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FEBRUARY, 1989

The

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



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The CORD

A Monthly 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: Exhoration to the Praise of God
ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father

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
SalViri: Salutation to the Virtues
Test: Testament of St. Francis
UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare
VPLact: 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

Fior: Little Flowers of St. Francis

FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare

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. Hebig, 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).

REFLECTION:

St. Francis: Sanity vs. Faith

In an age when men wore hand-crafted money belts as a symbol of their affluence, a young rebel wandered freely, simple garments bound by a length of rope. While the concerns of war, business and family preoccupied those men of the world, the little poor man — Francis — sang improvised praises to his God.

And they deemed Francis insane.

So it has been since man's fall from grace. the god of gold and money has blinded us, deceived us into thinking that following the current social norms will gain us everlasting reward. Accepting what the majority rules will keep us "sane". How many times have we been proven wrong?

The Son of God, Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, was born to a poor cerpenter and his wife. He took the risk of faith: depending on God the Father to provide for that Holy Family. When He gathered a group of disciples, there always seemed to be a place to sleep, food to eat.

Francis believed that God cares for all of us. He discovered, after long, tumultuous years, that he didn't need his biological father's wealth or name to be happy. He abandoned the material life and set an example which thousands have tried to imitate.

So many modern religious orders claim the charism of St. Francis, yet from the time a candidate passes through their portals until the day he or she dies, there is virtually no material risk involved. Indeed, these candidates will profess vows of poverty, chastity and obedience — while living in comfortable convents or friaries where so much is theirs for the asking. Many believe it is only common sense for such religious institutes to care for their own. It is the "sane" thing to do.

Whatever happened to leaving everything for the sake of the Kingdom?

Julie Smith, mother of four children, is a member of the Brethren of the Cross, a lay-covenant community in Rogersville, Missouri.

Whatever happened to taking risks — standing up for the rights of the unborn, the elderly, minorities? Whatever happened to getting involved?

Franciscans, of all three Orders, must take the social risks their founder did. Psychological neuroses are the creation of Freud and his descendants, often in an attempt to rationalize the working of faith in one's life. Nurturing this very faith, allowing ourselves to take risks — even if it means others in our social strata may look at us strangely, or whisper judgements about our "lack of sense" behind our backs — will lead us more quickly into the presence of God than 10,000 years of "following the crowd".

Actors are arrested for protesting nuclear arms. They receive publicity because they are widely recognized. They don't get involved just to have their photographs taken. If someone believes in a cause, he should do everything in his power to let everyone know he believes. Hare Krishnas shave their heads and roam around airports. What is our evidence that we believe in Francis and the Gospels?

Everything we say, all our actions should profess our faith in God and our belief in what is right. There should be no worry-lines drawing our lips into a frown because money is short this week. Such an event should be cause for rejoicing: when the necessary pennies appear — whether from an unexpected check in the mail or a bonus at work — we can be sure God is taking care of us. He will always provide.

So much more could be said. What it comes down to is this: We can take risks — little, daring ones or major, "insane" ones — as long as we believe. Francis did.

One Soul

Friendship is like two chalices

filled with the wine of a single

flagon: one soul in two vessels,

one blood pouring through different veins.

Br. Joseph Molleur, SSJE

Poverty and Prayer: the Franciscan Way to God

JOHN P. GRYGUS, O.F.M.

According to classical spirituality, the goal of all prayer is eventually to reach a state of union with God. Such a union, from the human perspective, involves a stance of total receptivity to God whereby God is allowed to be "all in all", the point at which life itself is experienced as pure gift, a pure manifestation of God's very goodness felt in the depths of one's being, to which one can only respond with a deep sense of gratitude and praise. Only within the growing experience of such receptivity can true worship, or what may be more properly defined as prayer, can be rendered to the most High, a worship in "spirit and truth," for then it is God Himself through the power of the Holy Spirit who becomes the source and foundation of that type of prayer. This state of union with God can only be entered into through a gradual dispossession of oneself of all that is not God. In other words, to put it briefly, one must become poor in spirit in order to become rich in God. The experience of poverty is then essential to the experience of authentic worship or prayer.

