

Standard Abbreviations Used in THE CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	Admonitions	Fragm	Another Fragment of the Rule of 1221
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo	LaudDel	Praise of the Most High God
CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun	LaudHor	Praises at All the Hours
EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony	OffPass	Office of the Passion
EpCler	Letter to Clerics	OrCruc	Prayer before the Crucifix
EpCust	Letter to Superiors	RegB	Rule of 1223
EpFid	Letter to All the Faithful	RegNB	Rule of 1221
EpLeo	Letter to Brother Leo	RegEr	Rule for Hermits
EpMin	Letter to a Minister	SalBMV	Salutation to the Blessed Virgin
EpOrd	Letter to the Entire Order	SalVirt	Salutation to the Virtues
EpRect	Letter to the Rulers of People	Test	Testament of St. Francis
ExhLD	Exhortation to the Praise of God	UNVol	Last Will Written for St. Clare
ExpPat	Exposition on the Our Father	VPLast	Treatise on True and Perfect Joy
FormViv	Form of Life given to St. Clare		I, II refer to First and Second Editions.

II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel	Celano, First Life of Francis	LMin	St. Bonaventure, Minor Life of St. Francis
2Cel	Celano, Second Life of Francis	LP	Legend of Perugia
3Cel	Celano, Treatise on Miracles	L3S	Legend of the Three Companions
Flor	Little Flowers of St. Francis	SC	Sacrum commercium
LM	St. Bonaventure, Major Life	SP	Mirror of Perfection

COVER AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

The cover and illustrations for our December issue have been drawn by Sister M. Raphael Fulwider, O.S.F., chairman of the Art Department at Maria Regina College, Syracuse, NY.

the CORD

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Think God!

MOVIEGOERS AMONG OUR READERSHIP may recall with pleasure the delightful film *O God Book II*, in which a young girl of ten or eleven and her friends go on an advertising campaign to make God better known and choose as their slogan the title of our editorial. Pleasant as the movie is, it does mirror faithfully the forgetfulness of God so much a part of not only American culture in general, but many of us in religion too. Though in non-contemplative communities some sort of horarium with Mass and Divine Office still survives, life seems to go on under the momentum of the secularization thrust of the late 60s rather than the impulse of faith.

Continuing education programs such as workshops seem more important than continuing edification programs like days of recollection and retreats. Planning seems to have priority over praying. Forming human relationships seems to be the goal of life in religion rather than developing a Divine Friendship. Prayer of petition seems to be less and less on both the community and personal levels. In short, it seems that we religious have bought *God I* and *II*'s observations that it is all up to us, that He doesn't intervene, that it is our physical environment and not ourselves that we should be concerned with.

The message of God incarnate we remember most specially this month is the opposite of all that. God *does intervene* in our lives—prayers do count; he does care about our inner moral lives; he has saved us from our sins; he wants us to be friends with him firsthand—something no amount of interaction with his creatures can develop. *Christian religious*—are called upon not just to think God, but to think Jesus—think of the Babe in the manger. Reflecting on him can remind us—as it did Francis—that gospel living does mean finding a personal place for Jesus in the inn of our hearts, trusting more in the Providence of our heavenly Father than our own plans, looking to be without rather than looking for middle class luxuries, self-emptying rather than self-enhancement.

St. Julian Davis of

Mother Maddalena Bentivoglio, O.S.C. Foundress of the Poor Clares in the United States

SISTER FRANCES ANN AND M. ELLEN, O.S.C.

Part VI: Death, Miracles, Remembrances

“O, won't you please let me go home?”¹

SO, NOW, the end was imminent for the servant of God, and Mother Maddalena wanted more than anything else to go to her true home. On June 20, 1905, she was anointed by Father James McBarron, Pastor of the Assumption Church, who remarked: “I have just anointed a saint” (p. 444). Then she rallied... she improved... until July 29th, her 71st birthday, and on that day she began to enter into the final stages of her illness—pernicious anemia.

At times she would ask of her Vicarress, Mother Charitas, to let her go home, for, as she said: “You are praying and while you pray God will not take me” (p. 448). It wasn't until August 18, 1905, that Mother Charitas finally consented not to pray for her recovery, and on that day she went home.

Previously, her great respect for death had been manifested in several ways, but especially in her response when she learned of her own sister's approach to

¹Father Albert Kleber, O.S.B. (the Vice Postulator), *A Bentivoglio of the Bentivoglios* (unpublished manuscript), p. 450. All page references in text are to this work.

Sisters Frances Ann and M. Ellen are members of the Poor Clare community in Lowell, MA. They wish to express a very special thank-you to the monasteries which so generously contributed of their knowledge and archives for the writing of these articles: Bordentown, NJ; Delray Beach, FL; Evansville, IN; Langhorne, PA; Memphis, TN; and Cleveland, OH.; as well as to Sisters Bernardine and Bentivoglio, who kindly shared their recollections of Mother Maddalena and to the Lowell, MA, community for their love and encouragement during this labor of love.

death: "Pray, good Mother, that when our hour arrives, the good God will give us the grace to receive the last Sacraments; but, nevertheless, also in the case we should be resigned to the Holy Will of God and be concerned about his greater glory, and should not want to choose when, or where, or how, but should choose in all to be most perfectly resigned, smilingly saying, 'Fiat!' " (p. 441). And, we are told, she habitually made an unconditional surrender of herself to God every evening.

As her death approached, she was more than her usual orderly self. It was said by one of the nuns that for about a year before her death she put the safe in order, so calmly, so peacefully, as if some great event was about to happen. She also parceled out small treasures which she had in her possession, such as holy cards and small statues and asked for prayers for her Sister benefactors.

No one was really aware of the severity of her suffering except the Sister who cared for her almost constantly. It is from her that we learn that all the while Mother Maddalena was speaking with the Sisters, counseling them, and giving them spiritual food, her tongue was so parched it was like a piece of "burnt meat." Upon this same tortured member she requested to receive Holy Communion each day, which of course was not granted

in those days. She did, however, receive three times a week.

