feast of the Conception, the Franciscans took up th
During the fourteenth century, many learned Fran
Mary's honor in the classroom, in public theologica
popular sermons, sometimes even despite calumny,
imprisonment. In the following century, Saint Ber
Saint John Capistran, Pope Sixtus IV are but a few
Franciscan champions of Mary's prerogative. Indeed, d
years of controversy, the Franciscans, who had pledge
oath to teach and defend this doctrine in public a
undoubtedly the greatest single factor in silencing the
changing the general attitude so that eventually th
universally accepted.

Thus the love for the Mother of Jesus which Fra
to his followers crystallized, as it were, in this defense of
Conception, and the feast itself became the symbol of the
and devotion of all three Franciscan Orders to Mary,
God. Today it is their special patronal feast with a pr
and is celebrated not only by the Third Order Regular
Third Order Secular, which was an effective instrume
the devotion among the faithful during the years of co

The observance of these two vigils follows the g
of the Church. Consequently, when October 3rd or
falls on Sunday, the liturgical celebration is transferred to
Saturday but the fast and abstinence are not.

*St. Bonaventure University* *Fr. Allan*

✠ ✠ ✠

God can reject everything in a creature that was c
and that carries the unfortunate mark of sin inherited f
He is absolutely unable to reject our sincere wish to l
*Padre Pi*

# the CORD

## CONTENTS



✠ ✠ ✠

**THE CORD**, a monthly magazine specifically devoted to Franciscan Spirituality, ublished under the sponsorship of the Franciscan Educational Conference by

The Franciscan Institute
St. Bonaventure University
St. Bonaventure, New York

*Managing Editor*
Columban Duffy, O. F. M.
Christ the King Seminary

*Editor*
otheus Boehner, O. F. M.
Franciscan Institute

*Assistant Editor*
Sr. Francis, S. M. I. C.
Paterson, N. J.

*Consulting Editor*
Denis Gallagher, O. F. M. Conv., Albany, N. Y.

Annual Subscription, $2.00

econd class matter on November 25, 1950, at St. Bonaventure, New York, under Act of March 3, 1879.

ications, whether of a business or a literary nature, should be addressed to E CORD, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, New York.

*Cum permissu superiorum.*

.6 Je

## CHILDREN OF FRANCIS: 1953

Where shall the diaphanous dreams find spaces
For drifting now, I wonder, when the thoughts
Of men leap up like tenements, and commerce
Hawks cruel canticide on every street?

The treaty-tables smirk like chromium
Where lands of paunch and pinstripes prate of peace.
The vases of the universe are brightly
Jammed with paper flowers, and the old
Songs roll like tears down liberation's drains.

Still, in the bustling forums, sandalled strangers
Threaten the bombers with their: "Pax et bonum!"
And wilt some cannons with a Canticle.

Who shall devise a torture to defeat them?—
These men whose Father's hands and feet were torn!
What clever engineer shall murder singing
Out of the Seraph's daughters in their cloister?

The ancient smile of Francis arches over
Buckets of anxious sand at every door,
The waiting hoses, and the triple-chamber
For rinsing poisons from the bewildered air.

Learn new prostrations gay humility never
Dreamed of (on stomach, not on heart), poor world,
Not guessing how you roll in all your worried
Quick convolutions in the Hand of God.

But let the heirs of an incredible vision,
Heavy with Francis' dreams, light with his songs,
Keep their fantastic certainties for glowing
Candles in the sucking swamps of fear.

And still, in the bustling forums, sandalled strangers
Threaten the bombers with their: "Pax et bonum!"
Wilting the cannons with a Canticle.

*Poor Clare Monastery* *Sr. Mary Fra*
*of Our Lady of Guadalupe,*
*Roswell, New Mexico*



## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

*From the heart, a pattern to the flock* (I Peter 5, 3)

e and the same Spirit of God, said the dying Francis, had led ars and the Poor Ladies from this present world. The same ideals, me spirituality, the same poverty of spirit and its many fruits, herefore inspire all the sons and daughters of the Seraphic Father. ompletely Clare, his oldest daughter, his little plant, understood d made it real in her own life and her own Order, is abundantly rom her Legend and writings.

we proceed to talk of Franciscan obedience and of the relation n superiors and subjects (modern terms!), we shall not hesitate e her as a living example of the ideals that must inspire Francis- brotherhood", as Saint Francis so aptly called our common life. all, she embodies the concept, the office, the virtues of a Francis- uperior. Since obedience includes both the one who commands he one who obeys, we shall study Clare first as the model of su- s, and then (in a later conference) as the ideal of the obedient scan.

### *The concept of superior*

f Clare became the "abbess of the monastery of San Damiano" and o saluted in official documents, the office and the title were none r doing—except her own obedience. During the first three years of ew life "she declined the name and office of abbess, humbly wishing under rather than over others, and more willing to serve than to rved among the handmaids of Christ" (*Legend*, n. 12). Finally, at rging of Saint Francis and apparently in obedience to the canons e Lateran Council of 1215, she undertook the ruling of the Poor es.

Her reluctance came in part from her humility, but m
her fear of what the title of abbess stood for in her day, and
sensitive appreciation of what a Franciscan superior should be.
had some experience with monastic life in the few months b
came to San Damiano, and that had made her more conscio
vast difference between the two forms of religious life.

In the monastic way of life, the authority or ruling pow
centrated in the abbot or abbess. Great dignity is attached to
a sacramental blessing accompanies the election; and the po
conferred and usually held for life is in some ways indefinite
limited in scope. The Rule is, as it were, an instrument in the
the abbot, who is to judge what is more salutary and needf
the rest are to obey. The monks are completely subject, and
into the monastic family ("togetherness" becomes the touch
family composed of a father and his spiritual sons. From wh
tells us of medieval abbeys, the abbot or abbess was often
person indeed.

Only gradually did the contrast between the monastic
mendicant ways become fully apparent to the world. Yet Clare
beginning seems to have shared with Francis a deep appreci
the difference. There was to be no great stability, no possessio
ever, no vast houses. A family, indeed, and close bonds of union
brothers (or Ladies), all "willingly serving and obeying one
through the charity of the Spirit" (*Rule* I, 5), "reverencing an
ing one another" (I, 7); yet, truly, more a brotherhood, a f
equals. Leaders of some kind there would have to be, for a
must be founded on law and authority, and Francis would be
to uphold the central place of obedience. Yet it was to be an a
with a difference: the Rule is above the authority, and the Po
the Rule, and all must obey both; an authority that will be not
but a service, not for life but for a time only.

See the technical words Francis adopts, and we appre
concept. The Franciscan superior for him is a *frater praelatus,*
up temporarily to guide and rule his brethren, himself rem
friar as much as ever. The Franciscan subject is a *subditus* (not *s*
one who has *yielded himself* (*sub-do*) to obedience, who "for G
has renounced his own will" (*Rule* II, 10). Both are equally
the Rule, for it transcends them both.



*The office of superior*

In keeping with such equality and fraternity (and a certain liberty
Francis refused to give the *frater praelatus* any title of dignity.
even the name of prior was to be his, much less that of abbot,
r: but "let them all alike be called Lesser Brothers" (*Rule* I, 6).
t names he does give, or usage has added, show the true office of
Franciscan superior: minister, custos, guardian; names that denote
onor, dignity or superiority, but service! "All you are brothers . . .
) he that is greatest among you shall be your servant (minister)"
23, 9-11; *Rule I,* 5). All are prelates indeed, but lifted up not for
own convenience and glory, but for "the service and common
re of the Friars" (*Rule* II, 8). To them especially apply the words
int Francis: "Each pupil shall receive his reward not according
e authority he holds, but the labor he has performed" (*II Cel.* 146).

