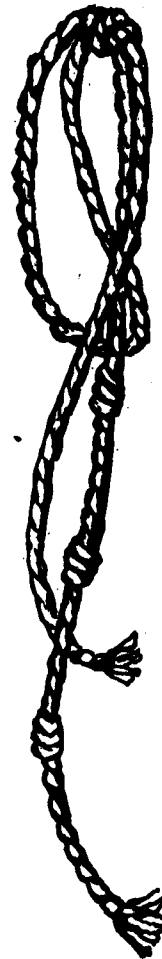


JANUARY, 1987

The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



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Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

I. Writings of Saint Francis

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

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



"The Best of Times"

AS THE REALITY of a New Year moves from our calendars to our somewhat reluctant consciousness, I am reminded of Thomas of Celano's striking observation that Francis allowed "nothing of that precious gift of time to escape." (II, 161) This significant characteristic of Francis calls us beyond our ordinary experience of a year's beginning. Franciscan sources constantly remind us in different ways that for Francis all time was the "time of his life" — *kairos*, St. Paul would say. The celebration of a New Year would enable Francis (and us) to grasp this New Testament conviction with fresh dedication.

It was Francis' greatest desire that the entire human family walk with him and his brothers in that fundamental experience of time and place wherein gratitude and praise to God shape one's primary mode of consciousness (RNB 23). Only in this way could time realize its preciousness. And this gratitude and praise were intimately related to that awe-inspiring event wherein God took our time and history as His own in the remarkable gratuity of the incarnation. This Divine encroachment transformed the human experience of time and Francis intuited its preciousness in a way that continues to fire our imagination.

Early Franciscan history reminds us that the hour of a Council is a Franciscan hour of special import. The mystery of Francis cannot be seen apart from the context of the Church's proclamations at the IV Lateran Council. We Franciscans can say of that period what Paul VI said at the closing of the third session of the most recent Council: "Truly we can say that Divine Providence has prepared for us a luminous hour; yesterday slowly maturing, now resplendent, tomorrow it will certainly provide teaching, impulses, and motivations for the life of the Church."



I thank God for the unique privilege of joining a circle of generous people who out of love for Francis, the man of God, have contributed in time and talent, and in various supportive ways so that we might hear in a special way the kairoitic call of the Second Vatican Council for a Spirit-given awakening to the dynamism proper to the Franciscan charism. The quality and content of the articles selected for each number of this periodical give eloquent evidence of the commitment of both the authors and the editors to this joyful summons. In particular, all of us must be grateful to Michael Meilach for devoting so many years of his Franciscan life to the untiring exercise of unusual editorial gifts. The Franciscan reading public will always acknowledge him as the scholarly author of countless articles and books. I am also grateful that Fr. Julian Davies, his assistant, will continue in this same capacity with me.

Within a Church struggling in the Spirit to actualize itself as "the Church of the Poor," "the Servant Church," "the People of God," we subscribe to what Dante said was the God-given charge of the mendicant orders: To remind the Church of the exclusively spiritual character of its mission. My hope is that the Cord will continue to be an instrument in bringing the "luminous hour" to realization in "word and deed." That is, after all, the only criterion Francis accepted for the "homecoming" of Gospel truth.

Joseph Doria O.F.M.

SAINT FRANCIS AND GOD

BONAVENTURE HINWOOD, O.F.M.

Introduction

We live in a secularized age in which many people have little or no knowledge of God, hazy or crooked notions about Jesus, and live in a crisis of faith, if they have any at all. To talk, then, about God's kingdom, about salvation as entering into the love community of the Trinity, about Jesus' law of love, about sharing in Christ's mission to the world is simply presupposing what is not there, namely, an understanding of God and his action in the world, a true picture of Jesus and what He has accomplished for us, plus appropriate faith and commitment. This may provide an explanation as to why statements on moral issues and social justice from popes and bishops appear to have little influence on many people: they presuppose as their chief motivating power something which is not present, namely, clear ideas about God, surrender to the will of God, and zeal for God's rule over human affairs.

One person for whom God was real and a powerful motivating force was St. Francis. Since so little has been written specifically about his idea of God, I thought that I would scratch the surface of the question: how did St. Francis express his experience of God in terms of the cumulative experience of the church as he inherited it, and is this likely to resonate with people today?

Father Bonaventure Hinwood, O.F.M. who lives in Pretoria, South Africa is the author of YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED. His last contribution to our pages was "The Franciscan Charism," (March, 1984).

In the article *The Franciscan Charism* in *The Cord* of March, 1984, I suggested that the Fatherhood of God was St. Francis' basic intuition on which he built his life. So I will not deal here with that important aspect of the topic. In a sense I want to go behind that intuition to the God Whom St. Francis was able to accept as his Father to Whom he could relate as a son.

In trying to get at St. Francis' God concept one is forced to rely largely on his own writings. The other "sources", even Celano, are too coloured by the theology of their authors. They are useful as secondary supplies of incidents, but their theological interpretations of the incidents largely express their own God concepts. Not that there is much need to go beyond St. Francis' writings. Limited though they be, they constitute a rich mine of information on the question of God.

The big problem is: how does one organize this abundance of ad hoc statements into a systematic scheme? The unique characteristic of the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition is that He is both transcendent and immanent in a way not found in other religions. Outside of our tradition the stress tends to be placed either on God's transcendence, as in Islam and African traditional religions, or on the immanence of the absolute, as in Hinduism. Only in the Judeo-Christian tradition are the two aspects held in tension.

This is the tradition in which St. Francis experienced God, and in terms of which he expressed his experience. It is, therefore, the structure in terms of which I shall endeavour to organize his thought. This is not easy, since St. Francis has an incredible capacity to hold them together and often speak of them simultaneously. My separation of the two will, then, be artificial and not complete.

The Creator

One very evident aspect of St. Francis' understanding of God is as Creator, and several of his favourite terms for God he apparently associated with this. Possibly the most compact expression of his attempts to express the greatness of The Creator as he experienced it is found in the *Canticle of Brother Sun*.¹ It addresses God as "Most High, all-powerful, good Lord". These words run right through St. Francis' talk to and about God with such regularity that it is not necessary to refer to particular instances.

Parallel to these runs the title of "King" which frequently appears in combination with "Father". Instances of these titles, separately and in combination, appear frequently in the *Office of the Passion*. A couple of examples will illustrate the point: "the Lord, the Most High, the awesome, the great King over all the earth,"² and "Lord, most holy Father, King of heaven and earth... You are God my Savior."³

"God, the King of all" is the author of all blessings, who can do all good to and in people, knows everything about their doings and their sufferings, rewards the just, and is the basis of a christian's sure confidence.⁴ No wonder that St. Francis delighted to think of himself as "the herald of the great King."⁵

By names such as these St. Francis wishes to convey the fact that God is the total cause of everything positive in the whole of reality, a thought he sums up in the words: "You, Lord, are the Supreme Good, the Eternal Good, from Whom comes all good, without whom there is no good."⁶ This outpoured goodness reaches its pinnacle in human beings, to whom St. Francis says: "Be conscious, O man, of the wondrous state in which the Lord God has placed you, for He created you and formed you to the image of His beloved Son according to the body, and His likeness according to the spirit."⁷

Not being an academic theologian, St. Francis does not analyse terms in order to convey the wonder of this Creator who is invisible.⁸ He rather adopts the technique, frequently found in the Bible, of piling up terms in order to produce an overwhelming impact. The effect is heightened by adding to what we may call descriptive terms about God also terms which express his subjective impact on the human creature who experiences Him as Creator in the depth of his being as well as in the affairs of life. To use modern technical jargon, St. Francis uses a combination of cosmic disclosure situations⁹ and positive existential disclosure situations¹⁰ to build up his notion of God as Creator.

