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The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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EDITORIAL



Respect Brother Body

FRANCIS REALIZED too late in life just how hard he had been on his body. His poor body, never too strong, had been short-changed all those years since his conversion so that his soul could grow strong. Only too late did Francis become aware of what he had done to his most faithful companion: his beautiful body, which God had given to him as his helpmate in order to attain heaven. Francis had given guidelines to the brothers as to how they were to treat their bodies, but he himself, as founder, felt called to go beyond his own advice. Finally, at the point in life where his body had given its all—the point where Francis could no longer retain food, could barely see the light of day, and was hardly able to put one foot in front of the other, he apologized to his body for his mistreatment of it.

I never thought too much about how independent Francis really was until I began to think about this aspect of his life. In his zealous search for the Holy, in his eager desire to be like the crucified, in his daily recognition of darkness and light within himself, he pushed his body aside as an encumbrance, almost as an unnecessary burden to be discarded ahead of time. He had gone beyond the call of the body for ordinary comfort, ordinary sustenance, and ordinary leisure. Thus, independent of his body, he became almost a living spirit while using the body solely for human recognition. An independence not too many of us can understand, much less practice.

Francis spoke to his brothers about the care of Brother Body in the following passage of the Legend of Perugia:

In taking food, sleep, and the other necessities of the body, the servant of God must act with discretion so that Brother Body has no excuse to complain: "I can neither stand up, remain a long time in prayer, nor preserve joy in my tribulations, nor perform any other good works, for you do not give me what I need." If, on the contrary, the servant of God provides for the necessities of his body

Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions	Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221
BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo	LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God
CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun	LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours
EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony	OffPass: Office of the Passion
EpCler: Letter to Clerics ¹	OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix
EpCust: Letter to Superiors ¹	RegB: Rule of 1223
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful ¹	RegNB: Rule of 1221
EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo	RegEr: Rule for Hermits
EpMin: Letter to a Minister	SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady
EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order	SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues
EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People	Test: Testament of St. Francis
ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God	UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare
ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father	VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy
FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare	¹ I, II refer to First and Second Editions.

II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

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

with discretion by observing the golden mean, and if Brother Body is then lazy, negligent, or sleepy during prayer time, vigils, and other good spiritual works, then it must be chastised like a bad-tempered and lazy beast of burden that wants to eat but refuses to work and carry its burden [LP 96; Omnibus, 1073].

One wonders if Francis had his life to live over again, whether he would have been more lenient toward his body. It is obvious from the above quotation that he recognized his body and the bodies of others as more than just vehicles for their convenience. He acknowledges the fact that the body has rights and that these should be respected; but he adds that there may be times when "destitution and poverty do not enable us to give Brother Body . . . what it needs or what it has uprightly and humbly asked of its brother or superior for the love of God." Then, he says "let Brother Body patiently bear its privations for the love of the Lord" (ibid.). Since the brother is not responsible for this set of circumstances, Francis frees him of all blame "if the body would have to suffer grave consequences" and says that "the Lord . . . will impute them to it as martyrdom" (ibid.).

Have you ever consciously asked your body how it feels before it tells you with a headache, back ache, sore muscles, toothache, etc?

What, then, should be the Franciscan stance today on the care of Brother Body? I think that very few of us would use the same terminology in reference to our bodies as Francis did in reference to his. Neither do I think many of us have ever really looked at the passage re: the care of the body as Francis spelled it out for his friars. Actually, what Francis says makes good common sense. The body does tell us when it is tired, hungry, aching, sick, weak, happy, strong, eager to do something, etc. It also tells us when it needs a change of pace. While it is true we are not living in the 13th century, we still have bodies which require all the things persons' bodies of that century required. But we must also remember that in those days communication was slow; main highways were very few; automobiles and airplanes were non-existent; and Howard Johnsons or Burger King was not a household name. When the friars went on a

journey, they really went on a journey! They did not hop a 747 for an overnight consultation with the Sultan only to return by plane early the next day. With all the fast, trips, fast foods, and fast work, there must be a slow-down time. If the slowing down time is only once a year at the annual five-day retreat, Brother Body is going to complain. That is hardly enough time for him to replenish himself spiritually and physically for all the year's long labor ahead.

The body deserves more respect than to be considered merely a service vehicle whereby one is able to fulfill one's desires. There must be a type of communication, as Francis has observed for us, where the person in charge of the body listens to its complaints and tries to prevent the body from having complaints. Have you ever consciously asked your body how it feels before it tells you with a headache, back ache, sore muscles, toothache, etc.? It is often only when these things are screaming out for help that we notice we have offended against some part of our body. Then it becomes an inconvenience for us. Perhaps if we were more aware of each part of our bodies when they are healthy, they might never become unhealthy.

Now, when the first friars went on their journey, they had plenty of fresh air, sunshine or rain, and exercise. Walking from place to place was the best exercise they could have, and they didn't have to be told about it. Since the brothers owned nothing, the body was not loaded down with heavy bundles; having no permanent dwelling, the friars had no worries about what would happen to their possessions while they were away. Physically and psychologically they were free. Because we do have bundles, because we do have possessions, and because we travel fast, our bodies are more in need of consideration than those of the 13th-century friars.

Just think of all the things your body has done for you today. What could you accomplish without it? Recount all the tiresome things your body has been pushed to do, then recount all the leisure time you have given it to rest, to laugh, to enjoy the day . . . for this day is a once only happening. Where, O where, do we put holy leisure in our schedules so that our bodies can get it all together again for us?

Worst of all, as Francis himself said, what happens in chapel when it is time for the Office or time for a period of meditation? If holy leisure has not been a part of our rigorous daily schedule for living the religious life, then the body will take its own leisure at a time when we need spiritual food. According to Francis, if the body cannot perform its function during prayer time or vigils but becomes sleepy and negligent, then it must be taken to task. In today's fast society, of which we are very much a part, it would seem that the

body of itself is not responsible for its negligence and its tiredness, but that part of us which directs these activities which produce this effect actually pushes the body beyond its ability to perform. I have a strong feeling that Francis would ask us, "Where are you going in such a hurry? Why do you eat so fast? Why do you eat so much?" In reality he had the key: Walk on your journey; eat what is set before you; sing and dance along the way!

If Francis were here, perhaps he would tell us to apologize to Brother Body, not because we have abused it by fasting and penance for the sake of the kingdom, but because we have abused it in forgetting that it exists in a way other than just serving us as a vehicle for work to the extent that it has become a thing, a convenience, built for the sole purpose of the success of personal drives.

How often we have read or heard of someone who has finally retired with the hope of spending many years visiting places and doing things never before possible for lack of time, only to have Sister Death interrupt that dream and permanently end worldly retirement. The dream so longed for, the money so carefully saved, the time so hoped for, for leisure, is gone.

