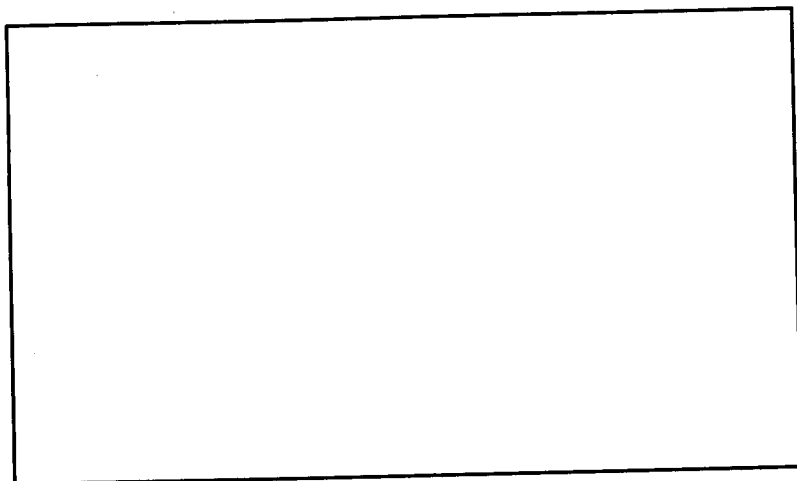


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A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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Father William Hart McNichols, S.J., S.F.O., has illustrated his own article on Gregorio, and Brother John Francis Tyrrell, F.F.S.C., has provided the illustration for "Saint Francis and the Notion of Reverence."

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
RegNB: 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).



On Local Community

THERE IS A trend among religious today which raises a lot of questions, at least in my mind, about our understanding of community life. This trend is the fact that more and more religious are choosing to live alone. Most often they choose to live alone because of the work they are doing. Though having a choice about our work is a good thing, it is not the only consideration to keep in mind.

Since the renewal years we have placed greater emphasis on "being" rather than "doing," and yet we make our choices in terms of work. This seems to be a contradiction. I am not in any way trying to deny the importance of the apostolate. Zeal for building the kingdom of God must be a priority in our lives, but if we expect new members to join us we must ask ourselves what we are offering them. They could just as well remain at home and go to work.

The usual argument for living alone is to create community with others in the parish or neighborhood; but if we give no example that community is possible, what good are our words? Or many religious say that they belong to the congregation or province, and that is their community. This argument strikes me as lame because if we are honest we must admit that life happens at the local level. This is where we interact, have our own rough edges sanded down, and encourage and build up one another in faith and love. The psychologists tell us that we can relate deeply with only, perhaps, six or seven in terms of community, which means that membership in a province or congregation does not automatically mean that I live within community, that I even know what community is all about.

I do not mean to suggest that staying under the same roof is enough, either. What I am talking about is people growing together to be of one mind and heart in Christ. This means that I take seriously the need for self-revelation, attentive listening to others, common situations in light of our charism.

In chapter 16 of the Rule of 1221 Francis gave us some wise advice. Originally directed to those who were to go among the Saracens, this chapter has something to teach us today about local community. Francis told his brothers that when they go among people their first task is to be a Christian community. He wrote this because he knew that the most persuasive means for drawing people to Jesus is a clear witness that we are one in Christ.

Placing importance on local community does not exclude intercommunity living, especially among various Franciscan groups; it simply means that community is created and lived on the local level in a very real and dynamic way, or it is not lived, no matter how we want to rationalize it. Ω

Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSF

Incarnation

The eternal Word was spoken,
transcending time and space.

The Infinite:
reserved within a humble, earthen vessel.

The Incomprehensible:
expressed in terms that finite minds could ponder.

The Unapproachable:
now dwells, unveiled, within your midst, O Israel.

The eternal Word was spoken,
transcending time and space,

Accomplishing His desire:
bearing fruit in the midst of desolation.

William J. Boylan

Francis the Cradle of Greccio

WILLIAM HART MCNICHOLS, S.J., S.F.O.

WHEN I WAS A CHILD every church had its crib or crèche which was set up in the sanctuary sometime during Advent. Now, every church in my hometown of Denver had its own Nativity display, but as far as my mother was concerned there was only one *real* crib to be seen, and that was the one in St. Elizabeth's, the Franciscan church. This is not to say the most elaborate or the largest crib, because other churches boasted hand carved, imported German and Italian cribs, but the Franciscan crib had an aura about it that you could feel from way back in the vestibule as you entered the church.

The crib drew you near with a natural silence and an almost tip-toe reverence, and I remember my mother dipping her fingers in the water font and then taking my hand with her moist and blest hand, and we walked down the aisle together toward the "little town of Bethlehem." The crib was on the right side, or the side of the Blessed Mother, and it was built upon a hidden platform which rose gradually upward from the communion rail, all the way up and over Mary's niche. There at the top was a mythic midnight blue sky with the great guiding star and scattered painted stars that somehow glowed. Below the sky was the tiny city of Bethlehem set on rolling hills with palm trees and odd little white adobe and stucco houses. Winding from the top of the horizon, all through the poor little town, was a road which led to a cave at the base of the structure, and so the viewer was led without any words or direction by the stars and lights through the ancient city of Micah's prophecy, right into the cave of the Nativity.

Father William Hart McNichols, S.J., S.F.O., maintains an art studio at St. Ignatius Retreat House in Manhasset, Long Island.

There you noticed others were there with you, or well on their way. There were shepherds and poor women and children side by side with great ornamented kings of three distinct races, and they all had retinues of slaves, camels, and horses as well as gilded gifts for the baby. And there were lots of sheep and lambs—the faithful ox and ass—and all, whether they were human or animal, were bending slightly forward and gazing at the baby in the straw as if they'd just fallen in love. My own mother was pregnant at this time, and so we were on a double mission: to see the crib and also to ask God for a little girl; if he answered us the girl would be named Mary Elizabeth for the saint of the Franciscan church. "Did this father, St. Joseph, take his wife Mary to the hospital for the baby?" I asked. Then it was that my mother whispered the story we all learn, that this Child was actually born in such a poor cave just like things looked in the Franciscan tableau.

Who in our topsy-turvy world could better understand [than Francis] God's deliberate choice of Bethlehem for his only Son, and the stark, impoverished cave?

