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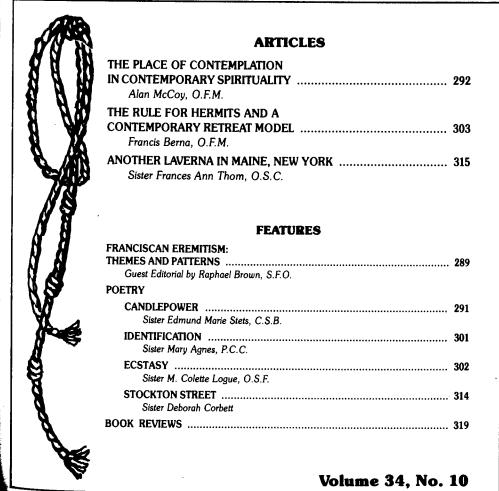
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FRANCISCAN PATHWAYS

The Franciscan Institute St. Bonaventure University St. Bonaventure, NY 14778 **NOVEMBER, 1984**

The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



The CORD

A Monthly Franciscan Spiritual Review

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The illustrations for our November issue have been drawn by Sister Jane Madejczyk, O.S.F., an artist in Chicago.

Standard Abbreviations used in **The CORD** for Early Franciscan Sources

I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions
BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo
CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun
EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony
EpCler: Letter to Clerics¹
EpCust: Letter to Superiors¹
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful¹
EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo
EpMin: Letter to a Minister
EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order
EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People
ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God
ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father
FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare

Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221
LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God
LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours
OffPass: Office of the Passion
OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix
RegB: Rule of 1223
RegBr: Rule of 1221
RegEr: Rule for Hermits
SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady
SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues
Test: Testament of St. Francis
UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare
VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy
1, II refer to First and Second Editions.

II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis 2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis 3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles CL: Legend of Saint Clare CP: Process of Saint Clare Fior: Little Flowers of St. Francis LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis LP: Legend of Perugia L3S: Legend of the Three Companions SC: Sacrum Commercium SP: Mirror of Perfection

Omnibus: Marion A. Habig, ed., St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

AB: Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., Francis and Clare: The Complete Works (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

GUEST EDITORIAL

Franciscan Eremitism: Themes and Patterns

FIRST, A FEW semantic paradoxes. There are no hermits in Heaven, but there are lots of contemplatives. A Christian hermit or anchorite living all by himself and for himself is a living contradiction. We are not called by God to be hermits, but to be Christians, loving him and others and living for him and others.

As a non-Christian sociologist friend once said to me with good humor: "The Catholic Church is wonderful. It organizes everything—even hermits!" Right! It Christianizes its hermits, making them team-hermits, communal hermits, in Orders and communities of hermits. That is the basic Christian eremetical process. Holy men go off to pray alone in the desert, and soon they attract followers whom they guide and counsel and group into small communities or lauras. That is what the two great eremitical founding fathers of the desert did in Egypt and Palestine: Saints Anthony and Sabbas. Their lauras evolved into our Western Latin Carthusian and Camaldolese hermitages and into the Eastern Churches' kellia and sketes.

Our Father Francis followed this pattern. The Carceri is a laura, or was one until it grew into an Observant ritiro. Francis' Rule for Hermits strikingly illustrates his ideal and plan for a small community of team-hermits, alternating the life of Martha and Mary. Note also the provisions for the Hours of the Office, yet no mention of Masses. Note too the warm mother-son family ethos.

Raphael Brown, S.F.O. and lay affiliate O.F.M., retired reference librarian of the Library of Congress and President of the San Luis Rey Fraternity in north San Diego County, California, has written several books and numerous articles on Franciscan themes, the latest of which is True Joy from Assisi.

What we must above all grasp and try to follow is the basic pattern of Francis' own twenty years consistently divided into a three-part alternating cycle or rhythm: (1) praying in hermitages, (2) preaching in towns and villages, and (3) traveling on foot between them. But two thirds of the pattern were given to prayer, for as Dante reports, "the Friars Minor go along the road in silence and solitary, one ahead and the other behind" (Inferno 23.1-3).

So we see clearly that Saint Francis lived as a hermit in a "mobile-home hermitage"! For he told his friars when they set out on a trip (which we might call an inner-hermitage "trip"): "Wherever we are and walk, we have a cell with us: Brother Body is our cell and the soul is the hermit who stays inside the cell to pray to God and to meditate" (LP 80).

Here we penetrate into the heart and core (cor) of the eremetical spirituality of Francis, which is very simply and beautifully the heart and essence of the deep-flowing mainstream of Christian contemplative spirituality: the inner prayer life, the interior life of continual intimate heart-t-heart union and communion in which by ego-reducing and self-overcoming we experience the repairing infusion of God's healing Spirit and daily, hourly, "toward him soar and his Love outpour."

As Francis often said, "Let us always make in ourselves a little dwelling and abode of the Trinity" (RegNB 22), and "The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and make in them a dwelling and abode" (EpFid 48), using the Latin habitaculum of Eph. 2:22 and the mansionem of Jn. 14:23. This scriptural theme of the indwelling of the Spirit in our inner dwelling or "house of the soul" reappears throughout that mainstream of Christian mystical spirituality in many pregnant phrases of the saints and masters, such as the inner Jerusalem, the inner Temple, the inner House of God, the inner cell or cloister or abbey, in Saint Catherine of Siena's "cell of self-knowledge" and Saint Teresa of Avila's interior castle and John of the Cross' inner fortress, in Saint Bernard's cubiculum or mystic marriage chamber, and in Paul Evdokimov's interiorized monasticism. This theme of the Christian life as a journey into the cave of the heart has been sung by Dante and Bunyan and our own Murray Bodo: "The Journey is an inner one . . . La Verna is in your own hearts." For as Christ said to the modern French lay mystic Lucie Christine: I am the interior life." That life and journey have been masterfully mapped in Evelyn Underhill's rich classic. Mysticism, with countless examples and citations from the great Christian voyagers and guides of that mainstream.

All this is directly relevant to Franciscan eremetical spirituality because it is exactly what Saint Francis lived and experienced in all those recurring visits and forty-day retreats which he made, up to seven times a year, in his twenty hillside hermitages that he founded between Assisi and Rome and Assisi and Florence.

Again we have a clear pattern, a basic physical setting. First, a stiff climb of about one hour up a steep hill or mountain away from a town. There, nothing but an abandoned hermit's chapel and cell and some caves, plus a grand panoramic view and a beautiful God-made forest cathedral, with a

stream. That's all. Later, tiny and then larger cells and buildings were added, mostly by the Observant return-to-the-ritiri reform under Saint Bernardine of Siena. The Franciscan Order's branches have been repeatedly reformed and renewed by successive waves of returns to the ritiri, in other words, to the inner life of contemplative prayer.

But in each case, literally in each friar every day, the lifelong process of reform and renewal has involved the rekindling of the inner fire, of what Saint Francis constantly stressed as "the spirit of prayer and devotion," that inner "work" of poverty, penance, praise, worship, fasting, self-denial as joyful, loving sacrifice and intercession for the healing of sin-sick souls and the growth of the Kingdom, the inner Kingdom, the spiritual church, and hence of the whole Body of Christ.

To sum up, here are two lapidary quotations. When asked whether he would join a house of prayer, a friar replied, "I'm already living in one—in here," tapping his chest. The most famous modern American hermit, Thomas Merton, is reported to have appeared after his death to a minister and said: "I spent too much time looking in the wrong place. I should have looked within." That is the meaning and message of Franciscan eremitism. Ω

Raphael Brown, S.F.O.

Candlepower

On the distant altar a demure candle flickers, faint and far away. It does not surrender its fire; (the smoldering wick does not die.) The candle has an intrinsic power; it will not let go of the flame. We are the same when we burn and hunger for God.

