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SEPTEMBER, 1985

The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



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The CORD

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Father William Hart McNichols, S.J., S.F.O., has illustrated his own article on the Stigmata; the other drawing in this current, September, issue, is by Brother John Francis Tyrrell, F.F.S.C., who teaches in St. Joseph's School, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

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 Alf 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).

EDITORIAL



Awareness and Acceptance of Personal Poverty

We never become aware of how poor we are until we learn how rich God is in everything and how determined he is to share his richness with us. "How can we be poor," asked Georges Bernanos, "when our Lord is so rich?" But that question concerns a Providence that ultimately will not allow us to be poor in spiritual endowments, provided we meanwhile acknowledge our need. It is basically a Gospel inquiry, an evangelical question; and precisely because it is evangelical, it is a Franciscan inquiry. One of the works closest to our contemplative tradition is The Considerations on the Holy Stigmata, and in the Third Consideration (Omnibus, 1444–47) we are brought by means of question and answer to the knowledge of divine generosity and of our own emptiness. Leo, as silently as he could, walked among the trees of La Verna, saw Saint Francis in the moonlight, and heard him say repeatedly this prayer in the form of a double question:

Who are you, my dearest God? And what am I, Your vilest little worm and useless little servant?

It was the Saint's mantra of contemplative inquiry. There follow in the incident several personal queries:

The Franciscan

Who are you? (Francis' challenge to the twig-breaking intruder).

I am Brother Leo.

Why did you come here, little brother lamb? Did you see or hear anything?

Friar Gregory, of the Irish Province, is engaged in itinerant Preaching, referenciscan encounter in Southern Africa. His present case: P. O. Be Groenkloof, Pretoria 0027, Republic of South Africa.

University

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It is a perfect dialogue, native not alien, to prayer. An intrusion—the felix culpa of Leo—becomes occasion for a consideration and exposition of contemplative insights. The holy father tells Leo that two lights, corresponding to the two parts of his prayer, were shown him: knowledge of the Creator and knowledge of himself. "The grievous depths of my vileness"—that is how Francis depicts, unflinchingly, what was revealed to him on praying the question, "What am I?" And God had spoken to him in a flame. For him it was the flame of discernment, the fire that sears the veils hindering pure realization and vision.

The import of all this is remarkably clear. It is essential that we become aware of our own poverty and then accept the condition with a positive attitude. Nor are these two-awareness and acceptance-to be presumed. Most of us can without timidity talk of poverty and brokenness; but a deep and abiding consciousness of how poor we are in ourselves comes only with prayerful reflection, self-examination, and the willingness to profit spiritually from multiple human experience. This experience includes the passing of the years, the failure of our efforts, the transience of enthusiasm, and human debility in general-"the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to." Such acceptance, however, is not to be identified with neurotic morbidity or prostrating diffidence. If passage through this awareness is properly negotiated, there will emerge the only experience of poverty that ultimately matters in spiritual life. For in the end, if other forms have more or less failed us, or failed, at least, to be lasting or significant—like maintaining low standards of living, drastically reducing material requirements, breaking with securities—this vivid awareness-acceptance of personal interior poorness stands us in good stead. For after all, it is the one form of poverty that circumstances need not alter: it does not need to be adapted, updated, it remains valid for all places and times. Morevoer, we know it from source material to be authentically Franciscan. We deviate from no spiritual track when we experience it and cultivate it.

Many Franciscan persons experience this poverty: those whose "dark night" shows no bright horizon, those broken in health, those who have unexpectedly become handicapped, those drained of the energy they once had, those unrecognized, those whose ideals and projects are frustrated, those overexposed and exhausted. It can be said this experience is not specially Franciscan. No, but it is certainly as Franciscans that Franciscans experience it; it is part of the life they took on; moreover, it has its own color, and is a composition written in a "seraphic key."

The Gospels point up this fruitful emptiness. Jesus, for instance, tells the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:10) that if she "knew the gift of God" she would be asking for life-giving water instead of thinking it a big thing to

have an earthly drink to offer. And the emptying of the seed's vitality, its impoverishment, becomes the condition of its fruitfulness (Jn. 12:24).

In the Considerations Francis tells Leo that after his contemplative inquiry, focused on "What am I?" he was bidden by God to make him three offerings. He humbly complained he had nothing except what he had received. And then three mysterious "gold coins" turn up on his person and he presents them. These are seen to represent obedience, poverty, and chastity, but in their gift aspect: gifts with which God provides us that we may have something to offer him.

Solidarity with the poor in their poverty is not a normal priority with secular power-politics. Despite great scientific achievements, the rich states have shown an astonishing impotence when it comes to aiding the chronically poor, or even victims of occasional disasters, e.g., the African famines. Complacent members of the Church can also be blind to what the poor really need. It is hard to evade the conviction that, admitting the need to hand out bread and medical supplies, say, in the short run, the only remedy that brings lasting wholeness to brokenness in the long run is a solidarity with people in need that springs from a keen awareness of our own interior poverty. All of this attitude is a vital ingredient of evangelical discipleship, and quite naturally, therefore, of every expression of Franciscanism.

- frien Tegdy Shenshan

Contemplation

Christ's love warms docile hearts at break of dawn As humble people plod their way to church. His love bids me to pray, then carry on; His love is morning strength and brave desire; Christ's love fills docile hearts with joy and fire. His love can fuel my fainting soul to fly On wings seraphic where the eagles soar; Christ's love is surcease in my sorrow; His love is what I seek for, for tomorrow.

Joyce Finnigan, O.F.M.

Brother Francis Sends Greetings

BERARD DOERGER, O.F.M.

AMONG THE WRITINGS OF Saint Francis that we are fortunate to possess, there are ten Letters that Francis wrote or dictated to various groups or individuals. This article is an attempt to study these ten Letters as a unit, examining the following points: (A) what the author of these Letters tells us about himself in his Letters, (B) who are the recipients of the Letters; (C) what are the reasons or motives that impelled Francis to write these Letters; and (D) what are the central themes in the Letters.

Although we shall study the ten Letters together and cite portions from some of them, it is suggested that the reader peruse the ten Letters individually (they are easily available in several editions of the Poverello's writings; our own citations are from the Armstrong-Brady edition—see inside front cover of this issue).

A. What Francis Tells us about Himself in His Letters

IN SEVEN OF THE TEN Letters of Francis that we possess, Francis introduces himself in the opening lines of greeting. I believe he reveals a lot about himself in these greetings; so let us begin by listening to some of them:

- \dots Brother Francis, your servant and little one in the Lord God, sends a greeting \dots [EpCust I; AB 52].
- . . . Brother Francis, the least of the servants of God, sends greetings and holy peace in the Lord [EpCust II; AB 54].
- ... Brother Francis, their servant and subject, offers homage and reverence, true peace from heaven and sincere love in the Lord [EpFid II; AB 67].

Brother Francis, your little and despicable servant in the Lord God, sends wishes of health and peace to all of you [EpReg; AB 77].

Brother Francis sends his wishes of health [EpAnt; AB 79].

. . . your Brother Francis, health and peace! [EpLeo; AB 47].

Father Berard Doerger, O.F.M., is Pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Cuba, New Mexico. Of related interest to our readers is a study of the first version of the Letter to the Faithful (also known as the Volterra Letter) by Father Thaddeus Horgan, S.A., in **The Cord** 29:6, 166-75; another study of that Letter is scheduled for publication in the near future.

Let those who keep this writing with them and observe it know that they will be blessed by the Lord God.

Francis of Assisi was "Brother" Francis because he had in common with all other creatures one Father in heaven who had created them all out of his goodness and love. All creatures, then, especially other human beings, had not only the same Father as he, but also the same Brother: Jesus, who "redeemed us and washed us in his most precious Blood."