The story of Francis' crib at Greccio is so typically Francis that even though his was not the first crib, tradition has forgotten the others and with blind affection attributed the whole custom to the Little Poor Man. Actually the medieval celebration of Christmas was quite elaborate before the time of Francis. It originated simply with clerics acting as shepherds and midwives, and each would read a part or they would answer back and forth in antiphonal chorus. Gradually this developed into a regular cycle of scenes with three full acts which began with the Old Testament Prophets, continued through the events of the infancy narratives of the Gospels, the Flight into Egypt, the massacre of the Holy Innocents, and finally ended with a fully grown Jesus in a battle with the Devil. In 1207 Innocent III had to outlaw these pageants—they had gotten so out of hand—this is why Francis had to get permission from Pope Innocent, in 1223, to celebrate Christmas at Greccio in a special way. Hear now the loving description of Christmas Eve at Greccio by Francis' first biographer, Thomas of Celano:

The day of joy drew near, the time of great rejoicing came. The brothers were called from their various places. Men and women of that neighborhood prepared with glad hearts, according to their means, candles and torches to light up that night that has lighted up all the days and years with its gleaming star. At length the saint of God came, and found all things prepared: the hay had been brought, the ox and ass led in. There simplicity was honored, poverty was exalted, humility was commended, and Greccio was made, as it were, a new Bethlehem. The night was lighted up like the day, and it delighted the people and beasts. The people came and were filled with new joy over the new mystery. The woods rang with the voices of the crowd and the rocks made answer to their jubilation. The brothers sang, paying their debt of praise to the Lord, and the whole night resounded with their rejoicing. The saint of God stood before the manger, uttering sighs, overcome with love, and filled with a wonderful happiness. The solemnities of the Mass were celebrated over the manger and the priest experienced a new consolation.

The saint of God was clothed with the vestments of the deacon, for he was a deacon, and he sang the holy Gospel in a majestic voice. And his voice was a strong voice, a sweet voice, a clear voice, inviting all to the highest rewards. Then he preached to the people standing about, and he spoke charming words concerning the Nativity of the poor king and the little town of Bethlehem. Frequently too, when he wished to call Christ Jesus, he would call him simply the "Child of Bethlehem," aglow with overflowing love for him; and speaking the word *Bethlehem*, his voice was more like the bleating of a sheep. His mouth was filled more with sweet affection than with words. Besides, when he spoke the name *Child of Bethlehem* or *Jesus*, his tongue licked his lips, as it were relishing and savoring with pleased palate the sweetness of the words. The gifts of the Almighty were multiplied there, and a wonderful vision was seen by a certain virtuous man. For he saw a little child lying in the manger lifeless, and he saw the holy man of God go up to it and rouse the child as from a deep sleep. This vision was not unfitting, for the Child Jesus had been asleep in the hearts of many; but by the working of grace, he was awakened again through his servant Saint Francis and stamped upon their fervent memory. At length the solemn night celebration was brought to a close and everyone returned to their home with holy joy.

Daniel Marshall of *The Catholic Worker* said once that Francis turns the topsy-turvy world right-side up. In our blindness we think he's upsetting things; yet in fact it is the opposite. This is what Francis did at Greccio: he turned the upside-down world's values right side up. And in this way God uses Francis as a sort of "Cupid" or "Eros." The part of Cupid in the Greco-Roman mythology is to wound unsuspecting people with the arrow of passion or love at the bidding of his mother Aphrodite

(Venus, or Love). At God's bidding the Little Poor Man wounds us with his prophetic acts, puzzling koans, street drama, or sometimes just an image of Francis in his utter simplicity can wound a soul incurably.



FRANCIS the CRADLE of GRECCIO

The wound is God's wound, and one powerful instrument of God for centuries has been Francis, who is also the greatest reformer of the Church as he shows us total dependence on God. He wounds us, and the wound becomes a search for healing which is the search for God. Augustine knew this wound hundreds of years before Francis and said: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in God."

Who in our topsy turvy world could better understand God's deliberate

choice of Bethlehem for his only Son, and the stark, impoverished cave? Who better than the one who had chosen voluntary poverty and who felt himself to be so poor a dwelling for the most Holy Spirit? Francis lived and held all these mysteries in his heart and body, and when they are shown to us in his simple way, the way of the Gospels, the impact is immediate, transforming and searing as the two-edged sword. Francis' words and actions that Christmas Eve came from such naked love and truth that the people present were pierced with them. They split right through the coverings of fear, guilt, pride, or doubt and opened and wounded many hearts. As the Stigmata revealed Francis as bearing Christ's passion, the Child Jesus come-to-life in the arms of Francis revealed him as a poor enough Cradle for the Word made flesh. Ω

Christ-mas

Clamor of salesmen
Seek Summer vacationers:
"Buy your Christmas now,
One Fourth price for Christmas Rose!"
Keep 'til December?

Under Freedom's guise,
Civil Libertarians
Jam every court room.
Plot: Evict Christ from Christmas;
Judges heed them naught!

"Mas" has no meaning,
Christ-core to Celebration;
Christmas, gift giving.
To share your secret feelings—
God's Son from above!

The price for Christmas
Soars beyond the farthest Star—
Touch our Father's heart.
He sends LOVE, His only Son—
Savior of our Race!

Envelop your heart(h)
With wholehearted Thanksgiving!
Jesus adorns you
Who ope your doors to Poor ones.
Christmas dawns tonight!

Sister Barbara Mary Lanham, O.S.F.

Saint Francis and the Notion of Reverence

SEÁN COLLINS, O.F.M.

THIS IS NOT an attempt to force Saint Francis into one of those Procrustean beds of which he has long been a victim. There is a radical impossibility about capturing a personality totally by heaping up quotations from his writings and actions. Nonetheless it is possible to give the beginnings of an intuition, something that can be developed and integrated into the living appreciation of a man. The salient virtues of a renowned personality are open to contemplation by us all. It is an adventure to investigate the contemplating of others, as it is rewarding to compare one's insights with the views of the keenest observers, especially "the first eye-witnesses."

It was in Jörgensen's excellent book on Franciscan Italy that I first found the idea of reverence put forward as a special characteristic of Saint Francis. Jörgensen describes how once, in the friary at Greccio, he noticed a friar kiss a piece of bread which he had inadvertently dropped on the floor. And he goes on to say, almost in passing, that "the Franciscan spirit is essentially and before all else a spirit of reverence."¹ What struck me was the fact that in spite of the directness and categorical nature of the assertion, he did not develop it any further. But somehow it stuck in my mind; and subsequent reading and reflection have convinced me that it contains a whole world of meaning that I had not at first dreamed of.