Sister Edmund Marie Stets, C.S.B.

The Place of Contemplation in Contemporary Spirituality

ALAN MCCOY, O.F.M.

WHAT I WANT to speak about is about you and about what I think you can give to the whole Franciscan movement and to the Church.

I believe that we are becoming more and more aware of the fact that whatever involvement we may have in social action must be rooted in a truly contemplative life. I'm thoroughly convinced of it. On the other hand, I firmly believe that a contemplative life that does not reflect a sensitivity to the problems of people in today's world, that does not reflect an interest in grace and sin as they are reflected not only in personal lives but in the structural realities that we are dealing with—I believe that such a contemplative life is an escape. It's the type of escape that certainly Amos rejected, that Isaiah and Jesus rejected. So my plea to you is: Help! Those of you who are privileged to experience the eremetical life in the Franciscan tradition, I think have a great gift to share with all of us.

I'd like to start my consideration of contemplation in today's world with something else: viz., salvation. I believe that many of the problems that we have related to the contemplative life and many of the ways that it has been denigrated in the history of the Orders stems from an incomplete picture of what salvation is all about.

In the Old Testament, it's very clear that salvation pertains to this world. In the earlier books of the Bible, it's very clear: salvation means getting out of Egypt, God saving me in the desert, bringing me back to the land that he had promised me, but not me—us! Salvation was thisworldly, yes, and also communal.

Gradually, though, toward the end of the Old Testament period, it became clear that we weren't going to realize the fullness of that salvation here on earth. It was going to be the coming of the kingdom in a truly eschatological reality. And the individual was becoming important.

Father Alan McCoy, O.F.M., former Minister Provincial of the Santa Barbara Province and currently General Secretary of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, delivered this talk at the Franciscan Eremetical Life Conference, Graymoor Christian Unity Center, Garrison, New York, on June 16, 1983.

Now in the New Testament, all four of those phases are present. Salvation means: I have come that they may have life, and have it here on earth, that all children of God may have it; I have come that they may have life—life eternal. And I have come that the individual may have life, and be under a law of growth to the fullness of life, at the same time that my People, my Body, my Kingdom, my Church—whatever term we see used, despite the different shades of meaning, always has a communal dimension. Those four aspects are very clear, and especially nowadays, Scripture scholars are helping us discern the difference between the truly Pauline Letters and the so-called Pauline school. Paul himself is very much for the next world. But the Pauline school and the Pastoral Letters—and also Luke in the Acts as well as the Lukan Gospel—are very strong for salvation here on earth.

You can be effective instruments of the Kingdom . . . as long as you come to prayer to meet the Lord as the center of your being . . . and with him all your brothers and sisters.

In the course of time, we lost that perspective, a loss which is reflected in the history of every religious order, depending on the time in which that order gave an answer to God's call.

There came a time, and this was at the end of the "first fervor" of the Franciscan movement, where salvation meant "saving my soul." All the sacraments were looked upon as vehicles for my personal, eternal salvation. And when that dominates, then what we do as religious will reflect the *individual* approach and the *other-worldly* approach.

It's hard to say—I've asked theologians about this—what was Francis' concept of, first of all, salvation; what was his personal evaluation of contemplation? I have a few inklings, which I would like to share with you, because I think it might help when you come to consider the eremetical movement.

I believe that Leonardo Boff has something right on target when he says, "Francis really cannot be said to have 'seen God in others.' "We've said that so often. Really, as you study Francis, and study his attitude toward creation, you see that with Francis there was a transparency of God through others. The person never lost his or her individual value,

reality—even the birds of the air and the beauty of God's creation—God came through all of this. Francis lived in God's presence, and when Francis wanted to get away and allow that presence to sink in deeper, it wasn't that he was trying to flee people or, we might say, "the world," in that sense; it was rather that his mind wasn't able to deal with all the things that were going on. He needed the chance for himself to come and really rest in the presence of God with all of this, to bring with him the experience he had, say, with the leper. Boff claims that it's only when we understand that, that we'll understand Bonaventure or such modern writers as Teilhard de Chardin.

If we can understand, e.g., Teilhard, then we will get rid of this idea that somehow there's a great distinction between worldly things and spiritual things. For him, nothing that comes from the hand of God can be profane. And so, contemplation can't be an escape from anything at all that God has made.

Having said that, I'd like to say something about where I feel contemplation is today, in our world. I think that we have rediscovered the biblical reality of contemplation. (It's been rediscovered time and time again, and lost time and time again.) In the Old Testament, the people were called as a people to a union with God that was so intense that they would experience the living God. This was all his People—not some select group, but all his People. And when Paul prayed for his converts, not special groups: religious, priests, bishops—but all his People—he prayed that all of them would come to have that experience of the living God. Paul's language, e.g., in Ephesians 3, leaves no room for doubt as to either the intellectual component or the global nature of the experience in question. And that tradition has been kept very well in the East.

In the West, we had a little problem with it. Already in the early ages of the Church, the West started becoming very practical, and so forth. It was Gregory the Great who had to come back and reaffirm the truth that was central in our theology from that time on if we really hunt for it: viz., that every baptized Christian is called to contemplation. Every baptized Christian—why? Because we're under a law of growth, of intimacy with the Lord. When we accept that seriously, and we put that into the context of a house of prayer, or hermitage, what are we saying? That somehow we are special? And that this is our particular calling, to attain contemplation? No—what we're saying is: Every gift that's given is meant to be used. Now some way, those of us who are privileged to be in a house of prayer, or in a hermitage, have to make sure that that gift is given back to the Christian community, and not just in a prayer of intercession.

If all the people that we touch in some way are called to contempla-

tion, somehow, we who have been favored with this gift, at least with the calling to come on to the gift, have to make sure that it is shared with others. And to me that's the heart of the call of the contemplative within the Franciscan life today. If the whole Order itself and the whole movement of various Franciscan groups are going to be effective in today's world, if we're really going to be the instrument of peace, there's no way we can persevere in this task without all of us somehow sharing in the contemplative life. (I would never want to equate the contemplative life with the hermitage—by no means; but I do see the hermitage as the cradle. I see it as so important. I see it as an opportunity in many ways for us to see that people can actually bring us deeper and deeper into that union, into that experience of the living God.)

Now, there is a tension—there's always been a tension—between the "active life," so called, and the "contemplative life." And I don't think we're going to do away with that this week. It's a healthy tension. But I was asked to reflect on the fact that that tension which is there and has been there has been very fruitful.

I have been on the road quite a bit in the past few years. One thing I've been interested in is what happened to the movements within the Order: first of all, Bernardine and his companions; then the Alcantaran movement and the Capuchin movement.

Let's take a look first of all at the Alcantaran movement. I've never been drawn to it to any great extent. The severity of it sort of pushed me aside for a while, but as I studied Peter of Alcantara, I came to understand him as a tremendous person—a man of great tenderness and also a man of great apostolic zeal. Now, this is not always evident in the immediate quotes and accounts of his actions, but you see it in his relationship to others. And the Alcantaran movement: you see it yet today in Japan, in the Philippines, in Peru. I was down in Paraguay recently, and some of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate down there told me the results of the Alcantaran movement in Paraguay over 300 years ago-they could see its effect in the lives of the people. The people would welcome them into their homes on their missionary journeys, e.g., they would give them a room and, when the missionaries went off to bed the people would be up praying. The people had really been taught—it was a tough way, but it perdured, and it has influenced the entire country in one way or another. In Peru, you still see the entire missionary thrust of the Franciscans being much influenced by the Alcantaran movement.

