 69-70; C. Koser, *As I See the Order*, 148-50). Who are the spiritual leaders in our community? To appoint directors and guardians is to accept the responsibility for such leadership. It means that we believe they can communicate the value and importance of prayer and themselves pray and spend time in prayer.

Support for them and contact with them is more important today, when pluralism of thought and attitude tends to cause division and marked differences in our communities. We must be accountable to one another and give reasons for the faith we hold and the teaching we give (1 Pt. 3:15-16).

Such support includes the opportunity for such directors to receive special training and schooling to strengthen their influence and equip them to fulfill their most important responsibilities.

By the quality of these appointments and the attention we give them on an on-going basis, we show this to be our highest priority and our most personal concern. For indeed, such

directors represent the Ministers in their highest duty.

C. Within Each Fraternity.

The daily rhythm of life in fraternity is the most influential and constant motivation for the individual friar's life of prayer. This is home, where life is lived in the reality of day to day.

The House Chapter is brotherhood in action. The voice, mood, and will of the fraternity is spoken here. In Chapter, under the guidance of the superior, we call one another to prayer and set up goals and schedules that will make the spirit of prayer evident as our first concern (CG, 96:2). Guidelines are formed to have fixed times for silence (CG, 44:2); plans are discussed for annual retreats and for monthly days of prayer and renewal (CG, 19:2). At such special times, Franciscan documents are read and discussed (CG, 3), and the opportunity for evaluating one's personal spiritual growth is shared with the fraternity (CG, 22).

It is through the House Chapter that the superior becomes alerted to providing more practical means of introducing friars to the theory and practice of mental prayer, and to taking care that more time, good reading material, and better facilities are available (CG, 20).

The voice of the Chapter must be heard today. Friars must be encouraged to speak out their needs to one another (Rule of 1223, ch. 6), and we all must learn

the asceticism of listening patiently to one another as a sign of our love. This includes the Provincial Minister as well, whose presence at such local fraternity chapters from time to time can lend support to its importance and give him the chance to listen in dialogue to what the friars are saying.

To grow in prayer we must incline ourselves toward it: form a mentality, an attitude toward this communion with God. We need to build up aids that will dispose us to God. This way of living, seeing, and thinking is what we mean by penance. It must be understood as our desire to acquire the Spirit of the Lord, as opposed to the spirit of selfishness. This is how Francis speaks of it (Rule of 1223, ch. 10; Rule of 1221, ch. 17).

Faced as we are with the spirit of self-indulgence, this attitude and this way of thinking are challenged not only by our own inclinations but also by the ways and attitudes of modern man. We are in need of one another to uphold a strong and open desire for the Spirit of the Lord. This is why the General Constitutions call for the topic to be brought up from time to time in friary chapters (25:2).

Specifically, this calls us to simplify our needs which our society constantly increases. Such needs absorb our attention, keep us forever restless, and direct our

minds and hearts off the central point of our most genuine concern. As Francis puts it, the deception lies hidden even behind the guise of some good, which we think justifies our many concerns (Rule of 1221, ch. 22). In such a mood and climate it becomes increasingly difficult to spend longer periods of time in solitude, silence, and prayer.

What we are looking for in "signs of penance," then, is a way to identify those needs which merely cater to our selfishness, to be suspicious of them, deliberately to take a stand in the simplicity of our life-style, to live according to the Spirit of the Lord.

D. For Each Friar.

Mental prayer is our most personal duty and privilege. So personal is it, in fact, that no one can substitute for us (Medellin Documents, 44). And precisely because it is so personal, it is subject to neglect. The reasons are many, as we know: fear of the demands it makes on our time, of the changes called for in the comforts of our life, etc. The consequences are even more painful: the experience of emptiness and loneliness within, which are compensated for by further distractions and activities. Yet there are many friars today who are too ashamed or too fearful to reveal their needs and reach out

for help.

When a friar feels that he is growing in his relationship with God, he discovers the most personal and compelling reason to persevere in prayer. Everyone wants to grow! It is the law of life. To grow means that one is coming to a better understanding of God's goodness and mercy. He experiences the greatness of God's forgiveness and love through the sinfulness and helplessness of his own life. To grow in intimacy with the Lord is to recognize in the depth and secrecy of his own being, his need and complete dependence on Him.

The need today is for encouragement: the encouragement

of friars who themselves spend time in prayer, who make it clear that they spend an hour or more each day in mental prayer, who freely discuss and encourage others to good spiritual reading as support for prayer.

There is, above all, a need for spiritual directors who in a warm and encouraging way offer serious guidance, who make themselves readily available to their brothers, and who are willing to give continuing direction through times of trial and discouragement. As friars gain courage to speak of and share their needs and hunger, they will gradually learn to make themselves accountable for their spiritual progress and find hope to build on it.

Opportunist

Rabboni,
the Magdalene goes, swift, fleet,
with all of spring upon her tongue.

Sudden, from seven deaths sprung,
I come, with kisses
to stay Your sacred feet.

Sister Mary Agnes, P.C.C.

Aqua Lateris Christi, Lava Me

MOTHER MARY FRANCIS, P.C.C.

ALTHOUGH WE no longer have a special feast of the Precious Blood of Jesus, it is still a dedication in the Church. And in our last conference on the unfolding petitions of the ageless prayer, "Anima Christi," we reflected about that precious blood, asking that it would indeed "inebria nos"—make us drunk with its giving so that we may excel and surpass ourselves in our own giving.