Let us, then, respect Brother Body—our very own body lent to us for the sake of developing it and caring for it as a gift God has lent us: a gift which will be returned to the One who made it. Let us respect and recognize it now, while it is still willing and able to help us enjoy some leisure time whereby it can be renewed. Let us respect it so it will give us the pleasure of God's presence in the time of prayer. Let us respect it for what it is, a faithful companion and a sharer in the glory that God has planned for us. Ω

S. Frances Ann Thom, O.S.C.

Canticle of Morning

Dew-touched

Gold-tipped

Life-filled

Morning spreads around

Bringing joy to be

Bringing joy to be Here

God-circled.

Sister Marie Regina, O.S.F.

Good News for the Poor

The Introduction to Bonaventure's Commentary on Luke

GREGORY SHANAHAN, O.F.M.

THE COMMENTARY ON Saint Luke's Gospel, undertaken by Saint Bonaventure early in his teaching career, was enhanced by later revision.¹ For the Seraphic Doctor, Luke is the record of God's pity for the outsider, the Gospel of the poor and humble and of radical renunciations. It is the book of peace (a recurring theme all through Bonaventure): peace from heaven for "men of good will" and peace borne to doorsteps by disciples announcing the Kingdom. It is the perfect setting for the vindication of several Franciscan vital options, such as communal voluntary expropriation, mendicancy, evangelical freedom; options attacked during the Paris "mendicant controversy." Bonaventure is also keen to show that the relatively new Order has papal authorization for preaching the Gospel. Moreover, a large part of the work is a veritable treatise on good preaching. The virtues Christ brought to his mission are highlighted, as are the qualities required of the poor men later called to be his preaching disciples.

An obvious priority with the author is the formation of the ideal preacher, and he finds in the Lucan Gospel the material for enunciating his principles. The one who teaches Scripture in the classroom and the one who preaches from the pulpit are workmates; they are the new evangelists who, like the first, are to be filled with the Spirit of Christ. Their style of living, rooted in the following of Christ, must harmonize with and lend

¹Cf. Gregory Shanahan, O.F.M., "Aspects of Franciscan Life in St. Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*," S.T.L. dissertation (Rome: Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, 1975). Dominic V. Monti, O.F.M., "Bonaventure's Interpretation of Scripture in his Exegetical Works," dissertation (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979). The Luke Commentary occupies the greater part (pp. 11-604) of tome VII of the Quaracchi *Opera Omnia*; Bonaventure's Prologue, pp. 3-7.

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sincerity to their proclamation of the word of God. This subject is launched into in the very prologue or *prooemium*. Bonaventure excerpts the Isaiah prophecy said by our Lord himself in Luke 4 and masterfully applies it to the prophet, to the Evangelist, and to Christ. From its Spirit-animating effect, it is implanting itself in the Evangelists and through them in the teaching and preaching Church. The Bible as a whole is called upon to illustrate this theme.

The Seraphic Doctor's book is not only a monumental Scripture commentary, but a fine example of a Franciscan approach to human desires, agonies, and triumphs. The following is offered as a version of its prologue. It is not intended to be a critical translation; accordingly, some scholastic technical terms have been teased out into their plainer meaning.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to humbled people, to heal broken hearts, promising the release of captives, the opening of prison doors.

As we wondered what text would be an introduction to Saint Luke's Gospel, none presented itself as more suitable than this one. Luke himself says Christ used it at the beginning of his preaching; it is in Luke 4 and is originally from Isaiah 61. We may interpret this text in a *generic* sense to indicate every teacher of Scripture; in a *special* sense to indicate Luke the Evangelist; and in a *unique* sense to indicate Christ, the source of truth and grace. The generic interpretation comprises *two persons*, that is to say, those needed for the teaching task, the teacher and the pupil. The special interpretation involves *two outward sources*, namely, the composer of the Gospel and the purpose of the Gospel. The unique interpretation implies *two inward sources*, that is, the content of the Gospel and its structure.² Having noted those six elements, we can more easily move on.

What Saint Luke intended [is] that
through knowledge of the truth we might
come to find a remedy for our sickness.

First, let us interpret our text in the generic sense. It tells us what the

²The language of the philosophical concept of *causality* is used here and elsewhere in the prologue. A more ordinary meaning has been chosen to translate the sense of *efficient cause*, *final cause*, *material cause*, and *formal cause*.

gospel teacher should be like; it also tells us what his pupil should be like. The one who teaches the good news of Scripture must be anointed with God's grace, must be furnished with an obedience that is genuine, and must be ardently motivated by a brotherly compassion. That he should be anointed with God's grace is denoted by, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has anointed me." This is prefigured in the Old Testament anointing of the prophets. To Elijah the Lord said: "You are to anoint Elisha son of Shaphat as prophet to succeed you" (cf. 1 Kings 19:16). And of David it was said that after he had been anointed, "the spirit of the Lord seized on David and stayed with him from that day on (1 Sam. 16:13). They were being anointed in order to receive the Spirit of the Lord, through whom the hidden things of God are revealed to us. If, then, the Scriptures are to be expounded in the same spirit in which they were written, and if "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet. 1:21), it follows that anybody considered fit to teach what was pronounced by Christ and written by the Holy Spirit, must be one who is anointed with grace from on high.

He must also be furnished with a genuine obedience; "*sent me to bring good news . . .*" is what is said. Our example is Moses, to whom the Lord said: "Come, I send you to Pharaoh to bring the children of Israel, my people, out of Egypt. [And Moses said:] Who am I to . . . bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Ex. 3:10-11). Moses was legislator and liberator to the children of Israel coming out of Egypt; he stands for the teacher of the divine law, the one who leads the Lord's people out of the darkness of ignorance.³ No one, however, ought to undertake such a task unless he be commissioned. And if not commissioned, then not only should he not hold this office, but be all the more reluctant to do so, since no one may presume that he is fit for it. If, on the one hand, *he* has not spoken to God, he is unworthy; if, on the other hand, *God* has not spoken to his heart, he ought to regard himself as "faltering and tongue-tied" like Moses (cf. Ex. 4:10). And so, one who is unable to pronounce the divine mysteries opened up to him by the Lord, should in no way attempt to do so unless he is clearly appointed by obedience.

Furthermore, he must be ardently motivated by a brotherly compassion; for he is being sent "to heal broken hearts, promising the release of captives, the opening of prison doors." We have Paul's example in this:

You found us innocent as babes in your company; no nursing mother ever cherished her children more; in our great longing for you, we desired nothing better than to offer you our own lives, as well as God's gospel, so

³Bonaventure, always keen on the power of words, connects linguistically *eductor* (one who leads out) and *educator* (a tutor or educator).

greatly had we learned to love you [1 Thess. 2:7-8].

Just as you cannot beget natural offspring without natural love, so you cannot beget spiritual offspring without spiritual affection. As Gregory said: "He who has no charity for his fellowman must never take on the office of preaching" (*Gospel Homilies*, I, 17). To expound and teach God's gospel is to preach the divine word; and for this the teacher must have enkindled within him a sympathetic attitude towards his fellowman.