In the work of the men who followed Bernardine, then John and the Observants, and the various reforms that came from that, when you take a look just a few years afterwards and see what was happening in Europe, you cannot but be impressed by the genuine deepening of the

prayer life. The same way with the Capuchin movement. When I have a chance to talk to Capuchin chapters, I always tell them that we have a right to expect something very special from them: that they help us all never forget the call to contemplation—all of us. And look what happened through the Capuchin movement. Alongside the Jesuits, it was the greatest influence in the Church during the counter-Reformation, with effects on every form of apostolic work in Europe. And it certainly did not come out of just a well-planned form of pastoral action. It came out of a sincere movement—one back to the contemplative life, found often in the hermitage.

If that is true, what about our work today? My plea to you, is to share the life in which you are involved, because, although contemplation is not found only in the hermitage, it certainly is fostered there, deepened there, and must be shared from there. Secondly, I would ask that you, in your own growth as individuals, take very seriously the fact that all of us who may be in various forms of social action ask you to be involved. Not in the same way as those who actively participate in the apostolate, but are you not really going to be one with Jesus, in resisting sin in today's world? Isn't that the heart of our calling: resisting sin within our own self and others? But it's not just personal sin we're dealing with. You and I are living in an age where we're becoming aware of the fact that sin is social, structural. If we stand back and adopt a perfectly neutral attitude toward what's happening, we are actually strengthening, encouraging those structures that are sinful; we are actually wreaking sinful things upon other people. No matter how removed we may be physically from what's happening, we must in some sense be involved. We must bring this to the Eucharist; we must bring it into the lives of those we touch in any way whatsoever. If we don't, then we are certainly guilty of what Amos said of the leaders of the people in his day.

I like to stress this because I think that we may have even today among us something of the same great division that has existed within our Order in the past. Even in small groups, we see some of us harboring the feeling that we've got to "protect" the whole movement toward the contemplative life, and others feeling equally obliged to "protect" the ideal of active involvement. My point, here, is that, while each of us as an individual must retain something of the action-contemplation tension inherent in our Franciscan ideal, we must also work to eliminate overt conflict among ourselves stemming from that tension.

One of the great men whom I've come to know and admire is Dom Helder Camara of Recife. Dom Helder, who can hardly be called "one who veers to the right," is not bashful about telling anyone where his strength really comes from: he spends two hours a day in contemplative prayer. When he has a very serious problem facing him and his people, he gets up an hour earlier. So, he's not one of those activists who feel that God's grace works just through their action; he really feels that if he's to be an instrument of God, his effectiveness must come through a union with God that's much deeper than any kind of action.

I'd like to share with you, at this point, what happened about fifteen years ago with the American Conference of Major Religious Superiors. We were worried, at that time, about our Provincials and our Abbots, who were "breaking down" at an unprecedented and alarming rate—three to one over the rate among religious in general. So we asked ourselves, "What's wrong?" And with all the various answers we found and examined, the one that stood out most clearly was this: we must get back to a very strong base of contemplative life. We went to the Trappists, then, to the Dominicans, to the Benedictines; and we asked them: "Can you draw from your tradition some helps for us? Can you help us help them? And they did.

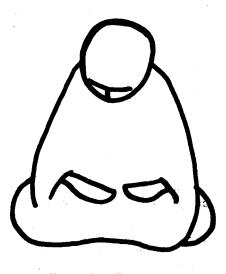
The movement they pointed to as a source of help for us is one that is snow doubtless well known to you: the prayer of centering. I know that if you don't watch it, it becomes an "in-thing," a gimmick purporting to help one achieve the heights of contemplation overnight, etc.; but taking all things into consideration, it still has been a very powerful, deep, and fruitful movement in the United States. Many a religious superior has, I'm sure, been saved by entering into a very simple approach to prayer. Of course, to perfect it, you have to get time away. But it's something you're asked to carry with you into the most involved situations of your life. I've seen it work. I've had people come to me and say, "My whole life has been changed, because I'm able really to rest with God, to waste time with him." That's tough for a busy American—to "waste time with God. . . ."

Some time ago I learned a very interesting and valuable lesson while down in La Paz, Bolivia, to negotiate with the human rights committee on behalf of some people who were fasting. All the people were doing was fasting, but the government was alarmed. They were fasting to make sure that human rights would be respected. It started with 18 people; by the time we got there there were 1100, and before we left there were over 1300. In the long run the government capitulated, but for a good while there, it was scary. The man who put us up was arrested—just disappeared off the street. (We happened to find out about it because an Oblate of Mary Immaculate saw it.) The Sister, too, who had met us at the airport and gotten me through customs was arrested. Then word came that there would be a raid on the Oblate House; so the Oblates came and said, "We're afraid they are going to come and raid the house,

and that we're all going to be arrested. Now, we don't think they're going to arrest you." I wasn't in the mood to trust their judgment, but they said, "If you'll stay here, you can keep the documents, and we won't lose them all. So will you stay in the house?" Well, I didn't have the nerve to say no. . . .

So they went. There were some lay people out in front, and they yelled, "The soldiers are here!" But before that happened, I went into the chapel, and I said, "Now, what do I do in a case like this? Lord, you know what I want—the prayer of petition isn't going to help you or me at all."

"Why don't I just waste a little time with the Lord?" I then reflected. "Why don't I just really sit here in Your presence? Relax and rest in Your presence?" Then, when the call came—the brothers had told me, "Be sure to put on your Roman collar and be very



clerical"—I went in and got the Roman collar and walked out the front door to meet the military . . . and they'd all taken off!

But what had impressed me was the fact that one can get so busy about things that one forgets God's role. Why can't we just let God do it? We don't have to get lost in a sea of words. To me, the whole movement of the Prayer of Centering has been fantastically supportive. I've seen people in very tense situations say that they've been able to come through them because of that Prayer. I think that, unless we stop putting the effort on our own cleverness and begin to rely more on God, we're not going to get very far.

So, share this, those of you who have touched it. But also be open to what has to happen out there. Don't be neutral. Be intensely interested in what your brothers and sisters have to face.

If I have touched God, say—and if he has touched me in the depths of my being in prayer—can I stand back and say, "Lord, Lord" and refuse to roll up my sleeves and do something about that? Can I continue in the consumerism of a country like ours? Can I give in to an advertisement that would glorify the exploitation of women? The whole pan-sexual approach? And then somehow say that this, which is eating off the life-blood of people, doesn't have anything to do with me? None of us can

stand back like that.

I'm particularly concerned, though, about Franciscans. I must say this: people all over the world love you. But sometimes, oh! they wish they could build a fire under you. To get you going. When I went down South, three of us were met there—one came from the World Council of Churches, and another, like myself, was Catholic. Everybody was great! We have the Nuncio, the Archbishop of the city, all the different Provincials. And although I knew that in that particular country the Franciscans were more numerous than all the other Orders put together, I didn't see one present on that occasion! So I went and asked—I said, I'm a little embarrased here; we come in and are dealing with the life-situation of the people. Where are the Franciscans?"

The Jesuit sub-Provincial got hold of me and said, "Don't feel bad. There's one down here that's doing good work out in this place." Well, I thought, that's pretty good; I know they're doing good work. Then the Oblate superior came to me and said, "I know you feel bad that there are no Franciscans represented at all, but they're good people. They come well trained—good background. But they regood people, They really aren't into the process of understanding what's happening in God's world—the signs of the times! They're doing things that were very good 20 years ago, and they're doing them well, and I'm sure they're becoming saints in doing them. But they're not the saints that Francis would have us be if we're really going to respond to the Spirit as He calls us today."