Now we come to the next petition, which we might perhaps call the most mystic of them all. We pray, "Aqua lateris Christi, lava me": "Water from the side of Christ, wash me." And we shall see that there is a very intimate connection between that shed blood and that water from Christ's side. When we were recently assembled in the community room, remarking together at the beauty of the altar décor created by one of our sisters, we reflected on the theme in the

words of Holy Scripture, that from His side shall flow streams of living water. And indeed it was a most charming décor created by one of our sisters, with the light and gauzied cloth signifying the flowing water, and the "water" caught below in the pure white bowl with its floating mimosa blossoms and its lovely rocks. A true presentation. And the mystics through the centuries have made such presentations in their words, their songs, their dance, whatever creative outlets they chose for sharing with us their understanding of what was flowing from the side of Christ. But, dear sisters, let us not forget that these lovely mystic representations, as any true mystic representation, express a very solid reality, a reality so overwhelmingly strong that it can perhaps only be appropriately expressed in mystic form.

What, really, was that water that came from the side of Christ

Mother Mary Francis, P.C.C., Abbess of the Poor Clare Monastery of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Roswell, New Mexico, is the author of numerous books of spiritual conferences and poetry. This is the fourth in a series of twelve conferences on the prayer, Anima Christi, originally given at chapter to the Poor Clare Nuns in Roswell. To preserve the spontaneity of the spoken conferences, the barest minimum of editing has been done on the transcriptions.

after all the bitter sufferings, the agony of the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the painful and arduous way of the Cross, the anguished affixing to the Cross, the three terrible hours of agony of body and soul and mind and heart? What was this that happened when all of the other was done and Jesus had said, "It is finished!" (Jn. 19:30) because it really was finished? What happened after his "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Lk. 23:46) was spoken, and his spirit, commended, had gone into the hands of his Father? What was this strange flow of water from his side?

Well, dear sisters, we know that the human heart is enclosed in a conical sac of liquid, and that the sac is called the pericardium. This serus, this liquid which surrounds the heart is, in a sense, one might say, the heart's last protection. When that soldier took that spear and plunged it into the side of Christ, into his blessed Heart, he pierced that pericardium. And so, along with the blood, the last blood of that most Sacred Heart, came its support—that clear liquid from the pericardium. It was the sign of death.

The support was gone, the pericardium pierced, so that its water flowed out and proclaimed death. That water which came from the side of Christ was indeed the proclamation of his redemp-

tive death. The water flowing out reiterated in its own way the proclamation of what his blessed lips had uttered only a few moments before. The water repeated, "It is finished." There is nothing more to give. The name of the water from the side of Christ is: totality. All support is gone, all protection is taken away. The sheltering sac around the heart has been pierced and the heart itself rent. The water and the blood together say: "All is given."

And so, when the Scriptures tell us that "out of his side shall flow streams of living water" (Jn. 7:38), they are asking us to remember that the living waters we receive from that sacred side are the waters proclaiming Christ's death. And they are living waters for us, refreshing for us, the baptizing of the new Church born from that side of his, just because they are his *all*. Strength is always received from one who gives all.

In every reference to this water from the side of Christ we see in the Scriptures as well as in the writings of the mystics through the centuries the expression of totality. In the first Vespers hymn of the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, we have these words: "For this You bore the lance's thrust and scourge and thorns and pain, / that blood and water from Your Heart might wash away our stain." The water

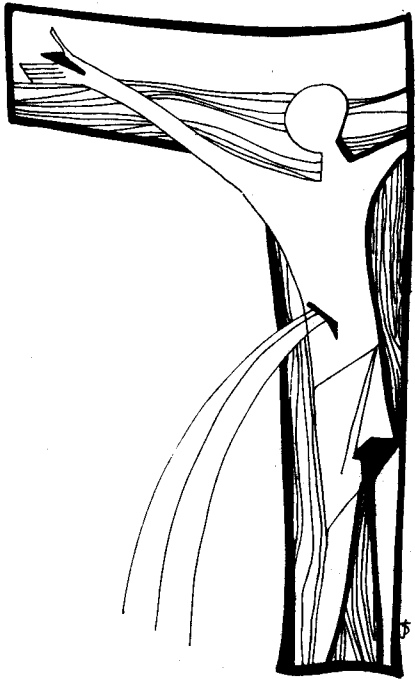
was there with the blood to say: All is given. And everything that led up to this, as that Vespers hymn teaches us, says that all which Christ bore was ordered toward this totality of giving, the flowing of water and blood from his stricken side.

Again, in one of the responses in the Office of the Most Sacred Heart from which this water as well as the blood flowed, the running water, the water of the pericardium, we have these words: "Christ loved us, and in his blood he washed away our sins." And once more, "From whose Heart, when pierced, we saw blood and water giving birth to the Church." Was the blood not enough, the life-blood of his that gave life to the Church? Yes, it was. But let us say it again, and let us think of it again and again: The water from his side is the sign of *all*. The Church is born from his sacred side out of his total giving. We are born and we are baptized and we are professed out of his total giving, without which neither birth nor baptism nor profession could be possible. It is the sign of his death which is the sign of our life. And from his side indeed flow streams of living water that wash away our stains. They have power to wash away our stains because they are the waters of his total giving, the giving of the God-man.