If gospel teaching is to produce its desired effect, the teacher must have as pupil one who is humble, gentle, and faithful. A pupil of Scripture will be of mild speech because he has adapted himself to listening. The good news is brought to humble people, not to those that are censorious. Indeed, only those that are submissive in their approach to the word can properly grasp God's good news. "True answer and wise answer none can give," says Ecclesiasticus, "but he who listens patiently, and learns all" (5:13); and as the Psalm puts it: "He teaches his way to the humble" (24:9). "Be patient," James writes, "and cherish that word implanted in you which can bring salvation to your souls" (Jas. 1:21). From the gospel one learns how to become a disciple of Christ: "Learn from me, for I am gentle" (Mt. 11:29).⁴ Contentiousness and dispute might be the way of the Aristotelians, but they are not the way of gospel disciples: "A servant of the Lord has no business with quarreling; he must be kindly towards all men, persuasive and tolerant" (2 Tim. 2:24). What Augustine says in his second book on *Christian Doctrine*, is in point:

What we need is a holy submissiveness in approaching sacred Scripture. We perceive its meaning when it smites some of our sinful ways—or perhaps we do not perceive. Still, there is to be no gainsaying on our part. As if we knew better, as if any notion of our own were better! No, what we must bring ourselves to think and believe is that what is written there is better and truer [c. 7, n. 9].

A listener has to achieve a humble disposition by means of a contrite spirit, for it is "broken hearts" that are to be healed—"Sorrow bows down the heart" (Prov. 12:25). A heart thus bowed down is more apt to learn, for it is written: "It was good for me to be afflicted, to learn your will" (Ps. 118:71), and "You have hidden these things from the wise and clever, and revealed them to mere children" (Mt. 11:25).

A listener, finally, must give a faithful assent by surrendering his mind—for it is to "captives" release is promised. Paul meant this when he

⁴A *disciple* is basically one who *learns* from his master (the Latin *discere* = to learn).

wrote: "We make every mind surrender to Christ's service" (2 Cor. 10:5). It is by a real faith this is done; and without a real faith it is impossible to understand the text of the good news—"Unless you believe, you will never understand" (Is. 7:9, according to the Septuagint reading). If belief be required for things we can learn about, all the more necessary is it for what is revealed by God. This "captivity" is actually a liberation from sin, for "he had removed all the uncleanness from their hearts when he gave them faith" (Acts 15:9), and "he empowered to become the children of God, all those who believe in his name" (Jn. 1:12).

In a general sense, therefore, our passage is a description of the good teacher and the good pupil.

We take our text to refer in a special manner to Saint Luke, the man who composed this Gospel and to a purpose. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" applies to him as author; "to bring the good news to the humble" points to his aim or purpose.

Of course, the uppermost source of the gospel is "the Spirit of the Lord": "It will be for him, the truth-giving Spirit, when he comes, to guide you into all truth" (Jn. 16:13). It is he who spoke through the Evangelists, spoke through Luke: "It is not you who speak, it is the Spirit of your Father that speaks in you" (Mt. 10:20); "I will give you such eloquence and such wisdom as all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand, or to confute" (Lk. 21:15).

At the other end of the scale of gospel sources comes Saint Luke. Note those words—"upon me"—that is, upon Luke. Jerome says of him that "he died, filled with the Holy Spirit." He was surely qualified to write a Gospel. The Apostle wrote of him: "We are sending . . . that brother of ours, who has won the praise of all the churches by his proclamation of the gospel" (2 Cor. 8:18). Therefore, Ecclesiasticus' verse fits him: "She opened his mouth in the assembly and filled him with the spirit of wisdom" (15:5).

There is an intermediate gospel source, indicated by the words: "he has anointed me"—and it is *grace*, which, when conferred, prepares the soul to receive lessons of truth from the greatest Teacher of all: "The influence of his anointing lives on in you, so that you have no need of teaching" (1 Jn. 2:27). It is the Holy Spirit who through grace taught the Evangelist, and the instructed Evangelist in turn taught the Church when he wrote his Gospel. That book, then, had a threefold source: upper, lower, and intermediate—the Holy Spirit personally, the Evangelist, and the Holy Spirit's grace. All of this can be known from our original passage given above and as presented by Saint Luke.

The purpose [behind the writing of this Gospel] is something that is also hinted at rather fully in the subsequent lines. It is a triple purpose: to

manifest the truth, to cure infirmity, to make eternity accessible. The first of these belongs to "prevenient" grace, the second to sanctifying grace, the third to the fullness of glory. And so, to begin with, the first aim of this piece of teaching: viz., the manifestation of truth, is indicated by the line: "to bring good news to the humble"—and by the line of the Psalm: "They will tell what God has done. They will understand God's deeds" (63:10). This is why it is called "gospel," that is, "good news."

Something which has existed since the beginning,
that we have heard,
and we have seen with our own eyes;
that we have watched
and touched with our hands;
the Word, who is life—
this is our subject.

That life was made visible:
we saw it and we are giving our testimony,
telling you of the eternal life
which was with the Father and has been made visible to us [Jn. 1:1].

How beautiful on the mountains,
are the feet of one who brings good news,
who heralds peace, brings happiness,
proclaims salvation! [Is. 52:7].

The holy Evangelists were the first with such a message.

The [Lucan Gospel's] purpose is, secondly, the healing of our infirmities, as indicated in the phrase: "to heal broken hearts." When the good news is proclaimed in word it bears fruit and has a curative effect. As the Book of Wisdom puts it, "Herb nor plaster it was that cured them, but your word, Lord, that all healing gives" (16:12). Well does the Gospel of Luke produce this effect. Jerome wrote: "If Luke is that physician *who has won praise by his proclamation of the gospel*, let us also observe that all the words he wrote are medicine for the feeble soul" (Letter 53, 103). And this is in line with what Saint Luke intended: that through knowledge of the truth we might come to find a remedy for our sickness.

Now, the third and last purpose [of the Lucan Gospel] is rendering eternity accessible—as indicated by the line: "promising the release of captives, the opening of prison doors." This happens when we come to possess eternal life, something the teaching of the gospel exhorts us to as to our final goal. "So much has been written down," says Saint John, "that you may learn to believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and so believing find life through his name" (20:31). Or, as in the last chapter of Mark: "Go out all over the world and preach the gospel to the whole of creation; he who believes and is baptized will be saved" (16:15). The



Evangelists were the ones who, more than others, fulfilled this injunction. Not only did they proclaim the gospel by word of mouth to their contemporaries, but they did so in writing, both for the benefit of the people of their day and that of all future generations.

If we are to understand [our opening text] as uniquely referring to the Lord Jesus, since what it says peculiarly concerns him, we shall see indicated two inward principles: viz., the subject matter and the layout [of the gospel]. One thing is certain, that the entire gospel story is about Christ, as mediator, preacher, restorer, and victor. We see the mediator in the mystery of the incarnation, the preacher in the authority of his instruction, the restorer in the healing passion, the victor in the triumphal resurrection. The first has reference to Christ's nature, the second to his teaching, the third to his victimhood, the fourth to his triumph. These four, as they apply to Christ, are clearly and neatly touched upon in our opening quotation from Scripture.