It is my intention in this article to reflect on such a connection that exists between poverty and prayer from a specifically Franciscan point of view. The concern will be not so much with analyzing how the former can be used as a type of a meditative technique for entering into the exeprience of the latter. Rather, I will attempt to focus more on the process of becoming, of inner change or transformation which occurs within the heart of the person committed to the practice of evangelical poverty and on the style of prayer or, better yet, on the "stance of prayer" that then begins to emerge. Our model for this will be Francis himself

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— his life, thoughts, and his writings — for it is he who most clearly exemplifies this connection that exists between poverty and prayer.

It is beyond a doubt that no other religious movement within the Church has placed such a heavy emphasis on poverty as has the Franciscan movement. This is its chief charism, the unique contribution that it has given to the history of spirituality and therefore a charism which it must seek to live out authentically in every age if it is to remain true to its ideals. As Sr. Mary Mildred points out, "Without poverty, there is no genuine Franciscanism. Other virtues are Franciscan only in combination with poverty." To understand why Francis gave such a prominent position to the role of poverty in authenticating human existence, considered more from the spiritual rather than the economic and social point of view, we must first examine the unique understanding that he himself possessed of the nature of the human/divine relationship. Such an understanding is nowhere more clearly delineated than in his Second Admonition for it is here that he offers us his own interpretation of the plan that God intended for humankind from the beginning, the nature of the first sin which disrupted that plan, and what he sees as being the chosen pathway through which humanity can once again return to the original state of innocence enjoyed by our first parents. The Second Admonition then stands as foundation for Francis' entire life project. Consequently, as Regis Armstrong states, "It is here that we find concepts and images that we encounter many times throughout Francis' writings."2

Francis begins to describe the drama of the garden by reiterating the proscriptions which God gave to the first humans as contained in the book of Genesis:

The Lord said to Adam: Eat of every tree; do not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (cf. Gen. 2:16-17)

and accepts the traditional Judeo-Christian understanding of the limits imposed on the will of the first humans as being specified by the need to render an attitude of loving obedience to the divine imperative:

He was able to eat of every tree of paradise since he did not sin as long as he did not go against obedience.

However, it is in his interpretation of what constituted the human transgression of that limitation, the fact of the first sin, where Francis parts with tradition:

For the person eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil who appropriates to himself his own will and thus exalts himself over the good things which the Lord says and does in him.

Here Francis specifies his understanding of the first sin as essentially involving not the act of disobedience espoused by most of tradition but that of appropriating onto oneself the good that essentially belong to God. We might say, then, that for Francis the act of appropriation becomes the *causa facta* through which the sin of disobedience itself is incurred.

In perceiving the root of all sin to lie in the sin of appropriation, Francis will dedicate the rest of his life to trying to reverse its effects. The means for doing this will be the practice of evangelical poverty. Just as the original act of appropriation involved cutting oneself away from God by assuming a prerogative which was God's alone to assume, so the healing remedy for Francis will involve dispossessing onself of that prerogative so as to once again experience the immensity of God's care and solicitude.

What essentially did this pursuit of evangelical poverty entail? Most directly it entailed that with which Francis is most popularly associated, the relinquishment of material goods. Thus those entering the Order are advised by Francis to "sell all that belongs to them and strive to give it to the poor" (RB II,5). Once in the Order, they are exhorted not to appropriate unto themselves "anything as their own, neither a house nor a place nor anything at all" and be content in living a life of utter simplicity "as pilgrims and strangers in the world" (RB VI,1-2). Chief in this category is the prohibition not only against the ownership but the very handling of money in any form (cf. RB VI).