As to the event of her death—it was indeed extraordinary! But for several long weeks before she "went home" she suffered several trials, diabolical and physical. Finally, on August 18th, when she once more requested of Mother Charitas to let her go home, she received the response, "We will pray no more" (p. 448). Then, to fulfill her wish to die like Saint Francis, she was taken from her bed and placed on a straw mat on the floor facing the crucifix on the East wall. The Sisters were assembled, the shutters of the room were closed to the rainy atmosphere outside, and the prayers for the dying began. Mother Maddalena's eyes became so animated that the Sisters began to think their novenas for her recovery had worked. Instead, as they fixed their eyes upon her and she upon the crucifix, a brilliant light fell upon her face. The light from the crucifix beamed straight down on Reverend Mother with such effulgence and glory that it was impossible to describe. Several of the Sisters, noticing the light, looked toward the window to see if the sun had come out through the rain, but the shutters were firmly fastened. Of the 23 Sisters only twelve saw the light, and each saw it in a different way. Since her cell was small, some of the Sisters could not even see her

as they prayed for her soul to depart in peace. The illumination lasted fully 35 minutes. According to Mother Charitas:

... Rev. Mother looked at me as if to ask if I saw it. She smiled as if she knew I had, and turned her eyes again to the crucifix. Then from the fullness and depth of my heart came the almost involuntary exclamation, "Sisters, God is present!" ... Words are powerless to express what I saw. No language of earth could describe it! [p. 451].

Mother Maddalena died peacefully at 3:30 P.M. Her epitaph reads: THIS MONUMENT DOES NOT MAKE YOU FAMOUS, BUT YOU MAKE THIS MONUMENT FAMOUS.

Several unusual manifestations had taken place during the last days of her illness and after her death. I will recount only a few of them here. On three separate occasions the sound of a choir of voices was heard for which there was no accounting; her body, exposed for 26 days after death, remained as perfect as on the day of her death; an unusual odor of unrecognizable essence issued from the body several times; and the light from the crucifix had no natural origin.

These unusual manifestations caused Mother Charitas to delve further, and so she had the coffin opened 17 months later. Having obtained the required permission and with witnesses, among whom was a notary public, she

opened the metal lid to find a coating of mold. Removing the mold, Mother Charitas found that the features were more perfect and beautiful than before; so she proceeded to minister to the deceased Reverend Mother: "I wiped her face, hands, and feet, which seemed more beautiful and perfect than before she died" (p. 458).

The perfumed odor once again was exhaled by the corpse. Each Sister paid her respects to her deceased and, they believed, sainted Reverend Mother. Mother Charitas, herself, placed a kiss upon the lips of the corpse in farewell.



Does Mother Maddalena desire to be recognized by the Church? Whereas in life her response would have been an emphatic No, it is also true that she never lived for herself. Perhaps, then, heeding the words of Albert Kleber, she may consent in heaven:

Canonization of the Servants of God would not add anything to her sanctity and eternal glory, though it would be a grace for us to have her virtues approved by the unerring judgment of Peter, and to have her life put before us as an attractive pattern; at the same time have her appointed patroness of all those who will endeavor to fashion their lives according to this pattern ... [p. 470].

Miracles, miracles?

IN THE realm of the miraculous, Mother Maddalena apparently had a reputation before her entrance into heaven, and one of these was for herself. In a letter written to a Reverend Mother Patricia the writer states that while in New Orleans,

... Reverend Mother Magdalen suffered much from a tumor in her breast, I saw and felt the lump. A novena was begun, but after a few days every trace of the tumor had disappeared. The attending physician... who was a pious man, declared it miraculous.

And again, a different type of miracle,

The oil stove exploded, setting fire to our little store of provisions. Reverend Mother, taking her apron, calmly picked up the flaming article and threw it into the yard. While her head-cover was scorched and the apron badly burned, her hands and feet were not in the least burned.

In a letter to Mother Charitas in June, 1911, Sister Francis recalls her trip with Mother Maddalena to Omaha, where Mother Constance lay near death. During the journey she received a second dispatch which stated that her sister was much better. Fatigued and anxious, Mother Maddalena soon fell asleep. "I felt myself getting steadily worse,



and it seemed every moment must be my last, but I had not the heart to awaken my Mother. Not wishing to die without her blessing, I placed her hand on my head and taking her cord in my hand, at the same time I breathed a prayer that through the merits of our dear Lord and those of my Mother I might be cured, and indeed, I was instantaneously, such was her sanctity.

The greatest miracles, however, occurred after her death. Of these I shall mention only a few. A Sister who suffered from a goiter was advised by Mother Maddalena not to have it operated on, and so even after her death the Sister refused the operation until matters became too extreme and at last, thinking it to be prudent, she went to the surgeon. To his surprise and hers, upon examination, the goiter had completely disappeared. As he said, "... there is no goiter there. You are cured. I can't account for it. A higher power must have cured you!" (p. 462).

Another person blessed by a miracle of Mother Maddalena was a priest of the Newark Archdiocese who had gangrenous fingers from an accident. The doctors were puzzled by the nature of the disease, and there seemed to be no other way than that of an amputation. Then it was further decided that it was beyond the power of man to help and the rest was in the hands of

God. It was at this time that the priest's aunt obtained a piece of the veil of the Reverend Mother Maddalena. This was pinned on his clothing, and the complete cure followed. Eight years later he was ordained a priest—dedicated to the God who had seen fit to cure him through the intercession of the Reverend Mother Maddalena Bentivoglio.

Several other miracles have been testified to, such as the cure of several cases of eye disease and knee-joint disorders. While all these are important for proof of her sanctity, there are other qualities which prove this very human woman to be truly holy. One of these is her sense of humor. It seems that most of the saints were able to laugh at themselves, at their human foibles, with complete confidence that God laughed along with them.