Christ Jesus, as the mediator, is introduced by the statement: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has anointed me." He is the mediator, of whom it was written: "God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38). Anointed, indeed, not like other holy men, but *above* others: "God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above other kings" (Ps. 44:8). With that anointing Daniel's prophecy is brought to completion: "The visions and the prophecies come true, and he who is all holiness receives his anointing" (Dan. 9:24).

Christ the preacher is introduced in the next statement: "He has sent me to bring good news to the humble." This accords with what was promised the children of Israel by the Lord through Moses: "I will raise up for them a prophet like yourself, one of their own race, entrusting my own message to his lips, so that he may instruct them at my bidding" (Deut. 18:18). This was Christ, Lord of all the Prophets, who said: "I

have made known to you all that my Father has told me" (Jn. 15:15). And this was the purpose of his mission: "I must preach the gospel of God's kingdom to the other cities too; it is for this that I was sent" (Lk. 4:43).

Christ as restorer is introduced by the phrase: "to heal broken hearts." He is the very one of whom it is written: "He went about doing good, and curing all those who were under the devil's tyranny" (Acts 10:38). And so, it is of him the Psalm speaks: "He heals the broken-hearted, he binds up all their wounds (146:3). This he did, with the remedy his passion was:

Ours were the sufferings he bore,
ours the sorrows he carried.
Yet he was pierced through for our faults,
crushed for our sins.
On him lies a punishment that brings us peace,
and through his wounds we are healed [Is. 53:4-5].

Christ the victor is introduced in the fourth part of the statement: "promising the release of captives, the opening of prison doors." This he accomplished in the triumph which his resurrection was. Colossians 2:15 (if applied to Christ) speaks of this: "He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them. . . ." And again, as the Psalm says, "He has mounted up on high; he has captured his spoil; he has brought gifts to men" (67:19; cf. Eph. 4:8).

Since, therefore, under these four titles Christ is the object of faith and the subject of the gospel, in the text offered he is rightly designated as the gospel's "material principle" or subject-matter.

"Sciences fall into real sections" (Aristotle); form is determined by arrangement of material; the subject of our gospel is one, set up and looked at in four ways. These are reasons why one book must needs treat principally of one of the aspects only and secondarily of the other aspects. But the written good news as a whole must deal chiefly with all four. Therefore there must be four gospels, each having four parts.

Thus we gather why this book should have the four parts it has. The first part, up to chapter 4, deals with the mystery of the Incarnation; the second, up to chapter 22, with Christ's preaching authority; the third, up to chapter 24, with the medicine which the passion was; the fourth part, up to the end of the whole book, deals with the triumphal resurrection. Although he needed all of these to make a complete story, Luke shows a special interest in Christ's priesthood, and in the passion as [humanity's] cure (as we might expect from one who was a physician).

Therefore, from the passage set before you, applicable to Christ as it is, you deduce [this Gospel's] "material principle" or subject, and its "for-

mal principle" [or structure]; that is, the arrangement of sections and chapters, as well as scriptural method.

These two [subject-matter and structure] are very well prefigured in the animal vision of Ezekiel (1:5-12); he saw four animals, and while each had four faces, one of the faces was its principal face. The first of these resembled a human being, and in that we see Christ's nature; the next resembled a lion, and in that we see Christ's victory; the next resembled an ox, and in that we see Christ the victim; the next resembled an eagle, and in that we see Christ's doctrine. Now, all the holy doctors hold that these symbolize the four gospels, representing their subject-matter and structure. For each animal is *one*, yet has four forms—to show that the four gospels treat of the one Christ under a fourfold aspect. Again, since each is four-sided, each has four faces. And yet again, the first, the one resembling a human being, since he is first, is Matthew, who in the main traces the mystery of the Incarnation. The second, the one resembling a lion, the second to write, is Mark, treating of the triumphal resurrection. They share the same *side* because they agree on many things.⁵ The third, the one resembling an ox, the third to write, is Luke, who follows the priesthood, and the passion as [humanity's] cure. But the fourth, the one resembling the clear-eyed eagle, and the fourth to write, is John: he is concerned with the evangelical teaching power of Christ; his theme is beyond the others' attainments. He is described as being "above them" (cf. Ezek. 1:10).

And so it is plain how the reality of things corresponds to the shadow which preceded it. Plain also are those six questions with which we have prefaced what the doctrine is about to impart: the quality of the one teaching it, the quality of the one hearing it, who produced it, what it aims at, what its content is, and what form it takes. This gives something of a general conception of the Gospel of Luke. Ω

⁵The final paragraph 24 is more or less a standard piece based on patristic sources. The figures representing Matthew and Mark are said to be on the same side in the vision, on the right side, that of joy, because the Nativity (Matthew) and the Resurrection (Mark) are what brought most joy to the disciples.

Sounds of You in a Monastery Garden

"And Adam heard the Sound of God Walking in the Garden" (Genesis)

I hear the sound of You
in my eyelids' lifting
at midnight and at dawn
or on a flower.

Low startle of amaze
in lifting eyelids
whispers Your presence
in soft certainty.

I hear the sound of You
in my lips upcurving
at sky-span, wind-dance, kind
full-bosomed clouds.
Sweep of my lips upcurving
at Your wonders
carols Your presence
in my centering.

I hear the sound of You
in my heartbeats counting
Your steps down every
moment of my life.
My blood sings through my veins
to mark Your footfalls,
cascades content at You
in the midst of me.

I hear the sound of You
in my motored breathing.
And where You pass, my breast
keeps lifting vigil
and lowering watch for Your
returning, Lover.
Stride down my breathing,
for I love the sound!



I hear the sound of You
in the silent torrents
of tears denied permission
for their splashing
outside the banks of heart.
I hear You sweeten
their brine with Hand-cup
catching of each one.

I hear the sound of You
in the push of yearning
at spirit's arteried walls
to see your face.

I hear the sound of You
in vows pulsating
with power, tensing
stewardship in me.

I hear the sound of You
in all creatures loving.

I hear Your overflow
of ceaseless loving
the Father loving You
in Substantiated Spirit
over the acres of creation
sounding
the sound of You
if anyone will hear.

Mother Mary Francis, P.C.C.

"Bag Pilgrims": Preachers of Poverty

SISTER LORRAINE WESOLOWSKI, O.S.F.

WALK THE STREETS of any city. Sit for a while in a bus station. You'll see them. We've coined a name for them. We may even shy away from them or pity them. Perhaps we may even be one of the few that take the risk to listen to their story. They are the "bag people," the outcasts of society that carry all they possess in bags. They are the nomads of our century. They call "nowhere" home. Home can be a bus station, hallway, rescue mission, abandoned building, or discarded cardboard box by the railroad tracks. Each of us has his/her own image and experience of these pilgrims of our modern day society—these men and women who carry all their possessions, treasures, and meaningful mementos of a shattered lifetime in a shopping bag.