¹*Pèlerinages franciscains* (Paris, 1910), p. 48. There is also an English edition, long out of print.

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The Nature of Reverence

THE THEME of reverence is treated at length by the German philosopher Peter Wust. Though his language can be at times rather grandiloquent, in the style of the early nineteenth-century idealists, his thought can be very enlightening for our present study.² The starting-point of philosophy, writes Wust, should be the absolutely primitive emotion called Astonishment. Since the time of Descartes philosophy has put the methodical doubt in the place of wonder, but this is a phenomenon of reaction, a *second a priori* of philosophical thought.

To have existed, to have known God,
even for one moment, is enough for an
Eternity's thanks.

The thinker must choose between these two fundamental orientations: mistrust and trust of being. Wust asks whether in fact this initial indifference to assent or negation is genuine or even possible, and is of the opinion that an analysis which went deeper than that of Descartes would show us that astonishment at ourselves is in fact the very basis of doubt. He sees in a persistence in doubting a certain pride. Our knowledge is not transparent to itself. It is not just a mystery, but a gift, he claims.

What we find lacking in the Stoic sage, and the sage as Spinoza, and even Schopenhauer conceives him . . . is the supreme and innocent delight in existence (*Daseinsfreude*), of the idealism and optimism so opposed to the tragic outlook . . . they lack that final security in existence, that armour of proof which guards the simple child, his serene trust and innocence. The sages renowned in history are still not innocent children in the strange and deep sense of the Gospel: "Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein" (Mk. 10:15) [*Ibid.*, p. 236].

And what prevents these wise men from recapturing the soul of the child, is that they have broken away from the filial relationship with the Supreme Spirit, from a loving reverence towards the ultimate secret of things. He speaks of the soul's overwhelming sense of reverence before the harmony of the universe, and correlates surprise and reverence on the one hand with simplicity and piety on the other.

²Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having* (London: Fontana, 1965), pp. 232ff.: "Peter Wust on the Nature of Piety."

the one hand with simplicity and piety on the other.

The conclusion, then, is the "learned ignorance," the *docta ignorantia* of Augustine and of Nicholas of Cusa: accepting in a humble and reverential spirit the limits set by supreme Wisdom to the manner of knowledge with which it has endowed the human mind. This is not fideism—which Wust calls "fallen Gnosticism" since it is really the faith of despair.

The genuine Christian keeps his distance from both pitfalls [fideism and Gnosticism] equally. When he witnesses to his trust in the universal Order, his witness should not be interpreted as mere surface optimism, but recognized as the result of his reverential attitude towards the whole of reality [Ibid., pp. 235-36].

Nietzsche declares, in *Joyful Wisdom* (Book IV): "I still live, I still think; I must live, I must think. I wish to be at all times hereafter only a Yea-sayer."³ He too was occupied with the problem of the ultimate yes or ultimate no. Man's greatest possibility, in the words of the greatest Nietzschean poet, Rainer Rilke, is "to praise in spite of" (*dennoch priesen*), to become aware of the worst in life and still accept it. The fact that he could say neither yes nor no troubled him: was this just the nature of life, or could a man exist who could say finally: I accept everything? His own determination to be a "Yea-sayer" was the effort of a despairing man. To "praise in spite of" is a noble ideal, but, given Nietzsche's perspective, doomed to failure. And so we return to Saint Francis—a man whose ideal was not "to praise in spite of," but "to praise because of."

Francis as "Yea-Sayer"

FRANCIS CERTAINLY HAD in a truly abundant way that filial relationship and loving reverence to God of which Wust speaks. His declaration before Bishop Guido: "Henceforth I will only say: Our Father, Who art in heaven," was not just a dramatic phrase. It was the declaration of a lifelong program. Francis was what Nietzsche sought, the man who could say Yes to everything—not because he was shallow or because he did not see life's misery, but because of his living relation of trust in his heavenly Father. Towards God his attitude was one of overwhelming awe and love. I think it can be best conceived by thinking of a saying of Francis reported in the *Mirror of Perfection*: "The Love of God is so high and so wonderful that it should never, save in rare and great necessity, be

³Quoted by Colin Wilson in *The Outsider* (London: Pan, 1963), 144. In Chapter Five, "The Pain Threshold," there is a treatment of Nietzsche, to which I am indebted.

named."⁴ We also have the opening lines of the "Song of the Creatures":

Most High, omnipotent, Good Lord!
To thee all praise, all glory and all blessing;
To thee alone, Most High, do they belong,
And no man is worthy to pronounce your name.