Think not, however, that Francis meant any lessening of the author-
f the prelate or of obedience on the part of the "subject"! At
ession, we are received to obedience (Rule II, 2), to obey in all
gs which we have promised the Lord to observe and are not against
cience and our Rule (II, 10). He himself protested to his dying day:
rmly wish to obey the Minister General and any Guardian whom it
please him to give me. And I wish to be so captive in his hands,
I cannot take a step or make a move beyond obedience or his
" (*Testament*).

But what he did abhor was the sight of some prelates making their
a matter of self-glory. Too many, he complained, possessed an
tion to be over others, and sought after prelacies. Such were not
Friars Minor, but forgetful of their calling. Others took it ill
they were removed from office, since they were seeking not the
but the *honor. In praelatione casus*: only when a man is lifted up
in danger of falling (*II Cel.* 145). The prelate he desired was one
sought in the care of others not his own glory but the will of God
things; one who sought his own salvation before all, and looked not
he applause of his subjects but for their spiritual progress; who
d a position of authority and felt humbled when it was bestowed
ejoiced when it was removed (*I Cel.* 104).

Taught of God, Clare grasped much of this before it had even
expounded by Saint Francis to his brethren. She would have refused

the office save for obedience. When accepted, "it caused fear, not
in her heart, and increased not liberty but service and subjectio
more she was raised up in the eyes of others by outward digni
more lowly she was in her own estimation, the more ready to
(*Legend,* n. 12). The longer she held office, the more humble
came, the more thoughtful of the needs of others, the more
striving to rule others more by her virtues and holy manner
the authority given her: from the heart a pattern to her flock.

### *The virtues of a superior*

What were the virtues of Clare that made her the ideal su
The same which Saint Francis wishes to find in any Franciscan
up in authority—the foundations of which one lays while he o
a subject!

First and above all, there must be the foundation of all Fra
virtue: charity and poverty of spirit, saying *Yes* to God and *No*
and creatures taken purely as creatures. Therefore, the Fra
superior will seek God in his or her office, not self, not persona
comfort or liberty. The office will be seen as a trust for souls, the
of others, an onus rather than an honor. Poverty of spirit will
pression in what is perhaps the first specific virtue of a superior: h
and detachment from the office.

"Those who are set over others," said Saint Francis, "shoul
in this only as much as they would glory if appointed to wash
of the brethren. And if they are more perturbed over removal fr
prelacy than they would be if removed from the 'office of the fee
are laying up 'treasure' to the peril of their soul." Clare carried
the extreme, for she considered it part of her office to wash the fee
externs and to do the menial tasks connected with the sick!
Franciscan in office ought at least always to remember he is but
*praelatus,* still a Friar Minor and bound to humility, but lifted
time for the good of others; and feel nothing but relief when ca
to relinquish the onus.

Another form of humility in a prelate, says Saint Bonaven
affability, which we might translate into the words of Clare
successor: "Let her be so kind and approachable that Sisters



their necessities without fear and have recourse to her at any time
all confidence" (*Testament,* 19). Both Saints are echoing the
ught of Francis, that those in authority receive their subjects char-
ly and kindly and show them *familiaritas,* a real family spirit of
therhood.

Woe to that superior who is as a lion in his house, terrifying those
his household (Ecclus. 4, 35), unapproachable, inclined to coldness
indifference. Woe to him that is prone to anger or perturbation,
ecially in little things (unless it is anger according to charity), for
is "impeding charity" in himself and in those under him (*Rule* II,
-and charity must have the primacy. Blessed the community whose
late is *like-minded, compassionate, a lover of the brethren, merciful,*
*mble* (I Peter 3, 8).

But no one is going to possess such composure and show such af-
bility unless he is patient; patient with himself first of all and the
ties of his office as they crowd upon him; patient with others, their
w progress, their thoughtlessness and ingratitude, their imperfections.
n the other hand, impatience and brusqueness of speech stand next to
nger in impeding charity and in turning away others to seek help or
onsolation elsewhere. If a prelate possess true patience, as Saint Bona-
enture remarks, his very office and its demands will prove a help to
is own spiritual perfection. He will thereby do penance for his own
ins; he will be kept from the *tumor superbiae,* the tumor of pride (get-
ing a "big head"); and so will multiply his own merits. Did not Saint
rancis tell a certain Minister that patience and long-suffering charity
ward the errant would be far more meritorious to him than flight to
e quiet of a hermitage?

The patience and forbearance of Saint Clare seem to have be-
me a by-word among her Sisters. But above all they found in her the
odel of their own life, even as Francis wished the Ministers and pre-
tes to be such that their life would be a *speculum disciplinae,* a
rror of religious discipline, to the others. In her humility and sense
service, she did not lord it over her charges but became from the
rt a pattern to her flock. In sickness and in health, she strove to
d by virtue rather than by office, to be conformed in all things
the common life, as she demands in her Rule of her successors. There
ver was a question of one rule for the Sisters, another for herself.
e Francis, rather, she was the living embodiment of the Gospel-life,

the mirror of virtue, the rule of conduct. So in a Franciscan exemplarity of life, total conformity, will make up for m defects.

This leads to a final point (though only a few virtues mentioned): like Francis and Clare, the Franciscan prelate as his true goal the spiritual interior living of the Rule, the mation of his charges in the spirit and the life of the Orde his duty (or privilege!) to lay down all sorts of new laws and for his community, as though its perfection depended on hi decrees. Rather, since he is under the Rule—and it is the Franciscan way of life, which his subjects have promised to ob duty is primarily to provide, regulate, guard the conditio which he and his subjects alike can keep the Rule they have To do this, he needs must follow true Franciscan principles, which we have suggested. Therefore, he should know and "implement" the basic philosophy of our life. Above all, he m as Saint Bonaventure puts it, to make those committed to hi *formes,* like Christ. Therefore, let the prelate be Christ-like *Christum ingerat subditis imitandum,* from the heart a patt flock!

*Detroit, Michigan* *Fr. Ignatius Brad*

✠ ✠ ✠

The knowledge of your own unworthiness and deform most pure divine light whereby you are forced to reflect on nature and its potentiality for every sort of crime; and it was the greatest saints because it both protects the soul from every pride and vanity and increases humility, which is the basis of t and of Christian perfection. Saint Teresa herself had this k and she says that at times it brought with it enough pain and cause death, if the Lord had not sustained her.

*P*

# FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Within many minds, even modern minds, there lurks the thought beneath a habit beats a rejected heart. In sundry places, and in so many ways, there breaks into expression the conviction that "she n't get a man". How little such people know of the magnetic pull ed by Love Itself on these suspect hearts! However, not to disap- those who belittle the intention of souls seeking a temporal ness with the Eternal Lover, there have been, and are, instances ch misguided individuals. Some of these come and go; some come attempt a life of compromise between the world and the spirit, but them incompatible; some come, and after a while are captivated e Creator of souls. Foremost among the so-called disappointed in who attempted a life of bodily ease and comfort within the shadow e cloister was Hyacintha Mariscotti, today honored among the can- ed saints of the Church, and enrolled under the banner of the rello.