In one of the letters to Rev. Mother Patricia an incident in the first house in Omaha is related in this fashion:

One of the places in Omaha in which Mother Maddalena and Mother Constance resided was so small that Rev. Mother and one of the novices had to sleep in the same room and Mother Constance and the postulant in the other. The Sister who gave the awakening had to sleep on the floor under the kitchen table and the first morning after had the fun and fright of having the alarm clock jump down on her. After that it was safely placed on the floor.

Another incident in Omaha occurred when Mr. Creighton wished to give each Sister a pair of shoes for the winter. Mother Constance protested that in the spirit of poverty she did not need a pair. But Mother Maddalena told her to give her shoe number; so, having heard Mother Maddalena say that hers was a six, Mother Constance replied that hers was half-past six. Mr. Creighton enjoyed this, and so did the others.

The last amusing incident I will relate is rather tragic in its consequences, but is a still better example of Mother's personal sense of humor. In the last summer before her death, Mother Maddalena perspired profusely from the dropsical condition brought about by her heart trouble, and as a result she lost much weight. She remarked about this condition, "I am melting all away!" (p. 442).

Remembrances: "There Was Nothing Extraordinary about Mother."

WHAT KIND of person really was Mother Maddalena Bentivoglio? We are fortunate to have still among us two members of the Order of Saint Clare (O.S.C.) who recall Mother Maddalena and can give us some insight into her personally.

Sister Bentivoglio Hartman (named for Mother Maddalena),

sister of the late biblical scholar, Louis Hartman, C.Ss.R., shared her recollection of her one and only meeting with Mother Maddalena:

Mother Maddalena had stopped in New York where the Sisters cared for the immigrants at the German Immigrant House. While there Sister Bentivoglio, fourteen years of age at the time, interested in the life of the Poor Clares, was introduced to Mother Maddalena. She describes her as "a very quiet person with a very nice smile. Mother Maddalena gave her a picture and a medal of St. Clare and assured her that she would accept her whenever she was ready. The following August Mother Maddalena was dead.

Sister Bentivoglio has enjoyed 90 years of life, but those few moments with Mother Maddalena are as fresh in her memory as if their meeting had taken place yesterday.

The second contributor to this article is Sister Bernardine, who lived with Mother Maddalena when she was Abbess in Evansville and was present at her death. Sister describes Mother Maddalena as

a real Poor Clare, a tireless laborer and a deeply spiritual woman—always giving good example by being first in chapel for morning prayer and at midnight (due to the spirit of St. Clare who considered good example superior to words). She had a sense of humor which

was evident on the occasion of the broken bench. The Sisters were outside for recreation and several of the young Sisters sat on a rather weak bench which gave way under them. No one was hurt and all had a good laugh. There was nothing extraordinary about Mother. She was just one of God's chosen ones [through whom] God may permit some souls to get special graces.

Regarding her death, Sister Bernardine recalls,

... Mother was dying. She was lying on a straw mat and it was on the floor. As we went in, one Sister was with me. . . . Sister knelt by her head, and I beside her by her left arm. . . . Sister said the Litany of our Holy Father Francis, and when she said "Holy Father St. Francis, defender of the Children," she opened her eyes real wide as though she was

seeing someone, and when she closed her eyes, she was gone. . . . She had her two hands crossed on her breast, and she looked beautiful.

Mother Madalena truly followed Francis and Clare in their imitation of Jesus, and from her sufferings, wanderings, and joys she was able to leave a great legacy to her children. If anyone understood Francis's story of Perfect Joy, she certainly did.

Like our Holy Mother St. Clare, [she] disdained not going from door to door begging alms for the love of God. Once her hand was nearly taken off by a woman who rudely slammed the door in her face. The novice who accompanied her burst into tears, but Rev. Mother, with a sweet smile on her face said: "Dear child, this is perfect joy!"



Old Nuns

Their lives
Burning thinly
In the self-fitting ends
Of experience cast their star-shaped
Shadows.

Sister Rafael Tilton, O.S.F.

Two Songs for Christmas

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

Advent Song to Our Lady

Swift fly the Advent days,
Little Maid-Mother;
Under your quiet heart
Jesus, our Brother,
Shading the splendor
Of increate light!
Is robing the Godhead
In crimson and white.
Soon from the sheath
Of your virginal womb
Jesse's sweet Blossom
Will burst into bloom.
In the night silences
Soon will be heard
Whispered among us
The Father's own Word.

Little Maid-Mother,
These are the days
Kneeling beside you
We ponder your ways;
Reaching our pitiful
Arms of desire,
Warming our hopes at
Your heart's holy fire;
Waiting to see
Your immaculate hands
Wrapping our God in
Earth's swaddling bands.
Swift fly the Advent days,
Little Maid-Mother;
Show us the God you made
Jesus our Brother!

Little Is Love (A Carol)

Magic of moonlight is over
the meadows;
stillness of starlight is
studding the sky.
The comfort of campfire is
shelter to shepherds
and shadows move softly where
Huddled sheep lie.

But out of the midnight
a music is moving
and wingtips are winnowing
over the earth.

Skies are asunder and
splendor stupendous
is telling the tidings of
marvellous birth!

Hasten, oh hasten! and
hurry your footsteps!
Stoop at the cattle cave's
cumbersome door.

Soften your speaking now,
quiet your tumult.

Hush, to the stable straw, hush, to adore.

Lantern glow lighting the
dim of the dusk
golden the straw where the
Little One lies,
rings into radiance
Maiden-all-Mother,
shadows the shining of
love in her eyes.

Soft is her singing now,
sweet is His slumber,
gladsome the glisten of
teardrops that start.
Little is Love as He lies
in a manger,
made to the measure of
cradle and heart.