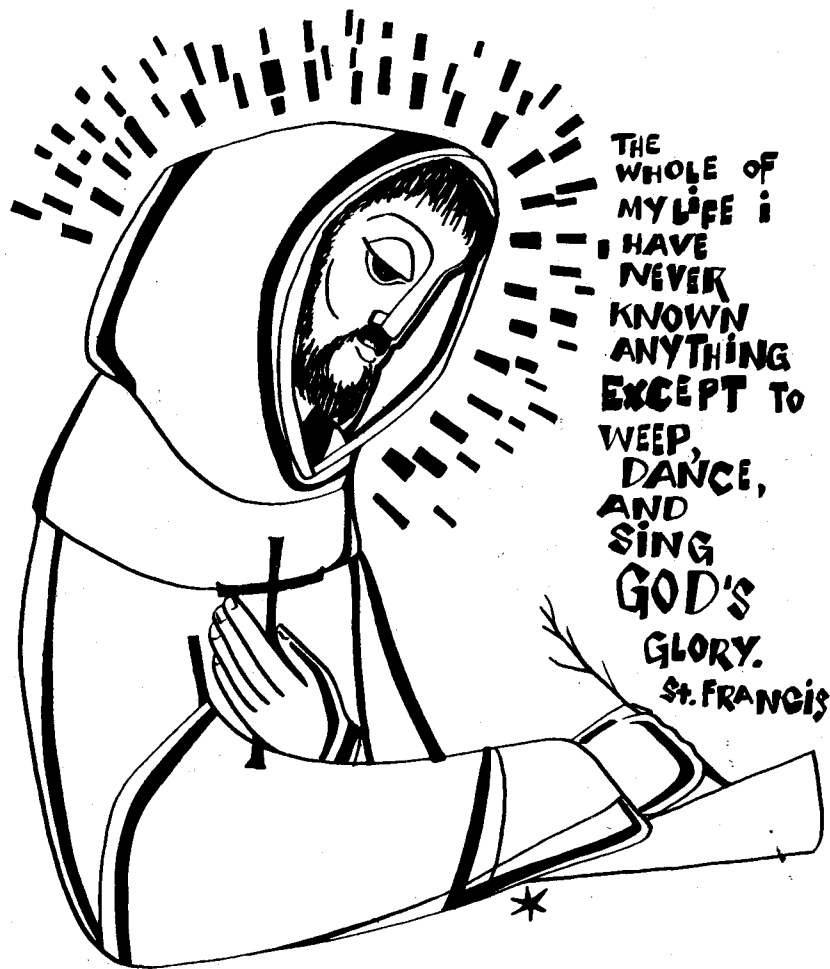
This attitude of reverence, where God is spoken to in the secret of the heart because his wonder and love are too great for human words, must have been taught by Francis to the brothers, for we find Brother Giles many years later bluntly telling two learned and self-satisfied preachers that Saint John the Evangelist had said nothing about God. Naturally they were amazed, and he said, pointing to a nearby mountain: "If there could be a mountain a thousand times higher than that, and a sparrow began to peck at the foot of it, how much would the great heap sink in a day, a year, or even a hundred years?" Of course they admitted that it would not diminish noticeably. And Brother Giles concluded: "The mountain is so tall and the everlasting divinity is so immense that Saint John, who was like that sparrow, could express nothing at all compared to the greatness of God."⁵

In spite of the hyperbole, this story does express Francis' attitude to God, and it explains his great veneration for the Holy Scriptures, for the Eucharist and the priesthood, and for theologians. Because God in his infinite condescension has given us a knowledge of himself in the Holy Scriptures, Francis prized them above everything. And in Christ we have the very image of the invisible God. In the God-man Francis had the object of his greatest love. And his devotion to the Priesthood and for theologians comes from their actualization, corporally and spiritually, of God's Word in our midst.

For the same reason, Francis promised "obedience and reverence" to the Lord Pope and was ever "subject and submissive" to Holy Church. Fundamentally it all goes back to his childlike love and reverence for the unspeakable mystery of God. It was the *docta ignorantia* of all the mystics of the Church, which finds its most striking artistic expression in the wordless melismata of Gregorian music. The tension between solemn reverence and overflowing joy in the best pieces of the Gregorian repertory, for example in the incomparable Easter Introit *Resurrexi*, which is

⁴SP I, ed. P. Sabatier (British Society for Franciscan Studies, 1928), 93.

⁵Cf. *Golden Words: The Sayings of Brother Giles*, tr. Ivo O'Sullivan, O.F.M. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966), 30.



an "ecstasy of God in God,"⁶ is wholly mystical. The spirit bows down in reverence before the wonder of God's love.

This theme has a very characteristic expression in the Eastern Churches. Here we find that "Christ, incarnate God, man transfigured, the *Logos* glorious in loneliness and suffering," is at the same time "merciful and a friend of man." In face of this glory the sinner prostrates himself with a heart-rending feeling of his total abandon and absolute confidence in his pardon. This is the *Oumilénie* (total humility) of the Byzantine

⁶Dom Joseph Gajard, "Commentaire sur les chants de la Semaine Sainte et de Pâques," *Revue Grégorienne* (mars, 1946).

spirit.⁷ It is a very positive attitude. It was because Gogol had not got it that he allowed fear of Satan to overcome him, so that he destroyed the second part of *Dead Souls*. It is to be found abundantly in Dostoevsky. Even the worthless pseudo-liberal Stepan Verkhovensky, in *The Devils*, when he comes to die, can speak thus:

The whole law of human existence consists merely of making it possible for every man to bow down before what is infinitely great. If man were to be deprived of the infinitely great, he would refuse to go on living and die of despair. The infinite and immeasurable is as necessary to man as the little planet which he inhabits. My friends—all, all my friends: Long live the Great Idea. Even the most stupid men must have something great. . . .⁸

This may sound strange from Verkhovensky, but it is most definitely Dostoevsky's own creed, for it occurs in many of his novels. And he does not mean it in a simply utilitarian sense, in which, as Unamuno says, God would be simply an umbrella to protect us from life, capable of being opened and shut as required; no, it is an ontological relation constituent of our very nature, what Wust calls "the filial relationship with the Supreme Spirit."

Especially in their Liturgy the Orthodox show their reverence—so much so that it was a complaint of the Orthodox delegates at the 1968 World Council of Churches meeting at Uppsala that modern worship tends to emphasize the horizontal at the expense of the vertical. The "brittle clarity" of many prayer-forms leaves no room for the mystery of God. Reverence entails a certain distance, a lack of familiarity, something different from every day. The devout worshipper feels the need of this; hence external solemnity. (Was this spontaneous urge to distance, of non-coincidence, the reason why Francis liked to praise the Lord in French?) Saint Gregory the Great expressed what this concept should be in the life of the monk when he called it "in *sollemnitate amoris habitare*" (living in the *solemnity* of love). And it has ever been the experience of those who humble themselves that God bends down in love and raises them up:

Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing;
thou hast loosed my sackcloth
and girded me with gladness [Ps. 30].

⁷Charles Moeller, *Modern Mentality and Evangelization—Part III: Jesus and Mary* (New York: Alba House), 20.

⁸Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Devils*, tr. Magarshack (Penguin), 656.