What the Spirit is saying is: They've got to understand the situation! You can't let people be brought into a religion that's really an opiate, that will have them say of man-made tragedies, "This is the will of God." There's a danger in historicism: a danger for us Franciscans, perhaps, more than for any other group because we have such a tremendous history. And we have the greatest figure, I think, in the history of Christianity: Francis of Assisi, greatest since the time of the Apostles. I think that Francis really speaks to men and women of the Christian world as no other leader ever has. But there's a danger that we go back and glory in that. We think that what Francis actually did and said is the answer to a contemporary problem. But no! What Francis did and said are surely good indications of the response needed in his time; but isn't he calling us (every one of us) to understand what's happening in our own day? When we come close to God, then, with the determination to do so in the very deepest kind of contemplation, let us come as people fully open to Jesus in today's world.

One thing I did pick up from Latin America, for which I'm very grateful, is an appreciation of the devotional life of the people. About 20 years ago the theologians were very much against the popular devotions

down there, but I doubt that this is the case any longer. Those devotions, at any rate, are relevant to our life of contemplation. If we look at our Order's history (as well as that of the other religious Orders), surely such devotions as the Stations of the Cross and the Rosary were instituted to bring us all to rest in the Lord. But what eventually happened was that the people's devotional life got locked into a historicism or a Biblicism which took you back to what happened to Jesus and Mary 2000 years ago; that was what (in Ignatian terms) you "contemplated." In other words, you reflected on that. Well, if you do that, you go back and try to solve life's present questions in view of what happened in Palestine when Jesus walked this world.

That is exactly what has happened, though, in the prayer of so many of us. All that was happening in the day-to-day lives of people was bypassed. Then, with the page that we took from the Eastern Orthodox at the time of the liturgical movement, we celebrated the gloriously risen Christ, emphasizing the resurrection over the suffering that preceded it. That is, of course, a very beautiful celebration, just as the more Passionoriented celebrations before it were beautiful. But that then takes you to the fact that Christ has risen. He has triumphed. We have triumphed. That's good—we need that hope. But we surly also need hope to realize that Jesus is starving to death in that house down the street. "I was hungry. I'm the one that was in prison. You saw my brains strewn in the street." (I can't get over some of the scenes that I've witnessed in El Salvador.) But—is that Jesus to me? Now, Latin Americans are asking us: don't bypass that Jesus. Surely, you go back to the Jesus who walked this earth. Surely you celebrate the gloriously risen Christ. But he's here! Not "the Christ," but Jesus, who is the Christ-the Person: "I was in prison, I was hungry, and when you do come to me with some kind of answer, then you're serving me."

Some of the modern writers have gone so far as to say that, in the New Testament, it's not loving God and neighbor; rather, when you really take the text even of John, and analyze it to see what Christ is really saying, over and over again, it's loving God through your neighbor. That's the one command of the New Testament. And my plea to my fellow Franciscans is that we really become instruments of the Kingdom in that sense. You can do it in your life as a hermit as long as you come to your prayer with the realization that when you come, you meet the Lord at the center of your being. At the very center of your being, you therefore meet also all your brothers and sisters, and your interest is there, and what you can do is going to be done. Now, then, when you touch the lives of the people, it will be in the sense that you are trying your best to help them also to see and recognize and touch Jesus, in the life that he is

leading today.

I've got great hopes. I'm not discouraged by the fact that sometimes we Franciscans go to sleep at the wheel, because when we wake up, we're capable of tremendous things. And I know we're waking up. I'm very happy to be here to see how many young people are bringing to the Franciscan tradition today their dedication. I know that whatever is going to happen is going to depend on those of you who are serious enough to take contemplation as the very center of your lives. And I beg you to be serious enough to take involvement with the existential Jesus also right there at the very heart of your lives. Ω

Identification

Lovers, looking with amaze on Each other, would be that they gaze on . . . — Francis Thompson

Enamored of the Christ Who chose to live as one among the poor and die despoiled of all that man holds dear, Francis became enamored, too, of Lady Poverty.

He took her to himself, a bride he never ceased to woo; lived so oned with her, within, without, he learned a joy and freedom few men do. So oned that when his welcomed Sister Death came like gentle winds and violins, she found him stretched upon the naked earth, stripped of all but song and royal dignity. She lifted Francis from his Lady's arms, lifted him to God on high,

herald of the great King, Christ's knight— Sir Poverty.

Sister Mary Agnes, P.C.C.

Ecstasy

Not with the wise is the word that I seek; Not in book-lore is the word I would speak nor in the pages that I turn so fleet.... Not of man's coining that word so meet:

The Word that tells of the Mother's joy when He opened his eyes, her God, her Boy!

Not of earth's coining; all earth is alloy. Naught tells of that joy.... her God, her Boy!

Love, only truest and best; deep Love may guess of the heaven therein, in her heart's fullness!

O Mother divine, purest and blest, teach us the Love that sang, yet hushed as you tucked Him in when the Sandman claimed Our God, Our King!

Sister M. Colette Logue, O.S.F.

The Rule for Hermits and a Contemporary Retreat Model

FRANCIS BERNA, O.F.M.

TEXTUAL INTERPRETATION can attempt to define the precise meaning of particular words, phrases, and ideas in relation to their cultural and historical origin. In another way textual consideration can attempt to create the fullness of meaning conveyed by a text. This article attempts the latter.

Francis of Assisi experienced creation as alive with its Creator. His world-view found it more difficult to deny the existence of God than to prove it. Intimate communication with God, even the depths of mysticism, were seen as more ordinary than extraordinary. He lived from this premise and encouraged the same for others: Accept God's gracious gifts.

With that understanding this article interprets the Rule for Hermits within the context of Francis' writings in general. The contention is that the themes and dynamics found within that Rule provide guidance for the spiritual pilgrimage of Franciscans and those of like spirit today. Part Two of the article gives one example by suggesting themes and dynamics for a contemporary Franciscan retreat. This model, it is hoped, will spark further reflections and give credibility to the method of interpretation employed.

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I. Interpretation of the Rule

The Call: "Those who wish. . . . "

EARLY IN HIS VOCATION Francis prayed, "Most high, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart . . . so that I may carry out your holy and true command" (OrCruc; AB 103). Life itself came as a gift of the Most High, and the life of prayer served as a response to that gift. With this attitude Francis indicates some general characteristics regarding the spiritual and mystical life. On the one hand it appears that the high stages of contemplation rightly exist as a possibility for everyone. Francis did not interpret his experience of the Lord as extraordinary, but rather as the way in which humans ought to exist with God. On the other hand Francis upholds the particularity of each personal relationship with God.

In the choice of the words those who wish, Francis captures this twofold dynamic. As Armstrong and Brady have pointed out, Francis views the eremetical life "as a response to a desire for an intense life of prayer" (AB 147, note 3). Francis understood the desire, the call as well as the response, in personal categories. Furthermore, he avoids singling out the qualifications of those who ought to be permitted this way of life.

The Franciscan goes on retreat to experience the Father's love by embracing the cross and seeking to be crucified.

In one instance, however, Francis does deny permission for the eremetical life. A certain minister experienced difficulty with friars in his care who had sinned. Rather than face the difficulty of the ministry he sought to retire to a hermitage. In his Letter to a Minister, Francis indicates that the present situation can be of greater value than the hermitage: "You should accept as a grace all those things which deter you from loving the Lord God and whoever has become an impediment to you. . . . And you should desire that things be this way and not otherwise" (EpMin 2, 3; AB 74–75). Francis observed the need to discern the call of God in the immediate present. Grace came with no particular location or action. Seeking escape from a particular time or place constituted avoidance of grace, not the following of a call.

This letter also underlines something of the personalism God employs in dealing with humans. Francis intends to stir the minister to compassion, to an imitation of the divine action: "There should not be any brother in the world who has sinned . . . who, after he has looked into your eyes, would go away without having received your mercy. . . . Love him so that you may draw him back to the Lord" (EpMin 9,11; AB 75). Francis understood God's call to him as a literal imitation of Christ. He understood Christian life as the continual incarnation of the same grace. Life in the hermitage had to fit within the wider picture. It could not be an escape because for Francis Jesus could never be an escape. Following Jesus brings one face to face with life and its issues, not retirement.