Yet, when we examine the totality of Francis' writings, we begin to see that for him poverty implied much more than dispossessing oneself of material goods. Thus, in the Fourth Admonition he commands "those who are placed over others" in the fraternity not to be so attached to their office that they would grow upset were it to be taken from them. Again. Thomas of Celano recounts how on one occasion Francis told his friars that if a learned man wanted to enter the order, "he ought in some way give up even his learning ... so that having renounced such a possession, he may offer himself naked to the arms of the Crucified" (2 Cel. 194). In the Fourteenth Admonition he extends this prohibition even to the desire to maintain control over one's honor, reputation or good name to such an extent that one should not even feel scandalized or moved to anger should someone wish to place one in disrepute. In this instance, as Armstrong states, even anger can be seen "as a 'possession,' something to which we might cling and with which we might Lord it over or manipulate another."3

In short, nothing is to be excluded from this practice of evangelical poverty. The demand of poverty is even extended to the highest possession a person can have in life, the slavish clinging onto one's own will. For this reason, rendering a spirit of obedience to one's prelate becomes for Francis the ultimate sign of the practice of evangeical poverty:

The Lord says in the Gospel: 'He who does not renounce everything he possesses cannot be my disciple' (Lk. 14:33); and: 'He who wishes to save his life must lose it' (Lk. 9:24). That person leaves everything he possesses and loses his body who surrenders his whole self to obedience at the hands of the prelate (Adm. III, 1-3).

It is quite clear here, from the association we see being made between surrendering one's will to one's prelate and the Gospel imperative to renounce everything as a prerequisite of true discipleship, that Francis considers the prelate to be but the instrument through which God manifested his will for the individual friar. Consequently, surrendering one's will to the prelate implied a surrender of one's whole self to none other than God.

What we see here is the notion of poverty being extended to the consummation of the spiritual life. Consequently, as Scarfia states, for Francis "poverty is not simply a privileged evangelical virtue; rather it is a life of complete self-abandonment and unreserved surrender to the mercy and grace of God." This is the real aim of the Franciscan dedication to a life of evangelical poverty, not the pursuit of poverty for its own sake but for the sake of achieving a total union with God. Dedicating oneself to the pursuit of such a union with God is what specified the contemplative dimension of the Franciscan way of life which was then expected to permeate all of its active dimensions with a certain spirit of prayer and devotion.

The starting point for entering such a life in quest for union with God was marked by a voluntary decision to release oneself from all attachments to material possessions (expropriatio). This was expected to be the normal outcome of taking seriously the inner call one felt within oneself to "leave the world" and enter a life of penance or conversion. 5 But certainly the friar could not stop there; rather, the act of material disappropriation was intended to have him experience the grace he would need to then gradually move into yet a deeper state of "inner" poverty, the disappropriation of oneself from all the inner attachments present in one's heart and mind, to the relinquishment of the depths of one's very will to God. Only when this was done could the friar be considered sine proprio, having nothing of his own. It is, then, the combination of this interior with the more exterior form of disappropriation which constituted for Francis the "summit of the highest poverty," that which marked the friars as true "pilgrims and strangers in this life" (RB VI,2), 6

For Francis the model of such a following of a life of poverty was, of

course, Christ himself, a point which Fr. David wishes to clearly make in his attempt to specify the reason for this virtue needing to hold such a prominent position in the Franciscan approach to life,

St. Francis understood poverty in a very comprehensive sense. Whenever he thought of poverty he thought of Christ, and the life of poverty meant nothing less, for him, than a life in imitation of the poor Christ.⁷

Thus, from the very beginning, Francis proclaims that "The rule and life of the Friars Minor is this: to observe the holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without anything of their own (sine proprio), and in chastity" (RB I,1). When Francis looked at Jesus he saw One who existed in the glory of God but voluntarily dispossessed himself of his divinity for our sakes so as to be born in a lowly stable, live a life with no place to rest his head and without permanent resources, stripping his outer garments to wash the feet of his disciples in humble and loving service, to finally die in naked self-oblation, totally resigned to the mercy and grace of his Father. Thoroughly embued with the symbolism of these Gospel scenes, Francis came to the realization that the path of absolute poverty which Jesus followed must become his own as well.