Reverence for Creation

G. K. CHESTERTON ASKED HIMSELF in a very early verse through what incarnations or prenatal purgatories he must have passed, to earn the reward of looking at a dandelion. In his *Autobiography* he returns to this theme, stating in his own inimitably robust way that the only way to enjoy even a weed is to feel unworthy even of a weed. People feel that they can look down on dandelions and compare them with other, superior flora. And "all such captious comparisons," declares Chesterton,

are ultimately based on the strange and staggering heresy that a human being has a *right* to dandelions; that in some extraordinary fashion we can demand the very pick of all the dandelions in the garden of Paradise; that we owe no thanks for them at all and need feel no wonder at them at all; and above all no wonder at being thought worthy to receive them.⁹

Now this precisely is the attitude of Saint Francis. In the story about him and Brother Masseo at the fountain eating their stale bread, the very words of Francis are: "O Brother Masseo, we are not worthy of such vast treasure" (Fior 13). For one who has the power to see "the dearest freshness deep down things," all is grace and a direct gift from God. Hence springs Francis' reverence for water and for fire, gifts of God and symbols of Him. The whole world becomes a reminder of Love, and God's children are fully free and at home in it. Things are good because they *are*; they are, because God has created them. Francis tells the birds to praise their Maker, and by their very existence they do it. "All creation, all creatures, every leaf, are straining towards the Lord, glorify the Lord, weep to Christ, and unknown to themselves, accomplish this by the mystery of their sinless lives." Thus Father Zossima in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Dostoevsky has a notion that may seem strange to us: even this life can be heaven if we but realize it. Markel, Zossima's elder brother, exclaims: "Life is paradise and we are all in paradise, only we don't want to know it, and if we wanted to we'd have heaven on earth tomorrow." And in *The Devils* Kirilov, Dostoevsky's most "metaphysical" character, tells Stavrogin:

"Man's unhappy because he doesn't know he's happy . . . he who finds out will become happy at once, instantly. . . ."

"And what about the man who dies of hunger, and the man who insults and rapes a little girl? Is that good too?"

"Yes, it is. And the man who blows his brains out for the child, that's good too. Everything's good. . . ."

⁹G. K. Chesterton, *Autobiography* (London: Hutchinson, 1936), 332.

Obviously Kirilov does not use the word *good* in any normal sense. But by this shocking passage Dostoevsky flings into relief the problem of suffering and pain. And he seems to say that it has no explanation for us. God permits it; it enters in some way into his plan. But no facile explanation can unveil the mystery for us. It's only left for us to bow down before the mystery, as Job did. (The Book of Job fascinated Dostoevsky; he tells us through Zossima that he has never been able to read it without tears.)

This strong faith—actually frightening in its absolute trust—was the faith of Francis. He believed against all evidence that God had all things in the palm of his hand. He did all in his power to alleviate human suffering, but he knew that in the final analysis one can only worship. For Dostoevsky, who had once been pardoned at the foot of the gallows, life is so wonderful that nothing else matters. The most miserable are blessed. Francis knew that over and above existence we have redemption and God's Love, the greatest gift; therefore he was always happy deep down in his heart. His very being was reverence; it was the air he breathed. To have existed, to have known God, even for one moment, is enough for an Eternity's thanks.

Conclusion

IN A JOURNEY in Palestine, H. V. Morton describes a Bulgarian peasant he had seen at Christ's tomb.¹⁰ That description sums up what we have been saying:

He was kneeling at the marble slab and kissing it repeatedly, while tears ran down the deep wrinkles of his face and fell on the stone. . . . He had probably been saving up all his life for that moment. . . . This was his life's dream. Never in all my life have I beheld peace and contentment written so clearly on a human face. . . .

He knelt before the low entrance, his hands held out on each side of his body, his head slightly on one side, the tears running down the furrows of his face. I thought he looked like an elderly martyr who might have been painted by Giovanni Bellini. Then it seemed to me that the simple, contrite creature kneeling there in the half-light at the doorway of Christ's tomb was a symbol not only of the questioning ache at the heart of humanity, but also of its answer. Ω

¹⁰H. V. Morton, *In the Steps of the Master* (London: Rich and Cowan), 12-14.

The Incarnate Word

So great a thing in flesh so pure,
At once creature and Creator,
Such a marvel love has done,
Creator creature has become.

Run, O lovely souls, to find Lord Jesus, run,
Who lies secure in his dear Mother's arms.
Run, run, do not delay,
Your love to pay,
Run, run with hearts afire,
The one whom you desire
With love will pierce your heart.

My dearest, kindest Jesus, Lord,
You who come down from heaven above,
To bear the heavy weight of love,
Debtor in my place become,
You suffer woe and suffer pain.
You call to me, you wait for me,
You cancel my deficiency.
You're always calling me to you
And helping me what's good to do,
You draw me to a life so good,
Just like a real magnet, Lord.
King of kings, sweet Lord above,
Make me worthy of your love.
Please come from your realm divine
And listen to these prayers of mine.

Here he comes, fair Babe of mine,
So divine, so divine,
He comes with burning love so full,
He warms my soul, he warms my soul.
When on your face I fix my eyes,
Rays come forth from paradise,
And when my eyes meet yours, O see,
You shoot at me, you shoot at me,
Your arrows wound my heart and soul
With love so full, with love so full.
O Jesus mine, good Jesus dear,
O Jesus mine, good Jesus dear,
What made you come from heaven here?
For love, for love, for love,
To kindle again our heart from above.
O my Jesus, I will love you;
O my Jesus, I will serve you;
And your glories, I will sing your glories due.

St. Joseph Of Copertino

Translated by Francis M. Pimental, O.F.M.Conv.

Fear to Freedom:

Saint Francis and the Fatherhood of God

JOHN HARDING, O.F.M.

CELANO RECORDS how Saint Francis was brought before the Bishop of Assisi by his father, who sought restitution of the property which his son, in what must have seemed like a fit of madness, had taken and sold for money to repair a ruined chapel. The series of events leading to this confrontation are too well known to be reviewed here. The result of the action is our concern.

Saint Francis, having accepted the counsel of the Bishop that it was not lawful to use ill-gotten gains for sacred purposes, took the opportunity to demonstrate clearly and dramatically his new purpose in life. Laying his clothes at the feet of his father, he declared:

From now on I can freely say Our Father who art in heaven, not father Peter Bernardone, to whom, behold, I give up not only the money, but all my clothes too. I will therefore go naked to the Lord [2Cel 12; *Omnibus*, 372].

This event marks a critical moment in the process of Francis' conversion. It represents that all important transition from a life bounded by fear to one lived in the freedom of the sons of God. This transition from fear to freedom has profound significance for the evangelical life. Fear resides in the depths of the human heart. Fear of what? While there is much to fear, it seems that our fundamental fear is fear of the All-Holy God. Before God we stand naked and empty. This we fear, and thus it is that we flee for cover.

Father John Harding, O.F.M., who has contributed several poems and monographs to our pages in recent years, writes from the Franciscan Study Centre, Canterbury, England.