Hers was a disposition that could be summed up in such words ain, arrogant, proud. Of course, from a strictly worldly point of she was justified in her vanity, for she belonged to a wealthy and minent family; her mother was descended from the illustrious Roman ly of the Orsini, and her father was Mark Anthony Mariscotti, t of Vignanello, where our saint was born in 1585. Baptized by Bishop of Civita Castellana, this third of the five children born to pious parents was given the name Clarice. Already vain and self- d even as a small child, Clarice nonetheless gave evidence of a in normal piety and of an intelligence considerably above the aver- but, as she grew older, she became giddy and frivolous and almost pletely overwhelmed by the sense of her own importance. The Count his wife were made all the more aware of her inclinations because were so in contrast to those of her eldest sister, Genevieve, a sweet lovable person with an attraction to mortification and self-denial. evieve herself made many attempts to check her younger sister's

innate vanity and self absorption, and was one day provided
made-to-order object lesson. While dawdling with the rope of
on the castle grounds, Clarice slipped over the edge but was
miraculously entangled in the rope. She hung there breathless
the awful depth until Genevieve saw her and came running
rescue. The impact of this shocking experience seemed to steady
for a time, but before very long she was once more the self-su
little daughter of the Count of Vignanello.

In the hope of counteracting these tendencies in Clari
parents entrusted her education to the Franciscan nuns of Saint
dine's Convent in Viterbo, where Genevieve had meanwhile
and was known as Sister Innocentia. Clarice hated it, and she just
hated her sister, who she felt, was at least partly to blame for her
cut off from the round of amusements and pleasures. Then, h
ucation supposedly completed, Clarice, at the age of seventeen, re
to the family home at Vignanello, where it became increasingly e
that the good Sisters had failed to check her frivolity and egois
she settled back complacently into her old attitudes and gave re
her impulses and conceit.

At the age of twenty she fell in love. Determined and self-
in this as in all else, she set her heart on marriage with the M
Cassizuchhi, a member of one of the celebrated families of Rom
the object of her affections—or calculations—had his own ideas,
exactly coincided with the plans of the Count: the Marquis ma
her younger sister, Hortense, with the Count's blessing. Clarice w
hurt and chagrined at seeing her younger sister preferred before h
marriage that she became embittered. Piqued and self conscio
having been "jilted", she became morose and in a rage of self-pity
up her mind to bury her spurned heart in a convent. At first her f
refused his consent, but by some deception she managed to convince
that she had a real vocation and he allowed her to enter. Joining
same Community as her sister, the Tertiary nuns at Viterbo, she
the name of Sister Hyacintha.

What a contrast there was, however, in the lives of these two! S
Innocentia is described as a "holy nun", while Hyacintha certainly
no desire to lead a holy life. She forsook her home in order to escap
situation in which she found herself—that of being the older si
sister of a successfully married younger sister. She had no intentio



g the life of poverty as prescribed by the Rule of the Third Order
enance; she did not flee the world to be a good Religious, but to
the life of a secular within the convent walls. And that is exactly
t she did. On one occasion when her father came to visit her, as he
uently did, she told him that she intended to live according to her
k; and it was no mere idle boast—she meant it. At the foot of the
vent garden was a sort of cottage which Hyacintha asked her father
urnish for her. He furnished it luxuriously: she had her own kitchen
re special meals were cooked just for her; she wore a special habit
de of the finest of materials; she gave full sway to her worldly vanity
everything was tainted by it. All this in a Franciscan convent!

Sister Hyacintha was a thorn in the side of the whole community—
proached by superiors, entreated with tears by her sister, prayed for
each and every member. At least twice during that early time she
omised to reform, but nothing ever came of it. Having lived her life
convenience and bodily ease for ten years, Hyacintha was one day
ken seriously ill, and, thinking that her end was near, asked for the
craments. Despite her frivolity, no fault could be found with her faith.
There was nothing lacking in her devotion to the Eucharist, and it was
er ardent desire for the Blessed Sacrament that really brought about
er conversion. The chaplain, a Franciscan priest—apparently a very
nlightened one—came at once; but upon seeing the elegance with which
he had surrounded herself, and wearied with her shallowness, he rep-
rimanded her severely. Saying that hell, not heaven, was the future
bode of the vain self-indulgent, he refused to give her absolution
unless she abjured her scandalous way of living. By a happy concurrence
of circumstances—the grace of God, her desire for the Eucharist, an in-
pired priest, and a dread of death and eternal punishment—his words
ierced the barricade which her arrogant spirit had erected around her
ind and heart. And then it was that she was stricken with a heart-break
f a completely different order. With characteristic determination, she
rose from her sickness bent on a life of reparation—a life radically
ifferent from the shocking one she had lived for the past ten years. For
yacintha Mariscotti, too, the Fear of the Lord was the beginning of
isdom!

Begging from her superior a habit of the usual coarse material to
place the exquisite one she had worn until then, and disdaining shoes,
yacintha made her first appearance since her convalescence in the

common refectory. With a rope around her neck, she publicly asked
pardon of all the Sisters for the example she had set them by her li
contrary to the spirit of Saint Francis; she pleaded with them to
that her life henceforth might become one to wipe out the scand
her living thus far, to make restitution to God for her abuse of
grace. And well she might beseech prayers, for the course that she
charted for herself was to prove a trying one for Clarice Mariscotti.
all the good intentions in the world, there were lapses; she had pamp
her body with tenderness for so many years that it took a recu
sickness—a somewhat mysterious stomach disorder, which she acc
gladly as a penance for her former way of life—to keep her awa
first, of the necessity of being on guard against its demands. Hyac
later told one of the Sisters that, had it not been for this afflictio
keep her mindful, she would probably have lost her soul.

She strove, by every means possible, to clear her mind and
of the attraction exerted on them by worldly things; she began g
away all the superfluities with which she had been surrounded,
eventually deprived herself of even bare necessities. She gave u
lavish furnishings, keeping only her crucifix, a relic of the true
and a small piece of the veil of the Blessed Virgin Mary for her
use. In exchange for her splendid room, she was given a monastic
at one end of which were two large beams in the form of a cross, th
reaching from floor to ceiling and the other from wall to wall. S
in this the symbol of Christ's sufferings, Hyacintha hung from it a
chain which she attached each night to a different part of her body,
it might disturb her sleep and thereby make compensation for her
mer ease and idleness. Two boards served as her bed and a stone as pi
Her dainty clothes were replaced by veritable rags; she would wear
the cast-off habit of some other Sister; instead of the sandals worn by
other nuns, she adopted a so-called "scuff"—a mere sole with a st
but, after a time, she abandoned even these, and for the remainde
her life went barefoot. Her undershirts were merely a collectio
patches, and became proverbial among the Sisters. On several occa
when she was ill and the nuns were getting her ready for the phys
her pains ceased immediately when her much mended shirt was sli
over her head. Somewhat confused, the doctor pronounced her rec
nothing short of miraculous, for what connection could possibly
between a shirt and the terrific pains which she had been suffe
In short, she became possessed of a spirit of poverty truly remini



the Little Poor Man of Assisi, and, like the Seraphic Father, deter-
ined to remove from her heart, also, all attachment to people. She re-
ounced her natural parents that she might be free to adopt heavenly
nes. Among all the saints from which she had to choose, it was Mary of
gypt and Saint Augustine who now became her father and mother;
or her sister she selected Margaret of Cortona, and for brother, James
he Hermit. The motive for her choice is certainly very obvious. So
omplete was this withdrawal from her earthly family that, when she
as sent by the Abbess to the grate to visit with her parents, she
ent with a very evident repugnance and all the while she was there
id not utter a word. The Count and his wife, being very religious
eople and realizing that Hyacintha was forsaking worldly converse
or a celestial one, viewed her course of action with admiration and
enderness. Hyacintha was guided in this renunciation, as she was in
very step of her reformed life, by the advice of her very wise director.