There are two principal examples of this which are sufficiently different to justify quoting both of them. On one side of *The parchment given to brother Leo* we read:

Your are holy, Lord, the only God, You do wonders.
 You are strong, You are great, You are the most high,
 You are the almighty King.
 You, Holy Father, the King of heaven and earth.
 You are Three and One, Lord God of gods;
 You are good, all good, the highest good,
 Lord, God, living and true.
 You are love, charity.
 You are wisdom, You are humility; You are patience;
 You are beauty; You are meekness; You are security;
 You are inner peace; You are joy; You are our hope and joy;
 You are justice; You are moderation, You are all our riches
 (You are enough for us).
 You are beauty, You are meekness;

You are the protector,
 You are our guardian and defender;
 You are strength; You are refreshment.
 You are our hope, You are our faith, You are our charity,
 You are all our sweetness,
 You are our eternal life:
 Great and wonderful Lord,
 God almighty, Merciful Savior.¹¹

The second example is in chapter 23 of the 1221 rule:

the one true God,
 Who is the Fullness of God
 all good, every good, the true and supreme good
 Who alone is Good
 merciful and gentle
 delectable and sweet
 Who alone is holy
 just and true
 holy and right
 Who alone is kind
 innocent
 pure
 from Whom and through Whom and in Whom is
 all pardon
 all grace
 all glory
 The most high and supreme eternal God
 Trinity and Unity
 the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit
 Creator of all
 Savior of all
 Who is
 without beginning and without end
 unchangeable, invisible,
 indescribable, ineffable,
 blessed, worthy of praise,
 glorious, exalted on high, sublime,
 most high, gentle, lovable,
 delectable and totally desirable above all else
 forever.¹²

The sense of God alone being totally good and the source of all good to us humans filled St. Francis with a profound reverence in God's presence and for everything connected with God.

The Trinity

Did you by any chance notice in both these quotations a new element? Briefly in the first St. Francis says to God "You are Three in One", and at greater length in the second "Trinity and Unity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Creator of all". The extent to which St. Francis' thought is overtly trinitarian is noteworthy. Was this the result of his own spiritual experience, or was it due, at least in part, to the teaching of Lateran IV? Probably an unanswerable question. Trinitarian invocations often start a letter, rule, or paragraph, sometimes in the simple form "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit", as in the first and last paragraphs of the second version of the *Letter to the faithful*,¹³ sometimes in the more elaborate form "In the name of the most high Trinity and the holy Unity: the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit", as in the *Letter to the entire order*.¹⁴ At other times the Trinity is invoked in a blessing at the conclusion as in the *Letter to the faithful* already mentioned.¹⁵ The friars who go among non-Christians are encouraged to preach in order that people will "believe in the All-powerful God-Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit – the Creator of all."¹⁶

The Trinity is furthermore praised with varying degrees of theological expansion, ranging from a simple form in the *Praises to be said at all hours*,¹⁷ through chapter 21 of the 1221 rule,¹⁸ to the elaborate form given in chapter 23 of the same rule, in which the role of the Trinity in creation and redemption is brought out:

All-powerful, most holy, most high and supreme God
 Holy and just Father
 Lord, King of heaven and earth
 we thank you for Yourself
 for through Your holy will
 and through your only Son
 with the Holy spirit
 You have created all things spiritual and corporal
 and, having made us in Your own image and likeness,
 You placed us in paradise.
 And we thank You
 for as through Your Son created us
 and You willed to redeem us captives
 through His cross and blood and death.
 we humbly ask that
 our Lord Jesus Christ
 Your beloved Son
 in whom You were well pleased
 together with the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete,
 give You thanks
 as it pleases You and Him
 for everything
 And through Your love
 we humbly beg
 all the saints who were, who will be, and who are
 to give you thanks for these things as it pleases You,
 the supreme and true God
 eternal and living
 with Your most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
 and the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete,
 world without end.¹⁹

This praise in particular emphasizes what we have already seen, namely,
 that St. Francis' thoughts about God as the Trinity do not form a separate
 parallel sequence to those about God as Creator, but simply specify more
 exactly the nature of the creating and redeeming God, Who is also the
 triune Revealer, as St. Francis makes clear when writing about

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. Through
 his angel St. Gabriel, the most high Father in heaven announced
 the Word of the Father – so worthy, so holy and glorious – in the
 womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, from whom He received
 the flesh of humanity and our frailty.²⁰

Given the standpoint adopted by Lateran IV and much of the th
 current theology of grace, about all the external works of God being t
 combined operation of the Trinity, it is noteworthy that St. Francis f
 quently refers to particular relationships of one or other of the three divi
 Persons with the graced human subject. Most striking among these ref
 erences for our present purpose are the instances where he brings all th
 together in a brief compass. The simplest statement of this is in the *For
 of life given to St. Clare and her sisters*:

Since by divine inspiration you have made yourselves daught
 and servants of the most high King, the heavenly Father, and ha
 taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse, choosing to live according
 the perfection of the holy Gospel that is, after the pattern of t
 Son incarnate.²¹

This statement receives a more detailed treatment in the famous pass
 about the relations the faithful christian has to the Persons of the indwell
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A peculiarity of this statement is that the term "spouse" is applied
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 we thank you for Yourself
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 You have created all things spiritual and corporal
 and, having made us in Your own image and likeness,
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And we thank You
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 our Lord Jesus Christ
 Your beloved Son
 in whom You were well pleased
 together with the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete,
 give You thanks
 as it pleases You and Him
 for everything

And through Your love
 we humbly beg
 all the saints who were, who will be, and who are
 to give you thanks for these things as it pleases You,
 the supreme and true God
 eternal and living
 with Your most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
 and the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete,
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This praise in particular emphasizes what we have already seen, namely, that St. Francis' thoughts about God as the Trinity do not form a separate parallel sequence to those about God as Creator, but simply specify more exactly the nature of the creating and redeeming God, Who is also the triune Revealer, as St. Francis makes clear when writing about

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. Through his angel St. Gabriel, the most high Father in heaven announced the Word of the Father – so worthy, so holy and glorious – in the womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, from whom He received the flesh of humanity and our frailty.²⁰

Given the standpoint adopted by Lateran IV and much of the then current theology of grace, about all the external works of God being the combined operation of the Trinity, it is noteworthy that St. Francis frequently refers to particular relationships of one or other of the three divine Persons with the graced human subject. Most striking among these references for our present purpose are the instances where he brings all three together in a brief compass. The simplest statement of this is in the *Form of life given to St. Clare and her sisters*:

Since by divine inspiration you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the most high King, the heavenly Father, and have taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse, choosing to live according to the perfection of the holy Gospel that is, after the pattern of the Son incarnate.²¹

This statement receives a more detailed treatment in the famous passage about the relations the faithful christian has to the Persons of the indwelling Trinity in the *Letter to the faithful*.