The fundamental revelation of Jesus is that God is our Father and not to be feared. Jesus is sent to calm that ever present unease between creature and Creator (cf. Jn. 6:20; Mt. 14:17) and to show us the "way to the Father" (Jn. 14:16). In him the All-Holy God is made accessible as never before and in a way we cannot fear. The unease in the human heart is very deep seated and can be calmed only before God: "Thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart is restless until it rest in thee" (St. Augustine, *Confessions*, I, 1).

Setting aside all idols and father-figures,
[Francis] . . . became a son of God.

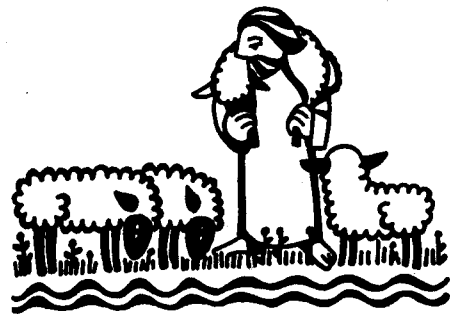
Prior to stripping himself, Saint Francis had experienced that restlessness of heart. His human searching for glory had constantly seen him returning home without having alleviated that ache in his heart. Military exploits and revels with his friends had not been able to quell or divert his preoccupation. He needed an answer, and only in God could this be found. Thus Francis' declaration in front of the cathedral in the presence of the Bishop, his father, and the townspeople was so significant. Here he began to discover where the answer lay.

Saint Francis had begun to face the question put to him earlier in a dream: who could do better for him, the servant or the Lord (cf. 2Cel. 6; *Omnibus*, 366)? He had begun to make the transition from fear to freedom. This transition might just as easily be expressed as one from darkness to light.

Jesus saw that people, willingly or otherwise, were trapped in desperation, in darkness. By revealing God as Father, he sought to call them from darkness to light, for only in the light can the truth about God and man be known. As long as people prefer darkness it would be impossible for them to recognize the way to overcome their fundamental fear. The light is feared for what it might expose; yet, before God who is Father, there is nothing to fear. Saint Francis came to an awareness of this. Sometime later he would confidently assert: "for what a man is before God, that he is and nothing more" (Adm XIX; AB 33).

In the light we are seen for who and what we are; but, being afraid, we retreat into the shadows and hide. Jesus felt deeply for this most human of conditions. His summons into the light is a call to enter into a new set of relationships with both God and neighbor. In Jesus we see the way by which we can enter into these relationships. In him we can be at one with the Father.

Those who did heed the invitation seemed so often to hover between the darkness and the light, as if desiring this closeness to God and yet seeking to hold onto the old idols and so not accepting the freedom which is offered. This manifests itself in the preference for the state of servility rather than true friendship. In short, there was a reluctance to take the risk. The father-figure was substituted for the Father. Jesus has to issue the stern command: ". . . call no man father on earth, for you have one Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 23:9). This command calls on those who venture out into the light to leave behind all their former attachments and to have faith in God alone.



Saint Francis must have perceived this, for he responds so radically to the command by forsaking his natural father and in doing so loses his assured heritage and future. He takes the risk to come out from the dark and to stand naked in the light of God, whom alone he now calls Father.

The way to the Father is the way of free, mature self-surrender and is exemplified in Jesus Christ. By imitating Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, the disciple enters into a new relationship as son or daughter and is forged into a universal brother/sisterhood in Christ. Saint Francis came to appreciate this fully and hymned it in his Canticle of Brother Sun (cf. AB 37-39; also SP 118; *Omnibus*, 1257).

Freedom is possible only for those who will take such a radical risk. This freedom allows the disciple to see God in all and to have his or her whole attention centered on God. This too is manifestly true of Francis. He wished, Celano tells us, to center his life wholly on God; and, as Saint Bonaventure explains, he saw God and revered God in all (cf. 1Cel^o 102; *Omnibus*, 316; LM IX.1; *Omnibus*, 698). No longer was the fear which resided in his heart the fundamental fear of the All-Holy God, but the fear of turning back to his former way of life. Francis had passed from fear to freedom, from darkness to light. All his being was centered on God, and this is most evident in his Exhortation to Praise God (cf. AB 42-43), where he sings as one who has been set free from bondage, as a "Herald of the Great King" (LM II.5; *Omnibus*, 643).

The fear of turning back was a real fear, one that is often manifested in a subtle substitution of a father-figure for the Fatherhood of God. It is

possible to choose the path of servility rather than the authentic path of self-surrender in a free act of creative love. The freedom of the children of God is won by passing through the narrow door; it means foregoing the familiar securities for the sake of that security offered by God our Father.

Jesus had to contend with this temptation both in the desert and in Gethsemane. Like the Master, Saint Francis knew temptation. Celano relates how he was tempted to take a wife and build a family, to go back on his new way of life (2Cel 115ff.; *Omnibus*, 457ff.). The way of substitution is attractive and chosen by many who would gladly say, "We have Abraham for our Father" (Jn. 8:39).

The path which Jesus exemplifies and which Saint Francis chose is the path which forsakes every idol for the sake of God, who transcends all limitations and is supreme over every human sovereignty. It demands a strict asceticism and is lived in constant exposure to the searching light of the All-Holy God and Father. It is a path which can be trodden only in union with Christ, who is the way to the Father. By following this way the disciple is led to a greater experience of freedom; empowered by the Spirit, he can confidently say, "Our Father in heaven" (cf. Mt. 7:9) and "go naked to the Lord."

When Saint Francis stripped himself of his clothes, he also stripped himself so as to be wholly open and available to God. Setting aside all idols and father-figures, he obtained the reward of God and became a son of God! Ω

St. Bonaventure:

Letters V and VI

TRANSLATED BY CANISIUS CONNORS, O.F.M.

The following letters are the last contained in the collection of the *Opera Omnia* of Saint Bonaventure, published by the Friars Minor of Quaracchi. While they are of little historical importance and provide us with meager spiritual insights, they complete our presentation of these little known writings of the Seraphic Doctor. They also suggest his manner of dealing with his brothers, as in the fifth letter, and with other religious, as in the sixth letter.