Naturally, such a spirit was the envy of the demons, who subjected
her to extraordinary temptations in an attempt to prevent it. Knowing
her weakness and inclination toward sensual enjoyments, they besieged
her with pictures of a rose-colored, pleasure-filled world, the enjoyment
of which was so much more to be desired in its certainty than was a
distant, improbable heaven. They argued that, since there is no heaven
or hell, where was the sense in not enjoying the present life to the full?
When all this deception failed, they tried despair—for which they felt
that she had every reason—suggesting that God would not, could not
accept good deeds from such as her. But Hyacintha's only response was
redoubled effort, for such an all-out attempt to stop her convinced her
more than ever that her sacrifice was worthwhile.

What an enigma her life must be to those who consider life in
convent the equivalent of being buried alive—to those who contend
hat God-given talents are wasted in a Religious life where they are
urely useless. To such persons, the amount of charity which she dis-
ensed as a nun subject to obedience, hemmed in, so to speak, by four
alls, must be past believing. Her activities and accomplishments in
he interest of the poor and needy were without number, efforts in which
he was encouraged both by her understanding superior and by her
irector, the caution of each being simply that she keep within bounds.
ather went so far as to say that probably God had set her apart and
owed her the experience through which she had lived in order to give
r a real compassion for the sinner.

She was instrumental in many conversions; and, to aid her in
much sought work for the salvation of souls, God gifted her
prophecy, miracles, and the discernment of hearts, powers which
used to the full, conscious that they made a first powerful thrust thr
the wall of indifference. One especially difficult case was broug
Sister Hyacintha by a mother grieving over her wayward son, wh
deserted his wife, a good honest girl, for a woman of cheap morals.
he was asking an acceptance of his common-law wife into the
home, and the mother feared that a refusal might estrange hi
together. She begged to be advised, and Sister Hyacintha told
bring her son to the convent. When, after a great deal of persu
he did go, Hyacintha extracted from him a promise to give up
licit love and loose ways. Before he left after promising amendmen
gave him a medal upon which was an exceptionally beautiful
of Our Blessed Lady; but scarcely any time had passed until h
back at his same old haunts and loves. In answer to a second sum
from Hyacintha, he returned to the convent; and before he cou
a word, she related, act for act, all his evil deeds since his las
She asked for the return of the medal if he had no intention of
sion; but when he took it out of his pocket and glanced at it, the
had vanished completely! Stunned and filled with remorse, he
to forsake his old ways completely and to enter on a life of pen
course which he began immediately, and in which he persevered
his death.

Among the most notorious of her hardened sinners was
Pacini, who had joined the army to escape the restrictions of ho
and more easily gratify his licentious desires. When an acquaint
his petitioned Hyacintha for prayers for his conversion, she imme
sent for Pacini; but he refused to call on this nun of whom he had
so much. Not at all discouraged, she very cleverly secured an inte
ary, a good and pious fellow, prominent socially, who at Hyac
coaching sought out and cultivated Pacini. Then, on the plea of h
he persuaded the man to accompany him to Saint Bernardine's c
Weighted with the grace of God, Hyacintha's first words touched
and as he felt his heart inflamed, his resistance to grace crumbl
in such a frame of mind, viewing the panorama of his life, he wa
fied at its guilt. When he returned to the convent, after making
fession, to tell Hyacintha of his purpose of amendment, she
that, since his former life had been one of public scandal, he wa



to live just as spectacular a life of goodness. Taking her advice, he donned a penitent's garb and withdrew to a place apart, to an island later called the Isle of Elba. After living there a long time, communing with God, his only food herbs and roots, his only weapons a breviary and a rifle, he felt a strong urge to return to Viterbo. Upon his arrival there he discovered that Sister Hyacintha had prayed God for his return, for she needed him in her work for the sick, and in the organization of her Confraternities.

These Confraternities grew out of her realization that the work for the sick, the infirm, the poor, and the aged needed to be given some permanency. Having decided to found two of them–one, the Oblates of Mary, to care for the sick and the infirm among the poor, and the other, a Confraternity to provide homes for the aged poor–she secured the permission of Cardinal Barberini, as well as the use of the Church of Our Lady of the Roses for use as an Oratory. In the set of rules and regulations governing their duties to their charges, she outlined for them a way of life whereby they could sanctify themselves while sanctifying those for whom they labored. The devil assailed her especially severely in regard to this work, asking her about the possibility of an enclosed nun carrying on such activity within the contemplative spirit of her Rule, and suggesting the impossibility of one who had been so worldly as she being able to fulfill the role of foundress. Just as stubborn as ever, convinced that it was God's work, Hyacintha went ahead, and both institutions flourished and prospered.

Hyacintha truly loved the poor. When a beggar came to the convent, she would not allow him to be kept waiting, but immediately left what she was doing and went to attend him. If the community happened to be at the table at the time, she took her own portion–which, to be sure, was not much, for she had limited herself to one meal a day, and, for the most part, this consisted of only four ounces of left-over bread. When some of the Sisters noticed her taking her own food to the beggars, they vigorously disapproved, pointing out that there were other ways of providing for the poor; but the spirit with which Hyacintha was moved demanded that she sacrifice for them, and that she give of herself.

All the family property had passed into the hands of her older brother, who, as was the custom, set aside a sum to be used for Masses for each member of the family at their death. Sister Hyacintha asked for her share in money, preferring to provide for her poor who were in

need then, rather than to provide for herself after death. How tho
she was in her giving! When she distributed this money to th
needy, it was given with the stipulation that there was to be no t
of trying to repay it; for she did not want them bothered with the
debt. So great was the concern of this daughter of the Poverello
poor that the people of Viterbo in speaking of her referred to he
Mother of the Poor. No matter how poorly she felt, how weary
she was, when word came of the needy, she was rejuvenated, and h
to make plans to assist them.

She was known to be a friend of those confined in priso
could always count on an answer to their appeal. One man who
prison for a grave crime had no one to whom he could turn for c
or assistance. Hyacintha, hearing of him, but being unable to
the prison, prayed, and while praying conceived a very clever id
baked a fish, sliced it through the middle and inserted her letter of
tation and consolation, then closed up the fish again and sent
messenger to the prisoner. In the act of eating the fish he cam
her letter and was filled with joy in the knowledge of her prayers.
were many instances of her paying the debts of men who were d
in prison because they could not meet them. The money for these
came to her by way of donations, and usually in the exact amount n
By fasts, by fervent prayer, by long vigils, she prepared herself s
to be His instrument in all these cases, that God did not hesitate
her.