Francis not only referred to himself as "Brother Francis," but he also wanted his followers to be called the "Order of Lesser Brothers." He also, as we know, addressed all creatures as "brothers" or, less often, as "sisters." There were "Brother Sun," "Sister Moon," "Brother Wind," "Sister Water," "Brother Birds," "Brother Rabbits," "Brother Flowers," and on and on. There were the "Christian Brothers," the lepers; the "Brother Robbers"; his "Brother Body" (also called "Brother Ass"); and there was even his "Brother Lady Jacoba." When we consider all this, it is not surprising to find it stated in an early chronicle of the Order that "the other brothers called Francis with particular affection the Brother" (Chron. of Jordan of Giordano, 17).

2. The Author Is a "Lesser" Brother. So, it is "Brother Francis" who is writing these letters as a brother to his other brothers and sisters in the family of Jesus and his Father in heaven. And how does this Brother who is sending his "greetings" and his "peace" and "wishes of health" and "sincere love in the Lord" further characterize himself? He is the "servant and subject" and the "little one in the Lord"; he is, indeed, "the least of the servants of God," "a little and despicable servant," "a worthless and weak man."

Francis is not writing as a superior to subjects, then, or as a teacher to his pupils or as a master to his followers; or even as a father to his children. He writes as a servant and subject of others. He is a worthless

and weak man, a little one in the Lord God. It is Francis, the "Lesser" Brother, who is writing.

B. The Recipients of the Letters

WHE ARE THE recipients of these letters of Francis? To whom is he sending his greetings and wishes of peace and health and sincere love in the Lord? The titles of the Letters as they are presented in the various collections pretty well answer this question. But let us note a few of the details that Francis gives in the letters the melves and some facts that we know from other sources. 1. Brother Leo. Francis is writing to his "son," Brother Leo, who was his close companion during his last years, the only one who saw the wound in Francis' side while he was alive (2Cel 138), and to whom Francis willed his tunic at his death (2Cel 50). Leo was a priest and the confessor of Saint Francis and acted also as his secretary and scribe on occasion and as his nurse in times of illness (EpLeo; AB 47). 2. Brother Anthony. Francis is writing to "Brother Anthony," the great miracle worker of Padua and the first teacher of theology in the Order. Francis addresses Anthony not only as his "Brother," but as "my bishop," because of the great respect he had for this former Augustinian (EpAnt; AB 79).

- 3. The Clergy. Francis is writing to the "clerics" of the Church, among whom he lists himself, for Francis was of course a deacon (EpCler; AB 49).
- 4. The Superiors of the Order. Francis is also addressing himself to all the "custodians of the Friars Minor," i.e., the superiors or ministers to whom he had entrusted the governance of the Order (EpCust I [AB 52]; EpCust II [AB 54]; EpMin [AB 74]).
- 5. All His Lesser Brothers. Brother Francis is writing also to "all the reverend and much beloved brothers of his entire Order," from the Minister General to "all the simple and obedient brothers, from first to last" (EpOrd; AB 55). Every one of his children and brothers is important to Francis.
- 6. All Civil Officials. Francis is writing to "all mayors and consuls, magistrates and rulers throughout the world, and to everyone who may receive these letters" (EpReg; AB 77).

All in the World. Finally, this Brother Francis is writing to all men and women, clergy and laity, "to all who live in the whole world," to "all those who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with their whole strength and love their neighbors as themselves" (EpFid I [AB 63]; EpFid II [AB 67]). There is no one who is outside the scope of Francis' interest and concern, no one he does not desire to reach through his apostolate of letter writing.

C. The Motives or Reasons for the Letters

NEXT WE WANT to consider some of the motives or reasons that prompted Francis to send his greetings and to write his letters.

1. Francis' Inability to Visit His Friars and Others in Person. The main reason why Francis decided to write most of the letters that we have seems to be that during the years when he wrote them (1219–1226), he was sick and unable to visit his friars and other groups and hence unable to speak and preach to them in person. So he wrote them instead.

Francis himself brings out this reason in the second version of the Letter to All the Faithful (AB 67), where he says:

Since I am the servant of all, I am obliged to serve all and to administer to them the fragrant words of my Lord. Therefore, on reflecting that, since I cannot visit each one of you in person because of the infirmity and weakness of my body, I have proposed to set before you in this present letter and message the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Word of the Father, and the words of the Holy Spirit, which are spirit and life.

- 2. Francis' Desire to Spread the Gospel Message to as Many as Possible. We see in the words just cited from the Letter to the Faithful another motive in the mind and heart of Francis for writing his letters: he considered himself a servant to all, and as a servant Francis felt obliged to serve and administer to others the words of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit. This letter writing was part of his apostolate of spreading the word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Francis did not, however, consider that he was writing his message or words to others, as much as simply passing on in written form the words and message of Christ and the Holy Spirit which had been made known to him. His letters were an instrument through which the Gospel could be spread to others.
- 3. Francis' Desire to Participate in the Church's Eucharistic Crusade. A third and more specific reason that lay behind many of the letters of Francis seems to be his desire to participate in the Eucharistic Crusade which had been initiated in the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and which had later been given further impetus by an encyclical and decree of Pope Honorius III (1219), which encyclical accentuated reverence and respect for the Blessed Sacrament.

Since the Fourth Lateran Council and this encyclical of Honorius seem to have had a great influence on much of the material in the Letters of Francis, we might add a few more words about that influence.

The Fourth Lateran Council (the twelfth Ecumenical Council of the Church) opened in 1215. Francis himself, as a major superior of an

Order, is thought to have attended at least some of its sessions. It is considered one of the greater Ecumenical Councils of the Church and the most important before Trent. Since it dealt with many areas of the Church's life, it is described as a renewal council. It announced a new Crusade to recover the Holy Land; it investigated some heresies, and it was very much concerned with the renewal and moral well being of the Church at large. At the end of its sessions, the Fathers (more than 400 bishops and archbishops and more than 800 abbots, priors, and superiors of religious Orders) drew up seventy canons to express their concerns about the various areas mentioned above. Of those seventy canons, the following seem particularly relevant to some of the themes found in Francis' Letters:

- Canon 17 contains a severe denunciation of abuses in the celebration of the Mass and other divine services.
- Canon 19 deals with the proper use of churches.
- Canon 20 treats of the custody of the Eucharist and decrees that the Eucharist must be kept in a tabernacle under lock and key.
- Canon 21 speaks of the requirements of annual confession and the obligation of receiving Communion at least once during the Easter season.

There are other interesting Canons among the seventy enacted by the Council, such as the prohibition of the blessing of hot water and hot iron for judicial ordeals (canon 18) and the prohibition against having commerce with usurious Jews (canon 67); but most of these other canons do not show any particular influence on Francis' Letters.

The Fourth Lateran Council had been summoned by Pope Innocent III, who had approved orally Francis' first simple rule for his Order in the year 1209 or 1210. But Innocent died at the end of 1216 and did not have much time to put into effect the decrees of the Lateran Council. Honorius III, his successor, had to implement them, and one of his efforts in doing so was the encyclical letter he wrote in 1219–1220. This papal letter urged the bishops to put into effect in their dioceses the decisions of the Council, one of which was, as we have seen, that greater care and reverence be shown towards the Holy Eucharist, concerning which there were apparently many abuses in those days.

Francis was in the Holy Land when this encyclical was promulgated, inspired to go there by the Lateran Council's announcement of the new Crusade mentioned above. When he returned, he undoubtedly heard immediately about the Pope's encyclical and Eucharistic crusade, and decided also to participate in this crusade by his Letters to the friars and other groups. Although Francis never mentions explicitly in his Letters the encyclical or the Pope's "crusade," an examination of the Latin style

of the encyclical and that of Francis' Letters indicates that he is sometimes quoting from the encyclical of Honorius III.