The Friars of Quaracchi note that the hermitage mentioned in the fifth letter was established, according to Luke Wadding, by Saint Francis and a companion in 1220. The sixth letter, which reflects the tension that existed between the Augustinians and the Friars Minor, is yet another example, according to the Friars of Quaracchi, of Bonaventure's ever present desire for peace, a point of which he writes in the Prologue to his *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*.

Letter V

Brother Bonaventure, General Minister and servant of the Order of Friars Minor, sends best wishes for everlasting peace in the Lord to all the Brothers who read this letter.

I HAVE LEARNED from a trustworthy report that Montichiari and other places, which are inhabited around Lago di Garda by Veronians, were consigned by our most holy Father Francis to the brothers who were living in a place near Lago di Garda on the Brescian side, and that these brothers have been making use of this concession for many years now.

Since I thought that it would not be proper for anyone to infringe upon the will of our Father, I command all the brothers to enjoin them in virtue of the merit of salutary obedience to leave freely the above mentioned places to the brothers of the aforesaid hermitage for the purpose of begging for the necessities of life. And I forbid all other brothers from begging for anything in these places, notwithstanding the constitution of the General Chapter in which boundaries are given for begging in neighboring places.

Farewell in the Lord, and pray for me.

Given at Paris on the 27th of May, 1266.

Letter VI

Brother Bonaventure, General Minister and servant of the Order of Friars Minor, sends best wishes for everlasting peace in the Lord to that venerable and religious man, the Abbot of Santa Maria de Burgo Medio in Blois of the Order of St. Augustine, and to the other Canons of the same Convent.

I HAVE HAD and I still have a great desire that every reason for disagreement, about which you seemed to complain in reference to our brothers at Blois, should be put aside as much as it can be according to the will of God, and that these brothers should be inclined to be submissive to you [as much as is proper] with all humility, just as they were inclined before to be friendly and devoted to you. As a result there should exist between you and them an undiminished charity and that *peace of Christ, that is beyond all understanding* (Phil. 4:7). Wishing, therefore, and desiring to accomplish this as much as I can, I approve and confirm that concession of houses, of open areas, of squares, or of other things whatsoever, which Brother Peter, the Provincial Minister of our Order in Touraine, freely made to you with the consent and approval of our brothers of the convent at Blois, just as it appears in the letter of this Provincial Minister, which makes express mention of these matters. I wish and decree that you possess and freely hold all the above mentioned things which the Lord Count of Blois or anyone else has given to these brothers as alms. I assure you that neither I myself will do anything, nor will I permit anything to be done by our brothers, which is contrary to this concession or by which the concession of these things, made to you, may appear to be hampered in any way whatever.

And that you may be assured and undoubtingly believe that we intend to have you as fathers in Christ, friends and masters—as is fitting—and that we desire to make everlasting peace with you, I for myself and for the brothers give you every pledge of assurance against redress for all the above mentioned matters.

Given at Paris on the 20th of March, 1273

Sentinel (Isaiah 62:6-7)

Remember your Promise
forget not your Word!

Like fake jewels in the crown
of a kingdom not yet come
we sequester the heights of Jerusalem's wall
to conjure a banquet
where now workers drip furrows,
and exhumation where gravediggers toil.
But to imagine your approach
lets our problems dance out to meet you
(the weightier the burden, the greater the alacrity)
for you, All-Boundless-One,
have fixed yourself as with tent pegs
by your Word:
the blind must see;
paraplegics, prance on this parapet,
and we poor mortals can hear about you.
Remember your Promise!

The chains of our people will be junked,
innocent exonerated, and guilty restored,
when we recognize your throne upon the weak.
Forget not your Word!

And may we not be the last to know
(though we rejoice to know at last)
that this day, in the shadow of Jerusalem's wall
All your promise is fulfilled.

Remember your Promise
forget not your Word!

Hugoline A. Sabatino, O.F.M.

Book Reviews

The Admonitions of St. Francis of Assisi. By Lothar Hardick, O.F.M., with an Appendix by Sr. M. Ethelburga Häcker, O.S.F. Translated by David Smith. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982. Pp. xxiii-316. Cloth, no price given.

Reviewed by Father Vianney M. Devlin, O.F.M., Ph.D. (English, University of London), a member of the Retreat Team at St. Francis Retreat Center, Rye Beach, New Hampshire, and Assisi Experience, which conducts Study Pilgrimages to Rome and Assisi each summer.

Among the writings of Saint Francis a very special place is occupied by the Admonitions—28 short addresses given at various times by Francis when the early friars were assembled in Chapter. Taken as a whole these Admonitions form “a mirror of perfection” which Francis held in front of anyone who felt called to lead the Franciscan way of Christian life (p. viii).

The noted Franciscan scholar Kajetan Esser, O.F.M., published between 1959 and 1969 a series of reflections upon these Admonitions, and the present book by Lothar Hardick, O.F.M., contains a “revised version of these reflections . . . offered in response to the desire expressed by so many to see them published as a whole” (p. ix).

The book is divided into 28 chapters, each devoted to a single Admonition and of varying length under a contemporary title such as “Knowledge and

Good Works” (Adm 7), “Knowing the Spirit of God” (Adm 12), and “Virtue Should Be Concealed” (Adm 28). In an Appendix, Sister Ethelburga Häcker, O.S.F., offers suggestions to help readers understand Francis’ intentions in his 18th, 19th, 20th, 23rd, and 27th Admonitions—to draw conclusions from them and to make them a living, inner reality for themselves. These are models . . . [which] may stimulate the reader to assimilate these Admonitions and to make them his own” (p. ix). In other words, what Häcker offers are models for prayer and paraliturgical services suitable for retreats or days of recollection.

Although Hardick does not attempt an exegesis of the text of the Admonitions, he nevertheless draws clear distinctions between what was applicable to and serviceable for Franciscans of the thirteenth century and what is pertinent to us in the twentieth. Thus, e.g., in his discussion of Adm 23 on “True Correction” he points out differences in approach to this between Saint Francis’ time, when the emphasis was placed upon corporal punishment, and our own time, when a renewed sense of responsiveness to community is called for as opposed to the sense of isolation from each other which Hardick declares a twentieth century phenomenon (p. 195).

Hardick is helpful in pointing out the interdependence of these Admonitions, thereby indicating that taken as a whole they offer an holistic Franciscan vision and the tendency to read them as isolated, sporadic statements is to be

avoided.