Community.

"Two should be mothers, and they may have two sons. . . ." At no time was a friar "on his own." Francis perceived Christian life as unimaginable outside community. Even the call to the most intimate prayer could not be a call taking the friar outside the fraternity. Eremetical life meant communal life. One finds notified unique in this insistence on community. Earlier religious groups followed the same pattern. Uniqueness comes with Francis' imagery when the nature of the life.

The biographies of Francis detail the difficult relationship he had with his father. In contrast Francis found in his mother and in Mary, the Mother of God, models of authority and tenderness. This image he applies to the structure of community—the friars at large and those in the hermitage.

Francis interpreted the most significant of his relationships with the same image. He writes to his closest companion, Brother Leo. 'I speak to you, my son, as a mother" (EpLeo 2; AB 47). Leo apparently sought some direction for his life. Thus the letter indicates the tenderness of Francis as well as his approach to direction. "In whatever way it seems best to you to please the Lord God and to follow his footprints and his poverty, do this with the blessing of God and my obedience" (EpLeo 3; AB 48). The mother tends to nurture and encourage, not command.

The second version of the Letter to the Faithful develops this image in reference to the Scriptures: "We are mothers when we carry him in our heart and body (1 Cor 6:20) through love and a pure and sincere conscience; we give him birth through his holy manner of working, which should shine before others as an example" (EpFidil, 53; AB 70). The friars who served as mothers in the hernitage performed a great ministry. They gave birth to Christ through their work. The brothers' care provided for the birth of Christ in the prayer of the son and in their mutual relationship.

The mothers had the added function of protecting their sons from out-

siders. Eremetical life required withdrawal, particularly from the curiosity of others. Francis spells out this common attitude in his Admonitions referring to "the good and vain religious" as well as "the frivolous and talkative religious" (Adm XX, XXI; AB 33-34).

As one might expect, Francis achieved a certain balance. Conversation belonged within the mother and son relationship. After Terce the sons were free from silence and could go to their mothers. It seems possible that together they could share a meal and perhaps pray. The phrase and afterward raises a question: Did they pray after going to their mothers? As the meal was not to be taken in the enclosure, was it taken in common? In later sections of this article, on place and on liturgy, I shall take up these questions, and in the section on the vows I shall look at the topic of the sons begging from their mothers.

At this point the image superimposed on mothers and sons deserves attention. Just after indicating the nature of the mother-son relationship, Francis recurs also to the biblical image of Martha and Mary (Lk. 10:38-42). Apparently he intends nothing more than the common application of those figures as expressions of the active and contemplative life. Perhaps one may speculate, though, that for Francis both "attend to the Lord." Since the relationship between active and contemplative does not take on the terminology of servant and master or attendant and recluse, it seems plausible that Francis envisaged something different. His outlook may be seen as more biblical, emphasizing that both Martha and Mary welcome the Lord to their home. And he seems to underscore this perception in his suggestion that sons and mothers exchange roles when it seems good to them.

On this point one discovers the particular flavor of Francis' spiritual vision. Aelred of Rievaux, like many other spiritual writers, employs the image of Martha and Mary in considering the active and the contemplative life, but note the difference in tone when Aelred suggests that the recluse carefully choose two attendants. The attendants provide for the needs of the recluse and keep away outsiders. While the recluse may have conversation with the attendants, Aelred makes no suggestion regarding common prayer and meals. Most significantly, he makes no suggestion concerning the exchange of roles. The third part of his rule specifically associates Martha with service to neighbor, while Mary is seen as drinking from the fountain of divine love. One leaves behind the Martha to take on the contemplation of Mary. Aelred does not develop their mutual relationship. Francis seems to have a better grasp of their complementarity.

Despite continual insistence that the friars not acquire property or houses, Francis begs for the Portiuncula and permits the acceptance of LaVerna. These places marked the early days of the spiritual life and their fulfillment. These places spoke of the meeting between God and man. In the same spirit friars in the hermitage could have an enclosure, a place to themselves.

A climb up LaVerna is a climb into beauty. Place and vision go together. Francis knew God pouring out his life in the beauty of the world and in the sacrifice of the cross. Walls made by human hands often blocked the beauty of nature. In poverty of dwelling one experienced the wealth of nature. The cell of a Franciscan hermit was marked by the natural walls of trees and bushes (cf. AB 147, note 6). Rather than the monastery the world becomes the cell of the friat.

The enclosure became a sacred place. No one was permitted to enter. Here again one finds a note of personalism. The communication of intense prayer belonged to the privacy of God and the individual. Francis insisted on this privacy for himself. He resisted disclosing the marks of the stigmata. It was God's special touch. The revelations of the Lord ought to be manifest in action—imitation of divine action—not in words. "Blessed is the servant who keeps the secrets of the Lord in his heart" (Adm XI, XXVIII; AB 34, 36).

Knowing how human beings can become attached, Francis cautions in his First Rule that those in hermitages should not consider the cell as their own. "The brothers should beware . . . they do not make any place their own or contend with anyone about it" (RegNB VII, 13; AB 115). Only in poverty could one continue to receive the wealth of creation.

Francis guards against possessions by having the friars in the hermitages switch roles. In this he also guarantees a continual openness to the activity of God. Francis never experienced the call in terms of becoming settled. The call beckoned him to go farther and deeper. So too for the brothers.

The Rule instructs that the sons not take meals in their enclosure. Again this gives stress to the sacredness of the place. But does this instruction imply something more? The Rule gives no instruction where the sons ought to take their meal. The image of mother and son could readily suggest they dine together. The sons were allowed to beg alms from their mothers. Gospel living in the spirit of Francis would seem to suggest that the friars share whatever they have.

Liturgy: "Rise for Matins. . . . "

Generally accounts of the mystical life say little or nothing about the role of liturgy. On the one hand the monastic setting presumes the

¹Aelred of Rievaux, The Rule of Life for a Recluse, The Works of Aelred of Rievaux. Cistercian Fathers Series (Spencer, MA: Cistercian Press, 1971).

liturgical environment. Mystics of the monastic tradition take liturgy as a matter of course. Mystics outside monasticism, while they may not recommend strict liturgical prayer, would tend to emphasize the importance of regularity in prayer. Though outside the monastic tradition, Francis requires the Liturgy of the Hours for his friars.

Francis could well have included this requirement in his Rules as a general requirement in accord with the Church of Rome. His own use of the Hours, however, as well as his devotional Office of the Passion, indicates his full appreciation of this prayer. It comes as no surprise that he incorporates it within his Rule for Hermits.

The inclusion of this prayer indicates something of Francis' orientation regarding the Church. As noted earlier, Francis could not envisage Gospel life outside of community. In the same way, he could never envisage Gospel life outside the Church. Religious life, no matter how intense, and mystical life, no matter how intense, belonged to the Church. The mystical life, rather than leading one beyond Church; rooted one more deeply in its mystery.

An initial reading of the text probably would not raise the issue of how the Office was prayed. It is the phrase and afterward in line 6 which surfaces the issue. Did the hermitage friars pray part of the Office together?

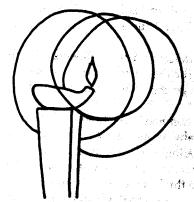
Francis makes two specific references to the celebration of the Office: one in each of his Rules. In 1221, he writes that it should be celebrated "according to the custom of the clergy" (RegNB III,3,4; AB 111). The later Rule specifies that the Divine Office be celebrated "according to the rite of the holy Roman Church" (RegB III,1; AB 139). In various places Francis notes the need to pray with reverence. A careful study of the liturgical practices of the period indicates the extent to which the Office was celebrated in common and privately: the traditions of monks and canons favor the common celebration, and so, as his biographers suggest, Francis too prayed with other friars whether on the road or in a particular locale.