As is often the case with those disciples of the Master, Who is
*and humble of heart,* the esteem and respect for which she had for
striven were now hers without seeking. Her counsel and her p
were much sought. In a letter to a friend who asked her advice o
subject of mortification, she confessed that she had practiced pen
for years and was getting nowhere until she realized that mortific
does not sanctify—it is the interior virtue for which one must striv
a nun who considered vigils a necessity to sanctification but coul
do without the sleep, she gave the warning that unless she too
required rest—it is only to a few that God gives the gift of getting
on a little sleep—she would fail to accomplish the good that she
It is resignation in difficulties that is pleasing to Him, rather than w
ings and forced prayers. Strange counsel, indeed, from one who, ac
ing to the decree of canonization, mortified herself to such an e
that the preservation of her life was a continued miracle!



As January of 1640 progressed, the pains which had racked her
dy from head to toe so often during her life became so increasingly
ense that her superior and the Sisters were very much concerned;
t Hyacintha would have none of them worrying about her. She told
em that there was no sense in their getting excited, that she was going
die at the end of the month. There was no relief from the suffering,
ntil one day, while calling on the names of Jesus and Mary, she died.
s she had foretold, it was the thirtieth of January. Hyacintha was in
e fifty-fifth year of her age, twenty of which had been spent in severe
enance and wholly taken up with the thought and service of God's
oor and sick and neglected. When the people of Viterbo were told of her
eath, their sorrow broke bounds and guards had to be placed both at
e entrance to the convent chapel where her body lay, and also around
e coffin. But the love and veneration of the people refused to be checked
nd, despite the guards, they took pieces of her veil, habit, cord, rosary—
ome took finger nails—as relics of their beloved saint, as she was already
opularly proclaimed. No sooner was she buried than they began pilgri-
nages to her grave, seeking cures. And there were cures—many of them.
The silver cross placed over her grave was a thanksgiving offering from
one of them.

In 1726, Benedict XIII, also a descendant of the famed Orsini
family, declared her beatified, but it was not until 1807 that Pius VII
entered her name among the canonized, a fitting climax to a life such
as hers. The life of Hyacintha Mariscotti is one truly worthy of study
by all those moderns who have lost their sense of values; but to every
present-day Franciscan, especially, it carries a warning and a message that
are fairly shouting to be heard; a warning and a message which can
probably best be set forth in the words of the *Imitation*:

> "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, but to love God and
> serve Him alone. This is the highest wisdom, by despising
> the world, to make progress toward the kingdom of heaven."

*Sr. Maura, O.S.F.*

*Pittsburgh, Pa.*

✠ ✠ ✠

The life of a Christian is nothing but a constant struggle against
self, and its beauty does not become manifest except at the price of
suffering.

*Padre Pio*

# AN EXPLANATION OF THE RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR (XV)

TEXT: Chapter V: *Interior and Exterior Conduct*

*The Fourteenth Article*

*Since the Brothers and Sisters of this Fraternity are called the O of Penance, they should daily carry the cross of mortification as bec true penitents.*

The supernatural love life of the Franciscan religious, we has as its triple objective to love God, to control self, to serve o The previous chapter dealt with the various aspects of the Ter love of God, which is at once a love of adoration, a repentant love, an atoning love. The present chapter concerns the control of sel without which perfect love of God and neighbor is impossible.

Since mortification is the basic means of acquiring self-co it is not surprising that the present article takes up this subject Its very wording indicates the close connection between penance and tification—a point treated in the preceding article. Not only doe tie in the subject matter of the present chapter with that which before, but it provides us with the opportunity of discussing the Fra can concept of penance and mortification from the standpoint of they have in common, their subject-matter.

As we indicated earlier, the regulation on fast and abstinenc the preceding article represents a significant mitigation of the penite practices imposed in the rule of Leo X. "The Brothers and Sisters," latter reads, "shall even abstain from flesh meat on Monday, Wedne Friday and Saturday, except when the feast of our Lord's Nativity on one of these days. They shall also fast on all Fridays throughou year, likewise every day from the feast of Saint Martin until the Na of the Lord, to which they shall add the Lent of the Universal Ch





which they shall, however, commence on the Monday following Quinquagesima Sunday and continue till the Resurrection of the Lord. Days whereon they are not obliged to fast they shall eat but twice a day, except that from the feast of Easter until the month of October those who are employed in hard or painful labor may eat three times a day, fast-days always excepted" (*Rule of Leo X*, ch. 3).

In view of these strict regulations, we can better understand why the Third Order was indeed called the Order of Penance. But the abolition of these many fasts and abstinences by the new Rule may cause some wonder whether the Order still deserves this title. The present article reminds the Tertiary Regular that, despite the mitigations on this point, the obligation of daily mortification remains. It is incumbent upon all Franciscan religious to understand just what the Franciscan ideal of penance entails if they are to conduct themselves as becomes true penitents.

If we examine Saint Francis' own attitude towards penance, we are struck by three points in particular. First, his equating of the Franciscan way of life with penance. Secondly, the seeming inconsistency between this ideal and the practices actually incorporated in the various Franciscan rules. Thirdly, the distinction Francis insisted on making between his own penitential practices and those of his friars.

To begin with the first. Francis describes his conversion to a life according to the Gospel with the words: "The Lord gave to me, Brother Francis, thus to begin to do penance." The Franciscan way of life was to be synonymous with penance. That is why his first followers could call themselves officially "penitents of the city of Assisi," who were to preach penance more by example than by word (*Tres. Socii*, nn. 36-7). Francis knew such preaching would be a scandal in the eyes of the world, his "penitents" would be persecuted, their way of life ridiculed. But this should not deter them. "Wherever they are not received, let them flee into another land *to do penace* with the blessing of God" (*Testament*). And lest anyone think that only the First Order way of life should be called one of penance, Francis made it clear that penance is a symbol of Franciscanism itself. That is why he called his first lay Tertiaries simply "The Brothers and Sisters of Penance." That too is why Clare could describe her entry into religion with the words: "The most high celestial Father deigned to enlighten my heart by his mercy and grace *to do penance* after the example and teaching of our most blessed Father Francis"

(*Testament of St. Clare,* n. 7). We cannot escape the conclusion t the Franciscan way of life was to be equated with penance.

Yet, strangely enough, Francis did not overburden his Rule w many of the special bodily penitential practices characteristic of his d As Bishop Felder points out, in this regard the Franciscan Rule is n compared to some of the older monastic legislation (*Ideals of St. Fran* ch. 10). He frequently counseled moderation in regard to bodily mo fication, and at one General Chapter he reprimanded those who were prudent in their vigils, fasting, and other practices of penance. On occasion he commanded those who had spiked shirts, iron rings girdles or other instruments of penance to remove them and to wear n ing but the habit on their body (*Tres Socii,* n. 59; *Speculum perfectio* c. 27). While Francis was absent in the Holy Land, the two Vi charged with the leadership of the Order passed a regulation at a Gen Chapter forbidding friars to procure meat for themselves and permit them to eat it only when given by benefactors. In this action they w apparently influenced by certain contemporary practices in other religi orders. But on his return Francis promptly rescinded the statute bec it violated the perfect liberty of the Gospel (*Chronica Fr. Jordani Jano,* nn. 11-12).