As contemplative daughters of

the Church, we have a specific mission, a special expression of the total Christian mission: to wash away the sins of the world and to send out streams of living water upon a continually dying, agonizing, anguished world. We shall not do this unless our spiritual pericardium is broken and all is given, so that from us, too, flow out in union with his infinite giving, the blood and water, the sign of death. We shall give life to no one except at cost of some dying of ours. Dear sisters, I ask you, as I ask myself, to remember that no one ever gives new life, renewed life, a new reason to live, a will to live, or is a channel of eternal life, except at the cost of dying. And if the Church was born from the side of Christ at that moment when the blood and the water flowed forth in sign of totality, and if we were indeed cleansed from our stains in that moment and in that sign of his total giving, and if we draw strength from that stream of water which is living water for us because it is the water of death for him, it shall never be otherwise with our own giving.

If we do not wish to die, then let us never delude ourselves that we can be purveyors of life. The water from Christ's side was the sign of death. Any medical man knows that. And if our spiritual pericardium are not willing to be pierced and torn in labor, fatigue,



suffering, misunderstanding, frustration, and whatever the lances or cudgels may be, we cannot be what Jesus wants us to be: finite channels of living water out of our many dyings.

We read in Romans that "for your sake we are being slain all the day long" (8:36). This is an expression that any lover would be able to understand. When we love totally, dear sisters—dare I say it?—it is a happy thing to be slain. Do we not see this in all profound human love? A mother would rejoice to give her life for her child. And a very terrible moral note on our times tells of mothers who destroy the life of their child and thus pervert the

whole concept and the whole reality of motherhood. For it is of the essence of motherhood that the mother should love to die for her child. Nature herself will rise up in revenge on the mother content to have the child die that she may live as she darkly chooses. Love always seeks to give at expense to itself. Real love gives truly always at sacrifice of itself.

In our own little way we have surely all experienced something of this: the joy of being worn out in doing something for one we love, the joy of exhaustion in serving those we esteem. Far from its being sadistic or masochistic that we should find happiness in dying that we may give, this is at the very healthy and very happy heart of love itself. Sometimes we witness this rather dramatically in ourselves. We are conscious of being tempted not to give, but rather to sit down and enjoy our self-pity or our fatigue or our disappointment or our hurt. And then, by God's grace, we make a great effort to rise out of that and to die to it. We decide not to live to self-pity or disappointment or hurt, but to die to all that so that we may give, through Christ, understanding or strength or new clarity of mind or any such form of life to another. There are many ways to die in order that others may live. We shall know much more about this in eternity.

The Scriptures tell us again that in Jesus "is the fountain of life" (Ps. 36:9), and the Office of the Most Sacred Heart tells us in another antiphon that "We drink from the streams of his goodness." We drink from the stream of dying flowing from his side. And we live. This is the kind of stream that must flow out from us, too, upon the world. It must not be a death-giving stream of self-involvement, a bitter stream of acrimony or aggressiveness, it must not be a turgid stream of self-pity and selfishness and sloth, but a life-giving stream of goodness.

Goodness, the philosophers tell us, is diffusive of itself. Now, dear sisters, Jesus has implanted his goodness in us. We are made in the image of God. And so we are made in the image of goodness. But that goodness has been bruised and hurt by original sin. It has been enfeebled by our many actual sins. But by total giving, by Christ's dear grace, that goodness is reunited with the goodness of the Father and flows out in streams of living water. It ought to be possible for the world to say of us that same antiphon: "We drink from the streams of your goodness." Let us never offer poisoned waters, tainted waters, turgid waters to a world that has a right to come to contemplatives and say: "All right, you are there to live a penitential life of prayer and of

dying. We have come to drink the living waters that flow from dying." Why not? The world has a right, I say.

Water is so beautiful, is it not? No wonder our Father Saint Francis sang of it with particular tenderness in his *Canticle of the Creatures*. "Be praised, my Lord, for our sister water, so great is she and yet remains so humble, shining in her crystal chastity." There is a clear, a shining water in the pericardium, the supporting sac of the heart. And it was a beautiful sister water indeed that flowed from the side of Christ as the sign of his death, clear water from his human pericardium and mystic water from his Godhead. The water of dying is always clear, always life-giving. It is the water of selfishness that is tainted, discolored, disease-bringing. We want to bring life to the world, life to the Church; and we shall do this only as Jesus did it, by dying. The clear water that flows out from each of our little dyings will be made by Christ a new stream of living water.

Returning to that familiar quotation from Romans, that "for your sake we are being slain all the day long," let us remember that this is not a groan, a lament, a jeremiad. This is a proclamation! It is like the clear water from the pierced pericardium, the water of total giving, it is a cry of joy! "For your sake we are being

slain all the day long." The little dyings in our lives *are* for His sake; they are not for no reason. The sacrifices to which Christ's graces and inspirations invite us, to which the needs of our sisters summon us, to which the anguish of the world beckons us are not meaningless dyings, not bitter things. And so the apostle Saint Paul was not muttering or groaning when he said that we are killed all the day long. No, he was making a joyous proclamation. "It's wonderful!"—that is what he was saying.

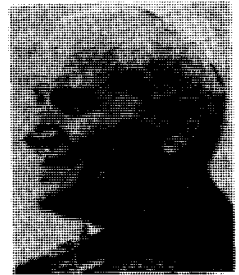
And so it was when the water came from the side of Christ, flowing out as a sign of his total giving. Now all was indeed consummated. Now we had the sign that all was given, all was over, the dying complete. And we were saved. All of this we confess when we pray, "Water from the side of Christ, wash me." It has cleansing, laving powers because it is the sign of totality, pouring out at the lance-thrust that tells his death. We are washed by that water, the Church is born of that water and baptized in that water because it is the water of consummation. The sign of his death is the sign of our life. And in the same manner if not degree, we shall wash one another to new life out of our willing dyings.