4. Francis' Concern for Individuals. A final motive of Francis in writing some of his Letters was his concern for some individual friars and their problems. We see this motive apparent especially in the short letter to Brother Leo (AB 47), in his Letter to a Minister (AB 74), and in the Letter to Anthony (AB 79).

D. The Principal Themes of the Letters

WE COME NOW to the real point of this article: viz., the principal themes or topics found in Francis' Letters.

1. The Holy Eucharist. The most oft-repeated and most extensively treated of these topics is that of the Eucharist. We have already spoken of the historical background that had so important an influence on his concern and treatment of the subject. Here let us divide our own reflections on the subject along these lines: (a) the theology of the Eucharist, (b) the reception of the Eucharist, (c) the care and respect for the Holy Eucharist, and (d) respect for priests.

For Francis' theology of the Eucharist, one must give especial attention to two passages from his Letters: EpFid II.4-15 (AB 67) and EpOrd 26-29 (AB 58), to which one must add a passage from his first Admonition, which some consider as possibly part of a Letter of Francis (8-22; AB 26-27). Although these passages cannot be cited in full here because of space limitations, we can at least summarize the main points involved.

- The Eucharist, first of all, continues the self-emptying of the Word of God. This emptying or *kenosis* began in the Word's taking flesh in the womb of Mary; it was continued by his choice of a poor life, together with his Mother; and it reached its culmination in Christ's offering of himself as a sacrifice and oblation on the altar of the Cross, which oblation the Eucharist recalls and makes present. Through the Eucharist, Jesus continues to do the Father's will; he continues to empty himself for us.
- In the Eucharist, too, Christ the Lord of the universe is present among us on the altar and in the hands of the priest.
- This presence of Christ in the Eucharist is a great sign and gesture of the humility of the Lord of the universe and of the total giving of himself to us
- Our response to the mystery of the Eucharist should be to humble ourselves as well, and to hold nothing back in giving ourselves totally to Christ, who gives himself totally to us.
- The Incarnation of the Word is repeated daily in the Holy Eucharist when Jesus comes down from the bosom of the Father upon the altar

(note in Francis' words the beautiful parallel between the coming of the Word from the royal throne into the womb of Mary and his coming from the Father's bosom into the hands of the priest).

• Just as the Apostles needed eyes of faith to believe that the Jesus they saw with their bodily eyes was God, so do we need eyes of faith to believe that the bread and wine we see with bodily eyes is the most holy Body and Blood of the living Christ.

• Through his presence in the Eucharist, the Lord remains with us always as he promised he would do.

On the need and manner of receiving the Holy Eucharist, we find only two citations in the Letters. The first is in the Letter to All the Faithful, where Francis writes:

We must also confess all our sins to a priest and receive from him the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who does not eat his Flesh and does not drink his Blood cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Yet let him eat and drink worthily, since he who receives unworthily eats and drinks judgment to himself, not recognizing—that is, not discerning—the Body of the Lord. Moreover, let us perform worthy fruits of penance. And let us love our neighbors as ourselves. And if there is anyone who does not wish to love them as himself, at least let him do no harm to them, but rather do good [EpFid II.22-27 {AB 68-69}].

The other citation is in the Letter to the Rulers, where Francis encourages them to "put aside all care and preoccupation and receive with joy the most Holy Body and the most Holy Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in holy remembrance of Him" (1–6; AB 78). Note the phrases "receive with joy" and "in remembrance of Him": the Eucharist is a living memorial of Christ's humility and self-giving, and this remembrance of Christ's total love should bring us great joy. It should also lead us, as the previous citation brought out, "to love our neighbors as ourselves."

Regarding care and respect for the Holy Eucharist, Francis suggests quite a few concrete measures. Practically his entire Letter to the Clergy is devoted to this concern. In the first paragraph he mentions some of the abuses of the day regarding the care of the Eucharist: the sad state of chalices, corporals, and altar linens; leaving the Eucharist in dirty places; carrying It about in a miserable manner; receiving It unworthily, and administering It to others without discretion.

Then in the second paragraph, Francis gives the positive recommendation that "wherever the most holy Body of our Lord Jesus Christ has been unlawfully housed and neglected, let it be removed from that place and deposited and locked in a precious location." This was one of the prescriptions of the Fourth Lateran Council.

In the Letter to the Entire Order we find the general recommendation

to all the brothers "to show all possible reverence and honor to the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ" (AB 56). Further on in that same Letter, Francis urges his brothers "to guard the sacred vessels and other liturgical appointments so that we may impress upon ourselves the loftiness of our Creator and our subjection to him" (AB 59).

It is the First Letter to the Custodians, however, that contains the largest number of specific proposals regarding respect and care for the Holy Eucharist:

I beg you, with all that is in me and more, that, when it is appropriate and you judge it profitable, you humbly beg the clergy to revere above everything else the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and his holy written words which consecrate his Body. The chalices, corporals, appointments of the altar, and everything which pertains to the sacrifice must be of precious material. And if the most holy Body of the Lord is very poorly reserved in any place, it should be placed in a precious location under lock and kept according to the mandate of the Church with discretion. In a similar way the written words of the Lord, whenever they are found in an improper place, should be gathered together and kept in a becoming place.

And in every sermon which you give, admonish the people concerning the need of penance, and tell them that no one can be saved unless he receive the Body and Blood of the Lord. And when It is sacrificed upon the altar by the priest and carried to any place, let all the people, on bended knee, praise, glorify, and honor the Lord God living and true [2–7; AB 53].

Why does Francis urge so strongly this great respect and care for the Eucharist? In the Letter to the Clergy he points out that "in this world we have and see nothing corporally of the Most High except his Body and Blood"—and, he adds,—"the words through which we have been made and have been redeemed from death to life" (AB 50). And in the Letter to the Entire Order there is a somewhat lengthy passage warning the brothers who are priests about their punishment if they show disrespect for the Eucharist. Francis then continues, pointing out the great honor and dignity of a priest, which he compares to the role of Mary and of John the Baptist, and of the tomb of Christ:

Listen, my brothers: If the blessed Virgin is so honored, as it is right, since she carried him in her most holy womb; if the blessed Baptist trembled and did not dare to touch the holy head of God; if the tomb in which he lay for some time is so venerated, how holy, just, and worthy must be the person who touches him with his hands, receives him in his heart and mouth, and offers him to others to be received [AB 57].

We conclude our treatment of the Eucharistic theme in the Letters of Francis with a passage urging respect for priests, not because of their per-



sonal holiness or lack of it, but because of their office and their administration of the most holy Body and Blood of Christ and of his holy words:

We must also visit churches frequently and venerate and show respect for the clergy, not so much for them personally if they are sinners, but by reason of their office and their administration of the most holy Body and Blood of Christ which they sacrifice upon the altar and receive and administer to others. And let all of us firmly realize that no one can be saved except through the holy words and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which the clergy pronounce, proclaim and minister. And they alone must administer them, and not others [EpFid II.33–35; AB 69].

A similar admonition regarding respect for the clergy is found in Francis' 16th Admonition.

2. The Written Words of Our Lord. We move on now to another theme which we find mentioned several times in the Letters: the Sacred Scriptures or "written words of our Lord," as Francis usually calls the Scriptures. Let us cite briefly some of the Saint's references to this theme and then draw some conclusions:

All of us who are clerics should be aware of the great sin and ignorance which some people have toward the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and his most holy written words which consecrate his Body. We know that it cannot become his Body without first being consecrated by his Word. For in this world we have and see nothing corporally of the Most High except his Body and Blood, and the words through which we have been made and have been redeemed from death to life. . . . Even his sacred written words are sometimes left to be trampled underfoot; for the person who does not have the spirit does not perceive the things of God. . . . Likewise wherever the written words of the Lord may be found in unbecoming places, they are to be collected and kept in a place that is becoming [EpCler; AB 49–50].