A peculiarity of this statement is that the term "spouse" is applied to the Son in the first part, the Holy Spirit being the One Who does the espousing, while in the second part the term appears to return to the Holy Spirit, as in quotation just given. This latter usage does seem to be more in keeping with the rest of St. Francis' thought, since it parallels what he says elsewhere about the three Persons in relation to the Blessed Virgin²²:



They are children of the heavenly Father whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined to our Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. We are brothers to Him when we do the will of the Father Who is in heaven. Mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and we give birth to Him through holy manner of working, which should shine before others as an example.

Oh, how glorious it is, how holy and great, to have a Father in heaven! Oh, how holy, consoling, beautiful and wondrous it is to have such a Spouse. Oh, how holy and how loving, pleasing, humble, peaceful, sweet, lovable, and desirable above all things to have such a Brother and such a Son: our Lord Jesus Christ.²³

The proper relations to the Father and to the Holy Spirit and their relations in leading the believer into a full share in the life of the love community of the Trinity are further spelt out in the following prayer directed to the Father at the end of the *Letter to the entire Order*:

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.²⁴

What such an intimacy with the Trinity in glory involves is spelt out in the *Prayer inspired by the Our Father*:

Your Kingdom Come;

So that You may rule in us through Your grace

and enable us to come to Your kingdom

where there is an unclouded vision of You

a perfect love of You

a blessed companionship with You

an eternal enjoyment of You.²⁵

Indwelling

In mentioning relations with the indwelling Trinity we have already slipped into speaking about God as immanent in his creation, and indeed in the most intensely personal way. Because this theme is so predominant in St. Francis' spirituality, I would like to highlight it by reference to the indwelling rather than the relations to the divine Persons, as in this passage in chapter 22 of the 1221 rule:

In the holy love which is God, I beg all (my) brothers, both the ministers and ther others, as they overcome every obstacle and put aside every care and anxiety, to strive as best they can to serve, love, honor, and adore the Lord God with a clean heart and a pure mind, for this is what He desires above all things.

And let us make a home and dwelling place for Him Who is the Lord God Almighty, Father and Son and Holy Spirit.²⁶

The mutual indwelling of the devout christian in the love community of the Trinity and of the Trinity in the faithful person make the constant divine influence in the personality, of which St. Francis is so conscious, quite understandable. Hence he can be confident that those coming to the Order will be led by the Holy Spirit.²⁷ His own spirit of humble obedience is grace granted by God's kindness.²⁸ It is likewise the Lord who gave him faith in churches and in priests.²⁹ The Holy Spirit, by letting a person share in his own divine vision of the Son, enables him to recognize the incarnate Son in the eucharist.³⁰ The same Spirit, who make the simple man of desire savor heavenly things,³¹ opens up the Scriptures and fills the humble seeker with wisdom and divine understanding.³²

Characteristic among these divine operations from within are interior revelations by which God reveals good things to his servants,³³ by which,

more specifically, He showed St. Francis that he should live according to the Gospel, as well as his purpose for the brothers,³⁴ and on a more external level made known to him the blessed Virgin's love for the Portiuncula.³⁵

Living in such intimacy with the holy Trinity and aware of the divine Persons at work within himself, it is little wonder that St. Francis was filled with divine sweetness which drew him away from earthly attractions,³⁶ made unpleasant things palatable,³⁷ and would often unexpectedly overwhelm him.³⁸

No wonder, then that St. Francis considered joy to be the normal condition of a person united to God, to the point that he wrote in the 1221 rule that the brothers "must beware not to appear outwardly sad and like gloomy hypocrites; but let them show that they are joyful in the Lord and cheerful and truly gracious."³⁹ Nor is it strange that he regarded down-heartedness as a miserable illness which had to be counteracted by allowing the Holy Spirit to keep one's joy fresh and lively. If signs of dejection begin to appear, God's servant must seek the intimate companionship of God in prayer, and remain with Him until he is no longer dispirited.⁴⁰

Immanence in Creation

Yet St. Francis' experience of God as immanent in his creation was not limited to intimacy with the indwelling Trinity. There were several levels at which he discerned God present and at work exteriorly in the world and in the events of his life. The link between the two facets is succinctly expressed in the *Mirror of perfection*:

Being completely absorbed in love of God, blessed Francis clearly perceived the goodness of God both within his own soul, already endowed with perfect virtue, and in all created things, so he therefore had an especial and profound love of God's creatures, and especially those which he thought of as representing some truth about God or religion.⁴¹

This love was not simply because they were his works, but because in them St. Francis saw the wisdom, power, goodness of their Creator. Incidents and sayings about creatures in the world of nature around us to illustrate this point are legion and too well-known to need recalling in particular.⁴² Interpreting such incidents, Thomas of Celano came up with this lyrical expression of how St. Francis experienced God's presence:

In every work of the artist he praised the Artist; whatever he found in things made he referred to the Maker. He rejoiced in all the works of the hands of the Lord and saw behind things pleasant to behold their life-giving reason and cause. In beautiful things he saw Beauty itself... Through his footprints impressed upon things he followed the Beloved everywhere; he made from all things a ladder by which to come even to his throne.⁴³

If this was true of other creatures, it was even more so of those "stamped" with the image of the Creator,⁴⁴ especially his brothers because they belonged to the same household of faith and shared the same promise of eternal life. Also particularly dear to St. Francis were poor people, because in the face of the poor and suffering he saw the face of Christ.⁴⁵ Hence his saying: "Whoever curses a poor man does an injury to Christ, whose noble image he wears, the image of him who made himself poor for us in this world."⁴⁶

This saying already tells us that St. Francis saw God as immanent in this world where He is in fact supremely immanent, namely in Jesus,⁴⁷ especially Jesus in his poverty and helplessness in the crib⁴⁸ and on the cross,⁴⁹ as well as where He lives on visibly among his people especially in the eucharist.

Providence

The Father did not spare his own Son, but sacrificed Him for our salvation.⁵¹ In view of this there can be no limit to the wonders of his divine providence. So St. Francis, abandoned by his earthly Father, turned to his heavenly Father in total trust,⁵² and in his experience of and meditation on his wise providence opened up another dimension of God which is immanent in this way in his creation. The care exercised by our most provident God has a range as wide as human existence. It starts off obviously with providing for physical need of the body,⁵³ extends to healing,⁵⁴ and even to respect for our dust after death.⁵⁵ It brings companions⁵⁶ and friends⁵⁷ when they are wanted. It initiates every good deed that we humans do,⁵⁸ does every good thing for us,⁵⁹ and above all and procures our salvation.⁶⁰ Consequently those who are faithful can face death with confidence⁶¹ in the God who will reward them with everlasting life,⁶² while at the same time He provides the sanction of damnation to discourage those who would refuse his goodness.⁶³ A particular aspect of God's provident care which played a large role in St. Francis' life was that of guidance. This guidance came to him through a variety of means: prayer,⁶⁴ visions,⁶⁵ dreams,⁶⁶ a call from a crucifix,⁶⁷ listening to or opening the Bible,⁶⁸ and the counsel of friends.⁶⁹

The obverse of this was St. Francis' experience of God present in the negative existential disclosure situations of suffering.⁷⁰ In the early days of his conversion he made sense of the sufferings arising from his father's persecutions by uniting them to the sufferings of Christ.⁷¹ His discovery of God in his own spiritual struggles enabled him in later life to advise one of his brothers that "no one must consider himself a servant of God until he has undergone temptations and tribulations. Temptations overcome... is in a way a ring with which the Lord espouses the soul of his servant to himself."⁷² On La Verna God taught him that he was to enter the Kingdom through many tribulations, trials, and struggles, before giving him the experience of union with Christ in the stigmata.⁷³ This was partly fulfilled in his constant physical illness in many parts of the body.⁷⁴ It culminated in the abject misery in which St. Francis came to that ecstatic experience of God which was the inspiration of the *Canticle of brother sun*.⁷⁵

Friend

What had I done
If you had not been there?
His words were clear
That fell on my unhearing ears.
This was a time keyed to wonders;
The man of Galilee had come.
"Fill the jars with water."
A common task,
The daily routine chore.
My heart,
That hoped for grace of miracles
And hours of ecstasy,
Had not heeded
Except for you.