Yet, no one was more serious about the practice of penance t Francis himself. Which brings us to the third point, the distinct Francis made between himself and his friars. Though he forbade lack of moderation in bodily penances, as Celano points out, his example in this matter did not accord with his teaching (*Lege Secunda,* n. 129). So extreme were the penances he inflicted upon h self that towards the end of his life, with characteristic simplicity, begged pardon of Brother Body for having treated him too harshly admitted he had gone too far in this matter.

If we consider these three points, perhaps we can come to an ob tive interpretation of Francis' ideal of penance. To begin with, he ceived penance as something essentially practical and not to be perfor simply for its own sake. Its value lay in the fact that it serves the hig end of love of God and neighbor. Therefore, the basic "change of hea if we may use the Greek expression for penance (*metanoia*), is that wh seeks to bring one's sin-corrupted desires to the perfect way of life idealized by Christ. Since the Franciscan way of life was to be simply Gospel in action, this must always be the basic penance of a follower the Saint.



But because the Franciscan mode of life was to be as flexible, as adaptable as the Gospel itself, Francis decried the introduction of any universal practice that would militate against its freedom. Fasting, indeed, was incorporated in all the Franciscan rules because Our Lord sanctioned it by His Own example. But even this differed in the various rules according to the manner of life expected of the respective members, and Francis himself was the first to moderate or dispense from the fast when it conflicted with the aim and work in which the Friars were engaged. His guiding principle in regard to penance and mortification, as Celano records it, was this: "One must treat Brother Body with kindness lest a storm of rebellion break out on his part. One must not give him any reason to murmur, that he may not tire of watching and praying devoutly. Otherwise he could complain: 'I perish from hunger; I cannot bear the burden of thy good works.' But if he has received sufficient nourishment and still shows signs of rebellion, then may he know that the lazy beast of burden deserves the spur and the idle ass the goad" (*Legenda Secunda,* n. 129). The life of a Franciscan was to be in truth a life of sacrifice; but a sacrifice, Saint Bonaventure explains, that is seasoned with the salt of prudence—not indeed prudence of the flesh but that which Christ taught by the shining example of perfection of His Own life (*Legenda Major,* c. 5, n. 7.).

Some, it is true, have tried to explain away the distinction Francis made between his own penitential practices and those of his Friars in terms of the special inspiration of grace. True as this may be, the real clue to understanding it lies deeper. It is to be found in Francis' conviction that penance and its practice in the last analysis is a purely personal matter between the individual soul and God. The more clearly we see our own real needs, the greater our obligation to perform a corresponding penance. The Poverello's own excuse for his excesses is significant—he considered himself to be a "greater sinner" than his brethren. Thus Francis himself gave us the precedent of adapting our penitential practices to our personal needs. And here we have another characteristic of the Tertiary ideal of penance. The very leniency of the Rule, so to speak, makes it incumbent for the individual religious to adopt his own very real, though prudent, practices of penance. True Franciscan mortification must always be conditioned and directed by specific personal requirements.

Reflection on these characteristics of the Franciscan ideal of penance

leads naturally to some practical observations. For the zealous religi
the practice of penance will find expression in three principal for
The first and basic penance will always be that dictated by the Fra
can way of life. It consists in minute fidelity to the obligations imp
by divine and ecclesiastical law, the Rule, the Constitutions, the di
tive or interpretative customs of the respective congregation or relig
institute, and the commands of religious superiors.

At this point it might be well to add a note of warning. When
gious hear that their fundamental penance is that required by t
ordinary mode of life, they tend to relax, as it were, and dismiss
matter as already cared for by their general good will or intentio
live as they should. This is a great mistake. Ordinarily, when we
amine ourselves on how we are living up to the commandments,
Rule, Constitutions and so on, we evaluate any lapse or defectio
terms of what we might call the objective value of the regulatio
commandment in question. Is this a serious matter? How does it a
my status as a Christian, a religious, as a member of this partic
Franciscan community? Am I seriously hurting myself or the
committed to my care, etc.? And because an intelligent and levelhe
religious rightly puts first things first, he or she may quite correctl
gard little lapses from prescribed silences, expressions of distast
irritability at some disagreeable task, minor negligences in regar
duties assigned, etc., as of small consequence when viewed against
general aim and goal of religious life. Such minor infractions may
become a matter of unconscious habit and so pass unnoticed in th
dinary examination of conscience. As a result, such religious are
looking a golden opportunity to practice a most difficult form of pen
and one they need not consult their superior or confessor before un
taking. For the objective importance of a specific rule or comman
no indication whatsoever of its psychological effectiveness in cur
self-love. In fact, it is more often those regulations which in thems
are insignificant, or even objectively ineffectual or objectionable
grounds of prudence, that provide the best material for the exerci
self-discipline.

Franciscans might well ask themselves: Is my way of life, my
routine, a real genuine mortification? Is it my principal form of pena
If not, is it because I have been ignoring these little disciplinary
flies" of which my daily life is woven? What about silence, punctua



fidelity to the practice of meditation, spiritual reading, etc., the daily cross of charity that imposes upon me the obligation of being amiable, patient, understanding, generous with my time, and so on? This is all part of what we mean when we say our Franciscan life itself must be our basic penance.

The second form of penance or mortification consists in bearing cheerfully the trials sent by Divine Providence. This is the cross God's goodness has splintered into fragments and distributed over our lifetime that we may be able to bear it. This is "God's hairshirt", as Teresa of Avila put it. So dear was this form of penance to Francis that he would not even ask God to remove his sufferings. In fact, Bonaventure tells of the time a simple brother, seeing the agony of pain and affliction caused by Francis' illness, said: "Brother, pray to God that He will deal more gently with thee, for it seems to me that His hand is heavier on thee than is meet." But Francis rebuked him saying: "But that I know the purity of thy simplicity, I should henceforth abhor thy company for that thou has dared to find fault with the divine judgments which are executed upon me" (*Legenda Major*, c. 14, n. 2).

The third form of penance comprises the voluntary practices of mortification good religious take upon themselves. It might be well to note that while we speak of this form as "voluntary" it is not something we are free to adopt or reject. It is an integral part of the Franciscan program of penance as the life of any of our saints, beginning with Francis himself, clearly reveals. Indeed, the entire history of religious Orders confirms the truth that the consistent practice of the other two forms of penance is possible only when reinforced by voluntary practices of mortification. The liberty of the Gospel to which Francis appealed in abolishing certain universal practices was not intended to free the individual from the obligation of undertaking additional penances, but rather to make it easier to adopt a program of mortification in accord with his specific needs.

The fact that this third form of penance is meant to complement the other two already indicates how it can be practiced profitably. Every religious has specific problems based on individual character weaknesses and on the nature of the environment in which obedience places him. The prudent Franciscan will be guided by self-knowledge in selecting these voluntary mortifications. Continual failure in charity with regard to certain individuals suggests that we put ourselves out occasionally to

do them special and uncalled-for favors. If a morbid curiosity conti
ly prompts violations of silence, our voluntary mortification might
take the form of deliberately refraining from satisfying curiosity in r
to some legitimate matter. Custody of the eyes at times not demand
prudence can be a fitting penance for voluntary distractions at p
mass, etc. Those who are strongly opinionated and are prone to
their way in everything would find it a real mortification to keep
opinion to themselves when a subject about which they feel str
is discussed or to follow the lead of another rather than voicing
own plan. In a word, we should try as far as possible to correlat
penances with our specific faults. This "correlation method" of pen
if we might call it such, is of special value in character training.
specific violation or form of sin tends to initiate or deepen a s
habit. The more specific our penance, the more readily do we count
the psychological effects of sin in our soul. Not only can we cor
specific types of mortification to specific character weaknesses, w
also correlate individual acts of penance to acts of sin. We know
instance, if Francis offended his brother, he would not wait unti
day was over but immediately beg the brother or his self-appo
"superior" to give him a penance. If the practice of making som
mediate atonement to God for an offense is not feasible, in conne
with our examination of conscience especially at the time of confe
we might adopt the practice of promising not only to amend ou
but to perform some special mortification for the deliberate sins we
committed. The priest's words at the end of the formula of absol
will have special significance in such a case. "May whatever good
will have done and whatever evil you will have suffered be to you
the remission of sins."