Understandably there is an uneven quality to these reflections; some are penetrating and practical, others merely "interesting." But taken as a whole, the book provides us with a clear, readable guide to the Admonitions. It can prove valuable to those engaged in preaching, retreats, or giving spiritual conferences.

A Voice over the Water: An Invitation to Pray. By William Breault, S.J. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1985. Pp. 111. Paper, \$4.95.

Reviewed by Father Daniel A. Hurley, O.F.M., National Chaplain of the St. Bonaventure University Alumni Association and Campus Minister at the University.

In this volume, William Breault provides a book of reflections on various passages from Sacred Scripture. The author is known for his audio cassettes, all of which have titles related to the sea. The title of this book of reflections on Scripture follows his pattern of referring to water as a help toward reflective prayer. The method the author uses encourages the reader to open the book at random and to read short passages that can lead to reflective thought and meditative prayer. With no particular theme for choosing scriptural passages, Father Breault selects a sentence or a phrase or a group of sentences from Scripture and then presents some of his thoughts that the chosen passage suggests to him.

The reader can find help in praying simply by reading a chapter at a time.

Sometimes, only part of a chapter will be sufficient to lead the reader to pause and reflect a while or to stop reading and start praying. While the reader may not always be led to the same pattern of reflection as the author, the latter's writing style is such that one may merely use his words as a jumping-off point for prayerful meditation of one's own. The author writes in his Introduction: "Give yourself permission to respond to God in your own words or by your silence" (p. 9). The variety of topics that Father Breault lists in his Table of Contents gives the reader ample opportunity to choose whatever subject seems appropriate at a particular moment.

This reviewer recommends *A Voice over the Water* to all persons seeking help in praying. He believes that this book will be beneficial to a diverse reading public. For the beginner at prayer, the author's personal reflections will exemplify a way of applying God's Word to everyday living experiences. For someone more experienced, Breault's reflections on Scripture can be a source of encouragement to continue his or her own meditative prayer.

A small book divided into thirty chapters is easy to use. Since the author's purpose is not to present a discursive explanation of a method of prayer, but rather to offer "an invitation to pray," *A Voice over the Water* is the kind of book to pick up and refer to whenever one has a free moment or feels inclined toward a moment of prayer. This book can become a popular aid for prayer for those who call themselves followers of Christ; it can also be found helpful for all who recognize themselves as creatures of a loving God.

Thank God Ahead of Time. The Life and Spirituality of Solanus Casey. By Michael Crosby, O.F.M.Cap. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1985. Pp. x-334. Paper, \$9.50.

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

This is a new biography of a Capuchin priest who died in 1957 and whose cause for beatification and canonization is being placed before the Holy See. It differs from previous biographies, e.g., James Derum's *The Potter of St. Bonaventure's* (reviewed in these pages by this author, vol. 19 [1969], p. 153) in drawing heavily upon Fr. Solanus' own words as found in his collected writings, and on oral reports from confreres and lay persons who knew him.

The book proceeds chronologically, starting with the 26 years of his life prior to entering the Capuchins, and then following his formation years and various assignments. People who have difficulty with studies might well use Solanus as a patron, for his difficulties prevented him from receiving faculties for hearing confessions and preaching formal sermons. In fact, prior to his solemn profession he had to put in writing that he would not seek ordination if his superiors judged him unfit because of his meager talents. Father Crosby wisely points out that no little of his problem came from the fact that the needed subjects were taught in Latin and German.

Once he was ordained, Father Solanus exercised a ministry of counsel-

ing and healing, and he was able to serve as weekend-priest at parishes. But he did not hear confessions—often having an arrangement with another priest to come and hear a confession he had already heard while standing at the friary front desk enrolling someone in the Seraphic Mass Association. Solanus attributed the healings to the power of the prayers of those in the Association, not to himself. And when people beseeched him for help (as they did), he asked them to "thank God ahead of time" for the favor received, and to do something as a gesture of good will on their part: e.g., communicate more frequently or give an alms to the poor. He took literally Jesus' words, "Ask and you shall receive," and he urged everyone else to do so too.

Those of us in community can well relate to his life in community, with its lack of appreciation (he was called a fraud by one of his brethren, and hooted out of the rec room when he entertained the brethren with his violin). He endured the former, and responded to the latter by playing on the violin in the chapel, before the Lord.

Although the author lets Father Solanus and his contemporaries speak most of the time, it is he who tells the story. He weaves in commentary on Solanus' spirituality, and he offers a concluding chapter which analyzes it. In making some comparisons of Solanus' and Eastern spirituality, the author, I think, falls into the trap of trying to explain something *more* familiar by reference to something *less* so. Apart from this fault, *Thank God Ahead of Time* is excellent spiritual reading, and I recommend it without reservation to all Franciscans.

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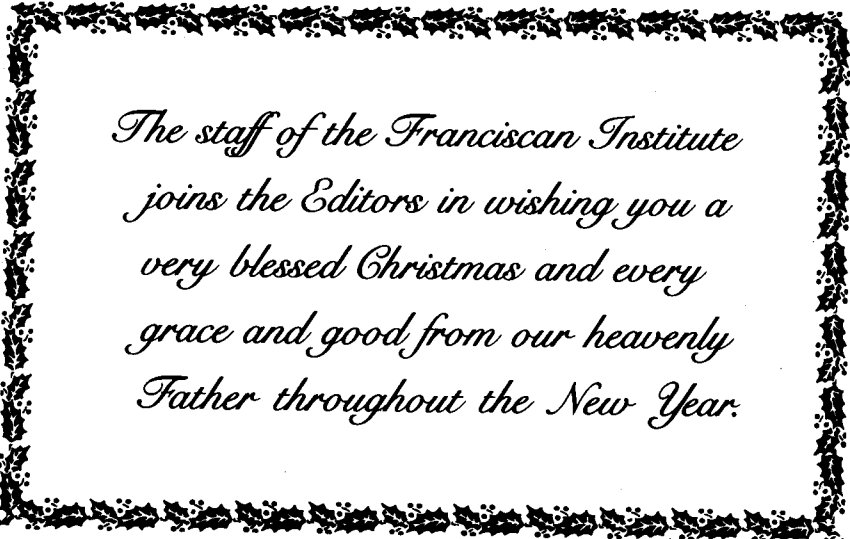
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grace and good from our heavenly
Father throughout the New Year.*

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