And now I am afraid
God grant that you be near
When He who changes
Watery essences into heady wines of
Infinite loves
Bids me carry to the Chief Steward.

Sr. Emeran Foley, O.S.F.

Response

St. Francis' lived response to the God whom he experienced and conceived in the way which I have outlined obviously gives concrete form to this verbal expression. Much of this lived response I have sketched in the article on *The Franciscan charism* already mentioned. There are just four aspects which I wish to emphasize by brief mention.

The first of these is praise: "This man, filled with the Spirit of God, never ceased to glorify, praise, and bless the Creator and Ruler of all things in all the elements and creatures,"⁷⁶ and in all the circumstances and events of life, right up to the transition into the fulness of life through death itself.⁷⁷ Praise was the dominant tonality of St. Francis' whole graced personality. It both influenced the way he looked at nature and his reaction to what he saw. As an example take this exhortation to the birds:

My brothers, birds, you should praise your Creator very much and always love him; he gave you feathers to clothe you, wings so that you can fly, and whatever else was necessary for you. God made you noble among his creatures, and he gave you a home in the purity of the air; though you neither sow nor reap, he nevertheless protects and governs you without any solicitude on your part.⁷⁸

Hence hymns of praise and passages of praise in other documents form a substantial part of St. Francis' writings. Perhaps one of the most characteristic of these because of the broad sweep of its contents is the *Praises to be said at all the hours*.⁷⁹ Hand in hand with the praise in St. Francis' reaction to God went thanksgiving. He thanks God for all his gifts,⁸⁰ for the favourable workings of his providence,⁸¹ for insults and injuries,⁸² for rejection and refusal of alms,⁸³ for sickness as well as for health.⁸⁴ He instructed civil rulers to institute a public signal to be given each evening so that "praise and thanks may be given by all people to all-powerful Lord God".⁸⁵ And his praises are not infrequently largely exclamations of thanksgiving, as we can see from this exhortation:

And let us refer all good
to the most high and supreme Lord God,
and acknowledge that every good is His,
and thank Him for everything,
(He) from Whom all good things come.

And may He,
the Highest and Supreme,
Who alone is true God,
have and be given and receive
every honor and reverence
every praise and blessing,
every thanks and glory,
for every good is His,
He Who alone is good.⁸⁶

The sense of God alone being totally good and the source of all good to us humans filled St. Francis with a profound reverence in God's presence and for everything connected with God. Because at times of prayer it is the great King to whom we speak, we should do all we can to ensure that He has our undivided attention, whatever may have to be sacrificed to this cause.⁸⁷ Although we cannot avoid doing so if we are to relate to Him at all, we should be conscious of the fact that we are not worthy even to mention his holy name.⁸⁸ Because his name and everything associated with God is to be treated with devotion and respect, his written words are to be cherished and rescued from being profaned wherever this is likely.⁸⁹ Priests,⁹⁰ the blessed eucharist,⁹¹ and even the liturgical vessels and appointments⁹² are to be revered to acknowledge the greatness of our Creator.

Finally there was St. Francis' life of prayer. About this I do not need to say anything beyond the brief reminder that being in communion with, in the presence of, listening to and conversing with the divine Persons was for St. Francis what life is primarily about. Everything else, however beneficial and virtuous, is only a temporary digression.⁹² Because God is the sort of God He is, He must necessarily be Number One in life, with no rivals for the primacy.

Modern application

Has all this got anything to say to modern secularized man? In my opinion a great deal.

I have over the last few years taken to preaching and talking about what it means to be a creature, how one is to understand the Creator, and what is implied in the Creator-creature relationship. I have done this to ordinary people, with the more sophisticated, and over the media. The response has been consistently favourable to enthusiastic, not infrequently accompanied by remarks like "How refreshing it is to get back to basics," "Thank you for clearing away the trappings and reminding us of what life's really all about," "I now understand the meaning of my life." For this reason I accept St. Francis' insistence on the Creator as still being valid.

True enough his own lyrical approach may not be possible with people who live in the concrete jungle or tarmac desert, any more than for those who live among the hazards of the tangled jungle and the sandy deserts. Yet there are jumping off points in all these situations. There are enough people in the world still living in sufficient contact with the earth and plants and animals to make St. Francis' own approach useful in working with them. For those with whom the beauty and fruitfulness and symbolism of nature no longer resonate we do have the panorama of the wonders of nature opened up to us on a different level by the natural sciences.

Whatever people's relation to the world of nature, they themselves as human beings remain a constant factor. They are there with their questions about the whence, why, and whither of life, with their longing to make sense out of existence, with their fears and anxieties about the unknown. So it remains a worthwhile task to help each person uncover the Ground of his being, the Support of his personality, the Source of his energy, the Love filtering up through his affections. This sort of language may appear abstract at first sight, but it is no more so than St. Francis' "Most High" or "All-powerful". Our words can be made just as powerfully personal and appealing as he made his terms by the living conviction of the person who uses them and shares his experience of what life is all about.

St. Francis was fortunate in having words like "King" and "Lord", which had an elevated meaning in ordinary language, with which to talk about God's absolute and sovereign existence which does not depend on his creatures, but is the source of all good for them. Today we lack such language. Kings in as far as they exist are mostly toothless constitutional monarchs; lords are by and large a quaint social anachronism. We cannot substitute presidents or prime-ministers, who are only temporary office-bearers voted in by the people and dependent on their approval if they are to stay put. We really do have a serious language problem in suggesting a personal reality which is elevated, sacred, permanent, and independent. The democratic mentality has left us without words to talk about God with the ease with which St. Francis could. Even "father" in many places no longer has any patriarchal resonances. Not that we are, therefore, condemned to silence. The lack of handy single words which immediately resonate with people in general simply means that we have to search for images and phrases which will speak to different groups of people in their particular situations.

St. Francis' fascination with the Trinity suggests one possible way out. Personality and interpersonal relations form the web of contemporary thought, not only in the West, but also in Africa and elsewhere. In the

divine Trinity we find the perfect society: the three divine Persons so totally given to each other in their divine richness, so utterly open to receive each other in their divine infinity that they only form one single life unit, the love community of the Godhead. The fact that they are three excludes the possibility that it is a conspiracy of two elements clinging to each other in selfish possessiveness in an attempt to overcome their mutual poverty and inadequacy. It is out of the overflowing abundance of this divine life of love that the Trinity creates and enters by self-giving to elevate created persons enabling them to be drawn into the interpersonal relations structure which is the life of grace, a structure of which St. Francis was so lyrically aware.