I am sure that none of us could fit all our worldly possessions into a bag. We may even be ashamed of all the bags and boxes we could fill. Nor do we have the awful uncertainty of what we will eat or wear, or where we will sleep. Yet, as Franciscans, as men and women dedicated to poverty and claiming to be on a pilgrim's journey, perhaps we need to take a closer look at ourselves and see what keeps us from claiming the freedom of the children of God.

The "bag people" are certainly open to risk and ridicule, the pain of which none of us is likely to experience. They haven't professed a canonical vow of poverty; yet they preach their poverty just by their effort to exist. Without claiming to be, they are the itinerant preachers to us Franciscans. Francis was probably like those "bag people." We need only look at his life to see how he was regarded as an outcast of society and ridiculed even by his family and friends. When Francis opened the Scriptures, he was told repeatedly to sell all and take nothing for his journey. How radically and literally he lived these words of poverty!

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The spirit of the gospel can often be easier to hear and to follow than a radical imitation that can expose us to rejection, misunderstanding, and ridicule. Our rationalization, justification, and need allow for this. We are not claiming or advocating literal gospel living. We are just prodding a state of comfortableness that may characterize each of us to a greater or lesser extent. Francis did this. He made others uncomfortable just as the "bag people" make us uncomfortable. We even cross to the other side of the street when they come toward us so we won't have to look into their eyes.

Perhaps we need to take the "bag test" and find out what it is that weighs us down.

The "bag people" of today experience the stark reality of the words of the gospel. The portion life has dealt them may not be of their own choosing, although for some of them it may indeed be a chosen escape. Regardless of the reason, it is their real-life situation, with a literal poverty to which our middle-class standard of life cannot reasonably be compared. Community living has made us so comfortable; our needs and even our wants are amply supplied. But in taking a look at the "bag people" as we walk past them (or for most of us, *drive* past them in our warm cars in the winter and our air-conditioned ones in the summer) on the way to our convents and monasteries, we need to feel uncomfortable in our comfortableness. At the end of our day we come home, kick off our shoes, and complain of how tired we are. Outside our doors, the "bag people" still travel the streets of our cities like pilgrims looking for a homeland.

I certainly am not claiming that we should give up all and become "bag people." Nor am I attempting to make glamorous or sanctify the life of these people. The loneliness, desperation, hopelessness, and misery of mere survival would be more than most of us could endure.

But let us consider the "bag people" as pilgrims on a journey, aware of their poverty and dependence. As Franciscans, we have in some respect joined the ranks of these wayfarers. Yet how close is our imitation of Francis? Far from being able to put all our possessions in a bag or—for that matter—in a large trunk, we keep getting weighed down with so much ownership that we have lost the sense of freedom that the vow of poverty should bring. We keep justifying our need for the things that



make our life, our ministry, and even our prayer better. The juxtaposition of poverty and the possessions of our life can perhaps make us wiggle a bit in that comfortable chair we "needed." The "bags" we carry do not permit our arms to open in loving embrace. If we let go one of our "bags," the reaching out is easier. But true freedom is ours when we can let go of everything and stretch out both arms without limitations. When we are unencumbered our feet travel lighter on our pilgrim's journey. When we travel with nothing but our poverty, we can expect to receive all kinds of riches.

Perhaps we need to take the "bag test" and find out what it is that weighs us down. What should we remove from our possessions or

ourselves that will make our journey lighter and our spirit more free? We may be among those who hold on tightly to our own personal space in the world. We've all heard the phrases: my time, my car, my ministry, my classroom, my parish. . . . Certainly all of these are precious component parts of who we are. But if we own them so tightly that nothing—no one—can be further gifted with our love and generosity, then perhaps it is time to re-focus. Before a gift can be given to us, we need to get rid of something or move something over so that there may be space for the gift. When we become so closed in with our sense of security and everything in its proper niche, we certainly do avoid the interruptions that life has to offer; but perhaps we need to take up the challenge of laying out the welcome mat and see who or what enters.

We pray the words so often: "It is in giving that we receive." It is only when we make these words a reality in our lives, though, that we notice the difference; and so do others. The unconditional guarantee of this "bag test" is known only to ourselves and to God.

The next time we see a "bag person," it may be worth our while to consider whose life is uncluttered, whose spirit is empty, and whose heart is open for the riches in a homeland at the end of life's journey. Ω

Francis of Assisi

O, tender child of light:
Your presence brings hope to dreams,
that will be realized by many—
because you loved.
Your offering was an offering of time.
A self-oblation—
the light of which pierces
the darkness and confusion of the world—
with truth and wisdom.
Your eternal fiat
resounds through the ages
and to the ends of the earth—
quickenning the spirit—
refreshing the soul.

William J. Boylan

Liminality and the Religious Experience of Saint Francis of Assisi

TIMOTHY JOHNSON, O.F.M.CONV.

FRANCIS OF ASSISI is certainly one of the most studied figures in the history of religious life. The point of departure for scholars varies as does their methodology. One of the newest and most interesting approaches is that found in the writings of Victor Turner. Turner, a social anthropologist at the University of Chicago, seeks to study Francis and the Franciscan movement in light of his own academic discipline (*Ritual Process*, 140-55). To do so he makes use of the concepts he has developed in the course of his anthropological field studies.

What follows is not simply a report on what Turner has already said in regard to Francis, but rather an attempt to utilize in a fresh manner one of Turner's key concepts: viz., that of "liminality." My hope is to show that the religious experience of Saint Francis, as it appears in the early sources, is an example of a continual liminal state. In addition, I would like to reflect on the major motivational factor, or as Turner calls it, the "root paradigm," which stands behind the liminal experience of Francis. Other Turnerian concepts will be introduced as the study proceeds. Because of the amount of space available, it will be impossible to develop fully the various ideas linked with liminality, but that could easily be the aim of further research which, it is hoped, may be stimulated by a reading of this article.

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The Meaning of Liminality

IN THE SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY of Victor Turner the concept of liminality must be understood in relationship to what is known as the "rites of passage." This term is used to describe the ritual in which a person moves from one cultural place, position, or state to another ("Passages," *passim*). Liminality is found in the experience of transition. Perhaps the clearest explanation of liminality is found in the book *Images and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, where it is described as

the state and process of mid-transition in a rite of passage. During the liminal period, the characteristics of the "liminars" [the ritual subject in this phase] are ambiguous, for they pass through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. . . . Liminars are stripped of status and authority, removed from a social structure maintained and sanctioned by power and force, and leveled to a homogeneous social state through discipline and ordeal. . . . Much of what has been bound by social structure is liberated, notably the sense of comradeship and communion, or *communitas* . . . [Images, 249].

Liminality, expressed in "stripping," involves a turning from structure toward nature.

Within the above description of liminality there is one element very useful for the present study: viz., the idea of being "stripped of status and authority." This concept, with some variation, can be applied to the Franciscan sources to show the liminal dimension of Saint Francis' religious experience.