Again, the image of Martha and Mary, especially in light of Francis' general approach to the Office, suggests some form of common prayer in the hermitage. While all of the hours might not be prayed in common—the liturgical direction of the text—perhaps it is reasonable to suggest that the hours of Sext, None, and Vespers complete the time together between mother and son.

Throughout his converted life Francis held great devotion for the Eucharist. This love for the Eucharist often found expression in his love for the clergy, even the most corrupt. They alone could administer the Eucharist to others (Adm XXVI,3; AB 36). Francis' Letter to Clerics reflects his love for the Eucharist expressed in the need to care for churches and sacred vessels and to administer and receive the Sacrament wor-

thily (EpCler 4, 5; AB 49-50).

Why, then, is there no mention of the Eucharist in the Rule for Hermits? The most obvious answer concerns the dates of composition for the various works. Except for the Admonitions, approximate dates can be established for Francis' writings, in particular the three Rules and the Letter to the Clergy. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) sought renewal of Church life, particularly in reference to the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Outgrowths of the Council were the papal documents Sane cum olim (1219) and Devotionis vestrae (1222). The former stresses the need to receive the Eucharist, while the latter gives permission for oratories.



Armstrong and Brady contend the Rule for Hermits predates Devotionis vestrae because the Rule makes no mention of an oratory. Given Francis' devotion to the Eucharist, one could correctly presume he would have an oratory if permitted. Furthermore, they place the writing of the Rule after 1217 since it includes references to ministers and cuitodians (AB, Introd., 49, 148, note 8). This line of thought might further determine the date of origin to be between 1217 and

1219—the date for Sane cum olim and the Letter to Clerics. Besides stressing the need for reverence and care in reservation of the Eucharist, both of these works also underline the importance of reception of the Eucharist. The Rule for Hermits seems to predate this developing theology of the Eucharist, or at least to have coexisted with it. Consequently absence of reference to the Eucharist in the Rule becomes less problematic. If the means to have Eucharist within the hermitage existed, Francis would have given the Sacrament some mention. He would not give priority to the mystical vision over Eucharist, for the latter remained always, for him, the way to see God in the flesh.

Vows: "Because of obedience to their minister. . . ."

Obedience colored the discernment of the wearied minister's call to the hermitage. In this same obedience the mothers must protect their sons from everyone. Obedience concerns the fulfillment of God's will. Consequently Francis gave it particular emphasis. In obedience one discerns the objective of the hermitage experience: "Let them seek first of all the kingdom of God and his justice."

While not given specific reference, poverty and chastity find appropriate expression in the Rule. Chastity for the sake of the kingdom includes not only celibacy but also active expression of love in the manner of Jesus. Francis' embrace of chastity meant the embrace of the leper, the poor, and the sinner, especially if the sinner was his own brother. The relationship of mother and son speaks of such chastity: active love in the manner of Jesus. The mother offered not only words of encouragement against temptations of the flesh and protection from external distractions, but also the loving support which made the eremetical life possible. The son returned to the mother the fruit of his prayer: active love in the manner of Jesus. The son could speak of his love of God and beg from his mother the grace of her kindness. Thus mother and son could embrace in chaste love.

Poverty became the hallmark of Francis and his followers. For the former it marked his way of life; and for the latter, it often marked the depreciation of their life. One may hope that it will always stand as a challenge.

That the son should beg from his mother marks the Rule for Hermits as truly Franciscan. Poverty, which has always meant more than a lack of goods, provides the key to remembering one's dependence on God's goodness. But this poverty needed practice in the hermitage as well as elsewhere. The friar could not come to think too much of himself; it was God's call that brought him to the hermitage, and it was only in poor and loving obedience that the friar could receive God's gracious gifts.

II. Model for a Franciscan Retreat

FRANCIS ENVISAGED a unique lifestyle for his friars in the hermitage. His imaginative language suggests possibilities for developing a retreat model including some of the themes and dynamics of the hermitage.

Community.

This topic need only include the material treated in the previous section. Community provides the entire context for Franciscan life. Outside community the life makes no sense.

Contemporary Franciscans often live at a distance from community. Sometimes the distance comes from ministerial necessity and implies only physical limitations. The more striking and probably more common distance has a psychological nature. Even when friars live in the same building, a healthy dependence on one another often fails to exist.

A retreat may begin to build community. A retreat specifically Franciscan in nature must support community. Common prayer, an often hurried experience in the daily routine, ought to be celebrated. Preparing

meals, serving at table, and doing dishes carry connotations of begging into the modern experience. A break from the buffet style meal to waiting on one another can heighten recognition of interrelatedness for the Franciscan.

Depending on the nature of the group, creative experiences in prayer, can strengthen community through sharing on this level. A dialogue homily requires a sharing of the faith experience. Above all it becomes clear that for the Franciscan a retreat does not mean stepping out of community. Rather, it implies an intensification of the experience. Dependence on the generosity of others prepares one and leads one to the generosity of God.

Silence and Solitude.

All the emphasis on community cannot overshadow the importance of silence and solitude. A basic dynamic of Franciscan life and thought consists of "going forth and returning." Francis cherished his silence, for it it he encountered his Lord intimately present. But he could not remain there. He had to preach. He had to descend LaVerna.

The poles of solitude and community reflect the going forth and returning. While the retreat should intensify the experience of community, it can do so only to the extent that it emphasizes the need for places "set apart." Retreatants need a place to go in order that they may return. The experience of God, while common to everyone, has its own personal qualities for each one. A Franciscan retreat appreciates this tension.

Goals.

The Rule for Hermits sets the goal as God's kingdom and his justice. Herein lies a clue for the goal of a Franciscan retreat: a revelation of the kingdom. What does this kingdom and justice mean?

First of all, it suggests something more than discernment. In many ways the image of the kingdom hints at surprise. Awaiting the kingdom means standing ready to accept whatever surprising gifts the Lord may freely bestow. While the retreatant may seek a revelation about a way of life or direction of ministry, a more fundamental attitude lies underneath. Mary awaits a revelation of the kingdom which may transform the heart even though it may fail to answer the questions posed.

In yet another way the image of the kingdom lends itself to a particularly Franciscan theme. Pondering the kingdom, the activity of God in the world, leads one to a realization of the immensity of the Father's love. Faced with such a love, the Franciscan recognizes both the power and the emptiness of sin and surrenders again to the Father's gracious

love.2

Some would undoubtedly argue that a meditation on God's justice implies a thorough reflection on reward an punishment: heaven and hell.3 One cannot deny a recognition of heaven and hell as important to Francis' spirituality, nor can one deny its importance within the Catholic spiritual tradition. But given the wane in popularity of such meditations, a different interpretation can be offered consistent with Franciscan spirituality. The justice of God finds its most adequate expression in the cross. The cross gives the thief paradise, finds the lost sheep, pays the late worker, welcomes the wayward son, and forgives the woman who loves much. The cross represents the kind of justice the Father exercises in order to restore the proper relationship between himself and his creatures. Divine justice hangs with Christ on the cross. Embracing the cross makes pale into insignificance the "reward" of heaven or "punishment" of hell as subjects for meditation. The Franciscan's primary goal must be to embrace the cross and to be crucified with Christ. This is LaVerna!

The Franciscan retreat proposes something other than clarifying the present reality of one's life, discerning the future, or contemplating a transcendent God. The Franciscan goes on retreat to experience the Father's love by embracing the cross and seeking to be crucified. One cannot begin to predict the results of such prayer, except that God may take the retreatant seriously!

Plans for Meditation.

Francis keeps his friars in the context of the brotherhood and in the context of the Church. The daily Liturgy of the Hours and the Eucharist provide the basic plan and direction for the retreat.