In all of our lives there come times when we think we cannot do anything about this untoward

situation, or that we cannot help this person. We feel that we have exhausted all our efforts, all our devices. Everything seems in vain. But this is not so. It is only that we have not died enough deaths or not died totally in this situation or for this person. And so for her son, Augustine, Monica died on and on and on. And Saint Augustine was washed by the total giving of Christ flowing out upon him through Saint Monica's dying.

Yes, it is a beautiful mystic reflection, dear sisters, that from Christ's side flow streams of living water; but let us be careful to remember that it is the stream of his dying which is our living water. And our living water to one another and to the world, to the agonizing, to the dying sinner, to the hardened in heart, must always flow at the cost of some dying of our own. When we pray, "Aqua lateris Christi, lava me," it is not a true prayer unless we are including in it the desire for our own dying out of Christ's dying. It has got to be a sincere prayer that our spiritual pericardium may be pierced and ourselves left without support or mainstay save in God, so that others may live. It is a very bold prayer, a very dangerous prayer. It is a petition that we may be given the strength ourselves to die totally so that others may live.

On February 25 of this year the Holy Father received in an Audience the members of the Council of the International Federation of Catholic Universities and the Rectors of the Catholic Universities of Europe, who had gathered together on that day in Rome. The following free translation, by the Editor, has been done from the text printed in L'Osservatore Romano on the day of the Audience.



The Catholic University: Towards an Apostolate of Culture

YOUR EMINENCE, Dear Brothers and Sons:

Is there any need to tell you how happy I am to spend a while with you, the members of the International Federation of Catholic Universities and Rectors of the Catholic Universities of Europe? The *Pontifical Yearbook* for 1978 lists me among the members of the Congregation for Catholic Education, where I became familiar with your problems. I also have fond memories of my participation in the Lublin Convention, which you just recalled so pleasantly. As for the task of the university professor, I quite naturally have an accurate idea of its value and importance after the years I myself spent teaching at the University of Lublin.

1. You are surely quite convinced of this, but I insist on re-emphasizing

it: Catholic universities have a privileged place in the Pope's affection, as they should have in the whole Church and in the concern of its pastors amid the many activities of their ministry. Dedicated to research and teaching, they have on that account also a role of witness and apostolate, without which the Church would be unable fully and lastingly to evangelize the vast world of culture or, indeed, whole successive generations of people who are increasingly well educated and will need more and more to bring their faith to bear on the many questions posed by the sciences and the various systems of thought. Since the first centuries the Church has felt the importance of the intellectual apostolate—one need only think of St. Justin or St. Augustine—and its initiatives in this area have been countless.

There is no need for me to cite the texts of the recent Council, which you know by heart. For some time the attention of ecclesiastical authorities has rightly been drawn to the spiritual needs of whole segments of society which are either quite de-Christianized or little Christianized: workers, peasants, migrants—the poor of every sort. This is a real necessity—a duty imposed upon us by the gospel. But the world of the university too needs the Church's presence more than ever before, and this is a need that you, in your own specific role, help to meet.

2. When I spoke recently to the professors and students of Mexico, I pointed out three objectives for Catholic universities: (1) to bring a specific contribution to the Church and to society by a really thorough study of various problems, taking care to set forth man's true meaning as reborn in Christ and thus to facilitate his integral development; (2) to form, in their teaching, men who have themselves achieved a personal synthesis of faith and culture and are therefore able both to take their own place in society and to bear witness there to their faith; and (3) to establish a true community of professors and students which will itself bear witness to a living Christianity.

3. I want to dwell here on some basic points. Research at the university level presupposes complete loyalty, seriousness, and (by that very fact) freedom of scientific investigation. It is at that price that you bear witness to the truth, that you serve the Church and society, that you deserve the respect of every academic

branch of the university.

But I must add this where man is involved — i.e., as regards the human sciences; although it is right to profit from the contribution of various methodologies, it by no means suffices to choose one, or even to combine several, to determine what man is in his depths. The Christian cannot allow himself to be confined to these limits, all the more so since he is not, in the long run, taken in by their presuppositions. He knows that he must transcend the purely natural outlook. His faith demands that he approach anthropology in the perspective of man's full vocation and salvation. Faith is the light in which he works, the principle that guides his research. In other words, a Catholic university is not only a setting for religious study, open-ended in every sense of the term. It presupposes, in its professors, an anthropology enlightened by faith, consistent with faith, especially with faith in creation and Christ's redemption. As methodologies continue to proliferate today and too often end up with a reductionist view of man, Christians have a fundamental role to play right in the arena of research and teaching precisely because they refuse to accept this truncated vision of man.

As for theological research properly so called, it cannot by definition exist without being based on and regulated by Scripture and Tradition, by experience, and by the decisions of the church handed down by the Magisterium in the course of the centuries. These brief reminders set forth the specific responsibilities of those teaching on Catholic faculties and the sense in which Catholic uni-

versities must safeguard their unique character. This is the framework in which they bear witness not only before their own students but also before other universities, to the seriousness with which the Church approaches the world of thought, and at the same time to a genuine understanding of the faith.