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord Jesus;

GREETINGS AND PEACE

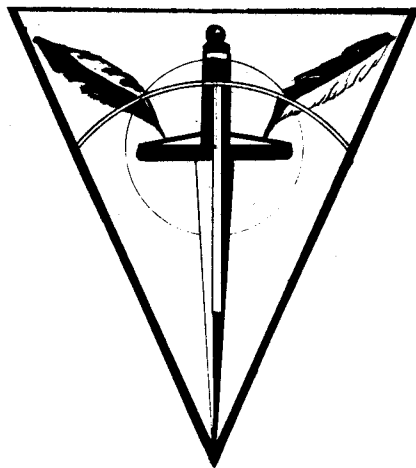
CY GALLAGHER, O.F.M.CAP.

THIS MONTH I would like to show the parallels, in Paul's Letters to the Corinthians and Francis's Letter to the Entire Order, regarding regulations, warning, caution, and correction.

Large groups are bound to have factions. Even a charismatic leader is certain to find that some are content to follow him only at a considerable distance, some will not follow at all, and some will even resist and move in a tangent. After Paul, beginning in "fear and trepidation" (1 Cor. 2:3), had established a Christian community in Corinth during about two years' labor, he moved on to other cities. Reports followed that the community was displaying open factionalism, major moral and legal disputes were scandalizing the simple, and even the celebration of the eucharistic liturgy was becoming sacrilegious, with some members drinking too freely, some excluding others from the agape. Charisms were misused for individual glory and were being prized more highly than works of charity.

And so Paul writes a letter. He insists on his apostolic authority. He addresses abuses directly and even promises a direct confrontation if abuses remain uncorrected. He promises to return (1 Cor.

16:5) but for some reason changes his plans. For this he receives much criticism; one person even publicly reviles him (2 Cor. 2:5). And Paul suffers great anxiety. "I did decide, however, not to visit you again in painful circumstances. For if I cause you pain, who can make me happy again but the ones I grieved? I wrote as I did so that when I come I may not be saddened by those who should rejoice my heart. I know you all well enough to be convinced that my happiness is yours. That is why I wrote



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you in great sorrow and anguish, with copious tears—not to make you sad but to help you realize the great love I bear you" (2 Cor. 2:1-4).

Had the Order become so "Corinthian" to Francis in 1224 that he could not bear to be present at the Chapter held that year, the last before his death? Moorman says Francis simply could not bring himself to go to the Chapter that year "to open himself to more argument and debate" (*History of the Franciscan Order*, p. 59). What agony Francis must have endured, now that his fraternity had grown so large and was becoming torn by factions! Instead of attending the Chapter Francis wrote a long letter addressed to the entire Order. "To all the friars, so revered, so well loved . . ." (EpOrd 2). The letter is filled with tenderness and great reverence for the Blessed

Eucharist, which Francis begs be celebrated with the greatest care (12-13).

Like Paul's Letter to the Corinthians, Francis's Letter to the Entire Order has paragraphs of warm personal endearment: "38. I confess all my sins to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; to blessed Mary ever virgin and all the saints in heaven and on earth; to brother H, the minister of our order as to my revered lord and all the priests of our Order and all my other blessed brothers. 39. I have offended in many ways through my own grievous fault, and especially by not keeping the Rule which I promised to God, nor the Office, which the Rule prescribes, through negligence or sickness, because I am ignorant and unlettered." Would that all were the servants—and lovers—of the brothers and the Sisters, in the humility and personal concern of Francis and Paul!

Advent Waiting and Paschal Post-Script

Mary, mother-yet-to-be,
your body weaves muscle and bone,
knits flesh for your unborn son.
We wait for his coming forth
clothed in our tattered humanity.
Not clinging to divinity, he dwells
like us in all things, in garment poor
but without soil, without stain.

Mary, mother-of-us, coming to be,
are you weaving him a shroud then
in our flesh consigned to death?
Does death in every thread hand him upon his cross?
Twine itself in every strand of man in him?
But wait! Our Father in dazzling white in him rents
the veil of our mourning and night asunder to exalt
him, Jesus, Mary's son, clothed in our flesh-yet-to-be.

Sister Lois Shelton, O.S.F.

In His Will In Our Peace

Flames have licked my face,
Moustache, beard, brow—I have become ablaze with a fire
Not my own, not me, yet in me full and hot.
Like a heliotrope
I have stared at the sun so long
That closing my eyes I see two blazing yellow balls.
As if ignited
My lids have leapt open like crazed birds, startled into flight.
In Assisi my brothers watch me wonderingly—
And even those I do not know
Raise eyebrows at this patched man
Dancing on stone streets in sandals and hood,
Shouting of a fever within.
My God, I am on fire!

Those who know divinity through books
Do not trust me.
Happily I set aflame words writ by men
That the heavy page may turn to ash
And that the praise, unhindered, would seek the heavens
In waves of white smoke
Rising.

In a dream
I have learned that the heart is closer to God
Than the mind,
And in impassioned outbursts of what can only be love,
My body has sweat beads of blood,
Leaving me dry as a leaf in late fall,
Ready to fly.

*If there is darkness, let me bring light
For I am finally ignited!*

Laughing, Assisi watches me,
A zealot, they say, searing through life
With dried bones and blazing blood.
They do not know (though often I tell them!)
Of the freedom of that flame,
Which ardent, glows in any space or moment,
Carrying always its own secret light.
*Laudato si, misignore, per frate focu
per loquale ennalumini la noctel*

I will die by fire.
Smitten, I shall be the blackest cinder
To touch my sister earth,
but into the air will rise an essence
Incandescent,
Body becoming spirit at last.

Mighty and strong I will no longer
Walk like lumber
Nor drop like stone.
My God, Your blaze has kindled me!

*Laudate et benedicite, misignore:
et reingratlate et servaitte li
cum grande humilitate.*

I will glow with flame.