So if words referring to individuals no longer provide us with adequate means of expressing the Creator's excellence, perhaps the wonder of the all-perfect love community can.

At the same time people will hopefully be able to understand how their inherent longing for satisfying non-exploiting interpersonal relationships can be met in a grace response to the Trinity's initiative in the process of salvation. It is the only adequate answer to the loneliness of so many people today.

Not that loneliness is the only experience of people in the area of interpersonal relations. Many people today still have profound and stimulating experiences of love in friendships and in marriage and family life. I have pointed out that St. Francis found God immanently present in his brothers, with whom we know that he had a relationship of great tenderness.⁹⁴ One of the fundamental dynamics of love is the lover's tendency to give himself for the beloved, even to give himself completely to the point of sacrificing his life. Parents in relation to their children and comrades in war provide many examples of this. If the other person is no more than a complicated animal, this tendency does not make sense. The self-sacrificing tendency towards a total giving of oneself to and for the person one loves only makes sense if it expresses an intention, albeit not clearly articulated, that in and behind that person is the Creator God Who is love, to whom total devotion belongs by right.

Another experience of God's love in St. Francis' life, which I have highlighted, is the awareness of being guided. This is not an experience unique to St. Francis. Many people are already aware, or can be helped to become aware, of being led along a course, often a course which they would not have initially chosen for themselves. It is possible often to discern in one life a pattern which one did not invent or impose, and yet which one is invited to accept and makes one's own. This can lead to the intuition of the loving presence of a provident Guide at the center of one being.

These and similar disclosure situations, in which St. Francis encountered his triune Creator, raise the pastoral problem of trying to help people break through the surface of their own life to the triune Creator who supports it from within, despite the noise of the technological civilization and the corruption of the permissive society.

St. Francis' recipe for finding God and remaining in vital, joyous contact consisted of a pure heart⁹⁵ seeking Him in spirit and in truth,⁹⁶ abstaining from vices and the indulgence of bodily appetites,⁹⁷ service of others,⁹⁸ humility, patience under trials and love of persecutors.⁹⁹ Does that sound like an accurate description of the life style presented and encouraged by the mass media?

Our primary problem is to persuade people to withdraw from the noise and pollution of the mass media sufficiently to enable the divine Trinity dwelling in the unconscious core of their being to be able to break through into the area of internal silence created by this withdrawal. In many instances it is the very mass media themselves we have to use in order to achieve this. Again I know from personal experience that one can achieve a measure of success by this means.

The media present a regular diet of fictional violence and viciousness, and actual reported disaster, depravity, death and destruction, with not much for one's comfort and uplift. Yet franciscan spirituality is characterized by joy, praise and thanksgiving.

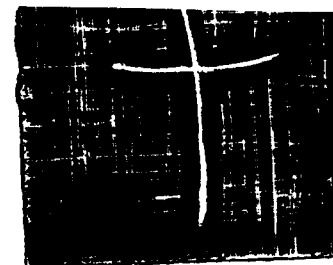
St. Francis' own times were no peaceful paradise. The feudal system was collapsing, and engaged in a life of death struggle with the emerging commercial society. There were class conflicts, inequalities, poverty, and social misery. Popes were at war with emperors, and city against city. Heresy was rife and religion to a degree in disrepute. Not a bright nor encouraging picture. Yet praise and thanksgiving could be the dominant characteristics of St. Francis and his brothers.

Amid all the chaos they remained secure in their intensely personal union with the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit; and, because love is always exhilarating and vitalizing, they brought fresh life to the world grown tired and cold. It seems to me our task in our own upheaved and depressed age is to do the same again; help people break through the surface of the world of things and bodies to the interpersonal world of the triune Creator and the exhilaration of "a life of intimacy with the Father through union with the Son in the love communicated by the Holy Spirit"¹⁰⁰.

Footnotes

1. Cant Sol, AB, 38.
2. OFF PASS, Ps 7, AB, 88.
3. OFF PASS, Ps 14, AB, 95.
4. IC 2, 7, 108 Omnibus, 322.
5. IC 1, 7, 17, O, 243.
6. POF 2 Prayer of Francis, AB, 104.
7. Adm 5, 1, AB, 29.
8. Adm 1, 6, AB, 26.
9. A "disclosure situation" is an experience on one level of reality which gives an intuition or insight on a deeper level of reality and provides a means of expressing this deeper insight. It is sometimes called a "more-than-the object" situation, eg. a child seeing its mother day by day doing all the manual tasks involved in caring for it, such as cooking, washing clothes, cleaning and sewing, reaches an insight into the reality of love expressed through service.
A "cosmic disclosure situation" is one in which a limited situation opens up an insight into ultimate reality with the corresponding call to commitment, e.g. "Yahweh is still my citadel, my God is a rock where I shelter" (Ps 94, 22), or "Yahweh is my Shepherd, I lack nothing" (Ps 23, 1).
10. An "Existential disclosure situation" is a personal human experience which gives an intuition or insight into the ultimate reality on which the person's existence depends and a commitment to that reality. It is "positive" when it flows from a certain fullness of being experienced, e.g. faithfulness or love. It is "negative" when it happens through a lack of being or a threat to personal existence, in what Karl Jaspers calls "limit situations", as in the case of serious illness or guilt.
11. AB, 99-100.
12. AB, 133-34.
13. AB, 67, 73.
14. AB, 55.
15. AB, 73.
16. ER 16, 7 AB, 121.
17. AB, 102.
18. AB, 126.
19. Reg Non B 130-32.
20. Ep Fid, II, 3-4, AB, 67.
21. AB, 44-45.
22. Antiphon AB 82, OFF PASS, Ps 1.
23. 6-13 AB, 63.
24. 50-52 AB, 61.
25. 4 AB, 105.
26. 26-27 AB, 128.
27. 2C 2, 116, 157 O, 489.
28. 2C 2, 111, 151, O, 484.
29. Test 4.6 AB, 154.
30. Adm 1, 9-12 AB, 26.
31. 2C 2, 144, 191-92 O, 516-17.
32. 2C 2, 68, 102-70, O, 446-48.
33. Adm 21, 2; 28, 2 AB, 34.36.
34. Test 14 AB, 154; IC 1, 12, 30 O, 253.
35. 2C 1, 12, 19 O, 379.
36. 2C 1, 3, 7, 9, O, 367. 369.
37. 2C 1, 9, 14, O, 374.
38. 2C 2, 61, 94-95, O, 440-41.
39. 7, 16, AB, 115-116.
40. 2C 2, 88, 125, O, 293-97.
41. 113, O, 1232.
42. For example see IC 1, 28, 77-29, 81, O, 293-97.
43. 2C 2, 124, 165, O, 494-95.
44. 2C 2, 131, 172, O 500.
45. 2C 2, 52, 85, O, 433.
46. IC 1, 28, 76, O, 293.
47. Adm 1, 3, 25; IILF 4-15 AB, 67-68.
48. IC 1, 30, 86, O, 301.
49. IC 1, 17, 45, O, 267.
50. Ep Cler, 1-6, AB, 49-50.
51. OFF PASS Ps 9, 2-3, AB, 90.
52. 2C 1, 7, 12, O, 372.
53. IC 1, 14, 34; 1, 20, 55 O, 257-274.
54. IC 1, 22, 62-23, 69 O, 280-86.
55. 2C 2, 153, 202 O, 524.
56. IC 1, 12, 30, O, 253.
57. 2C 2, 5, 34-6, 38, O, 548-50.
58. Adm 8, 3 AB, 30.
59. Reg Non B, 23, 8, AB, 132.
60. Reg Non B, 23, 3, AB, 130.
61. IC 2, 7, 108-8, 109 O, 322-23.
62. Adm 6, 3 AB, 29.
63. IILF 16-17 AB, 68; ER 23, 4 AB, 131.