In selecting our voluntary penances, we should remember our
is to mortify self, not crucify others. Fasting, for instance, should n
carried to the point where it makes an infirmarian brother or a nu
sister incontrollably irritable with the sick. A teacher, too, could f
her duty if by denying herself needed rest she became too slee
prepare properly for classes. When Blessed Albert of Pisa sought t
a rigorous fast to his already arduous work of caring for the sick i
hospital to which he was assigned, we know Francis commanded
not only to abandon his fast but to eat twice the amount to whi
was accustomed. Neither should voluntary penance become an ex
in self-pity, which manifests itself at times in subtle and devious



uch as the tendency to compensate one act of self-denial by indulging
excess in some other way. But perhaps the greatest danger latent in this
orm of penance is the temptation to pride ourselves on our own practices
hile looking down on others. It was this thought that prompted Francis
o add to the precept, "let the Friars be clothed in poor garments", the
dmonition "not to despise or judge men whom they see clothed in soft
nd fine garments, using choice food and drink, but let each one judge and
espise himself" (*Rule of Friars Minor*, c. 2). If we are convinced that true
ranciscan penance is that which is based in large measure on one's
ersonal needs, we shall not be prone to pass judgment on anyone but
urselves. Then, too, if all religious strive to make their private penances
nd mortifications as inconspicuous as possible—which is as it should be—
here will be no basis on which a proud religious might compare him-
elf with others, should he foolishly wish to do so. And this leads to a
inal observation about the Franciscan ideal of penance.

The test of true penance will always be: Does it bear fruit in charity?
n his *Letter to All the Faithful,* Francis wrote: "Let us bring forth
ruits worthy of penance, and love our neighbors as ourselves." Viewed in
his light, the opening passage of his *Testament* speaks volumes: "The
ord gave to me Brother Francis, thus to begin to do penance; for when
was in sin it seemed to me very bitter to see lepers and the Lord Him-
elf led me amongst them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left
hem, that which had seemed to me bitter was changed for me into
weetness of body and soul." If our practice of penance is according to
he mind of Francis, it will have a twofold effect. It will make God
weet to us, and it will make us merciful to others.

*t. Bonaventure University* — *Fr. Allan Wolter, O. F. M.*

✠ ✠ ✠

The most beautiful *Credo* is the one we pronounce when we are in
rkness, in the hour of sacrifice and sorrow, in the supreme effort of
inflexible will for what it good. This is the one that as a flash of
htning breaks the darkness of the soul; the one that in the midst of
aging storm lifts up the soul and leads it to God.

*Padre Pio*

# EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

## *Admonition XVIII: The True Lover of His Neighbor*

Saint Francis wished his children to be united in true frat
charity. This often-expressed desire was not only a part of his chara
for by nature he was kind and courteous, alive to the needs of o
and reverential toward all the children of God; it was also a p
his following of the Gospel. In the words and example of Chr
found charity enthroned in the center of Christian life. If perfect
based on humility it finds completion in charity.

There are various aspects to charity, and all are intrinsically
lent; but there is one which surpasses all others in excellence and a
difficulty of fulfillment. It is the perfection described by our Holy F
Francis in his Eighteenth Admonition:

> Blessed is the man who supports his neighbor in his weakne
> to the same extent that he would wish his neighbor to suppo
> him if he were in a similar situation.

In other words, we are blessed by our Holy Father if we bear wit
neighbor and help him in the way we would want him to bear wi
and help us if we were in his place. We are to open our eyes, to real
our neighbor—to see *his* need, *his* plight, *his* situation, as if it wer
own. It is quite needful that the eyes of our mind and heart be o
to others. All too many of us are afflicted with the kind of sp
blindness that simply does not see others, that is totally unaware
needs of others. This blindness is in reality a lack of understandi
the character of a person who is different from ourselves; it is
of sympathic imagination. We cannot see ourselves in another's
tion; or if we do, we fail to take account of his background, his
and gifts, his problems and difficulties and desires, his experien
life, his disappointments and failures, his desperate struggles, his p





environment—which includes his confreres and, lest we forget, ourselves as well. It is surely no easy matter to always consider our neighbor from so many angles; but then, to imitate the perfections of our Seraphic Father is no easy matter. To deliberately fail to imitate his charity, however, would be to expose ourselves to the really devastating consequences of this strange spiritual blindness. One of its most cruel consequences is misunderstanding that leads to rash judgments and culminates in outright condemnation; one of the most tragic is aloofness and egotistical self-sufficiency that leads from unawareness of the needs of others to cold indifference, and culminates in lonely bitterness and sullen contempt of others.

It is to forestall such aberrations in ourselves that our Seraphic Father urges us to be conscious of our neighbor, or rather—and this is even more in line with the holy Gospel—to discover in our neighbor a man who needs us, who is really no stranger at all but close and dear to us as our own soul.Was not this the answer Christ gave to the lawyer who asked: *And who is my neighbor* (Luke 10, 29)? The parable of the Good Samaritan was the answer, and it meant that our neighbor is precisely that man who is in need of our effective help and understanding compassion.

Once we have truly discovered our neighbor by putting ourselves in his situation, then his difficulties become ours, his failures wound us, his sufferings stir our warm and tender compassion, and his shortcomings seem to be our own. We do not endure his faults as coming from another who must be patiently borne with; we envision them as our own and try to cover them with the gentle cloak of charity.

And now, by way of examining ourselves on Franciscan charity, let us ask some of the following questions. Must I confess that I am blind to the needs of others? Am I concerned with myself alone and indifferent toward my confreres? Such self-centered charity is really selfish blindness, and hardly consistent with the religious state. Still less consistent is the kind of selective blindness that shuts out the vision of all but a chosen few. Is this my condition? Do I open my heart wide to some, but close it tight against others? Does my sympathy go out to seculars or to those outside my community and not at all to my fellow religious? Am I perhaps totally unaware of my confreres because of my absorption in my work or hobby, because I am so contented when alone with a pet animal or a fascinating occupation that I do not feel any need for the

family life of my community? If such is the case with me, my charit
blind, for it neither sees nor seeks to understand my neighbor. His lo
liness passes unnoticed; the companionship I could give him to h
him forget his troubles and relax in the warm atmosphere of frate
love is the one thing I never even think to offer. I wish him well,
I have no time to bother about him. I have chosen a way of life th
based on evangelical perfection. It obliges me to love all men after
example of Christ. I must be ever mindful of my responsibility le
awaken some day to the realization that perhaps I could have preve
the apostasy of a confrere had I but opened my eyes and my hear
his misery.