Mary Kathleen McCann

A Fool in Search of Truth

JOSEPH J. HALKA, O.F.S., M.D.

FRANCIS, son of Pietro Bernardone, was not a well educated man, certainly not a scholar. So say his earliest biographers (1 Cel. 89; LM 1),¹ and so says Francis himself (Test. 19).² It might even be said of him that he was foolish in a most extravagant way (1 Cel. 2; L3S 2). Yet he was not without a certain native ability. He was "quick and clever" (L3S 2). Nonetheless, Francis of Assisi never deluded himself about his literary limitations and more than once was content to call himself a simpleton, an unskilled, unlearned fool (VP Laet 11; EpOrd 39; SP 53).

Perhaps it was just because of this very unaffected simplicity, this extravagant foolishness, whether once in search of worldly and later of heavenly glory, that Francis was able to recog-

nize the immensity and the intensity of the divine action in his life and in his thought. Indeed, fool though he was, Francis of Assisi was a fool in search of truth.

The Search for Truth

THE WORD *truth* appears thirteen times in the writings of Saint Francis: Admonition I on the Body of the Lord (1.15); the Second Letter to All the Faithful (20); Office of the Passion (3.5.11); the Rule of 1221 (11.6; 22.31.40.49-50.52; and in Fragment 1.18.26. Francis's use of the word is always scriptural, and most often it is Johannine. This is best seen in the First Admonition (1.15) and the First Rule (22.40), where it is presented in its most crystalline form: "I am the way, and the truth, and the

¹All references to and citations of the various lives and legends concerning Saint Francis are as found in *Saint Francis of Assisi, Writings and Early Biographies* (English Omnibus of Sources), ed. Marion A. Habig, O.F.M. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

²All references to and citations of the writings of Saint Francis are as found in *Opuscula Sancti Patris Francisci Assisiensis*, ed. Cajetan Esser, O.F.M. (Roma: Collegio S. Bonaventurae, 1978).

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life" (J.N. 14:6).

Immediately it is clear that for Francis "Truth" is understood in an ontological sense and more especially a Christological sense.³ It is also clear that in the same context every other reference to the word is both biblical (RegNB 11.6; 22.31.49.50.52) and Johannine (Jn. 17:6-26; 1 Jn. 3:18). He seems to have discovered a dimension of truth more evident to illiterate and simple people than to scientists and scholars.

That Francis was a biblical man is not a new observation. His comprehension of Scripture, however, was said to be of a quality beyond the grasp of more learned men, even doctors of theology (SP 53). Nor was Francis's understanding of Scripture limited to the Gospel and Letters of Saint John. In the Office of the Passion (3.5.11) he quotes Psalm 56 with a definite Christological intention. It is the saving Lord, the Messiah, who rescues the soul of the searcher in distress. The author of the fourteenth-century *Meditations on the Life of Christ* suggests the reason for this command of biblical interpretation when he

³A. Michel, "Verité, Veracité," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* (1950).

⁴John de Caulibus, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, trans. Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961; rpt. 1977), p. 3.

⁵Etienne Gilson, *Medieval Universalism and Its Present Value* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1937; rpt. 1947), p. 1.

rhetorically asks:

Do you believe that the Blessed Francis would have attained such abundance of virtue and such illuminated knowledge of the Scriptures . . . if not by familiar conversation with and contemplation of his Lord Jesus?⁴

What Truth Is This?

BUT IF Francis was a biblical man, he was also a medieval man.⁵ He was convinced that his truth was true not only for his time, his society, nor only in his manner of expressing it, nor even for his Order alone. His truth is a universal truth and belongs to men and women of all times, all civilizations, all nations, and every manner of expression. Fool though Francis was, he presumed to give his truth to all the faithful (EPFid 1/2), to all the clergy (Ep Cler), to all superiors (EpCust 1/2), to the entire Order (EpOrd), and to all the rulers of peoples everywhere (EpRect).

Not only the followers of Francis, but all the followers of Christ are thus urged to become searchers with him. The Admonitions, the Rule of 1221, the Letters to the Faithful and to the General Chapter: these writings urge all

who have been inspired by divine promptings to measure their gospel living by the Truth who is Christ. Jesus is our exemplar (RegB 1.1). He is a fitting measure of the truth of our lives because he is true God and true man.⁶ It is incarnate Truth who is the object of our search. Christ who clothed himself with the flesh of our humanity and all its frailties (EpFid 2.4).

This personification of truth may be considered by some modern philosophers such as Santayana as a most "egregious and egotistical error,"⁷ the result of love's lavish excesses in attempting to convey in allegedly incompatible terms the meaning of its object. But surely there is no incompatibility of terminology here!⁸ The language Francis uses is an expression of his own metaphysics, his own conception of reality.

It is a conception which other modern philosophers like Jaspers could accept: "In the encounter with Transcendence the being of the World appears authentically

and ultimately real."⁹ And if it is correct, it follows that at the limits of all knowledge the knowing self becomes aware of its finiteness and the limitation of all reason. Man, contemplating death, suffering, conflict, error, guilt, the ambiguity and meaninglessness of relative truths, sees ambitious reason falter and even founder. He discovers that reason does not exhaust the possibilities, that there is a transcendence beyond the limits of empirical knowledge, opening to newer and more fulfilling vistas. Truth is the ontological.

What Fool Is This?

WHAT AN ascension this is! Francis suddenly finds himself articulating "truth" in the company of some of the great minds of the centuries. This would be of no surprise to Saint Bonaventure, who, as one of his earliest biographers, captures the sense of Francis's search for truth in his magisterial sermon on Christ the ONE Teacher.¹⁰ He too, in his academic expostulation, uses

⁶Norbert Nguyen van Khanh, *Le Christ dans la pensée de S. François d'après ses écrits* (Paris: pro manuscripto, 1973), pp. 36-37.