64. IC 1, 11, 26, O, 250; 2C 2, 117, 158 O, 489-90.
65. 2C 1, 2, 6; 2, 159, 209, O, 365-66. 529.
66. IC 1, 2, 5; 1, 13, 33 O, 232-33; 256.
67. 2C 1, 6. 10. O. 370.
68. IC 1, 9, 22; 2, 2, 92-93 O, 246-47. 307-08; 2C 10, 15 O, 375.
69. LM 12, 2, O, 722; LP 82 O, 1057-58.
70. For the meaning of this term see note 10 above.
71. IC 1, 5, 12-13 O, 239-40.
72. 2C 2, 83, 118, O, 460.
73. IC 2, 2, 93 O, 308.
74. IC 2, 4, 97-98; 2, 7, 105-07 O, 311-12. 319-20.
75. LP 43 O, 1021.
76. IC 1, 29, 80 O, 296.
77. IC 2, 8, O, 323.
78. IC 1, 21, 58 O, 278.
79. AB, 101-02.
80. IC 1, 11, 28 O, 251.
81. IC 1, 12, 30; 1, 14, 34 O, 253.256.
82. IC 1, 5, 11 O, 238.
83. Reg Non B 9, 6, AB, 117.
84. Reg Non B 10, 3, AB, 118.
85. Reg Non B 7, AB, 78.
86. Reg Non B 17, 17-18, AB, 123.
87. 2C 2, 53, 97 O, 442.
88. Cant Sol 2 AB, 38; Reg Non B 23, 3, AB, 131.
89. Ep Cus 5 AB, 53; Ep Ord 35 AB, 59; IC 1, 14, 82 O, 297.
90. Test 6-10 AB, 154.
91. Test 11 AB, 154; Ep Ord 17-20 AB, 57.
92. Ep Ord 34 AB, 59.
93. IC 1, 27, 71 O, 288; 2C 2, 61, 94-95 O, 439-41.
94. Adm 25 AB, 35; ER 9.10-11 AB, 117; 2C 2, 20, 49-21, 50; 2, 46, 76; 2, 144, 191 O, 406-07, 426, 515.
95. Adm 6, 2 AB, 32.
96. Ep Fid, II 19, AB, 68.
97. Ep Fid, II 32, AB, 69.
98. Ep Fid, II 40, AB, 70.
99. Reg B, 11, 9-10, AB, 144.
100. Hinwood, Bonaventure, O.F.M. "The Franciscan Charism," in *The Cord* 34:3 (March 1984) 92.



Hermitage and the Active Life

BROTHER WALT HUND, T.O.R.

PERHAPS THE FIRST thing that I should explain is that the following thoughts are not the result of years (or even months!) of research on the subject of Franciscan Hermitage. I am grateful to those who have done that, for they have re-discovered one of the greatest treasures of St. Francis and Franciscan spirituality.

This is, instead, a reflection on the experience of hermitage as it has been integrated into the life of our friary. Of course, this is not offered as *the* way to live the hermitage experience, but we found this way to be a great source of spiritual nourishment for us.

I should also mention that, by nature, I'm not a "hermitage type" person. On the contrary, I'm one of those "B" type personalities. I'm sure you've heard the description of us "B"s: we hate to wait (for anything), love to argue (I discuss), think that all traffic lights should be replaced by "Yield" signs and, when the drawbridge is up to let a boat go by, would rather swim the river than wait for the boat to pass. My point is that I'm not the type of person that you'd expect to want to go off for two days of silence and solitude. But the fruitfulness of the hermitage experience has overcome the tendencies of the "go-getter" in me. Besides, we "B" personalities are also opportunists... we know a good thing when we see it.

The original idea to make hermitage a part of our life came from Giles, a brother in our house. He is, in the truest sense of the word, a visionary... a dreamer. As you may know, this type of a person is not very common in the Franciscan life today. Their insight and vision call us to change, a proposition we usually find quite uncomfortable. But if we can walk down that difficult path with them, we are often rewarded with new and deeper experiences of God and His people. Every house should have at least one dreamer. Anyway, we took the original idea, prayed about it, talked about it, got some valuable insight from a good friend, Fr. Andre Cerino, O.F.M., and then decided to do it (for some "valuable insight and explanation" of your own, see Andre's article "Hermitage in the City," *The Cord*, March 1985.)

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When you hear the word "hermitage," do you picture... a mountaintop ... a forest ... a babbling brook? Well, that's not exactly our setting. The South Bronx is one of the poorest and most violent sections of New York City. Scattered throughout the day and night, you can hear alarms, sirens, loud radios and the sounds of the children at play in the streets. Got the picture? Doesn't sound like the ideal spot for quiet contemplation, does it? But it is. With only occasional exception, we've all found the time spent in the hermitage to be basically quiet and peaceful.

It seems inconceivable that our experience can be "quiet and peaceful" in the midst of a lot of street noise. But is it the outside noise that really distracts us, or the noise that's inside us? It seems to me that it's the noise that's inside that can do the most damage. I have felt God's Presence very deeply and peacefully in some of the most chaotic and fast-moving situations imaginable. Conversely, I have prayed in monastic enclosures "far from the maddening crowd," and have been unable to hear the gentle voice of the Lord because the "hustle and bustle" inside me was drowning Him out!

Not all is quiet and peaceful in the hermitage, however. There are times of real testing and temptation. When we slow down and leave our distractions behind, we often find that the devil, as well as the Lord, is waiting to speak to us. Should this alarm us? Should it surprise us? I think not. Rather, it should excite us. Excite us? Yes. As followers of Jesus and Francis, we seek to be like them and to experience the things that they experienced. What happened to Jesus when He went off into the desert to fast and pray? He was tempted by the devil. What did Francis experience as he sought God through fasting and prayer? Temptation... at times so strong, that, to fight it, he hurled himself into thorny rose bushes and snowbanks. Now, I don't know about you, but rose bushes and snowbanks are not my idea of a good time. That's not what should excite us. What *should* excite us is having the same experience that Jesus and Francis had... temptation in prayer and solitude. Francis goes as far as to say, "Do not be afraid because you are tempted. The more you are beset by temptation, the greater servant and friend of God do I consider you. I tell you that nobody in fact ought to consider himself a perfect friend of God except insofar as he passes through many trials and temptations." We should rejoice at being called friends of God!

Of course, there's also the lighter side of temptation. Like the time that a friend of mine found out that I was about to be "cooped up in the little house for two days." He offered to secretly bring me a pizza at midnight, under cover of darkness. I declined, noting that the time would give me its own "food." To which he inquired, "But is it as good as pizza?" I assured him that it was better.