Liminality and Dress

THE IDEA OF being "stripped of status and authority" runs like a fine thread through the early biographies of Saint Francis. His father, being a cloth merchant, enjoyed a great deal of status and authority in medieval Assisi. Money, a sign of prestige in the burgeoning capitalist culture, was the foundation of his power. Evidently it was his intention that Francis follow him in the textile trade and thereby share the social importance that accompanied it (Little, 146). As history shows, his son wanted something quite different.

The conversion of Francis shows a deep liminality. It was a time of passage characterized by a throwing away of social prestige and status in

the search for a new identity. The process can be observed from a host of vantage points. Perhaps one of the most intriguing is one of the most concrete: the clothes that he wore. The cultural importance of clothes for the medievals cannot be overemphasized; social rank was distinguished in a special way by the clothes worn (Tuchman, 19-21). The early biographers were naturally aware of the symbolic importance attached to clothing, and thus they strove to show Francis as a man who gave up his social standing, represented by the garments he wore, in search of a new life.

The first incident in Francis' life that can be examined is his meeting with the poor knight. Saint Bonaventure says that the encounter took place after Francis had suffered a prolonged illness:

After his strength was restored, when he had dressed as usual in his fine clothes, he met a certain knight who was of noble birth, but poor and badly clothed. Moved to compassion for his poverty, Francis took off his own garments and clothed the man on the spot. At one and the same time he fulfilled the twofold duty of covering over the embarrassment of a noble knight and relieving the poverty of a poor man [LM I.2; ed. Cousins, 187].

The initial inkling of his dramatic change is present here. Bonaventure is very conscious of the importance of clothes and takes pains to point out how both Francis and the knight were dressed. In his eyes, Francis was to be commended not only for his love of poverty but also for acknowledging the social rank of the knight. Francis' willingness to shed exterior symbols of status and authority is a sign of what is to come.

The next important change of attire appears in the episode before the Bishop of Assisi. The background of the story is essential. After a period of anxious searching and questioning, Francis came to a realization of what God desired of him. Leaving Assisi, he rode by horseback to Foligno, where he sold all the expensive cloth that he had brought. Then he sold the horse and wandered back to Assisi wondering what he should do with the money. Coming upon the Church of San Damiano which was on the verge of collapse, he offered all the coins to the priest. When Francis' father heard the news he was understandably enraged. Realizing that it was impossible to change his son's thinking, he brought him before the Bishop. His intention was clear: to get Francis to renounce his inheritance. Francis was more than obliging. Stripping himself completely naked, he renounced his inheritance in a dramatic way. In place of his fine garments he received clothing of a noticeably different style:

They brought him a poor, cheap cloak of a farmer who worked for the Bishop. Francis accepted it gratefully and with his own hand marked a cross on it with a piece of chalk, thus designating it as the covering of a crucified man and a half-naked beggar [LM II.4; ed. Cousins, 194].

The change from a rich merchant's son to a "half-naked beggar" points out an incredible descent down the social ladder. In throwing off his clothes, Francis threw away his social status and authority (Little, 148). There was no turning back. He had become what Turner describes as an "outsider" because by his own choice he set himself apart "from the behavior of status-occupying, role-playing members of that system" ("Passages," 394).

In time Francis began to wear what Thomas of Celano describes as "a kind of hermit's dress, with a leather girdle about his waist" (1Cel 21; *Omnibus*, 246). After the episode before the Bishop of Assisi, Francis wandered from place to place begging food. Gradually he began to concentrate his efforts on repairing several dilapidated churches in the Assisi area, such as San Damiano and Santa Maria degli Angeli, otherwise known as the Portiuncula.

One day, when listening to the Gospel proclamation (Mt. 10:9), Francis was struck by the verses which described the preaching mission of the Apostles. In particular, he noted how the clothing of the Apostles was linked with their mission. At that moment he felt that the Scriptures were speaking directly to him. Saint Bonaventure describes this pivotal moment in Francis' life as follows:

When he heard this, he grasped its meaning and committed it to memory. This lover of apostolic poverty was then filled with an indescribable joy and said: "This is what I want; this is what I long for with all my heart." He immediately took off his shoes from his feet, put aside his staff, cast away his wallet and money as if accursed, was content with one tunic and exchanged his leather belt for a piece of rope. He directed all his heart's desire to carry out what he had heard and to conform in every way to the role of right living given to the apostles [LM III.1; ed. Cousins, 199-200]

In ridding himself of the so-called "hermit's dress," Francis deepened the liminality of his experience. The "habit" which he began to wear was not much different from the common garb of the poor (cf. Esser, 99). By identifying with the poor he reached the bottom of the social scale. The craving for social status and recognition was no longer a part of his life. The action of Francis put him in direct confrontation with the social values of the day (cf. Grundmann, 140-42). Casting his lot in with the poor, he chose to proclaim the Kingdom of God in the freedom of apostolic poverty.

The apostolic dimension of Francis' spirituality can be understood as a state of continual liminality. By moving from place to place, Francis became what Turner describes as the "liminal religious man who has renounced world and home, moving from village to village—the pilgrim, or the hero of the "quest tales," who goes on a long journey to seek his

identity outside of structure" (*Images*, 248).

Because he had given up all status and authority within society, Francis was forced to seek his identity somewhere else. In his itinerant preaching he shows that his identity was rooted in a reality which could not be locked into, or subordinated to, the social reality of the day. He saw himself as "the herald of the great King" (1Cel 16; *Omnibus*, 242). The identity that he could not find selling cloth in the merchant's stall was given to him as he preached in the piazzas. His clothing, based on the gospel and not on his social standing, vividly expressed the radical change that had taken place.

Francis never arrived at the point where he felt that he did not need to be stripped further. When the time of his death drew near, a very intriguing event unfolded before the eyes of the early friars. Francis asked to be stripped of his habit, the sign of a poor man, so that he could die naked in the dust:

When you see that I am brought to my last moments, place me naked on the ground just as you saw me the day before yesterday; and let me lie there after I am dead for the length of time it takes to walk a mile unhurried [2Cel 217; *Omnibus*, 536].

Nakedness is a powerful expression of poverty. It also represents here and in other places a definitive rejection of status on the part of Francis. In the end he wanted nothing that would even hint of structure to separate him from the earth. This is another indication of the continual liminality of Francis' experience. Liminality, expressed in "stripping," involves a turning from structure toward nature. Turner points out that "an important component of the liminal situation is . . . an enhanced stress on 'nature' at the expense of culture" ("Passages," 410). Thus the death of Francis stands as the culmination of the liminal experience of "stripping" which began some twenty years prior when he gave his rich clothes to the poor knight. Naked, dying, Francis was one with the poor Christ. With him he passed over to the Father.

Liminality and the Root Paradigm

THAT FRANCIS WAS in a continual state of liminality appears certain. His constant and conscious effort to strip himself of status and standing in medieval society is proof enough. Yet by no means is this the whole story. From the point of view of Victor Turner, it is equally important to know what it was that motivated Francis' efforts to remain within the liminal experience. In a certain sense such a question demands a full study in itself. The best that can be done here is to offer a few reflections on Saint Francis' motivation.