⁷George Santayana, *The Realm of Truth* (Book III of *Realms of Being* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1938), pp. 134-37.

⁸Edward M. MacKinnon, *Truth and Expression* (New York: Newman Press, 1971), pp. 16, 60, 68, *et passim*.

⁹Karl Jaspers, *Truth and Symbol* (from *Von der Wahrheit*), trans. with introd. by Jean T. Wilde, William Kluback, and William Kimmel (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1959), pp. 9-10.

¹⁰Saint Bonaventure, "Christ the One Teacher," in *What Manner of Man*,

the Johannine text we have seen Francis use: "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life."

Nor would this cause surprise to the friar who advised his fourteenth-century readers that if they would distinguish false things from true, their hearts must take fire and become animated, illumined by the touch of the divine.¹¹ Least of all would it be surprising to Francis himself, for when he praises the virtues, he does not boast but states in matter of fact fashion: "Pure and holy Simplicity puts all the learning of this world, all natural wisdom, to shame" (Sal Virt 10).

Wisest of Fools

THIS FOOL Francis succeeds in expounding the most profound Trinitarian mysteries, too great to be entrusted to mere words alone, by daringly embodying, incarnating Christ in himself. Against the religious ferment of his times, he strives consciously, insistently to set before man's eyes the purpose of Christ's entry into this, His world. Francis excites in us a new hope, born of Christ's death, resurrection,



and ascension—that unique mystery by the truth of which "the soul would be strengthened in faith and lifted up to the hope of heavenly glory."¹²

If, as Santayana insists, truth is a household presence, disguised as a domestic and dressed in homespun, then Francis has unveiled Truth, shown Him to be clothed in homespun, and introduced Him into the world's

trans. Zachary Hayes, O.F.M. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), pp. 21-55.

¹¹Cf. note 4, above.

¹²Saint Bonaventure, *Breviloquium* (Vol. II of *The Works of Bonaventure, Cardinal, Seraphic Doctor, and Saint*), trans. José de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1963), p. 177.

households as a domestic.¹³ Francis was after all a herald of the Great King (1 Cel. 16). He would make fools of us all so that we may less self-consciously search for Him in humble places, search to become true worshippers of the Father who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth (EpFid II 19-20).

In so doing, Francis has also revealed himself for what he was, a new kind of fool (LP 114). Ever the biblical man, he possessed a folly wiser than men's wisdom; for he had found in Christ the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 17:31). God is Truth. His search ended, Francis had but to transmit that message to his followers even as Paul and John did to theirs. By this faithful mirroring of Christ's words and actions, Francis personifies Truth in thoughts which scale perilous heights, speak unutterable words, even as he scaled the heights of La Ver-na only to descend again to teach us to search for Truth in the veneration of the heart.

His search ended more than seven centuries ago, but its chronicle remains fresh and vividly alive in his words and writings. Followers of every age have found encouragement in them to make his search their own, to tread in his footsteps.

¹³Santayana, p. 139.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 132.

¹⁵Gilson, pp. 18-22.

He has done exactly what Santayana feared he might do, as heroes of all ages have done. Given his vision, he is intent on reverencing the truth contained in reality, on prophesying what that reality ought to become.¹⁴ For Francis as for John before him, Truth is ontological.

But Francis is no mere Platonist. He is the Poverello. He is above all a medieval man, endowed with the remarkable faculty of combining the personal and universal in such a way as to keep faith with his own nature, with the nature of God's creation all around him.¹⁵ His originality does not contradict the inherent truth of life; rather, he sets Truth free. He is a just man, who sees no opposition between faith and truth, between truth and morality, but who insists on God's justice above all else (RegEr 3).

It is for us modern men and women, who divorce our individuality from the universal, to surrender to the unity of the true God; else we will fall captive to our own scientific truth and make of it a tyrant which would prevent us from ever reaching transcendent Truth. That is not how Francis would lead us in our search. But after all, he was only a fool—or so he said.

Christmas

The night is dark The cold is long
Nowhere can hope be seen . . .

There is no lark no sparrow song
The fields, the flocks are lean.

But then . . . oh hark! . . . ears can't be wrong
What can the street dogs mean?

A joyous bark Then baying throng
Can dawn's approach be seen?

(Deep midnight mark *Nowhere* is wrong
It is the Judgment Scene:)

ALL CANDLES SPARK . . .
COME ANGEL SONG . . .
A VIRGIN . . .
MOTHER . . .
QUEEN . . .

Sister M. Mercedes, P.C.C.

Seven Masses

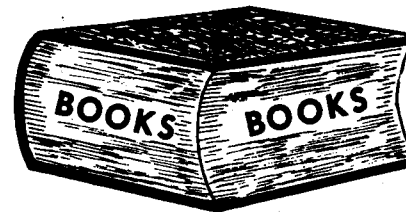
HUGOLINE A. SABATINO, O.F.M.

IV. Mass at Noon

(Is. 11:1-9)

we have skipped on water
in our childhood ecstasy—
experienced now,
love trials
fleshed out but awkward
no longer a darling in the elders' eye
scratched by our questioning
we seek a balm that penetrates
where the grit has skinned us
one answer, only one,
to heal every viper's sting—
we have judged with our eyes and ears
and have found only fault—
sprouts, shot up in our own greenness
we choke one another in that very growth
as wolves scattering lambs

let the children come
I will rest my hands on them
they are ready now
like standing grain
to be one
seeing with my eyes
hearing with my ears—
they have done well
(from private embryo
schooled to flawless slate of self)
but hush now the babbling of babytalk
they must praise God with my tongue—
let them assemble
from Parthia, Media, Crete and Rome;
let the wind chart its mysterious path
through the wheatfield
I pour out on them one Spirit
so all may know,
they are one body
which I call my own.