Personality structures, particular problems, or the need for self-discipline require some individuals to enter the retreat experience with a particular plan. This may well be a prayerful reading of the Scriptures guided by a mother. One might also approach the retreat through the traditional topical structure: God, Christ, the vows, charity, etc.

Still, one should be encouraged to try more creative approaches. The theme of *journey* could be used particularly in conjunction with Mark's

²Liborius Rieke, O.F.M., Franciscan Spiritual Exercises (Ms. adapted from the German by Berard Vogt, O.F.M.—New York: Holy Name Province, n.d.) points out that the love of God stands at the beginning of the Franciscan exercises.

Rieke keeps reflections on heaven and hell as part of the detailed structure of the exercises (his ms. predates by many years the changes in emphasis wrought by the theology of Vatican II). The Director.

The director in the traditional sense of the term has no place in the Franciscan retreat. Francis claimed the Holy Spirit as the Minister General of the Order. By way of analogy, then, the Holy Spirit should serve as the director of the retreat. Even though Francis provides for ministers within the Order and places great emphasis on obedience, he consistently bears witness to the activity of God directly operative in his life. And he understands this as normative for all the brothers. The only way to speak of a director is to speak of a mother, a Martha.

The mother provides space, privacy, and freedom for Mary. The mother listens and may encourage. Martha provides companionship for prayer and a home to which Mary may return. Perhaps "nourishment" best expresses the role of Martha in directing the retreat. Though a mother might suggest different possibilities based on her own experience, she also knows she must give her son the freedom to discover his own dreams. She must let him go! This can happen onlywhen the mother has prepared a meal.

Notice the complete absence of the father image. Also, one fails to find the word *master*. Francis consistently insisted upon servanthood as the characteristic duty of ministers in the Order. The Rule for Hermits reflects the same theme. As the Holy Spirit serves as the primary director, no place can be given to a spiritual father or master in the classical understanding of those terms. Francis prefers to foster a spirit of caring which would provide for the intimacy of conscience among all the brothers. This intimacy Francis likens to the relationship of mother and son.

One final word needs to be said about the directing mother. "Now and

⁴Valentin-M. Breton, O.F.M., Franciscan Spirituality (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1957), distinguishes between three schools of spirituality: theocentric, Christocentric, and anthropocentric. The Franciscan school follows the Christocentric model.

then, the sons should exchange places with the mothers. . . ." Imagine the dynamism of retreatant and director switching places at some point, especially when involved with an extended retreat. The Franciscan retreat needs to incorporate this dynamism: to keep alive for the director the realization that the prayer of the retreatant enriches his or her own experience. This dynamism has the same significance as the "going forth and returning."

Switching roles keeps the mother close to the experience of the son. Furthermore, the exchange allows the retreatant to begin integrating the more contemplative dimension with the more active life to which he or she will return. Also, a whole new bond of unity grows because Martha and Mary have served one another. They need and complement one another. Finally, the dynamic keeps the Spirit as director.

Conclusion

THE CONSIDERATION of the Rule for Hermits in the context of the other writings of Saint Francis has offered us an extended understanding of the text. It has highlighted significant themes in Franciscan life and thought.

As Francis wrote that the Lord's gifts are better proclaimed in deed than in word, one might properly conclude that any consideration without application offers something less than what could be. Hence the reflections on a contemporary retreat model provide only a sketch of possible applications. The final and most valuable test awaits experience. Ω

Stockton Street

I love the face of the old oriental woman in the doorway of the brick building amid the fish and produce markets of Chinatown.

She has sat there for a thousand years. She has seen so many feet go by, So many faces— and they have all become one face— one beloved and one still to come, one still birthing or still growing up. In the slow season of her long ripening she has learned to wait:

Sister Deborah Corbett

Another LaVerna in Maine, N.Y.

SISTER FRANCES ANN THOM, O.S.C.

NESTLED IN THE HILLS off Edson Road in Maine, New York (a small town near Binghamton, on the Southern Tier), is a paradise of silence and solitude known to those in the area as Mount Saint Francis Hermitage. The human voice is rarely, if ever, heard above a whisper here, where nature displays itself in its God-given glory. As one begins the short ascent from the parking lot to the chapel, the silence and holiness of the place presses upon one-welcoming, carressing, reassuring, and reminding that this is God's chosen place for prayer. Though Father Stephen has had to transform some of the landscape to make simple accommodations for those who come to spend days or weeks in silence and retreat, he has ingeniously used the natural materials of the environment in the construction of small, elegantly simple, rough structures for a chapel, eight prayer shelters, and several storage buildings. The use of wood is, indeed, in keeping with the mind of Saint Francis of Assisi, who expressed the desire that all buildings be of wood, i.e., destructible, to remind people that there is no permanent dwelling here on earth.

Each of the prayer shelters is so placed as to ensure privacy; yet each is near enough to the others so that the whole forms a type of silent community of prayer. The five earliest shelters are grouped in one area near the lakette, and the pathway leading to them is marked with a sign, "Do not go beyond this point," to ensure the privacy of the retreatants. These shelters are named for the first five followers of Francis: Masseo—the nobleman—the handsome one, whom Francis asked to whirl around madly until he fell on the ground from dizziness, in order to determine the direction the friars were to travel; Leo—secretary, confessor, and companion of Francis at the time of the Stigmata; Rufino—whose faith was severely tested and saved through the intercession of Francis; Angelo—he of the golden voice, who sang the Canticle of the Creatures as Francis lay dying; Bernard—nobleman and first follower of Francis.

Sister Frances Ann Thom, O.S.C., is a Consulting Editor of this Review.

In another area on the property, there are three rather new shelters named after other prominent figures in the Order's early history: Claire—counterpart of Francis and the Foundress of the Second Order of Saint Francis; Giacoba—the young widow who befriended Francis and his followers, housed them when they were in Rome, washed and made their habits, and arrived just before Francis' death with his shroud and sweet cakes, whom Francis fondly called his "Brother Giacoba"; and Juniper—that wonderful, foolish saint of whom Francis said: "I wish I had a forest full of Junipers."

Each of the prayer shelters is adequately equipped with a small bed, chairs, table, gas and small wood stove, sink, refrigerator, lamps, and containers for delicious spring water which one must procure from the nearby pump. Lavatory facilities are also outside.

Located in the center of it all is a small pond which is called St. Anthony Lakette. St. Anthony and the Baby Jesus proudly preside over this. On one side of the lakette is a unique Way of the Cross beginning with the Last Supper and ending with the Resurrection . . . Jesus is alive! After the ninth station is a covered bridge over which one walks, which is suitable for rest or meditation. Scattered about the area are many benches and even some large flat rocks for the comfort of those who wish to enjoy the view, listen to the harmony of nature, or commune with God in other ways. Some distance from the Way of the Cross is Mary's Hill. A very imposing statue of a young Mary with her hands raised out over the picturesque valley stands high above the terraced hillside. The view is, indeed, akin to the Umbrian hills of Assisi which Saint Francis so loved.

A network of sandy paths reveals the loveliest wild flowers, overhanging trees, ferns, and even a deer, chipmunk, rabbit, groundhog, or turtle, if one is so favored. The musical voices of the combined choir of crickets and frogs can be heard best around the lakette, while elsewhere many songbirds fill the air with their joy. The multitude of lovely butterflies also reminds one of the very top of Mount Subasio in Assisi (the mountain of the Carceri).

While Mount Saint Francis is a place of silence, solitude, and prayer for those who seek it by private retreat, visitors are also welcome to enjoy in silence the view from Mary's Hill, pray the Way of the Cross, rest by the lakette, or spend time in the chapel with the Lord.

One may surely ask why Father Stephen decided upon this particular apostolate, and how he acquired such a haven of beauty. According to Father Stephen, "I saw a need to give people a chance to be alone, to commune with God."