Our hermitage is an eight foot by ten foot pre-fabricated wooden building. Most people probably use them for tool sheds or pool cabanas. It sits in our front yard, in a space that we enclosed to give the hermit a little space outdoors in nice weather. Inside, it's pretty basic: oil lamps for light, a woodstove for heat and mattress for a bed. We go into the hermitage every five to seven weeks, depending on the number of the people in the house. It usually takes a half of a day to relax and slow down. Then you can begin to move more deeply into the experience of Jesus in solitude. We don't realize all of the things that occupy (and preoccupy) us until we pull back from them and "go off to a quiet place."

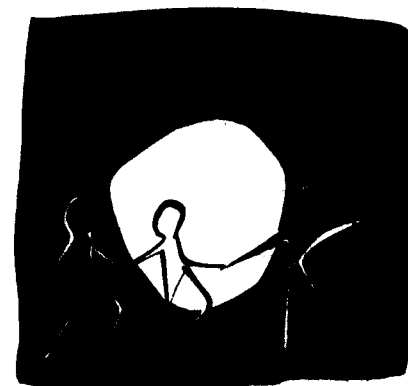
Speaking of going off to a quiet place, we thought about trying the hermitage experience within the house itself. Again, it was our "resident dreamer" who suggested that it would be beneficial, psychologically speaking, to "go away" from the friary. From my experience in the hermitage, I think that he is right. Just as going for a drive can allow you to "get away from it all" for awhile, so also can walking away from your house and going to a small hermitage outside. Also, you're away from all those familiar distractions: phones and doorbells ringing, doors slamming, water running, food cooking (or burning,) etc.

From listening to my brothers share their experiences in the hermitage, I think that I can safely say that we have found it to be of great spiritual assistance to us, both individually and communally. It is, for us, a "pearl of great price." But like the "pearl," the hermitage also has its price. We have to slow down, and that is something that, often, we don't enjoy doing. Running around distracts us from things we'd rather not think about (our unfaithfulness to God, our selfishness to our sisters and brothers, etc.). Theoretically, we don't question the value of it at all, but we can find all kinds of important reasons for not making the time. After reflecting on the time that I've been in hermitage, I must say that it was the times that I least desired to "go apart" for two days that were actually the most beneficial for me. And imagine my surprise when, lo and behold, God had managed to run the world for two days without me! And the Youth Group, guidance counselling, problems, successes, etc. were all still there, too. But there was a difference. I felt rejuvenated, renewed, better able to look at all those things in proper perspective. I also felt that I had more energy, more of myself to give to them. I have heard others in the house express the same sentiments. I have also heard them speak of feeling consoled by the Lord, of "having the burden lifted," of being renewed, of feeling loved, and also of feeling convicted and called to "turn from your sins and believe in the Good News." Indeed, the Lord speaks in solitude, and His Word is to return, once again, to Him... to move into deeper union with Him. But, as I listen to us share our experi-

ences in the hermitages, I realize that what excites us is not so much *what* the Lord says, but that He *does* speak to us. It is His tender voice, His gentle touch which causes us to know and feel His love.

Many times we find ourselves moving so fast and concerned about so many things that we rarely hear His voice. Our dialogue with God becomes a monologue. We're not asking Him to show us the Way; it's more like we're sending Him memos, informing Him of what we've decided to do and would He mind blessing our efforts? Many times we're talking to ourselves! And we can get used to it! Then, when we take the time to listen and hear the Lord speak, His Presence overwhelms us. We feel His voice. It is the experience of His Presence that we long for. That His message is one of congratulations, correction or consolation is secondary compared to the statement that his Presence makes: Our God is real!

It is this experience of God in the hermitage that has convinced me of its importance in the Franciscan life. Francis' Rule for Hermitages is beautiful, as are all of the lectures, writings, etc. about it. But we can find so many reasons for not doing it ourselves, for enshrining it as something that St. Francis could do but that is beyond us. After allowing the hermitage to slow you down so that you can hear His voice, you no longer seek to avoid it. Instead, you run toward it; you seek to protect it; you cherish it as you would a "pearl of great price." You seek to hear the Lord's voice, and feel His gentle touch. As St. Augustine says, "You have touched me, O Lord and I have tasted your sweetness. Now I burn with Your Love, and I hunger and thirst after You."



Motivation of St. Francis

SISTER FRANCES ANN THOM, O.S.C.

HAVE YOU EVER noticed that when we want to do something or we are highly motivated by the outcome or the pleasure of something, that we do it with great enthusiasm (God withinness)? If we are not interested, i.e., highly motivated, then we can find all kinds of excuses as to why we can't do it or can't do it well. We can actually make ourselves ill even over the anticipation of being asked to do something for which we have no desire. These happenings, however, are not usually of any great proportion in our lives. They are usually just little day by day chores or interferences in what we would rather do.

The saints, on the other hand, seem to be highly motivated in many directions. Once again, did you ever notice in the lives of saints that they seem to be very prayerful and often very deeply contemplative persons while being able to accomplish many tasks, write volumes of books, visit many areas of the world. Some of the most contemplative have amazed the world at the active accomplishments for humankind. They often spent very little time at rest while spending much time in prayer which seems to have fed the motivation for the very quick and multitude of active tasks.

Since the greatest motivation that we can have is to serve the Lord in every way possible, then, to spend time in prayer; conversing with Him who is both activity and contemplation at the same time, one should and indeed, must become very aware of the multitude of tasks to be performed, simply by this conversation. It would seem that the more intense the conversation (contemplation) the more intense the ability and motivation to accomplish whatever it is that the Lord has inspired the contemplator to do for Him. It will surely be done quickly and with great motivation.

The primary example of this is, of course, Christ Himself. He was most certainly highly motivated, and this motivation was contagious. Once the apostles valued what Christ had given them, they no longer needed anyone to motivate them as to what or how they should work for the kingdom. We, however, have not had the good fortune to walk side by side with Christ nor to be in the upper room after seeing the resurrected and feeling the movement of the Spirit within us. Neither, however, do we expect to be persecuted and nailed to a cross in the same manner as the apostles.

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What then is the way to become so highly motivated for the Lord and His works that we can forget all else and knowingly and at all times, work for His glory alone? We have to look at those who lived more closely to our own times. We should look particularly at those whose charism we have embraced. In the case of Franciscans it is, of course, Francis of Assisi.

Did you ever ask yourself how he was able to do what he did? When we are aware that his life span was so short, approximately 46 years and only 20 of these as a converted sinner and when we read his life after he had gained a few followers, he still seemed to be stumbling around wondering exactly what he was supposed to do. He tells us himself that he had only the guidance of the Lord to help him and that he lived day by day studying interiorly the manner in which Christ lived, since this was his example for his way of life. He was not given a daily agenda by God, but was allowed to make some mistakes along the way. It is surely amazing how God allows man to open himself to the spirit and try to follow the spirit within himself as well. One thing we can be sure of, if the motivation is strong and rightly directed, God accepts all kinds of things from us. I feel sorry for God at times, when I realize what a mess I have made of a perfectly good day.

When Francis went to see the Pope about getting his blessing on this new motley group who wished to serve the Lord after the example of Christ, the Pope must have wondered at their motivation. There were already so many ways in the established Church by which to serve the Lord and all of these ways could surely have used such men as these. But, the Pope did not turn them away. He prayed, probably, and hoped that their motivation would continue and their loyalty to the Church would prove valuable for other Christians—and he was not disappointed.