I beg you, with all that is in me and more, that, when it is appropriate and you judge it profitable, you humbly beg the clergy to revere above everything else the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and his holy written words which consecrate his Body. . . . In a similar way the written words of the Lord, whenever they are found in an improper place, should be gathered together and kept in a becoming place [EpCust I; AB 53].

Therefore, I admonish all my brothers and encourage them in Christ that wherever they come upon the written words of God they venerate them so far as they are able. And if they are not well kept or if they lie about carelessly in some place, let them, inasmuch as it concerns them, collect them and preserve them, thus honoring the Lord in the word which he spoke. For many things are made holy by the words of God and in the power of the words of Christ the Sacrament of the altar is celebrated [EpOrd 35–37; AB 59].

And let all of us firmly realize that no one can be saved except through the holy words and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which the clergy pronounce, proclaim, and minister [EpFid II; AB 69].

What conclusions can we draw from these passages on the written word of God?

First, we note the close connection that Francis usually makes between the Holy Eucharist and the Word of God. He comes close to putting the holy word of God in the Scriptures on an even footing with the Holy Eucharist (which Vatican II also does in the Constitution on Divine Revelation, ¶21)

Secondly, Francis several times refers to the *power* of the words of God in the Scriptures. In the second version of the Letter to all the Faithful, he says that "no one can be saved except through the holy words and the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which the clergy pronounce." In the Letter to the Clergy he proclaims that through these words of God "we have been made and have been redeemed from death to life." And several times he states that it is "in the power of the words of Christ that the Sacrament of the Altar is celebrated," or, more succinctly: "His holy written words consecrate his Body."

Thirdly, Francis recommends concern and respect for the written words of God: "Wherever the written words of the Lord may be found in unbecoming places, they are to be collected and kept in a place that is becoming," thus "honoring the Lord in the words which he spoke," as Francis adds in the Letter to the Entire Order.

3. The Divine Office. A third topic we would like to note is Francis' advice on how to recite the Divine Office or, as we call it today, the Liturgy of the Hours. The Minister General, Francis says in his Letter to the Entire Order,

should insist that the clerics say the Office with devotion before God, not concentrating on the melody of the voice but on the harmony of the mind, so that the voice may blend with the mind, and the mind be in harmony with God. Let them do this in such a way that they may please God through purity of heart and not charm the ears of the people with sweetness of voice. For I promise to observe these things strictly as God may give me grace, and I shall pass these things on to the brothers who are with me so they may be observed in the Office and in all other things established in the Rule [EpOrd 41-43; AB 59-60].

4. Brotherly Concern and Compassion. The theme of fraternal concern and compassion is especially evident throughout the Letter to a Minister, which poignantly shows Francis' concern and compassion both towards those who sin and towards those called to minister to the sinners. Space limitations restrict our citation from this Letter to just a few sentences:

To Brother N., minister: May the Lord bless you. I speak to you, as I can, concerning the state of your soul. You should accept as a grace all those things which deter you from loving the Lord God and whoever has become an impediment to you, whether they are brothers or others, even if they lay hands on you [1–2; AB 74].

And by this I wish to know if you love the Lord God and me, his servant and yours—if you have acted in this manner: that is, there should not be any brother in the world who has sinned, however much he may have possibly sinned, who, after he has looked into your eyes, would go away

without having received your mercy, if he is looking for mercy. And if he were not to seek mercy, you should ask him if he wants mercy. And if he should sin thereafter a thousand times before your very eyes, love him more than me so that you may draw him back to the Lord. Always be merciful to brothers such as these [9–11; AB 75].

Also the short letter Francis wrote to Brother Leo shows this brotherly concern for each individual—here his close friend, Leo:

Brother Leo, your Brother Francis health and peace! I speak to you, my son, as a mother. I place all the words which we spoke on the road in this phrase, briefly and as advice. And afterwards, if it is necessary for you to come to me for counsel, I say this to you: In whatever way it seems best to you to please the Lord God and to follow his footprints and his poverty, do this with the blessing of God and my obedience. And if you believe it necessary for the well being of your soul, or to find comfort, and you wish to come to me, Leo, come! [AB 47-48].

5. Approval for Study in the Order. We should also mention the theme of approval for study in the Order, a theme found in the short letter of Francis to Saint Anthony of Padua. Anthony had previously been an Augustinian monk and had received quite a bit of theological training prior to his entrance into the Franciscan Order. Some of the other brothers wanted Anthony to teach them theology, but he refused unless Francis gave specific permission for this. Such permission was presumably requested by Anthony in a letter to Francis, and we have Francis' reply:

Brother Francis sends his wishes of health to Brother Anthony, my bishop. It pleases me that you teach sacred theology to the brothers, as long as—in the words of the Rule—you "do not extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion" with study of this kind [AB 79].

In this short letter Francis calls Anthony his "bishop" out of respect for Anthony's learning. He also gives Anthony permission to teach the other brothers sacred theology, but he makes one important requirement: viz., that the general admonition in the Rule of 1223 regarding the work of the friars also be applied to study: this study must not extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion.

6. Praise of God. Francis' own lyrical praise of the Lord, as well as his constant exhortation to others to join him in that praise, pervades his writings. Let us look at some representative passages:

And you must announce and preach his praise to all peoples in such a manner that at every hour and whenever the bells are rung, praise, glory, and honor are given to the all-powerful God throughout the earth [EpCust I.8; AB 53].

Give praise to him since he is good and exalt him by your deeds, for he has sent you into the entire world for this reason: that in word and deed you may give witness to his voice and bring everyone to know that there is no one who is all-powerful except him [EpOrd 8; AB 56].

Let us love God, therefore, and adore him with a pure heart and a pure mind because he who seeks this above all else has said: "The true worshipers will adore the Father in spirit and in truth." And let us praise him and pray to him day and night, saying: Our Father who art in heaven, since we should pray always and never lose heart [EpFid II.19-21; AB 68].

And you should manifest such honor to the Lord among the people entrusted to you that every evening an announcement be made by a town crier or some other signal that praise and thanks may be given by all people to the all-powerful Lord God. And if you do not do this, know that you must render an account before the Lord your God, Jesus Christ, in the day of judgment [EpReg 7-8; AB 78].

7. Preservation and Duplication of Francis' Letters. A final theme that we can find in almost all the Letters of Francis is his exhortation to the recipients of the Letters to preserve them and to make copies of them and spread them around. This concern of Francis about his Letters is not, I believe, evidence that he considered them so great and significant in themselves; rather it seems to me to reveal his zeal to have as many as possible become holy and love and praise God, have great reverence for and devotion to the Holy Eucharist and the Word of God, etc. Francis also gives a special blessing to all those who preserve and disseminate his Letters:

Those who make copies of this writing so that it may be better observed should know that they will be blessed by the Lord God [EpCler 15; AB 51].

And my brothers who are custodians to whom this writing shall come and who have copies made to keep for themselves and to give to the brothers . . . should know that they have the blessing of the Lord God as well as my own [EpCust I.9; AB 53].

Make many copies of the other letter containing an invitation to proclaim the praises of God among the peoples and in the piazzas which I am sending to you to give to mayors, consuls, and rulers. And propagate them with great diligence among those to whom they should be given [EpCust II.6-7; AB 54].

... they should have this writing with them, put it into practice, and carefully preserve it [EpOrd 47; AB 60].

Keep this writing with you until Pentecost, that it may be better observed, when you will be there with your brothers [EpMin 21; AB 76].

Let those who keep this writing with them and observe it know that they will be blessed by the Lord God [EpReg 9: AB 78].

Summary and Conclusion

THIS CONCLUDES OUR STUDY of the ten Letters that we find among the authentic writings of Saint Francis of Assisi. We do know of other letters that Francis wrote from references in Celano's *Lives* and other sources; but we do not have the manuscripts of these other letters.