The positive effect of such a total abnegation of self became felt in a profound attitudinal change which then gradually began to take place, a change from seeing everything as being the result of one's rightful due to seeing everything as a pure gift of God. This is certainly reflected throughout Francis' writings but nowhere more so than in his Testament (most important for our consideration here because it reflects the frame of mind and heart possessed by Francis toward the end of his life, that is, at the attainment of the highest form of poverty possible). Thus, looking back upon the whole of his life. Francis proclaims unequivocally that: "it was the Lord who granted me, Brother Francis, to begin to do penance" (v. 1); it was the Lord who "gave me such faith in churches (v.4)... and priests" (v.16); "the Lord gave me brothers" and "revealed to me a greeting" (v.23)... and "has granted me to speak and to write the Rule and these words simply and purely..." (v. 39). Here is a man who is conscious of the fact that all that he is and has is the result of pure gift, of God's overwhelming generosity and love freely having been poured upon him inspite of his natural tendency to sin, which by this time has probably been pretty much eradicated from him. Thus, "in being totally stripped of his own self, the truly poor man now begins to be filled with the utter fullness of God Himself. This is the state of union towards which the entire pathway of poverty is oriented.

The only form of prayer that can truly fit such an experience of fullness now is that of thanksgiving, praise, and adoration; and we see Francis being thoroughly embued with this form of prayer as is made evident in the conclusion to "The praises To Be Said at All the Hours":

All-powerful, most holy,
Most High, and Supreme God:
All Good,
Supreme Good,
You who alone are good;
may we give you
all praise, all glory,
all thanks, all honor:
all blessing,
and all good things.
So be it.
So be it.
Amen.

Francis, now becoming aware of the Goodness with which he has been totally embued, has only one desire left in life: to totally give himself back to this Goodness which God is through a simple outpouring of himself in love, praise, thanksgiving and adoration.⁸

The above reflection can now lead us to make two important observations. Firstly, from all that we have said about the experience of poverty and the type of prayer it ultimately seeks to express itself in, we can conclude that the uniquely Franciscan form of prayer that we as Franciscans must seek to grow into is the prayer of thanks, praise and adoration - not merely because this was the prayer that best characterized Francis' own prayer life but because it is the prayer par exellence that flows out of an experience of total poverty of self which all Franciscans, by virtue of their charism, are called to enter into. And, secondly, from the above we can now further conclude, by way of outlining an important principle for discernment, that if one has not yet reached a more-or-less habitual state of praise, thanksgiving and adoration, then that one has probably not yet come to experience the level of poverty to which Francis wishes his followers to give themselves over. Still controlled by attachments ... which block the direct experience of God's goodness and love from flooding one's whole being with a spirit of praise and adoration, that one has still not yet been constituted as "pilgrim and stranger in this life, serving the Lord in poverty and humility" (RB VI,2). As is alluded to by Raguin, such a one (and in this category we probably would have to place most of the human race) must still rely upon the prayer of supplication as best reflecting his or her state before God:

My prayer is the expression of my relationship to my God. It is my situation before Him... The prayer of supplication is an expression of weakness,

limitation or trouble; but the prayer of praise and the giving of thanks is an expression of riches.⁸

Yet, even the prayer of supplication is a most fitting prayer to enter into for those of us who have still not reached the summit of poverty and for those times in our lives when we experience want and need instead of a sense of fullness. Why?; precisely because in directing us towards God, it already is capable of moving us beyond our self-attachment and so lead us to experience more fully the sense of Presence for which our hearts hunger.

... in being totally stripped of his own self, the truly poor man now begins to be filled with the utter fullness of God Himself.