Father Stephen Valenta, O.F.M.Conv., is a member of the Immaculate Conception Province, Union City, New Jersey. A native of Endicott and

the Director of the Catholic Information Center in that area for many years, he realized during his chaplaincy at Harpur University that education was not bringing the students closer to God nor bringing them any sort of happiness. Of this time in his life, he says, "I tried approaching them in the Franciscan way, the way of the heart, but I realized that to be effective, I had to become holy." From this point on, he began to think of how to go about setting his own holiness in order. "My provincial offered to allow me to get my doctorate in theology at Fordham University, but I felt I had enough education; what I needed was a center for Franciscan spirituality. Since, at that time, there was no such center in the United States, I was allowed to go to Assisi. After one month of tourists and noise I decided I could not find peace there. I approached our former provincial, who was then in Rome, and he sent me to a Camaldolese monastery outside that city. It was there I rediscovered Francis."

It became clear to Father Stephen that he, like Francis, must literally follow the gospel by complete detachment. Thus he says, "After receiving permission to follow my inspirations I advertised for 50 acres, more or less, in Broome County." There was one stipulation: he was to raise the money himself. Almost miraculously, he was able to raise the \$15,000 needed for the property in one year. He erected a tent in which he lived for five months, and it was during this time that other persons came and wanted him to share with them some of his peace and solitude. At first he was very hesitant, considering this only a personal way of life. Then he began to wonder if God, indeed, wished him to share this great find with others. He began more and more to feel the movement of the Spirit urging him to "give all people a chance to be alone with the Lord."

He first constructed a semi-public oratory in which he celebrated Mass for those who wished to join him. Then came the small prayer shelters for those who would like to spend a few days in solitude, a guest house for overnight guests, and now a large hall for group lectures. In this way he was attempting to fill many spiritual needs.

All of this wonderful work with the Lord did not go unchallenged. Because Father Stephen was known in the area and had done some counseling, there were those who still came to him for guidance. The people of the area became quite concerned that this haven might become a center for rehabilitating drug addicts. Father assured them it was solely for spiritual purposes.

Then there was the problem with taxes! Father Stephen met several times with area civic leaders to claim his right to have tax-free property (since his was definitely a non-profit work). At last he won the battle to have a place solely for the worship of the Lord of all creation.

The big remaining question is, How is this great work supported?



Father Stephen's answer is: "The hermitage is supported mainly by generous benefactors and retreatants' donations. There is a Wednesday morning club, the members of which donate their time from 9:00 until noon to help with weeding, cleaning, etc." But one is aware that the far more important factor is Father Stephen's own great faith and trust that God his Father will care for him and his work.

To communicate his work and his needs, Father Stephen periodically sends out a newsletter to those interested in the Mount. Also, every Sunday morning at 10:00 he conducts a mini-retreat consisting of a conference, some private meditation, the Eucharistic Liturgy, and some fresh air time to experience what the Lord is saying.

When asked about his own daily horarium, Father Stephen answers, "I believe in the influence of the Spirit . . . first things first . . . people, then things." He believes it is possible that one day Saint Francis' Rule for Hermits might be more fully implemented by a community, either of brothers or of sisters. But all of this will be in the Lord's own time.

Anyone who wishes to know more about the hermitage or to receive the newsletter may contact Father Stephen Valenta, O.F.M.Conv., at Mount Saint Francis Hermitage, Box 276, Maine, New York 13802. Ω

Book Reviews

We Drink from Our Own Wells. By Gustavo Gutierrez. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984, Pp. xxi-181. Paper, \$7.95.

Reviewed by Father Joseph Kiernan, O.F.M., Executive Secretary of the Justice and Peace Committee, Holy Name Province.

Those who feel that liberation theology is merely a political ideology of class conflict with a sacred veneer, should read this book. Those who wish to gain a better grasp of how the Christian community of Latin America struggles with the daily realities of hunger, poverty, and oppression, should also read it. Finally, it will deepen the appreciation of all who are already familiar with the author's earlier work, A Theology of Liberation. The two books are complementary, and in a sense We Drink from Our Own Wells should come first.

As Gutierrez understands it, theology is a second order reality which flows from spirituality. All theology, including liberation theology, is a reflection on the experience of following Jesus. "A spiritual experience, then, stands at the beginning of a spiritual journey. That

experience becomes the subject of later reflection and is proposed to the entire Christian community as a way of being disciples of Christ" (p. 35).

All authentic spiritualities are historically contextualized. We cannot understand them without appreciating that the following of Jesus penetrates deeply into the course of human history, affecting every dimension of our humanity. To buttress this assertion, the author cites, among others, the origin of our own. Franciscan Order. He says that

it . . . was born at a time when, despite apparent good health, the first germs of a crisis for Christianity were incubating. The new spiritual way was closely linked to those movements of the poor that represented a social and evangelical reaction to the wealth and power that the church had attained at that time. . . . Without attention to the historical context in which Francis of Assisi and Dominic Guzman developed their apostolate and bore their evangelical witness, it is impossible to understand either the full significance of the mendicant Orders or the reception and resistance they encountered [p. 26].

If this is true, then our own reflection and response to the Lord must follow a similar dynamic, ever attentive to the new movements of the Spirit in our midst. A constant dialogue is necessary between the "new knowing" of our concrete daily experience and the "old knowing" of Scripture and tradition. The encounter, experience, reflection, and action take on a particular shape in Latin America. They lead to a communal walking in solidarity with the poor in gratitude, hope, joy, humility, affirming the Lord of life, and seeking the transformation of all dimensions of our humanity that are held in bondage.

Orbis Books as to be commended for making We Drink from Our Own Wells available in English. It is part of a large body of literature they have published from Third World theologians. If Karl Rahner is correct in his thesis that we are entering the new era of a "global Church," these writings cannot be ignored in the First World. Liberation spirituality and theology are distinctive to Third World situations. The realities of hunger, poverty, and oppression are stark and pervasive in Latin America. It is im-

posible to ignore them in formulating a faith stance. Despite our very different and more benign situation in North America, the biblical call to be in solidarity with and have love for the poor, transcends social and historical contexts. We must find our own distinctive way to be true to this biblical mandate. The spiritual destinies of the people of North and South America are closely linked. The cries of the poor coming from south of our borders may very well correspond to the groanings of the Spirit among us, that all may be set free to live in a more just, loving, and peaceable society.

I heartly recommend this book. Its clear style, appreciation of the tradition, and ability to contextualize the tradition in Latin American experience, are admirable. It also contains many moving testimonies of faith from well known and unknown Christians in Latin America. In the end, it calls for conversion and not just admiration.



Books Received

Cody, Aelred, O.S.B., Ezekiel. OT Message Series, n. 11. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1984. Pp. 270, including Bibliography and Maps. Cloth, \$12.95; paper, \$9.95.

Doughty, Stephen V., Ministry of Love: A Handbook for Visiting the Aged. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1984. Pp. 94, including Appendices and Bibliography. Paper, \$3.95.

Feider, Paul A., The Journey to Inner Peace. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1984. Pp. 110, including Bibliography. Paper, \$3.95.

Jensen, Joseph, O.S.B., Isaiah 1-39. OT Message Series, n. 8. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1984. Pp. 311. Cloth, \$12.95; paper, \$9.95.

Johnson, Ann, Miryam of Nazareth: Woman of Strength and Wisdom. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1984. Pp. 127. Paper, \$4.95.

Father Eric Doyle, O.F.M. 1938-1984

The staff of the Franciscan Institute joins the entire Franciscan Community throughout the world in mourning the loss of the renowned author, scholar, and television personality, Father Eric Doyle. Father Eric died of cancer on August 25, 1984, at the Mount Alverna Nursing Home, Guildford, England, at the age of 46. May he rest in peace.