In these ten letters of Francis that we have investigated, we have seen how the Saint revealed himself as "Brother Francis," the servant of God and of those to whom he is writing. He is a "little one," a "worthless and weak man," truly a "Lesser Brother"!

The motives that prompted Francis to write his Letters also make evident to us other aspects of the character of this little servant of God and lesser brother. First, he is one who is extremely loyal to the Catholic Church and to the Bishop of Rome—one who wishes to promote to the best of his ability the desires and interests of the Pope and of the Church. And even more importantly, as this "servant in the Lord God," he wants through his Letters to be an instrument by which the Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be proclaimed to others.

The contents of the Letters also reveal to us some of the great concerns and theological insights of Francis concerning the Holy Eucharist, the written and spoken Word of God, the Divine Office, the praise of God by all the people, etc. Francis is greatly concerned that all people love and praise God and that all realize and respect the great gifts of the Eucharist and the Bible in which God and Christ remain present with us. And he is most desirous that all lead lives of penance, confess their sins and lead good lives, so that one day they may, with "Brother Francis," receive eternal happiness in heaven (cf. especially EpFid II [AB 68–73] for the development of this theme). Francis closes his longest Letter, the Letter to the Entire Order, with a prayer. We shall use that prayer to close our study:

Almighty, eternal, just, and merciful God, grant us in our misery the grace to do for you alone what we know you want us to do, and always to desire what pleases you. Thus, inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened, and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit, may we be able to follow in the footprints of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And, by your grace alone, may we make our way to you, Most High, who live and rule in perfect Trinity and simple Unity, and are glorified God all-powerful forever and ever. Amen. [EpOrd 50–52; AB 61]. Ω

Sun's Shard!

I placed a flower in a vase well hidden, in veneration of where a life was remade in a time suspended moment where a voice spoke a word of pleading with open hands bleeding from love's double edged sword.

The meaning of it all still a fragment, shard of crystal clear glass.

Damiano is quiet and still as I leave it undisturbed my contented will unbreached and unperturbed

As I turn in the frame of the door, the flickering red light echoes a name and I sight somewhere the same prismed crystal sharded door answering my silent prayer.

Séamus Mulholland, O.F.M.

Francis and the Stigmata:

"I Hold out My Hand and My Heart Will Be in It"

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

YOU COULD SAY THAT Francis' wounding began long before La Verna, and that the stigmata were the final flowering of the seeds planted as far back into his youth at Spoleto. The voice at Spoleto, it seems to me, was the first wound we know of in Francis' life. The voice of God wounds as it inhabits us, and once one has the experience of this voice, there is no escape, or comfort, or hiding in that place called doubt where the very existence of God is vague—which allows the soul to believe far more in this world.

The voice at Spoleto had that commanding yet fostering quality of the book of Hosea where the Lord says, "When Israel was a child I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son." How can this liberation from bondage not be seen as a wounding? We so long to be attached to and one with the things and values of the world, and are led kicking and screaming from the very things that would ultimately destroy us, as we try to appropriate or consume the gift of Creation. And so at Spoleto the Lord poses a most simple question which is so full, so mythic and haunting in its expansive, reverberating quality, that it calls up the question posed to the zealous Paul who collapsed under its weight enroute to Damascus: "Saul, why do you persecute me?" And Francis, "Why do you serve the servant and not the king?" Just as Paul was left blind and stumbling thereafter, so also we see Francis reeling as this question echoed over and over again inside him, giving him no comfort, no peace, and gradually burning away Francesco di Pietro Bernardone.

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

It is in this haunted and dazed state that we see Francesco bereft of the solace of created beauty and mechanically going through the motions as the "king of the revels," or the king of the feasts. Fortini paints a medieval miniature worthy of the Très Riches Heures du Duke de Berry, or more recently Zeffirelli's sumptuous feast in Romeo and Juliet, where the lovers first meet and they speak to one another through the genius of Shakespeare in lush soliloquies which join what we have always at bottom believed to be totally contradictory elements: the language of the spiritual (the pilgrim at the shrine) and that of erotic love (the sudden overpowering attraction of one person for another). It is in such an atmosphere that we find Francesco weakened in his pursuit of the erotic, and even the visible, while the pilgrim in him seems to be taking over. Paradoxically he is crowned in roses and the second searing takes place as he envisions the Lady Poverty and the wound grows larger; something is dying, something is growing, and the pilgrim stumbles toward the tomb of Saint Peter for an answer.

Our Father Francis asks that we show our own passion, our vulnerability, and thus make visible the continuing Passion of Jesus Christ for ourselves and the world to see.

As a pilgrim Francesco finds his wound beginning to fester, to become sore, as John of the Cross tells us in the commentary to his own poem on the Canticle of Canticles. The wounding causes such pain that only action toward God can give hope of healing. The actions for Francesco include the kissing of a leper and the exchange of clothes with a beggar. And with that exchange the Franciscan habit could have been born, resembling nothing more than the rags of a street person or a tramp—a mystical habit for fools.

Francesco's wound was a call in itself, as we hear in the Song of Songs, a kind of hypnotic invitation which leaves one desperate and drunk with pain and searching. The bride in the song is wounded and left to wander, asking everyone from the circle of bridesmaids to the night watchmen: "Where is the one who wounds and leaves?" The wound is violent too, in that while the stricken soul wanders, the wound is burning away the "old

person," and this is a time of eclipse of all light. In this darkness Francesco wanders into San Damiano, and the voice of Spoleto now

speaks through an ancient work of art, made with human hands: the image of the crucified One. For the first time the voice gives what appears to be something concrete which announces a rest from the agonizingly dark pilgrimage. Is it any wonder that Francesco rushes out to rebuild the church?

I could trace the wound throughout Francesco's early life as he is pelted by rocks and rejected—the subject of violence and ridicule—but these seem like nothing compared to the wound rapidly consuming the inner man.

We know what form the pilgrim's life eventually took as he left father



and mother and again uncovered "the voice" in the Gospel of Matthew in the church of Saint Nicholas. It is in this book of the Gospels that the pilgrim finds his only home; Francesco di Pietro Bernardone falls forever from Francis of Assisi like the shedding of an outer skin. This is the soul that finally mounts La Verna, naked in a suspended state of the tenth station of the cross, and somewhere between the feast of the Triumph of the Cross and Michaelmas Day, the Seraph which has been continually carving out an invisible design shows us all the outside of the inside: Francis' wounds become visible. And although Francis made a point of covering this blest individuality on his deathbed, and telling us to trust in God to find our own way, our Father has bequeathed to us the exhortation to show our own wounds. Our Father Francis asks that we show our own passion, our vulnerability, and thus make visible the continuing Passion of Jesus Christ for ourselves and the world to see. Ω

Joy, Remember Me

Joy,

in perfect peace dances on the blade which impales immaculate hearts.

This done where the One creates, enfleshes, breathes within the very walls we call our selves.

It happens, and the gift is only a Giver's shadow, a corpse beatified.

Remember me:

We are chosen, we do not choose whom we are to love and die for.

Carol Carstens, S.F.O.

The Finding of the Body of Saint Clare

September 23, 1850

SISTER MARY CLARE, P.C.C.

BEFORE THE FINAL unification of Italy on July 2, 1871, there had been a long period of civil and spiritual upheaval. Even the most remote provinces had become restive under the conflicting forces of French, Austrian, and Spanish dominion, compounded by the vested interests of the papal states. In the mid-nineteenth century the revolution toward a free, independent, and united kingdom was in danger of being turned into a tool of destruction by the fanatic forces for freedom. In 1848, the socalled Republic had set up its government in Assisi and was threatening to suppress all religious houses. During the first week of Lent an inventory was taken of all the goods of the Monastery of Saint Clare, and the nuns were about to be dispersed when the French troops arrived and the short-lived regime of the Republic collapsed. On October 30 of that same year, Sister Clare Columba Angeli, at thirty years of age, was elected abbess of Saint Clare's Monastery. Deeply moved by these events, the young abbess resolved to take definite measures to rediscover the blessed body of Saint Clare so that a true symbol of peace and unity might be given to her suffering country.