Francis could have ended up, as so many small groups of his day, by being excommunicated; by falling into heresy and just doing his own thing rather than obeying the voice and authority of the Church. But, as we all know one of the trademarks of Franciscans is loyalty to the Roman Church. At the present time, when there are so many opinions and so many theologians with opinions, which contradict Church authority, it is difficult to find the straight path which Francis followed—or is it? Have times really changed that much—is there something new under the sun? Perhaps the same motivation which caused Francis and his followers to remain loyal followers of the Church was the downfall for those who went aside from its teachings. Sadly enough, some of the heretics were very strong on the teachings of the Church but were asked not to teach it dogmatically and because they could not be content with that they disobeyed—their enthusiasm led them to be wrongly motivated, but just as intensely

What motivated Francis to give up his patrimony? He deeply loved his parents and they returned that love in many ways, but, perhaps Francis saw that his father's motivation for what he did was not correct. Francis wanted to improve on Pietro's motives for advancement and wanted to conform his own motives to those of Christ—these would not mix and so he had to make a choice.

We cannot condemn Pietro since we know that children learn their motivation from their parents first. Pietro had certainly motivated Francis to be a good business man, generous toward others (he never prevented him from giving parties and giving to others) even though Pietro's motivation for allowing this may not have been too clear. He inspired his son to be brave and spared nothing when Francis wanted to go off to become a knight. Pietro, like any normal parent, wanted to be proud of his son. The only problem seemed to be that Pietro could not understand how selfless giving and poor living could reap any benefits since he was totally a materialistic minded person. How different the story could have been had Pietro valued religion other than the money he made on selling fine cloth for vestments for church use.

What motivated Francis to try to become a knight? As a young man he saw the dream of the knight riding home victorious as a valiant and commendable thing. That he would wind up in prison and become ill had never entered his mind, but it was in that confinement that his true spirit developed. He tried to keep up the spirits of the other prisoners as he was aware that they had done a brave thing to do battle for something and someone they loved. In that sense they had not failed. Again, if one is rightly motivated how can one ever fail! Circumstances might not always bring about the desired results. Francis will see this repeated several times in his life and he will rise above the circumstances through his faith and trust that God sees the heart.

Francis' many gifts surely helped him but they could also have been a hindrance. Had his eyes swerved from the path set for him and his pride and desire for power taken control, he would still have become great in the world, but not in the eyes of God. He had the potential to greatness for whatever he would do. There was probably a thin line between the potential of being the materialistic man and the spiritual man Francis became, as he sallied forth on that first campaign. The gap widened when he was forcibly held prisoner. It may have been the first time in his life that he had time to think about what he was actually doing. Had he been motivated to go to war to make his parents proud of him, he would never have thought about the serious aspects of life. He may have come to the realization of another father who also deserved respect of him. All the intensity which had gone into parties, bargain-



ing for goods, being popular, now shifted, gradually from the exterior performance which was seen by others, to the interior study of all he had never noticed before. He emerged from prison as one who was a stranger to all about him. He allowed nothing to escape his notice and he drew it in as one draws breath to live. The real world was upon him now and he would be equal to it and just. He would be a knight; he would be a troubadour, of all created things but most especially of the great King!

Now he became as silent as he had been boisterous. He enjoyed the acts of creation as much as he had enjoyed being the center of entertainment. He was as giving as ever, but not careless and he sought out the least more than he had sought out the noble. The earth, the sea and the sky were new teachers for him for the Truth was upon him and he allowed it to set him free.

All of this, of course, was in the very beginning of his conversion and while he was enchanted by his new found dream, his new found life and his new found Father, it was not hard to be highly motivated. How did he continue this motivation when he became disenchanted? When life became hum-drum again and daily problems harrassed him?

He was not truly a saint at this point, but only one in the making and as such had quite a way to go. True his personality was such that he could see each new day as a new adventure. He could talk to the creatures about him as easily as he could to any person; he could cry over the passion of our Lord and not be embarrassed by the approach of a visitor; instead he would tell him of his great compassion and soon have the other joining him in tears; he daily investigated the meaning of the Gospels in order to live more perfectly the life he wished to imitate. He saw both emotions of joy and sorrow at the birth of Christ; joy, for a child was born and what a child!; sorrow, that he had to be born in such a poor place, away from home and under such circumstances. He again, saw these mixed emotions when Jesus was twelve and remained in the temple; joy, for Jesus was openly teaching the doctors of the law and beginning to manifest himself to the world; sorrow, for the doctors did not truly understand who he was and, sorrow, for Mary and Joseph whose human hearts were breaking for fear they had not cared for him properly. But for them a great joy returned with them to Nazareth. There was joy and sorrow in the public ministry of Jesus. Surely Mary missed his presence. Surely she must have felt lonely at times. Jesus, himself, felt emotions of joy and sorrow; joy, at the repentance of so many souls; sorrow, at the betrayal by a friend. But, it was on the cross that Francis was most intensely aware of these twin emotions. Jesus was sorrowful unto death as he physically, emotionally and psychologically suffered, but he was joyful in the full knowledge of the glorious outcome for so many souls. This scene Francis was most familiar with as it was these emotions he, himself, experienced at La Verna when the Lord appeared to him and embraced him with the stigmata.

The embrace of that stigmatization has been felt all over the world. What headlines would be written today: A LOWLY MERCHANT FROM ASSISI RECEIVES THE STIGMATA OF CHRIST! But that was only the final engraving of his likeness to Christ.

Had Francis not greeted brother sun by the day and sister moon by night; had he not sung God's praises as he wandered about the hillsides; had he not recognized the mark of God on each tiny creature; had he not wrestled with his own darkness and come to terms with it; had he not journeyed to Rome to pledge his undying allegiance to the Pope; had he not listened to the voice at Spoleto and the inspiration of the crucifix; had he not publicly proclaimed God as his father; had he not had intense devotion to the Eucharistic Lord; had he not totally emptied himself of self and embraced Lady Poverty, he would not have had the motivation needed to live each day. He would not have had the motivation to go forward and live in perfect joy which reward was the final approval by Christ.

In all of this, it seems to me, Francis says, look forward to each precious moment of each day for it shall never come again. Dream great dreams and expect them to come true; as if it were always your last moment and rejoice in it as if you were about to step over the threshold of heaven.



Incapes (Merton)

Incapes is their holiness,
their sanctity must come from God;
this clumsy pup, who runs my lawn;
this ever-changing beauty-laden dawn;
The stars that dot the midnight sky;
Birds singing in their flight on high.

I cannot cause the latent power
New-born of recent springtime love;
But needs must stand in humble prayer
And climb toward God on faith-lit stair.

Fr. Joyce Finnigan, O.F.M.

Vocation

"I AM WHO I AM."
Say this to the People,
'I AM has sent me to you.' "
"I am" a franciscan penitent,
and "i am" who "i am"
since "I AM" sent me.
Who "i am" is who
"I AM" has sent.

Onceforward wherever "i am"
or whatever "i am" doing,
who "i am" will
communicate itself: a franciscan
penitent
whom "I AM" has sent.

Michael M. Patee, T.O.R.

'Araphel

sitting for the universe
wrapped and still
dancing stellar particles
quark's quadrille
receptive sensitivity
attuned to cosmic band
gleaning starsongs globally
strains of light and sand
tracing dark divinity
a silhouetted face
in nebular Incarnation
haloed time/ a hallowed space

Sr. M. Felicity Dorsett, OSF

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