In fact, it is on this level of supplication that we see most clearly how the conjoining of poverty and prayer leads us to greater transformation. The conjoining, the flowing of one into the other, occurs through the experience of faith which is a process inherent in both the practice of genuine poverty as well as of a genuine God-centered prayer. I would now like to explain this more clearly. We begin with the experience of prayer. What is prayer? Essentially, prayer involves a directing of one's whole being toward God. It is about forming a relationship with God through similar types of processes (i. e. speaking, listening, being present to and with, etc.) as are involved in forming a relationship with another human being, but with one key difference: Whereas another human being we can see, God we cannot. Nor can we apprehend God through any of our other powers, either sensible or intellectual. Consequently, we can only truly begin to relate to God through the eyes of faith: and growth in faith entails precisely entering into such an experience of poverty that we have been speaking of, that is, moving beyond all our self-constructed images of God be they sensible, intellectual or volitional — down to the deep things of the heart, the security structures or attachments which we have had to set up for ourselves in the experience of human limitation and need, the things that have ultimate control over us (i. e. the false gods in our lives). Why?; because God is always beyond all such selfcreated structures, so that in limiting God to any one of these structures (by relating to any one of them as we ought only to relate to God), we de facto end up severing ourselves from the true God of faith. Thus we see that a genuine God-centered prayer must by its nature lead us to the experience of poverty.

The reverse is also true: as prayer has the potential of leading us to experience an ever-greater poverty of spirit, so a voluntary decision to enter into the experience of poverty can lead us to an ever-greater growth in prayer. Take, for example, the processes which are initiated through the act of material disappropriation. Why do we tend to so tenaciously cling onto material goods (or anything we might tend to perceive as a "good" for that matter)? It is because such goods afford us a certain sense of security which prevents us from being confronted with the horror of our own inner neediness (i.e. poverty of spirit which lies at the base of our creaturely existence). The one who willingly divests himself of all material goods, as Francis and his early followers have done, will then naturally be reconfronted with the experience of his own poverty. Unable to bear the pain of his own nothingness one will have to seek refuge in some higher forms of security, in those first that he can touch, feel, smell, perceive with his intellect, etc. — because they demand less of a sacrifice from him — to those false illusions of reality lying deep within one's subconscious which afford one at least some sense of power, though illusory, in the face of his inner experience of negation. However, should one remain true to the desires of his spirit and so refuse to be satisfied with all such limited forms of security, at some point (for a religious person such points would normally be expected to occur throughout the process of detachment) his heart will have to open itself up to a radical experience of faith in which he then would begin to lean upon none other than God. And this would mark an experience of true prayer because it is then really God with whom one is relating. From all that has been said above, we can now see how a genuine experience of poverty (i.e. one which through the medium of faith leads to and is allowed to rest in God) is a genuine experience of prayer, and vice versa.

However, as the mystics have continuously proclaimed, it is ultimately impossible for us to divest ourselves of all our attachments through our own good will and resources. The reason for this is related to the fact that at some higher stage of human development, we will ultimately have to be confronted with our very inability to become poor, precisely so that we might clearly come to perceive all to be the result of grace. Only then can life be enjoyed to the fullest. The dynamics involved in this process of self-emptying which occurs through the interaction of poverty and prayer is clearly delineated by Raguin in the following statement:

The most important poverty for prayer is certainly that of the human means which we put to work in our seeking of the Lord... [But] as we progress

further into this mysterious domain of divine action, our tools are snatched out of our hands one by one. After a short time, it is no longer I who put myself into a state of material or spiritual poverty so as to condition myself for the encounter with God; rather it is God himself who divests me of all the apparatus of means, methods and plans which I had conceived when I set out in search of him. The very activity of the Spirit of God within myself strips me of all my powers. The further I advance onto this divine ground, the more I feel poverty — stricken and disarmed, and it is to this profound poverty that God calls me, ultimately. 10

When we reflect upon the sense of giftedness that one begins to experience after passing into the state of glory (i.e. that chiefly characterized by the prayer of thanksgiving, praise and adoration), it is easy to see why this must be so: because so long as I am still able to bring myself to a greater sense of poverty through the exercise of my own powers, what results can never truly be experienced as pure gift. Somewhere deep within I will always feel that I have earned it, that I have merited the prize, which in and of itself will diminish the force of the gratitude that one must experientially and intuitively feel in order to be brought to the fullness of the experience of praise and adoration. It is then only out of an experience of total poverty, of God breaking through the sense of one's total hopelessness and helplessness of self, that the prayer of thanks, praise and adoration can ultimately flow.