4. In the face of this great and difficult mission, cooperation among the Catholic universities of the whole world is highly desirable, for their own sake as well as for the suitable development of their relationships with educated society as a whole. This is what makes your Federation

so important. I wholeheartedly encourage its initiatives, especially the study of the theme chosen for your next Convention: ethical problems of modern technological society. This is a subject of fundamental importance—one of which I myself am very much aware and to which I hope to be able to return. May the Holy Spirit guide you with His light and give you the strength you need. May Mary's intercession keep you open to His action, to God's will! You know that I remain very close to your concerns and to your work. With all my heart, I give you my Apostolic Blessing.

Heart of Jesus

The Listening Heart hears every
word, the tear-filled sigh
the angry word, the curse, the blessing
the grief-stricken cry.

The Praying Heart calls out
to the Father for mercy and pleads
for those of His flock shorn
bare by life's struggles.

The Bleeding Heart stands mute
dropping healing balm to lepers
of spiritual degradation
baptizing them into HOPE

The Loving Heart palpitates madly
to a joyous "I care!" "I care!"
runs to assist the stumbling feet
the broken, mumbled prayer.

Sister Marie Carmel, O.S.C.

Bonaventure and Higher Education

RAPHAEL D. BONANNO, O.F.M.

IN THIS paper I would like to put forth some ideas of Saint Bonaventure as a modest contribution to the IV International Week of Philosophy, with the expectation of a good dialogue, criticism, and greater understanding of those ideas with my esteemed colleagues. In the first

section of the paper, I treat of Bonaventure's philosophy of education, and in the second section, I offer a theme, much in line with the topic of this Congress, i.e., the use of the "reductio" of Bonaventure as a tool for relating philosophy and the sciences.

IT IS VERY true that Saint Bonaventure never wrote a treatise on his philosophy of education, as we have today in our manuals. But it is equally true that he was an excellent educator and dedicated five years of his life to teaching at the University of Paris before his election at age 40 as Minister General of the Franciscan Order. His ideas are spread out among his Commentaries on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, his famous sermon "Christ, the One Teacher of All," his work "The Excellence of Christ's

Teaching," his book "The Retracing of the Arts to Theology," and other works.

We can better analyze the topic at hand by endeavoring to answer three important questions. What is man? What is the world? What is the purpose of education?

St. Bonaventure investigates the first question in terms of the ideal man and man as he is today. He starts with Sacred Scripture (Qoheleth 7:30): "God made mankind straight, but men have had recourse to many calculations."¹ The man to be educated

is God's image, has his human dignity, intelligence, free will, and the power to dominate things. By means of his intelligence, the student seeks the truth in order to be erect, straight, and simple and not bent over and twisted by error. By means of his free will, man embraces the supreme goodness of his rectitude, integrity or moral uplifting. By means of his power to dominate, he exercises control of things according to the will of God; and thus he becomes straight, simple, erect, correct: a regent and king of creation. Man becomes lord of the universe and continuator of the divine activity.

Nevertheless, for Bonaventure, man in his current state is quite distant from this ideal. He is curved and twisted, not straight nor erect; a sinner, avaricious, finite, sick, unstable, and full of doubts. Bonaventure's view of man in his current state therefore seems comparable to the tragic figure of twentieth-century existentialism. Again, Bonaventure's thought on man as image of God coincides with much contemporary theology written on the same topic and for this reason too seems to be of value for philosophy and theology in our day.

The second question is: What world does man live in? For

Bonaventure as for Francis before him, the world is filled with creatures that are good because they come from God and are meant to help us return to him. We should use material things as a ladder to attain the Lover who created everything.² The world is likened to a river, full of different currents and depths with varied levels of meaning. The divine Word is the center of this world which expresses in a finite manner the power, love, and beauty of God himself. The world of things is a world of symbols of God; things are what they are, but they are more than what they are. Bonaventure respects the sciences but links everything to theology.

Today many people do not accept any longer the recent scientific restriction of reality to the empirical or material; such people, in search of a fuller framework or perspective, can find in Bonaventure's sapiential ideal a good deal of food for thought.

The third question is: what after all is the purpose of education? Bonaventure answers by distinguishing four uses of knowledge. First, there is knowledge as an end in itself, that is, vain curiosity or knowl-

¹Thus the New American Bible; the Jerusalem Bible has "I find that God made man simple; man's complex problems are of his own devising."

Father Raphael D. Bonanno, O.F.M., for several years a pastor and a member of a parish team ministry in Goias, Brazil, has recently been appointed to serve full-time in vocation work there.

²In *I Sent.*, d. 8, p. 1, dub. 3.

edge closed in on itself. Secondly, there is knowledge for the sake of fame, which is a disgraceful vanity and egoism. Thirdly, there is knowledge for the sake of money, which truly dehumanizes a man. Finally, there is the best form of all: knowledge which edifies—literally, builds up—others.

Love + knowledge = holiness (Eph. 3:17-19). According to

Bonaventure, then, education is meant to orient everything and everyone toward God; it is a love-process that seeks to see and understand the Lover and everything that he has made. This is the famous “reductio,” “leading back,” of Bonaventure, which is a method of instruction designed to direct all knowledge in one way or another toward God, the primordial Source of all.

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HERE I WOULD like to consider the nature of the “reductio,” its areas of application, and, finally, a possible use for it today in seeking to understand the relationship between philosophy and the modern sciences.