Reserve is unquestionably a virtue in religious, but, like every o
virtue, carried to the extreme it becomes a vice. There are some relig
who are so aloof, so buttoned up to the neck, that no one dares appro
them. Am I of this kind? If I am a superior or if I hold authority
others, can those who are subject to me approach me with confidence?
Seraphic Father insisted that superiors receive their subjects "with cha
and kindness and treat them with such fellowship that they can s
and act toward them like masters toward their servants" (*Rule,* X
would be good in this connection to examine ourselves on our observ
of the admonition of Saint Francis in Chapter VI of the Rule: "
wherever the brothers are located or meet one another, let them
toward one another like members of a family. And each should
assurance make his need known to another; for, if a mother tends
loves her child in the flesh, with how much greater attention mu
man love and tend his brother in the spirit?" Do I honestly try
observe this?

There is no doubt that if we were in some of the unpleasant
uations our confreres fall into we should certainly hope for un
standing at least. And yet, how many misunderstandings occur
among our good religious—even among saints. Let us ask ourselves:
I make a sincere effort to understand my confreres when they do th
I cannot approve of? Do I try to see things from their point of v
or do I admit of only one point of view—my own? Am I prone to
judgments, to critical, holier-than-thou attitudes? Do I watch o
to take note of their transgressions? In the case of serious and
scandal, do I try to put myself in the place of my pilloried con
and feel with him? Do I realize how bitter it tastes to have a sin o



error exposed, mercilessly judged and condemned? Would I enjoy the cutting remarks, the endless reproaches, the public stigmatization as a problem child? If we would love our fellow religious as a mother loves her children—and this is what Saint Francis demands of us—there would be much more of the charity of silence in our religious houses.

If our charity is not blind and if our heart is wide open, then we shall readily notice the needs of others and discover our true neighbor; and there are as many needs as there are human frailties. In fact, there are so many that it would be useless to even try to enumerate them. There are a few points, however, that we may consider briefly as examples.

First, there are the little services of everyday living, the common courtesies and kindnesses. Do I give them to others as I expect others to give them to me? Do I try to be pleasant and agreeable to others and to avoid in my own conduct whatever annoys me in others? Do I overlook a sour mood, an irritating remark, a nervous snappiness? Do I bear calmly with the shortcomings of my confreres, their mannerisms, speech, attitudes?

Then there are the Lord's dearest children, our sick confreres. Here again we have the words of Francis himself to guide us: "And if anyone of them falls into illness, the rest of the brothers must wait on him as they themselves would want to be waited on" (*Rule,* VI). Do I really try to place myself in the situation of the sick? Do I try to help them as I should want to be helped? Or am I simply lacking in understanding because I have never been sick and have never cultivated a charitable imagination? If I have sympathy, am I tactful and prudent in expressing it? Do I refrain from importunate questioning? Do I torture the sick by impetuously urging them to try cures or medicines which only a doctor should prescribe, or by diagnosing their illness and giving them uncalled-for advice?

Finally, let us examine ourselves on a point that is frequently overlooked: the manner of accepting charity. It is not always easy to be the object of another's charity; sometimes we have to suffer it rather than accept it. But in this matter, too, our Seraphic Father's admonition can guide us. We are simply to place ourselves in the other person's position and act accordingly. Do I try to believe, for example, that the clumsy charity of Friar X comes from a warm and sincerely loving heart? Could I be so lacking in understanding as to hurt him by brusque-

ly refusing his little services? How would I feel if my sincere attem
to be kind and helpful were so harshly brushed aside? It is an art
accept charity without feeling dependent on others or without suffer
some loss of self-respect. But where true charity accepts true cha
there can only be an increase of mutual fraternal love. The point alw
to keep in mind is this: if we can learn to put ourselves in our neighb
position, we can be sure we shall never fail either to give or to rec
charity in the spirit of our Seraphic Father. And then he will cal
blessed.

*St. Bonaventure University* *Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F*

✠ ✠ ✠

Let us take care, therefore, if we have entered the way of the
lest by our own fault or negligence or ignorance at any time and in
way we turn aside therefrom and so do injury to so great a Lord
His Virgin Mother, and to our blessed Father Francis, and to the Ch
Triumphant and the Church Militant. For it is written, *Cursed are*
*who turn aside from Thy commandments* (Ps. 118, 21).

Among the many graces which we have received and continue
to receive from the liberality of the Father of mercies (II Cor. 1, 3)
for which we must give deepest thanks to our glorious God, our voc
holds first place. Indeed, because it is the more perfect and the g
among these graces, so much the more does it claim our gratitude. T
fore the Apostle says: *Know your vocation* (1 Cor. 1, 26).

*Saint Clare of*

# FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

MEDITATIONS ADAPTED FOR THE USE OF THE FRIARS MINOR CHAPUCHIN, VOLUME V, Fr. Bernadine Goebel, O.F.M. Cap., translated by Fr. Berchmans Bittle O.F.M.Cap. Detroit, Michigan: Province of Saint Joseph of the Capuchin Order, n.d. Pp. 480. $3.50.

The fifth volume of Fr. Bernardine Goebel's *Meditations* is now available. It covers the time from the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost to Advent, and follows the same plan as the previous volumes.

Distinctly Franciscan in spirit, the meditations cover practically every aspect of the spiritual life for religious, particularly for Capuchins. The matter is instructive and doctrinal rather than inspirational in the sense of appeal to the emotions. Although intended primarily for the use of religious men who are also priests, these meditations offer solid food for the spiritual growth of all Franciscans.

A CITY ON A MOUNTAIN: THE CASE OF PADRE PIO, Pascal P. Parente, S.T.D., Ph.D., J.C.B. St. Meinrad, Indiana: The Grail. 1952. Pp. 148, with 35 photographs. $2.50.

PADRE PIO THE STIGMATIST, Rev. Charles Mortimer Carty. Saint Paul, Minnesota: Radio Replies Press. 1952. Pp. 228, with 72 photographs. Paper $2.50; cloth, $3.50.

These two studies of the remarkable life of Padre Pio, the Capuchin Stigmatic, are both well documented and well protected by ecclesiastical approbation. Father Carty's *Padre Pio the Stigmatic* is the fuller of the two, containing accounts of more miraculous happenings and more of Padre Pio's own writings. Father Parente's *City on a Mountain* is somewhat more scholarly in approach, although in view of his wide reputation as an authority on mystical theology, his treatment of the phenomena surrounding Padre Pio is somewhat disappointing. The stigmatized Capuchin has been singularly unfortunate in his biographers, and these two books, despite the good intentions of the writers, still have room for a more penetrating and more generally satisfactory study of the holy friar's life. Both books can be recommended, however, for the sincerity and caution of their authors and for their truly inspiring content.

Padre Pio (Francesco Forgione) was born in 1887 at Pietrelcina, Italy, and entered the Capuchin Order in 1902. In spite of constant ill health, he was ordained to the priesthood in 1910. The piety that had distinguished Padre Pio from childhood became even more remarkable after he received the invisible stigmata on September 20, 1915, the day following the Feast of the Stigmatization of Saint Francis. On September 20, 1918, again on the Friday following the Feast of the Stigmatization, he received the visible stigma on his hands and feet and side. Since that time his life has been filled with extraordinary happenings and gifts of grace, especially the gift of discernment of souls and of leading sinners to God. His greatest work is in the confessional. He does not