Do we see such breaking through occuring in the life of Francis? Most spiritual writers would probably tend to look upon the stigmatization experience on Mount Alverna as the point at which God fully breaks through all of Francis' inner attachment to life. I, however, would tend to see not this but the experience which directly preceded it as constituting such a moment, namely, the hearing of the Gospel being read to him three times by his companion. But let us first try to give an account of the frame of mind and heart which Francis brings to the experience. We see Francis coming to Mount Alverna already by this time divested of all attachments to life, material and spiritual, except for one: the responsibility he feels for maintaining the Order in accordance with the vision of life God had given him. In seeing how the Order had moved away from that vision, Francis must have experienced a tremendous sense of failure concerning himself and his entire life-project. His torment of mind and heart over this must have been immense, especially in the wake of his seeming inability to bring the brothers back to the original observance God had given them. It was perhaps in this state of confusion, doubt, sense of helplessness and failure (i.e. experience of total poverty) that he climbed the side of Alverna desperately in need of guidance from the Lord.

Bonaventure describes how, upon arriving at Alverna, Francis asked

his companion to open the Book of the Gospels three times with it each time having been opened to the passion narrative, and then adds the following: "and so Francis understood that he must become like Christ in the distress and the agony of his passion before he left the world, just as he had been like him in all that he did during his life" (LM XIII,2). Could this have marked the point at which Francis had now been finally led to understand that his failure and distress over the failure to maintain the brotherhood faithful to the original vision of life was not a failure at all but a significant part of God's plan for him and for the world: since he had been called to become so perfectly identified with the Crucified throughout his whole life, a plan therefore now to even be identified with Christ's own seeming failure to bring about a state of liberation as perceived through the eyes of flesh? If so, then the experience would have marked the point of ultimate liberation for Francis. He would have now been enabled to joyfully relinquish to God his final attachment to life, the sense of his own responsibility for the future direction of his Order and so with that the sense of failure for not having carried out that responsibility faithfully. He would now have been able to see by direct revelation how he had indeed fulfilled perfectly the Lord's will for his life and how the rest was really up to God. The gratitude he would have felt for such a supreme experience of liberation and exaltation of him by God would now have impelled him with great longing to be truly made one with the Crucified to the very bearing of his wounds. Totally absorbed in love for the Crucified, one can alomost hear him plead with God. "OK, if this has been the meaning of it all; if this is what you intended to do with me all along, then make me complete: Allow me to glorify you, Most Holy Father, as fully as he had glorified you on the cross, to the limits of my human endurance, for my love for you will not allow me to settle for anything less than that." How could the Lord refuse such a prayer?

In the light of all this, one can only wonder whether the secrets spoken to him, by the Seraph which he felt he could "never reveal to anyone as long as he lived" (LM XIII,4) were not really concerned with the prophetic role that his life would bear as a "living Testament" to call the fraternity to a constant renewal. If so, then is it not possible that Francis could have also been given to understand that God's whole purpose in calling him to penance was not so much to found a perfect Order, as he had thought, as to create a near-perfect replica of his Son to leave as a living witness for all of humanity to concretely see what human beings are capable of in seriously taking up the call of the Gospel as he had done? Francis' great humility would have indeed not allowed him to speak of such things to anyone.