In Bonaventure, the word “reductio” appears 95 times. It signifies one of the four great operations of the human spirit, together with “divisio,” “definitio,” and “demonstratio.” “Reductio” means the rising movement of the intelligence which passes from individuals to species, from species to genera, from genera to essences, and from essences to wisdom and prudence. The progress is one of unification, that is, a movement toward (1) generic unity of a multiplicity of individuals (point of view of extension), (2) generic unity of a plurality of notions in a genus (point of view of comprehension), (3) generic unity of a

multiplicity of inferior totalities (point of view of subordination), and (4) pluralities of ideal totalities conceived as generic individualities (point of view of coordination).

Thus the “reductio” is connected not only to wisdom in the area of intelligibility and thought, but also to prudence in the area of life and action. As Bonaventure says, the “divisio” proceeds from the abstract to the concrete; the “reductio” proceeds from the concrete to the abstract. The “divisio” functions in a progressive descent, a type of analysis, which is the basis for the scientific method. The “reductio,” on the other hand, ascends from the imperfect to the perfect, from the incomplete to the complete: the *unum primum*, God. The movement of the “reductio” is not merely logical but real, in the same sense as that of Teilhard’s teaching that the

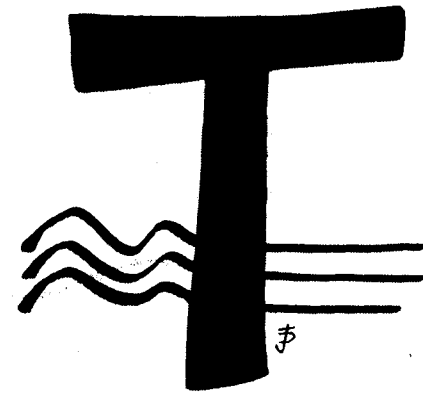
entire universe rises and converges in Christ, the Omega Point, the beginning and the end.

The areas of application of the “reductio” are in metaphysics and theology, in ethics, in some problems of physics, and in the classification of the sciences. The last of these is our present specific interest, and the Bonaventurian treatise most relevant to its elucidation is his “Retracing of the Arts to Theology,” a synthesis of knowledge in which all the sciences help man return to God, the point of origin of the universe.

Bonaventure begins with James 1:17: “Every worthwhile gift, every genuine benefit, comes from above, descending from the Father of the heavenly luminaries. . . .” From this text Bonaventure goes on to speak of six “lights” of human knowledge. Subdividing these, he subordinates all the profane sciences to theology, theology to Sacred Scripture, and Scripture to the treasures of divine Wisdom.³

Bonaventure talks of the sciences of his day (the thirteenth century), mentioning, e.g., navigation, mechanical and manual arts, etc. But the principle of his synthesis, of the “reductio,” is Christ, the incarnate Wisdom of God, the Master of all the sciences, he who said: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

³“Omnes cognitiones famulantur theologiae” (*De reductione . . .*, §26).



In this Congress we are studying the relation between philosophy and the sciences. Perhaps the “reductio” of Bonaventure can serve as a bridge between the two. If the philosophers offer the “reductio” and the scientists work with the “divisio,” the two together complete perfectly the circle of human knowledge. Philosophers need contact with the concrete so as not to lose themselves in sterile generalities. Some scientists recognize the need of a unifying principle beyond the material—something stable and fixed. The two sides thus seek by different roads the same reality, the same truth, the *unum primum*. Can Christian philosophers leave aside the “reductio” under the pretense that it is not pure philosophy but has the incense-smell of mysticism? The best philosophers were also great theologians; Augustine, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure

himself. Was it not exactly the separation between philosophy and theology on one side and the sciences on the other that brought us to the unhappy present situation where we have to try to communicate with one another once again? After all, we all seek the First Reality, and the "reductio" can be the instrument that carries us together into his presence.



Riposte

The following letter, received on May 16th, is in reply to our Review Editorial of this past April (pp. 98-103). The writer has been affiliated with the U.S. Mission Council in Washington for the past three years, and he contributed an essay on "The Spirituality of Justice" to our May and June issues of last year. We agree with him, obviously, on the importance of this subject and welcome further comments.

UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
Department of Social Development and World Peace
1312 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005

To the Editor:

The all-important subject of your excellent Review Editorial in the April 1979 number of *The Cord* impels me to accept your invitation to respond. At the same time I find myself hard-pressed to address the three or four central issues you surfaced. Each of them deserves much more time and space than this letter can afford.

Let me, then, speak to the question you raise which I consider the essential one for Religious Life today: is that life primarily a community of being (becoming) or one of action? I offer what insights I have on this crucial question for U.S. religious from the "praxis model," so well employed by the Liberation Theologians and especially by my friend and former co-worker Alejandro Cussiánovich, whose book gave rise to your Editorial.

While working in Peru as pastor of a parish dedicated to the cause of human liberation, I formed community with one other Franciscan with whom I had very little in common. Had either of us stopped to analyze it we would have concluded that we were not compatible, that we should not try to form community, that we might well be running the risk of being an anti-sign. Remarkably, however, we did manage to live, pray, eat, recreate, dialog, and work together for seven

years in harmony. Our Religious Life was built on the common purpose we held: the good of the poor with whom we worked.

The conclusion I have drawn from this intense experience is that the essence of Religious Life lies in a synthesis of your Editorial's being-action alternatives, not in one or the other of them. What Religious Life *is* (being) flows from what it does (action), although I would change the latter and replace it with "what it stands for in practice." And what Religious Life stands for in practice has to be somehow connected with overcoming oppression, working on behalf of justice, promoting the Kingdom values of freedom, dignity, peace for all human beings. Thus the true Religious Life narrows the dichotomy between being and acting, and produces the synthesis of *witnessing in and through practice* to Christ's liberating action for all.