On August 11, 1253, at dawn, the gentle heart of Saint Clare had stopped. The next day, on August 12, her body was carried to San Giorgio in the city where the body of her Father Saint Francis had rested from 1226 until its solemn transferral to the new church built in his honor in 1230. On October 3, 1260, a similar honor was accorded to Saint Clare when her body was exhumed from its temporary place of burial and transferred to the new church of Saint Clare, built on the same site. On account of the vicissitudes of the times the body was buried deep beneath the high altar, a simple inscription marking the exact spot: Hic jacet corpus S. Clarae Virginis. A small lamp was lit and placed there. The abbess, Mother Benedicta, and the nuns who had, in 1260, made the definitive move from San Damiano to their new Monastery of Saint Clare, and the nuns of each succeeding generation kept all of these things in their hearts.

Sister Mary Clare writes from the Poor Clare Monastery of Mary, Mother of the Church, in Alexandria, VA.

By 1849, Mother Clare Columba was not the only interested person intent upon the finding of the precious body of Saint Clare. Formal requests from around the world had been addressed to the Congregation of Rites. The nuns' confessor, Father Giuseppe Morichelli, was an especially ardent supporter of the project. The felicitous moment arrived when Cardinal Pietro Marini, Prefect of the Congregation, visited Assisi for the feast of the Stigmata of Saint Francis. After the celebrations he visited the nuns and was innocently sipping coffee in their garden, discussing with them and Father Morichelli the event of the finding of the body of Saint Francis in 1818, beneath the high altar of the Basilica. Father Morichelli, probably cued by a glance from the abbess, recognized the opportunity and countercharged: "Your Eminence, as the sun has been manifested, is it not necessary that now the moon may also be revealed?"

The "candle of Umbria" [was] at last placed on its candlestick to give light to the whole household of the Church.

Cardinal Marini was convinced of the timeliness of such an event, but permission to begin the excavation was not given until August 6 of the following year. The work was begun on August 23, 1850, and on account of the disturbed times or for other reasons, was done in the secrecy of night. In the presence of the Bishop's Chancellor, Luigi Alexandri, the excited Father Morichelli and a few other witnesses, the master mason, Mark Rondini, removed the massive base of the altar under which it was hoped that a passage would be found. It was not found. And so Master Rondini began to dig.

Eight days and two excavations later, the tomb in which the body of Saint Clare had been placed six centuries earlier was discovered. The tomb was a conical vault constructed of stones and a persevering thirteenth century cement, with its highest point reaching up six feet. There were four evenly spaced pillars supporting the arches, about six feet apart. Within the vault and to one side a stone coffin had been placed.

According to one source, the body of Saint Clare was buried nine feet below the high altar; to another, fifteen feet. We know that there were two excavations, the first beneath the altar and the second about six feet in front of it. It can be conjectured that Rondini began to strike the top of the vault at nine feet. Having surmised the approximate width of the vault, he decided to make a second excavation to reach the opening. This, finally completed on the night of August 30, brought him to the depth of fifteen feet, which would allow for the height of six feet quoted above. The full span of the opening appeared. At this point Rondini and his assistants stopped chipping and began to clear the debris in preparation for the official opening of the tomb by the Bishop of Assisi, Monsignor Luigi Landi Vittori.

On September 15, 16, and 17, a triduum was preached to the jubilant populace of Assisi by Don Dominic Zanelli, secretary to Cardinal Marini. He praised the virtues of Saint Clare and prepared the people for the formal recovery of her body which would be celebrated on September 23, the day on which the recovery continues to be commemorated according to the Roman Seraphic calendar. On September 22, Bishop Landi Vittori with his Chancellor visited the tomb and ordered that the opening be broken and removed. Master Rondini, with the assistance of an architect, Lorenzo Carpinelli, and his assistants, worked throughout that day clearing away the last of the debris and stones. Six bishops had arrived in Assisi to honor the faithful daughter of the Church, Saint Clare; and they, with the Bishop of Assisi, on the evening of September 22, visited the excavation and descended by a wooden ladder to view the opening into the chamber where her stone coffin lay. Among the prelates was the Archbishop of Perugia, Monsignor Gioacchino Pecci, the future Pope Leo XIII.

On the morning of September 23, the Pontifical Commissary for Umbria, Girolamo Andreo, arrived; and a solemn Mass was sung in the Chapel of our Lady at the Bishop's residence. A procession then formed, reminiscent of the one that wound itself through the same narrow streets on October 3, 1260, at the time of the solemn transferral of the body of Saint Clare. Meanwhile, assembling at the Monastery of Saint Clare were the Municipal Commission of Assisi, the Cathedral Chapter, and the superiors of religious Orders, as well as a chemist, Professor Purgotti, an archeologist, Professor Antonini, several medical doctors, and the city's archivist, Paolo Cesini.

In the small passageway there was room for only a very few witnesses. A visiting Canon from England became an eye-witness by the simple expedient of offering to hold the Archbishop of Perugia's candle so as to leave him free for the solemn opening of the tomb. According to Canon Chadwick's account, Monsignor Pecci handed the candle to him with a knowing smile. In his letter to the Poor Clares of Yorkshire, England, the Canon's account of the opening of the tomb is very similar to the one preserved in the archives of the Proto-monastery of Saint Clare in Assisi.

The tomb was first examined by the archeologist for some kind of in-

scription, but none was found. The iron bands were sawn through and the parts soldered with lead removed. A futile attempt was made to raise the heavy stone lid. Then a pulley attachment to the ceiling of the cubicle was devised, through which cords were passed and in some manner attached to the lid of the coffin. It worked. There the body of Saint Clare lay. The fine face was not deformed but merely reduced to bones beneath the darkened skin. A wreath of laurel which the nuns had woven for their mother in the thirteenth century was found to be flexible, the leaves still clinging to their stems. Branches of thyme which had been placed about the precious body were found to be in a state of remarkable preservation. Although the rest of the body was reduced to a skeleton, the bones retained their alignment. The head was reclining to the right shoulder, the left arm was leaning on the breast, and the right extended down the side of the body. A film of white powder covered the skeleton. The medical doctors attested that, yes, a partially preserved body of an adult woman was before them.

After the first examination by the scientists, the body was placed in a casket in the upper church. The nuns of Saint Clare, by special permission of the Holy Father, Pope Pius IX, entered the public church to venerate the blessed body of their Foundress. The abbess, Mother Clare Columba, the first to see the face of our Mother, fell on her knees, weeping, and kissed her. "It was a most affecting sight," wrote Canon Chadwick; "I bit my lips, and looked savage, and pulled my mouth, and made my eyes look very round; but it was no use. I could hear the devotional sighs and sobs of the nuns as they passed and see their handkerchiefs stealing up under their veils; and that was the end of our composure and our dignity—we cried as heartily as they did!"