Certainly one who has entered the state of glory (i.e. union with God)

through the realization of perfect poverty will be enabled to see Reality as it really is; for now, in having nothing of his own, he is enabled to perceive it through the very ground of its being, that is, through the eyes of God. Is it possible to get a glimpse at the perspective that Francis, fully united with God, might have had of reality, though we could never fully comprehend its depth unless we became as poor as he was? I believe that it is. To do so we need to once again return to the subject matter we started this treatise with, to reflect on the understanding of the nature of the human/divine relationship which Francis possessed. (This will merely place what we have already said above concerning poverty and prayer into a greater theological framework.)

For Francis, God is the One who invites Adam and Eve to "eat of every tree" in the Garden except of the one that would lead them to ultimate destruction (Adm.II,1). He is then the Bounteous God whose care and solicitude for all of creation, and in particular for the crown of his creation—the human person—knows no bounds. He is "the God," "the All-Good," or "the Highest Good," as Francis most often refers to call God. 11

Since God is "the eternal Good, from whom comes all good, without whom there is no good' (cf. Exp PN 2), creation must be characterized by a relationhip of total dependency upon God for all the good that it is. In short, it must be the result of pure gift. So pervasive is this concept of God's giftedness in Franciscan thought that Bonaventure, reflecting upon the heritage left to us by St. Francis, will go so far as to say that creation is relatio essentialis, dependent on God not only in its substance but even in its accidents; and here he will sharply part company with Thomas. ¹²

To say that creatures are totally dependent upon God for everything is to say that they must be totally poor in themselves. Poverty must then constitute the core of all created reality for Francis. It is that which binds creature and Creator, total receptivity with total gift, into an indissoluble bond of existence and love. Now this state of poverty, dependence or receptivity which all creatures share in common with each other is also what constitutes the true act of worship which they render to the Creator—and therein we have the connection between poverty and prayer again—for in having nothing of their own, created substances are left to reflect back to the Creator and each other nothing but the very goodness through which they were loved into being and through which they are continuously sustained in being. Consequently, the Lord looking back upon what he had made can truly say, "it is good," because he can see within his work particular reflections of his own goodness, and so be immensely pleased.

Now Francis, in having himself returned to this primal state of poverty, looking through reality as if through a hollow tube with nothing to obstruct

his vision, would have been able to perceive, first of all, the inner connectedness of all things to God in their essential poverty or dependence on Him and, therefore, flowing from that, the inner connectedness of himself with all things and of all things with each other through the same gift of poverty which binds all of creation to God. In other words, he would have seen not just human beings but every aspect of creation as "brother" and "sister". And this indeed was the case as Thomas of Celano recounts:

When he found an abundance of flowers, he preached to them and invited them to praise the Lord as though they were endowed with reason. In the same way he exhorted with the sincerest purity cornfields and vineyards, stones and forests and all the beautiful things of the gardens, earth and fire, air and wind, to love God and serve him willingly. Finally, he called all creation brother, and in a most extraordinary manner, a manner never experienced by others, he discerned the hidden things of nature with his sensitive heart, as one who had already escaped into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God. (1 Cel. 81),

What would flow from such a mystical insight would be a profound attitude of reverence and respect for all things, which represented a striking contrast to the spirit of irreverance, domination and greed pervading the rest of his society.

In seeing all things through the Ground of their being, Francis would have also been enabled to see the tremendous act of worship they constantly render the Almighty (that is, the manner in which they perfectly reflect the goodness and grandeur of God in their stance of total poverty before Him). No wonder, then, that Francis was moved to tears and high praises of God each time he beheld the moon, the stars, the hills, and so on. It is such a vision of the glory of God pervading all things which accounts for what is referred to as Francis' "nature mysticism." The single most important expression of that is perhaps "The Canticle of Brother Sun."

Of course, for Francis, the medium through which he beheld the secrets of the universe was none other than the poverty of Jesus. Thus, as Thomas of Celano again states, "Toward little worms even he glowed with a very great love, for he had read this saying about the Savior: 'I am a worm, not a man'" (1 Cel.80). All of creation, then, brought him in contact with an ecstatic sense of presence and love because, in its total poverty (dependence) upon God for everything, it reminded him of the total poverty of Jesus, which also but now perfectly allowed the glory of the Father to reveal itself through Him.