Who Is the Holy Spirit? By Charles Massabki, O.S.B. Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1979. Pp. viii-185. Paper, \$6.95.

Reviewed by Father Wilfrid A. Hept, O.F.M., Spiritual Assistant of the Secular Franciscans at Providence, RI, and a member of the Staff of St. Francis Chapel there.

In our graphic age we are used to visualizing everything, to having it flashed on the movie screen or more likely the TV screen. But how do we picture the Holy Spirit? God as Father is easily pictured from Michelangelo's depicting the act of creation as an old Man with long beard, his gnarled finger sparking life into Adam. A crucifix on a wall or on a chain around one's neck is an all too graphic picture of the redeeming act of the Son of God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. But a driving wind, a gentle breeze, a dove, or a fiery tongue at the first Pentecost is not very conducive to visualizing the Holy Spirit as a divine Person even in the enthu-

siums of the Confirmation ceremony. Whether charismatic or not, we twentieth-century Christians need to listen to testimonies out of our Christian tradition that speak of the Spirit of God in the Church community and in the believer. One source of such knowledge of the Holy Spirit is Father Charles Massabki's book, *Who Is the Holy Spirit?* In it the author draws heavily on the twin sources of authentic faith: Scripture and the Fathers of the Church.

Like the subject matter itself, this is not a book to be read lightly. In ten chapters with such varied relationships as "The Holy Spirit in the Church," the author in a practical way applies solid theology of the Spirit to our Christian daily living.

In fewer than 20 pages, the author gives us in his second chapter a lucid and understandable theology of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit's relationship with the other two Persons—a treatment which compares favorably with much longer and technical essays. Beginning with Gen. 1:26: "God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness," Father Massabki shows by analogy with our knowing and willing how God's knowing and willing results in a Trinity that is at the same time a Unity. This Unity in Divinity has a practical application and is the model of all community, be it marriage,

family, religious community, or the Church itself. In the same chapter, under the title "Names and Attributes of the Third Divine Person," the symbol of wind is well explained. The author says, "The wind symbolizes the Holy Spirit also for its force, as well as for the gentleness with which it blows." He gives new meaning to those words of our Lord to Nicodemus in Jn. 3:8: "The wind blows where it will. You hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone begotten of the Spirit."

In the third chapter, before writing of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit

In the third chapter, before writing of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Christ, the author points out several texts concerning the gift of the Spirit as found in the prophets (e.g., Is. 32:15-16: "The Spirit from on high will be poured out on us anew. Then will the desert become an orchard and the orchard be regarded as a forest" [p. 31]). Under the title, "The Mysteries of the Incarnation," we have a fine explanation concerning the Holy Spirit and the virginal conception of Jesus and the reason for it. For those already aware of the work of the Holy Spirit as described in John's Gospel as the giving of "life" (I have come that men may have life, and may have it in all its fullness"—Jn. 10:10), there is much food for thought in Father Massabki's sixth chapter on our divinization in the plan of salvation. The author quotes Saint Cyril as saying, "Being God and proceeding from God, the Spirit imprints himself invisibly, like a seal upon wax, in the hearts of those who

receive him" (p. 96).

To receive the Holy Spirit encompasses more than Baptism and Confirmation, as we learn in the chapter on "The Holy Spirit, Principle of Our Sacramental and Moral Life." The author rounds out the book with a short chapter on the Charismatic Renewal. Thus, while this book will not help us to paint a picture of the Third Person of the Trinity, it will at least permit us to conjecture the most outstanding traits of his personality. It will certainly contribute to our knowledge of the Scriptures and of the early Fathers on this important subject of the Holy Spirit.

The Credo of the People of God: Theological Commentary of the Profession of Faith of Pope Paul VI. By Candido Pozo, S.J. Trans. & ed. from the 2nd Spanish ed., by Mark A. Pilon. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1980. Pp. xviii-231, including index. Cloth, \$8.95.

Reviewed by Father Julian A. Davies, O.F.M., Head of the Philosophy Department at Siena College and Associate Editor of this Review.

The subtitle aptly expresses the scope and intent of this well written work. The major topics treated are the Unity and Trinity of God, Christology, The Holy Spirit, Mariology, Original Sin, Ecclesiology, the Eucharist, the Relation of the Church to the World (in a chapter entitled "Incarnationism"), and Eschatology. The format is structured so that the text is first given and then followed by the author's amply documented commentary.

Although Pope Paul's *Credo* was

not written directly to counteract the very first edition of the Dutch Catechism (later the Catechism was amended after dialogue with Rome), Father Pozo frequently indicates that viewpoints expressed in that Catechism were being criticized by the *Credo*. The text is enhanced by the inclusion of the original Latin text of the *Credo*, a new English translation of it by the translator of the book, three allocutions of Paul VI about that *Credo* and contemporary faith, and a beautiful prayer for faith.

Readers going through the book for the first time might want to skip the full footnotes (equalling, it seems, the text for better than half the book). The notes, however, ought to be read before putting the book aside, as they are integral to its message.

Cardinal Baum, in his Foreword, offers a summary appraisal: "This translation of Fr. Candido Pozo's excellent commentary on Pope Paul's *Credo* is . . . a timely addition to the teaching instruments available in our language which can help unlock the riches of this Creed for our times . . . It should prove most valuable to religious educators (on a variety of levels) and assist them in bringing the wealth of Pope Paul's *Credo* to the Catholic people" (p. viii).

Sing Pilgrimage and Exile. By Murray Bodo, O.F.M. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1980. Pp. vi-138. Paper, \$2.75.

Reviewed by Father Raphael D. Bonanno, O.F.M., who after 16 years in Brazil as a missionary of Holy Name Province is now beginning a new mission in the Holy Land.

In 1976 I travelled with Murray Bodo and several friars on a Franciscan Pilgrimage in central Italy and found him a sensitive, fraternal person with a deep knowledge of literature and a keen knack for writing. So the chance to review this volume of his poems on pilgrimage and exile came as most opportune and welcome.