Turner, in his social anthropology, offers another idea which is extremely useful in getting to the source of that which so forcefully animated Francis. The concept is that of the "root paradigm," which can be understood as follows:

A higher-order concept than symbols, root paradigms are consciously recognized (though not consciously grasped) cultural models for behavior that exist in the heads of the main actors in a social drama, whether in a small group or on the stage of history.

Root paradigms are shown in behavior which appears to be freely chosen but resolves at length into a total pattern. They go beyond the cognitive, and even the moral, to the existential domain. . . . They reach down to the irreducible life stances of individuals, passing beyond conscious prehension to a fiduciary hold on what the individual senses to be axiomatic values, matters literally of life and death [*Images*, 248].

Even a cursory scanning of the early Franciscan sources will quickly yield the root paradigm of Francis' spirituality. It is the poor, crucified Christ. At the root of all of Francis' actions stands the example of Jesus. The *kenosis* of Jesus which culminated on the altar of the Cross was the prism through which Francis saw all of reality. The willingness of Christ to empty himself and give up his power and glory became the model and matrix of Francis' actions. The continual process of "stripping" on Francis' part reflects the tremendous impact that the poor, crucified Christ had on him.

Throughout his life it grew stronger and took a progressively deeper hold on his being. The meaning of life on the existential level was to be found in "following the teaching and the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ" (RegNB I.1; AB 109).

That the root paradigm of the poor, crucified Christ took hold of every domain of Francis' life can be shown in various ways. Perhaps one of the most fruitful approaches can be developed in the area of Francis' relationship with the lepers. It is the key to understanding his desire to rid himself of power and authority. Reflecting on his state before conver-



sion, Francis reveals the role that the lepers played in his decision to lead a radically different lifestyle:

When I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them. And when I had left them, that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body; and afterward I lingered a little and left the world [Test 1; AB 154].

What was it that brought about such a tremendous shift in Francis' perspective that he could join those whom previously he had intentionally avoided? According to Saint Bonaventure, it was an encounter with the crucified Christ. There is a direct link, Bonaventure maintains, between the experience of the Crucified and the love of lepers. In the early stages of his conversion, Francis often sought out lonely and deserted places where he struggled to know and accept God's designs. Once, after a particularly mysterious meeting with a leper on the plain below Assisi, Francis had an incredibly moving experience of Christ in prayer. It shook him to the core of his being:

One day while he was praying in such a secluded spot and became totally absorbed in God through his extreme fervor, Jesus Christ appeared to him fastened to the cross. Francis' "soul melted" [Cant. 5:6] at the sight, and the memory of Christ's passion was so impressed on the innermost recesses of his heart that from hour to hour, whenever Christ's crucifixion came to his mind, he could scarcely contain his tears and sighs . . . [LM I.5; Cousins, 189].

The results of the encounter were manifested without delay, as the lepers became the immediate recipients of the love which Francis bore for the Lord. The unity between contemplation and action was achieved in his relationship with the lepers. With total disregard for himself, Francis went among the lepers to serve them:

Now he rendered humble service to the lepers with human concern and devoted kindness in order that he might completely despise himself, because of Christ crucified, who according to the text of the prophet was despised "as a leper" [Is. 53:3]. He visited their homes frequently, generously distributed alms to them, and with great compassion kissed their hands and their mouths [LM I.6; AB 189-90].

In what way is the leper incident the key to understanding Francis' "stripping" of self? This question is important because it contains the essence of Francis' spirituality. Francis' setting out among the lepers was the concretization of his experience in prayer. By giving of himself, he was changed and gradually conformed to the image of the poor Christ.

Until he moved outside his own personal world, he remained isolated and cut off from God. To be in the world, as the medievals understood it, was to be under the dominion of those self-seeking passions and forces which are opposed to God. With the lepers, Francis began to understand and experience in a profound way the self-sacrificing love of Jesus which was radically different from the self-seeking concern he was used to in the past. It is no surprise that after living with the lepers he began to give his clothes away to those in need. Bonaventure writes: "To beggars he wished to give not only his possessions but his very self. At times he took off his clothes, at times unstitched them, at times ripped them in pieces, in order to give them to beggars, when he had nothing else at hand" (LM I.6; AB 190).

It was with the lepers that Francis experienced what Turner describes as "communitas" (*Images*, 250-51). His relationships were direct and unmediated. They exhibited all the liminal qualities of "lowliness, sacredness, homogeneity, and comradeship" (*Images*, 250). Lowliness was present in that Francis left his social stratum and joined those who were considered as outcasts. The lepers were sacred to Francis because he saw the wounds of Christ mirrored in their sores. Homogeneity and comradeship were evident in that Francis joined them and lived with them as a brother.

To perpetuate the love which he came to know in the liminal experience with the lepers, Francis realized that it was absolutely necessary to follow the example of the poor Christ and shed everything which was an obstacle. Status and authority, represented by his garments, were barriers. To the degree that he rejected them, he remained in union with Christ and his brothers, the lepers. In the final analysis, Francis' experience was continually liminal because he was one with the poor Christ who is the ultimate "liminal man." Ω

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Leave-Taking

O far from futile longing
To grasp what can't be held;
To take and leave behind you
An unpossessing wealth.

To live with fading memories
Of a present which is past
And confront all the longings
In the consecrated task.

Then up! Be off!
And leave behind
That which you cannot lose.
Be quick! Be brave!
And know the risk
That happens when you choose.

So I must leave and never go
And finally fly the grasping.
For in this present memory
Are no answers, only asking.

Robert Barbato, O.F.M.Cap.

Il Monte Della Verna: "Lovescape Crucified"

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

*Joy fall to thee, father Francis,
Drawn to the Life that died;
With the gnarls of the nails in thee, niche of the lance,
his
Lovescape crucified
And seal of his seraph-arrival!"*

THERE IS A RANGE of mountains beginning in Colorado, and winding into the heart of New Mexico, which, upon seeing them, the early Spanish Franciscan missionaries named the Sangre de Cristos. The mountains have red gutters, and gashes and ravines which the missionaries, in the spirit of their founder father, saw as the open wounds of the bleeding Christ. Perhaps too they were thinking of that cleaved mountain so dominant in the imagination of everyone who comes near to Francis: La Verna.

La Verna is 90 miles north of Assisi, winding up, and up, and up, and up! It was a gift to the Little Poor Man by the wealthy Count Orlando, who was a loving admirer of Francis, and, as one friar, André Cirino, put it, "The Little Poor Man who wouldn't own or take anything, took a mountain." It is these seeming contradictions in Francis, his rapturous foolishness, his willingness to be obedient to every whisper of the Spirit, which make us want to abandon our lives and reputations and run follow him to Jesus. It is the light of freedom about him . . . that joy of being unbound and out of every prison (including the ones of the imagination), and the passionate way he suffered to attain that freedom—and it is the extravagance of his love which brings us to our knees (amazed at such goodness), like Peter before Jesus. Francis was always alert to the will of God, he *ached* to do the will of God . . . it was his food and drink, in imitation of his Lord. When the Spirit spoke, in words that only the heart can hear, the servant of the Lord would fly to carry out the request.