Working closely with Fr. Cussiánovich in that parish helped us to see all of this clearly. His own commitment to Religious Life derived from his concern for and work with the subjugated domestic servant girls who attended the middle-class families of Lima. No theoretician he, that which he insists on in his books is what he gently lives every day. His vowed life manifested itself to us through his becoming one with the oppressed. Alejandro proved for us that while there are admittedly many ways of becoming one with the oppressed, and engaging in their struggle for "life ever more abundantly," Religious Life is one of the best.

I said above that this question is crucial for Religious of the U.S. If we are not about something beyond ourselves--or in other words, if we see Religious Life as having ultimate value in itself as the witness to our final destiny as humans--then the all-embracing love which we say the vows impel us towards becomes love of one another and not love for those most in need of it. Again, in the praxis methodology, given a world where two-thirds or three-fourths of the brothers and sisters suffer all sorts of indignities, can we ever justify defining ourselves in terms of ourselves, or even in terms only of transcendence?

On the consequent matter of Religious Poverty spoken about in your Review, let me offer a thought, again using the example of Fr. Cussiánovich. He comes from an upper middle class family of Lima; yet he has seen the utter necessity of joining with the poor in a country where such a determination connotes a life-style much, much lower than the accustomed. While a similar conversion might be equally difficult in our milieu, where middle and upper middle class values prevail, I believe that the active seeking of material poverty is absolutely necessary for Religious. Otherwise we shall play somewhat at the expense of Religious Life--becoming that which we stand for in practice (one with the Poor in their Exodus from slavery)--but we will never really come close to living that authentically.

I trust that these thoughts of mine are not overly complicated and that they contribute to a much-needed debate on the subject of your Review Editorial. The Religious of affluent countries are dismissed by those engaged in the struggle of the poor in our world, but that dismissal is justified and remediable. It is justified because our affluent agenda is a caricature to those who see Religious Life in function of here and now Kingdom building; it is remediable if we can shake ourselves out for a look at the real world in which we live, and react vitally to its pressing problems--racism, sexism, and classism.

Sincerely and fraternally,
Joseph Nangle, O.F.M.

May 11, 1979

Clare's Testament

Poor little plant of Francis
Joy is in your heart

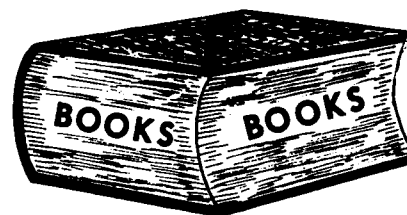
The grace of the Lord surrounds you
For all ages hence you shall be rich
For your treasure in heaven abounds.

You desire to be holy
As your father Francis taught you
Living humbly and simply in the Lord
For all ages hence you shall be rich
You are the precious servant of the Lord.

Prudent mother, gentle sister
The least among them all
You care for each one in her need
For all ages hence you shall be rich
Known for your wisdom and holy deeds.

The narrow gate of heaven
Not an easy one to pass through
But you found the key in Charity
For all ages hence you shall be rich
To see the Lord in brilliant clarity.

*Sister Anne of the Heart
of Jesus and Mary, O.S.C.*



I Live on an Island. By Catherine de Hueck Doherty. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1979. Pp. 126. Paper, \$2.75.

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

Thomas Merton wrote, "No man is an island." Catherine Doherty writes in her latest book, "I live on an island, but I am not an island." Both authors journey to God on different highways, but neither was ever alone or lonely, for they live in and with the presence of God. As in her other books, so in this one Catherine Doherty is more direct and more simple, for she is thoroughly convinced that she is merely an instrument in the hands of God and she firmly believes his Son when he says: "Without me you can do nothing."

From the vantage point of a cabin

on a small piece of land that juts out into the Madawaska River near Combermere, Ontario, Catherine writes of some of her experiences and meditations during the four seasons of the year. For some of her readers this book will create a nostalgia for experiences of nature which she describes so vividly and applies so spiritually to the journey toward God; for others it will be an enticement to commune with nature so as to share her insights on the God of nature, whom she knows so intimately.

The book is divided into four parts: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. With poetic appreciation of nature and animals her Franciscan heart heralds each season as a mirror of God and things pertaining to him. She writes, "I think of the millions of people on this continent who do not see the beauty in a tree, the beauty in the tracks of animals on the soft earth, the beauty in the opening of a wildflower in the woods... the sound of the birds, the melody of a brook, the musical whisper of trees discussing the wonders of God" and "this divorce between man and nature frightens me" (p. 23).

But in the section on Spring,

Catherine speaks of the new hope, new life, especially in the hearts of those who live in the midst of nature. With true Christian discernment she sees the bitter winter storms that followed Vatican II are over. Her hope is like the sap rising in the trees in Springtime. In spite of her sadness over the statistics concerning the number of priests willing to leave, she pays a beautiful tribute to their Catholic priesthood. Any priest beset by doubt, bewilderment, or anger concerning his vocation could read this section with profit. Here, too, she speaks of the difficulties of the nuns and sees the greatest need today to be communities of love, "little islands flung everywhere by the hand of God so that men may, like St. Thomas, touch the wounds love always makes" (p. 27). Next she uses her story-telling ability to relate a touching tale about our Lady's anger. Her relationship with Mary is more than devotion, for she has an unshakable faith in the Mother of God. Finally, she speaks of silence and poushtinia, that brought a thousand visitors to Madonna House in this one summer.