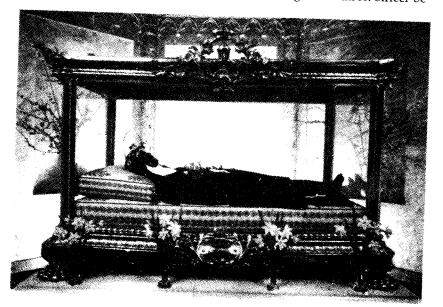
After a large relic of the body of Saint Clare had been removed by the Bishop of Assisi to be given to Pope Pius IX, the casket was sealed and placed on the high altar for the veneration of the faithful. A second triduum of thanksgiving was celebrated September 26, 27, and 28, after which the casket was reopened to proceed with the clothing of the body. The bones were wrapped with a layer of wadding, after which the body was clothed with a grey-colored tunic, white wimple, and black veil. A crown of flowers was placed upon the sacred head. The casket was then resealed and prepared for the solemn procession that took place on the afternoon of September 29. In a poignant reversal of destiny the body of Saint Clare was carried by four priests to visit the tomb of Saint Francis. the procession also stopped at San Rufino Cathedral next to the wastral home of Saint Clare. At twilight the nuns received the body of neir Morrey of the Joister and placed her beneath the crucifix of San The san Damiane, the grille through The Sales of

which the blessed Clare had received Holy Communion, was close by. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament ended the memorable day. The official civic commemoration of the event reads as follows:

September 23, 1850

In the century made great by the Seraphic Francis, Dominic Guzman, Bonaventure, and Thomas of Aquinas, the inhabitants of Assisi, respecting the desire of the excellent and great Pontiff Alexander IV, saw to their intense grief the precious relics of the Virgin Clare, their illustrious and holy townswoman, shut up in a rough marble tomb with the inscription seeming to indicate that they shall rest concealed until the end of time. Today, under the auspices of their beloved pastor, Luigi Landi Vittori, they see her again, and are exulting with joy, and pointing her out to believers as a perennial monument of local grandeur. Amid the festive sounds of sacred bells, the hosannas of priests carrying her in triumph through the streets, they show those present and those to come that faith and piety are to be found in the children as well as in the ancestors [F. Casolini, Il Protomonastero di Santa Chiara in Assisi {1950}, p. 211].

Soon a plan for a subterranean chapel to be built around the tomb of Saint Clare began to evolve. Ground was broken by Bishop Landi Vittori on June 22, 1852, a day chosen on account of the "Feast of the Vow," and the cornerstone laid on August 12 of the same year. However, some misunderstandings and a lack of funds slowed the progress of the work. And Father Morichelli, who had been put in charge as a liaison officer be-



tween the nuns and the workmen, died in 1856. A new impetus was given to the project when on May 8, 1857, Pope Pius IX paid a visit to the Monastery of Saint Clare and remained for some time in prayer before the temporary tomb. Those were critical times for the Church; and again, as in the thirteenth century, a pontiff was strengthened and consoled by the presence of Clare. All the nuns of Assisi were asked to assemble in Saint Clare's Monastery for the papal visit; about two hundred nuns shared a meal in the refectory after the Holy Father had left. It was noted that Pope Pius was served "an orange drink and little cakes," and that he shared some of the latter with the children who were a part of the procession and who were waiting for him outside the cloister.

In 1860, the work came to an abrupt halt with a renewal of the revolutionary movement in Italy when the nuns were threatened with another suppression. The official who came to the monastery demanding that the enclosure door be opened was an acquaintance of the abbess. Mother Clare Columba opened the door, but told him firmly that it was only because she was compelled to do so by force. The other nuns and novices, as on that eventful day in September, 1240, when the Saracen soldiers had scaled the wall, fled to Clare. The officer, Comrade Francis Bindangoli, suddenly remembered another engagement, signed the account books, and hastily departed. He later admitted that the thought of Saint Clare had made him afraid.

Other officials were not as sensitive to the presence of the body of Saint Clare, and entered the enclosure from time to time. The church of the monastery was used for a time as a storehouse for hay, and the sisters were fortunate in being allowed to remain in their cloister. Other nuns of the city were less privileged, and soon began to ask hospitality of the sisters at Saint Clare's. An entire Benedictine community of forty-one nuns occupied the second floor of the monastery for fifteen years.

In 1864, the sisters became apprehensive about the preservation of the body of Saint Clare and consulted a Roman expert, Modesto Scevola. On May 10, Monsignor Pecci broke the seals of the casket in the presence of the Bishop of Assisi, removed a second rib as a relic, and delivered the bones for consolidation to Scevola. The large bones were enclosed in a metallic netting; the partially preserved head of the Saint was covered with a mask of finer netting through which the darkened skin was visible. The body, reclothed in a tunic of ashen colored wool, was placed in a somewhat larger casket to await the solemn transferral to the new chapel.

By 1871, more peaceful years had come to Assisi, and Mother Clare Columba determined to proceed to the completion of the subterranean chapel. The convocation of Vatican Council I in Rome had occasioned many pilgrimages to Assisi, and generous financial assistance had been given to the nuns. A charming story circulated in 1872 was the perfect incentive for the people of Assisi; it warned that the holy Mother might be growing impatient for the full honors due to a saint of theirs.

The story went like this. On July 30, "during the first hour of darkness," one of the sisters was in the same room as the casket when she heard a blow given to the glass. Turning, she saw the right arm of the Foundress raised and pressed against the glass. She was quite breathless when she reported this to Mother Clare Columba, who came with the other nuns, including the Benedictines from the second floor. The arm was resting against the glass. On the next page of the *Chronicles*, it is mentioned that to move the body to its new and last casket, it was necessary to cut wires attached to the mattress. One of these had probably slipped, but the point was made. Plans for the solemn transfer to the new chapel were soon finalized.

On September 29, 1872, exactly twenty-two years after the first solemn exposition, Saint Clare was carried once more in procession to San Rufino and the Basilica of Saint Francis. A triduum was then celebrated, and the procession repeated on October 3, the anniversary of the first deposition in 1260. The solemn Mass was celebrated by Monsignor Pecci, who as a future pope seemed to have the same attraction for Saint Clare as his predecessors. Monsignor Landi Vittori had died on August 27, 1867, but his successor, Monsignor Paolo Fabiani, and four other bishops assisted Monsignor Pecci. After the Mass the Te Deum was intoned. The body of Saint Clare was then carried to its final resting place close to the tomb where she had lain hidden in her own little cloister for six hundred years. This time she was laid in a beautiful crystal casket, clothed in a habit made by her Poor Clare daughters of Marseilles. The chapel was so arranged that pilgrims could view Saint Clare through an iron grille. The "candle of Umbria" had at last been placed on its candlestick to give light to the whole household of the Church. At the end of that memorable vigil of the feast of Saint Francis, surely Mother Clare Columba stayed to pray alone beside her holy Mother, happy to kneel in her shadow, representing all the daughters of Saint Clare through whom her light has indeed illumined the whole world. Ω

Book Reviews

Franciscan History: The Three Orders of Saint Francis of Assisi. By Lazaro Iriarte de Aspurz, O.F.M.Cap. Translated by Patricia Ross. Appendix on "The Historical Context of the Franciscan Movement" by Lawrence C. Landini, O.F.M. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982. Pp. xl-603, including Index. Cloth, \$25.00.

Reviewed Father Sergius bv Wroblewski, O.F.M., who worked for fourteen years in Chicago's inner city, teaching at the Franciscan Institute (St. Bonaventure University) during the summers, before going this past year to South Africa.

This is a book that I was impatiently waiting for: an historical account of the Franciscan story up to the present time. Father Lazaro is the first one in our times to have attempted such an impossible task.

What pleased me most was that the book stresses the prophetic side of Saint Francis: his fidelity to his original inspiration, to which he gave legal expression in the Rule of 1223 against formidable opposition from some ministers of the Order. The book highlights the moral suffering Saint Francis endured when influential friars attempted to repudiate the original inspiration and to steer the Order in a different direction with the hope of making it an efficient and respected institution. Even on his deathbed Saint Francis reaffirmed the original way of life as the ideal goal for present and future followers.

ideal was obscured with the issuance of "Ouo elongati," which Father Lazaro calls "the end of the heroic stage." As he puts it, "the interests of the institution prevailed over the call of the pure ideal" (pp. 32f.). The drama of this story is missing, however, because Father Lazaro was forced to condense events and biographies of persons into a few paragraphs. Saint Bonaventure, e.g., gets two pages! He was also forced to devote innumerable pages to lists of places, dates, and names, so that the book reads more often like a tour guide than a history book.