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And the Spirit whispered:

You who own nothing,
you who opened the naked earth
and drew from her your coarse shift
and simple, rude tether,
and stepped out soiled beautiful terra cotta . . .
you now take this mountain, this place so wounded
and disarrayed,
take it from the rich man who thinks he owns it,
and there you will find a place made ready for you,
nature will greet you, and I myself will
visit you there.



And so the wealthy custodian of La Verna gave to the little custodian of creatures, the mountain which has remained his.

Francis travelled to La Verna in August of 1224 for Saint Michael's Lent to bemoan his sins and to grieve over the loss of his Order. In a dream he had seen himself as a black mother hen with pink dove's feet. The little chicks were circling round and round the mother, and they were so numerous she could not gather them in.

And how she longed to gather them, but they would not come, and so mother Francis turned his face to his own Jerusalem, his own Gethsemane, and left the brood to Holy Mother the Church.

Francis' garden of agony seems as ancient as Gethsemane itself. La Verna seems older than anything I've ever seen or experienced. The legend, in fact, is that the rocks rent themselves in two at the time of the Crucifixion of Jesus. As the Temple veil ripped, as the sky darkened with the

eclipse of the sun, as the earth grieved . . . La Verna trembled, split and broke, cracked and moved itself—carved itself into an altar hewn and wounded in empathetic agony.

As Francis climbed La Verna that late summer, nature did greet him, a flock of birds flew to meet him, and a falcon befriended him and woke him in the mornings to pray, and faithful companion Leo stood guard lest any one see the coming union. Soon even Leo's curiosity got the better of him, and he edged his way through the brush and shrubbery to catch a glimpse of the father-on-fire and instead saw a broken man bowed low in a state of repetitive prayer: "Who are you, my dearest God? And what am I, your vilest little worm and useless servant?" Leo was caught, and said once he was never so terrified and had wished the ground would swallow him up rather than face the wrath of Francis. Francis merely reprimanded him, explained to him the prayer he had been repeating, and sent him back to his post with a warning not to spy any more.

Between September 14th and the 29th, the Seraph, something no one has ever seen—that glorious image of crucified and resurrected Lord all wrapped in wings which carried and covered—appeared at La Verna. In all the visions and apparitions known to us there has never been a figure like this. Isaiah and Ezekiel saw seraphs and many-winged beings, but no one has ever seen Jesus-all-one-with-Seraph. This unimaginable vision, this winged victory, all bright and burning, all love and love-making, came only to Francis and in the act of love turned beloved into Lover. Francis staggered more wounded than ever, through the rest of the two brief years he had on earth as a kind of crucifixion-resurrection himself. He was one already dead, bearing the marks of death and whittled down to the bare bones . . . blessing the earth out of which he was born as clay and reborn as fire. He was simply waiting, a soul in a skeleton cage stained red, until that evening in early October when the seraph wings gathered the spirit left inside the remains and lifted it Home. Ω

Book Reviews

Sex, Marriage, and Chastity. By William E. May. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1981. Pp. 170. Paper, \$6.50.

Reviewed by Friar Michael J. Taylor, O.F.M.Conv., who is serving his Deacon Intern year at Our Lady of Angels Parish in downtown Albany, New York.

This is a concise work that deals with exactly what the title denotes. Its author is a fine Catholic layman who has for many years written and lectured on the subject. From the outset, he quickly distinguishes himself as one who takes an "integralist" approach to sexuality and is not afraid to divorce himself from other current schools of thought concerning sexuality, such as the "separatist" school, which he feels does not adequately represent the teaching of the Catholic Church.

The author begins his overview of the integralist system of thought on page 9 and does a fine job of interweaving this model throughout the book's other material as he addresses himself to the more concrete issues of the understanding of person, marriage, genital relationships, and the married and unmarried dimensions of chastity. It is also worthwhile noting his treatment of contraception in Chapter IV.

A hidden strength of this book lies in the author's extensive notes after each chapter, in which he provides a more than adequate backing to his line of

reasoning, frequently availing himself of the teachings of Pope John Paul II.

This book would be very helpful for those who teach adult religious education courses, campus ministers, or anyone who seriously wants to update himself on its subject matter.

Into the Needle's Eye: Becoming Poor and Hopeful under the Care of a Gracious God. By William Reiser, S.J. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1984. Pp. 144, \$4.50.

Reviewed by Father Daniel A. Hurley, O.F.M., Campus Minister at St. Bonaventure University.

The title of this book is based upon the saying of Jesus recorded in Matthew's Gospel: "Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (19:24). The author emphasizes the need for the Christian to be poor if he is to attain the kingdom of God. In the course of the book he develops his understanding of "becoming poor."

In his Introduction, Father Reiser acknowledges that his book contains some ideas he has already published in articles in such periodicals as *Review for Religious and Spirituality Today* (p. 15). He has, however, reworked those ideas for inclusion in the present volume.

Father Reiser writes an interesting

book. His travels in the Far East have made him realize that God is known and worshiped by more people following the religious traditions of the East than by people following Christ. His thought stresses the need for Christians to learn the meaning of "becoming poor" in the sense of "listening respectfully and openly to the word of God which may speak to us within another religious tradition" (p. 13). For the author, "another religious tradition" means especially Buddhism and Hinduism. He lived in India for some years and while there studied and listened carefully to expressions of the Buddhist and Hindu traditions. He presents many stories from these traditions, stories which this reviewer found fascinating.

An interesting point stressed by Father Reiser is that "No route to God bypasses a people's cultural expression" (p. 29). To appreciate and to understand religious traditions and religious practices, the author maintains, a person must be aware of the culture of the people among whom these traditions and practices are found. He relies upon his personal experience with both Western and

Eastern cultures to relate the religious traditions of both to each other.

"Turning poor," Father Reiser explains, "means letting go of self for the love of God, as Jesus let go of self for love of us" (p. 13). "Only God can fill the emptiness of the human soul; without faith, religious observances will not bring us to God" (p. 41). In his development of "becoming poor," the author brings in many related topics: truth, the poor, journeying, forgiveness, grace. All these subjects enhance the explanation the author gives of his understanding of poverty. Becoming poor, pursuing our own spiritual journey, responding to God's call—all these personal activities are tied together.

Whereas the early part of the book is filled with many of the author's personal experiences of Eastern religious tradition and culture, the latter half has few references to Eastern religions. Yet, the reader's interest is sufficiently aroused in the first few chapters to carry through into the latter half of the book. Christian readers especially can profit from reading *Into the Needle's Eye*.

Books Received

- Butler, John, *TV, Movies, and Morality: A Guide for Catholics*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1984. Pp. 160, including Glossary. Paper, \$6.95.
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- Underhill, Evelyn, *The House of the Soul and Concerning the Inner Life*. Minneapolis: Winston Seabury Press, 1984. Pp. iv-151. Paper, \$6.95.