In each of the seasons, Catherine finds something to reflect upon in nature, in animals, and in the Madonna House experience. In the section on Summer, the one word that might sum it up is "peace." She says: "Like St. Francis of Assisi, you will find many little animals and birds to talk to, right where you live." But she warns us: "Don't try to approach animals when you are unpeaceful, angry, or disturbed."

The section titled "Fall" (the short-~~est~~ at 15 pages) is characterized by the word "Faith." Whether she is

writing about her beloved Russian shrine, erected before Vatican II as a symbol of unity between East and West, or vocations, or November (the month of the souls in Purgatory), her faith shines forth. As one would expect, anticipation and fulfillment come across as Catherine celebrates the Incarnation of the God-man, Jesus Christ, in the section labeled "Winter." Christmastime finds her on her island, but connected by the bridge of love with every other human being.

For those of us living in the city and aware of the social evils of our times and the need for their correction, there is the danger of getting involved in a spiritual rat-race of activity, even as the secular world is involved in the rat-race of frantic activity. We might even get to think of, and treat, the Church as if it were another business venture like General Motors or the Bell Telephone Company and forget that it is primarily a mystery. To avoid this pitfall, we need books like *I Live on an Island*, which bring us back to nature and to the God of nature.

Sent from the Father: Meditations on the Fourth Gospel. By José Comblin. Translated by Carl Kabat. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979. Paper, \$3.95.

Reviewed by Father Michael D. Meilach, O.F.M., Editor of this Review.

Precisely because of the profound simplicity so well brought out by Father Comblin, John has always been my favorite Evangelist. Simplicity can be deceptive, how-

ever—mistaken for parvity of content or even superficiality. True simplicity means just the opposite, as the scholastics well knew in insisting on God's own absolute simplicity.

Just as the divine simplicity embraces infinite richness of content, so John's Gospel yields overwhelming, enthralling cascades of insight to those who bring to its reading a docile spirit open to its simple message that in Jesus the uncreated Light, Life, and Truth has once-for-all been made manifest.

The trouble is, many of us do not have the single-minded openness and docility needed to drink in the full riches of John's eloquent testimony, and that is why meditative commentaries like this one are always so welcome, so necessary. Each commentator, of course, brings to the Gospel his own unique viewpoint, a fact that is perhaps more to the point in this case than in some others. Father Comblin is a competent theologian, of course, but is much better known for his missionary work in Latin America and for the writings embodying liberation theology which have issued from that work.

In six short chapters, the author consistently holds up as model for the missionary the Johannine Jesus whose whole mission, as the One sent by the Father, was to unite the world to the Father through complete openness in both directions—to the Father and to the world. There are some graphic and illuminating reflections on the world's darkness, on the need for mission to be rejected if it is to bear fruit, and on countless other uniquely Johannine themes.

Without implying that the faults come close to canceling out the

book's evident virtues, attractiveness, and usefulness, I would, nonetheless, like to call attention to some problems, I had with it. I doubt that the recondite sense, e.g., in which it is true (if it is true in any sense) that "Jesus did not know the Father as the Father knows himself" would be evident to the average reader (p. 11). The effect of such a statement is, unhappily, to imply approbation of the currently prevalent tendency toward subordinationism and adoptionism.

Nor will it do to say that Jesus's revelation involves "no concepts or doctrines or methodology or training" (p. 91), a position that implicitly contradicts the author's earlier criticism of the Pharisees, who could not understand Jesus precisely because "their culture and personalities contained no *category* for Jesus' way of being" (p. 28, emphasis added). The point is more important than it may seem; the minimizing of precise doctrine is a recurrent theme in the book and is the conceptual side of the author's constant polemic against the institutional Church. Its ministers, e.g., are criticized for not remaining fishers of men but instead becoming "administrators of a cult, performers of rites, perpetuators of tradition, teachers of doctrines about an invisible world, magistrates of social deportment" (p. 53). Again, "Institutional Christianity has betrayed [Jesus], making his teaching the cornerstone of yet another ideology that estranges people from God..." (p. 80); and "faith is of little use to institutions, but orthodoxy is all-important: the members' understanding is dispensable, but their assent to the insti-

tution's orthodoxy is imperative for the institution's survival" (p. 87). The Second Vatican Council as a whole would be an absolute impossibility were any of these contentions true, and so we must suppose that they are deliberate exaggerations, attributable to an unfortunate rhetoric that we North Americans might perhaps better understand—not, surely, ac-

cept without reservation—if we had undergone the author's pastoral experiences in Latin America.

In sum, if you can discount this sort of belligerent rhetoric and are seeking some real insight into the Johannine message for missionaries, you will find this otherwise attractively written book both enlightening and inspiring.



In Praise of Light

All praise be yours, my Lord,
for every kind of light.
For the sun, which lights our days
all warm and nourishing.
And for electric light, which lights our darkness,
bright and colorful.
For the light of a beacon, which guides us to safety
even in the darkest night,
patient and trusted.
And for the light of a candle, the lover's light,
delicate and soft.
But most especially for the light of the world,
nourishing, patient, and trusted,
soft and loving;
Our beacon, the light of our darkness,
the warmth of your love,
Your Son, Our Light, Jesus Christ.

John Lynch, O.F.M.

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