First of all, I would like to mention certain "gut" reactions to definite poems; and secondly, to comment on the collection as a whole.

At times, the verse is playful—e.g., "Old Jacket" (p. 15), "Third Floor Room" (pp. 10:11), and "Observation" (p. 15). "Jeremiah" is a good vocational poem any promoter could easily use. There are poignant moments of loneliness, as in "Rye Beach" (p. 32) or a scene that masks a hurt, as in "Parting" (p. 18). In "Requiem for Gus" (p. 11), the poet stretches out in relation to the other, but the other always seems shadowy and unclear.

The poem "The Inextinguishable" (p. 20) is a fine requiem for Vietnam. Father Murray's imagery dwells a lot on the desert and on all types of birds (hawks, winter birds, sparrows, blackbirds, etc.). The desert is explainable because the author was born or grew up near the desert of New Mexico. The birds, on the other hand, need further analysis. They seem to be a recurring symbol of pilgrimage. Possibly they even reflect the poet's image of man: a frail, insignificant creature of God ever on a journey through the universe in search of the Father's house or, if you will, "nest."

"Views from my Window" (p. 24) are prose meditations included in the

collection; they turn around a conversation with Saint Francis. The first and fourth sections are the best. "Four Loves" (p. 30) has clever imagery. "Boat-ride" (p. 33) is a good poem and could be subtitled "Celibate Love." In "Italian Suite" (p. 34) the Cat in Florence is either a poetic whimsy or a symbol of something that escaped this reader. On a scale of 1 to 10, "Notes on a Water Suite" (p. 38) unfortunately merits 0! The title-poem "Sing Pilgrimage and Exile" (p. 40) seems to give the keynote to the whole collection: like Abraham, this friar is on a pilgrimage, singing of a thousand and one things he meets in life, some of which explicitly remind him of his Creator.

"Sparrow" (p. 41) is more substantial. "Widow's Son" (p. 50) is a lovely story poem with a scriptural turnabout. "The Landscape and the Trader" (p. 58) is reminiscent of Robert Frost's "The Gift Outright"; the land and the trader become one. "Crossing the Channel" (p. 72) is a good springboard for a life-enigma: why do we always land before I can jump? "Alley" (p. 74) is a study in monority, as we Franciscans understand it; so is "Minority" itself (p. 79). "Authority" (p. 105) is a sensitive pastoral poem of the wounded-healer type: a person in a decision-making role apologetic for the judgments that marred people's lives (Father Murray was a Provincial Councillor or Definitor in St. John the Baptist province). "Poetry" (p. 117) is a rare moment of the poet's reflection on himself and his craft. "Madonna Pieta" (p. 120) is tender and theological at the same time. "Night of the Tower" (p. 123) celebrates our

common humanity with Saint Francis. In general this book contains much nature imagery. Often a sparrow or a sandy beach will set the poet musing on deeper questions of life's pilgrimage and exile. I did not find an emphatic scriptural content in these poems, but once in a while it surfaces, as in "Widow's Son." Father Murray's poetry is reflective in a quiet way but not deeply emotional; he seems afraid to let himself go. His nature themes lead out onto universal truths, in the style and manner of Robert Frost. But where is the twinkle in the eye? I would expect it from a friar minor. His whimsy is pleasant but not humorous. I am not suggesting he move into Ogden Nash's department with limericks, but that he be more natural and let his own native humor flow more easily. It should not be Frost's twinkle either; just his very own.

Throughout the poems, good lines flash here and there, such as "The present is tense with presence; absent, the past is still." Some lines seem contrived, and others almost deliberately obscure, which may very well be the poet's intent. One recurring question is, who is the "you" in several of the poems? This "you" appears vaguely and ambiguously, as in "Autumn Song" (p. 94) or "Absence" (p. 95). Is "you" a woman or a man? Or God? Because the object of affection is clouded, the feeling toward the object lacks clarity and definition, a defect which can be fatal for a poet. I can understand Father Murray's celibate hesitancy, but a poet must express his deepest feelings and praise God through them.

A celibate poet has a special contribution to make, as the world noted in Gerard Manley Hopkins or Francis Thompson (not that they have said it all!). That is why Murray Bodo too has his own inner voice to give to this world. He seems determined to do so. As a brother, I would only ask him to be more natural in letting that voice be heard.

This Charismatic Thing: What Is It All About? By David Parry, O.S.B. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1980. Pp. viii-103. Paper, \$3.50.

Reviewed by Father Julian A. Davies, O.F.M., Ph.D., Associate Editor of this Review and Head of the Philosophy Department of Siena College.

This splendid exposition and apologia comprises four chapters, examining the charismatic phenomenon in Catholicism, the priest's relationship to it, its impact on religious life, and its manifestations in prayer meetings. Although based on the author's observation of the movement as he has seen it in England, the book rings true as an echo of the American experience, too. Thematic throughout the work is the reminder

that we cannot box or confine God to our expectations. Honestly faced in all of the discussions are the dangers involved when special manifestations of the Divine appear in the context of prayer. Those dangers—illusions, deception, elitism, and divisiveness—are not such as to render the risk of charismatic prayer too great to enter upon.

One of the most important points Father Parry makes is that God sometimes gives his gifts in anticipation of full conversion. Hence the fact that many who do not have solid spiritual maturity, do not "have their act together yet," have genuine prayer experiences which lead them to be most aware of, and vocal about, God's love and mercy to them. He could have added that in a wider perspective, all of us preach a better game than we live and carry with us a lot of inconsistencies and faults that we tolerate.

Father Parry is lucid and most reasonable in his exposition. Priests and religious especially can profit from reading this book and more than likely from a venture into charismatic prayer should the opportunity present itself and the Spirit's inspiration be felt.

☆

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