Furthermore, if one is interested in pursuing the story further, the bibliographies are not of much help, since they are sparse (the book was originally published in 1954 and then revised for publication in 1979). Although the author claims extensive revision, the inadequate bibligraphies seem to disprove that claim.

The book has three deficiencies. First, the Franciscan story is told in a way more topical than chronological. Since the arrangement in the book tries to combine both (the topical and the chronological), the effect can be bewildering. For instance, after relating the history of the First Order of the first hundred years, Father Lazaro then speaks of the Missions and starts at the beginning in 1219. This going back and forth in time gives one the sense, after a while, of being lost.

Secondly, the historical arrangement of events is at times odd and inexplicable. To give an example: Pope John XXII is considered, not in the chapter on "The Spiritual Quarrel," but in the After Francis' death, however, the section entitled "Conventualism and Observance," as if the tension with Pope John involved the Observants.

Thirdly, there is hardly any historical background for the Franciscan story except for the time before Saint Francis. The publishers tried to remedy this omission by including Father Landini's excellent historical overview of western history. But since it is located at the end of the book as "Appendix 2," it does not provide the reader with the needed links between the West's story and Franciscan history.

I have to add a personal disappointment. On page 412 Father Lazaro rightly observes that after Vatican II the Order took a significant step in the way it prepared the new Constitutions. It tried to "put every clause on sound evangelical and Franciscan foundations" "with full consultation at ground level." That certainly gave new hope to Franciscan families. But I feel it should also have been recorded as a historical fact that "small communities" sprang up in European countries and the Americas—several hundred in the 60s and 70s-which attempted to rediscover the early pilgrimage character of the Order and the option for the poor by friars "living among social outcasts." This was a revolutionary development deserving of historical record.

Despite these lacks, this handbook of Franciscan history is a valuable tool, if only because it is the only book we have for the history of the Franciscan families up to the present time.

Changes: A Spiritual Journal. By John Michael Talbot. New York: Crossroad, 1984. Pp. 138. Paper, \$7.95.

Reviewed by Brother Bill Barrett. O.F.M., a member of Holy Name Province who has been active for some time in work for Peace and Justice.

The music of John Michael Talbot has been quietly playing in many peaceful and recollected moments of my life in the last few years: at community prayers, away on retreat, even in the dining room of the Catholic Worker on a recent visit to New York. His albums are uniquely prayerful and calming. When I learned that he'd recently published a "spiritual journal," I was interested. This is a time of change in my own life, and since the movement of lives is common to us all. I hoped to find that common thread of recognition in this journal. I hoped the author's Changes might give perspective on my own. I was disappointed.

Publishing a journal is a risky business today more than ever, since iournal-keeping has become trendy, at least in religious circles. A private "spiritual" journal made public declares willingness to explore how bones shattered are knit whole, how hearts broken are healed, how wounds inflicted and received are forgiveen and repaired. There's not much of that in Changes, though one suspects the broken hearts and bones are in there somewhere, not all that far from the surface.

In his preface to the book, Talbot mentions that much of the journal was written from an Indianapolis retreat house where he went after a divorce. He never goes into the experience, and I can't blame him for not wanting to drag his broken marriage into a public plaza. Still, it seems odd that he would write a book of this sort and never examine something so human; for me, it made his vocabulary of relating to Jesus (as if they were married) less than helpful.

Talbot speaks in sexual terms often enough to warrant comment; I cannot say that I am comfortable with what appears to be his point of view. His use of exclusive language (e.g., mankind for humanity and man for person) from the very first page of the journal disappointed me. Our English language is changing, and most of us realize it; but many seem too lazy or careless to consider what their usage says as well as what it means. But more than this, Talbot's frequent talk of marrying Jesus ("Jesus and I have died together on the cross as lovers. Jesus and I have been resurrected from the tomb as lovers. In this new life, Jesus and I have been forever married" [pp. 29-30], et al.) and his use of feminine-submissive imagery ("I desire to be alone with my Lover in solitude at all times so that he may hold me and kiss me when I am lonely. I seek to be conformed to his mind so that we may never come to argument, separation, and divorce" [p. 32], et al.) made a significant portion of his thought inaccessible to me. I don't accept those role stereotypes in my own relationships with real women, and they tell me nothing helpful about relating to God. I have no doubt that sexuality is charged with the divine-some rabbinic teaching held that since the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed, God's presence is most clearly known in two places, when Scripture is studied in common and when a married couple lie together—but spiritualizing sex seems to me to miss the theological point.

For the rest, there are just too many gaps in the story; Talbot's views of marriage and sex aren't all that one wonders about. The book is written in the first person singular, but by its end the reader infers that some sort of community is part of the author's life. Midway through the book, Cheri White is mentioned as a non-Catholic friend who comes to see Talbot: the book's brief epilogue is signed "Sister Cheri White," but we're in the dark as to when she even joined the Catholic Church. This is very much to the point, since Talbot seems to have begun a Regular community within the Franciscan Third Order Secular. I wish he had taken the time to explain what that is and why! Unfortunately, I seem to infer that he was led to the Franciscan path in no small part because many Franciscans today wear a brown habit, and he had a dream in which a brown habit figured prominently. I'm sure there's much more to it than that, but I can't find that "more" in this book.

Many of the "changes" disclosed here appear, sadly, somewhat superficial, or the literal results of a vaguely fundamentalist reading of Franciscan and Gospel writings. It is painful to write what I realize is a harsh review, but I know no more of John Michael Talbot and the direction his life (and community?) has taken than I did before I read this book. I think there's a lot more to him than *Changes* allows to be seen. Maybe it's best if he lets his music speak, and allows silence to say the rest.

Books Received

- Champlin, Joseph, Healing in the Catholic Church: Mending Wounded Hearts and Bodies. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1985. Pp. 176. Paper, \$5.50.
- Cunningham S.S.C.M., Agnes, The Bishop in the Church: Patristic Texts on the Role of the Episkopos. Theology and Life Series, n. 13. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1985. Pp. 63, including Bibliography. Paper, \$4.95.
- Cunningham, S.S.C.M., Agnes, Prayer: Personal and Liturgical. Message of the Fathers of the Church Series, n. 16. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1985. Pp. 147, including Bibliography and Index. Cloth, \$10.95; paper, \$7.95.
- Faley, T.O.R., Roland J., To Come and See: Thoughts on Contemporary Religious Life. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1985. Pp. xii-158. Cloth, \$12.50
- Gilles, Anthony E., The People of the Book: The Story behind the Old Testament. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1985. Pp. xiv-178, including Index. Paper, \$5.95.
- Halton, Thomas, *The Church*. Message of the Fathers of the Church Series, n. 4. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1985. Pp. 239, including Bibligraphy and Index. Cloth, \$15.00; paper, \$9.95
- Nouwen, Henri J. M., Bring Prayer into Your Life: With Open Hands. New York: Ballantine Books, 1985. Pp. viii-87. Paper, \$1.95.
- Stravinskas, Peter M. J., The Catholic Response. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1985. Pp. 119. Paper, \$5.95.
- Tilley, Terrence W., Story Theology. Theology and Life Series, n. 12. Preface by Robert McAfee Brown. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1985. Pp. xix-242, including Bibliography and Index. Paper, \$9.95
- Walsh, S.J., James, and P. G. Walsh, Divine Providence and Human Suffering. Message of the Fathers of the Church Series, n. 17. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1985. Pp. 272 including Bibliography and Index. Cloth, \$15.00; paper, 9.95.

CORRECTION

Please note that the book review entry on page 159 of our May issue is both incomplete and incorrect. Anthony E. Gilles should have been listed as the book's author, and the book, instead of *People of the Way*, should have been the above: *People of the Book*. We regret any inconvenience these errors may have caused.

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