Finally, in realizing the state of total poverty within himself, Francis would have been enabled to understand the depths of who he was and to experience within himself the fullest potential of his own personhood.

From the human perspective, he would always see himself as being "nothingness"; but from the divine perspective, from the perspective of the giftedness he perceived within himself, always as "fullness" in God — fullness not only in the experience of joy which comes from the human heart obtaining the object of its desire, which is none other than God Himself, as fully as this is possible in this life, but fullness in the experience of God's own power to be realized in his ministry to others. The experience of that fullness would have made Francis all the more grateful to God for all that he had received as gift and, therefore, all the more desirous to pour the gift of himself back to God in an ever greater act of praise, adoration and loving service to all of creation.

In summary, we can then say that total poverty is that privileged existential position in which all aspects of reality are brought to an essential fullness of being. It is the point at which the human person is enabled to most fully gaze at the very face of God and in so doing realize the fullest potential of his or her own personhood as a creature of God or better yet — in light of the human/divine synthesis achieved through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus — as a son and daughter of the most High Father. Embued with God's power and light flowing through a stance of total receptivity, one is then enabled not only to see reality as it truly is but to render to God a perfect act of worship which, among other things, involves relating to all living things with the same depth of reverence, respect and love with which one is also related to by God Himself. In that one who has achieved such a depth of poverty, the Kingdom promised us by Jesus has indeed come to full fruition.

There is something about this experience that allows us to see it as being the pathway which not only we as Franciscans but all men and women must take in order to realize the depth of the longing for life present in the human spirit for, as St. Francis pointed out, it is the pathway of the Gospel itself. This places a tremendous charge upon us Franciscans. We have been given this pathway as our fundamental charism to be shared with the rest of the world. But before we can so share it. we ourselves first need to be brought back to its practice. In this regard, if our present reflection has done anything at all, it is hopefully to have shown that such a return to our fundamental charism, though it must begin through a serious attempt to simplify our lifestyle materially, cannot end there; rather, the act of material simplification must be allowed in and of itself to lead us to that deeper poverty of spirit wherein we become totally submitted to the action of the Holy Spirit so that what then is allowed to flow from us is not our programs of reform but God's program of reform, which is the only program that can lead His people and all of creation to the fullness of the Kingdom. When that happens, keeping in mind how we have defined true prayer as an expression of the fundamental goodness of God reflected back to God and to his world through poverty, we will end up with Francis "not so much praying as becoming prayer itself" (cf. 2 Cel. 95). Pax et Bonum.

Footnotes

¹Sr. Mary Mildred, C.S.S.F., "Christocentrism and Love: Two Basic Forces in Franciscan Formation," Cord 15 (January-February 1965): 15.

²Regis J. Armstrong, "Prophetic Implication of the Admonitions," *Laurentianum* 26 (1985): 46.

³Ibid, p. 443.

⁴B. Scarfia, "Poverty: The Life of the Friars," Interest 2 (Winter 1964):6.

⁵Lazaro Iriarte, Franciscan History: The Three Orders of St. Francis of Assisi (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982), p. 112.

6(cf. Scarfia, p. 6).

⁷Fr. David, O.F.M. Cap., "The Franciscan Ideal of Poverty," Cord 16 (Summer 1966): 261.

⁸Regis J. Armstrong. Lecture Notes for FS 541: "Theology of Prayer In Light of the Writings of Saints Francis and Clare," taught at St. Bonaventure University (Summer Session 1988), Ap. 6 v.

⁹Yves Raguin, S.J., "Poverty and Prayer," Contemplative Review 19 (Spring

1987): 31.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 34.

¹¹(cf. Reg. NB XVII 17-18; Laud Hor 11;l Exh Ld 10; Reg NB XXIII 9; Exp PN 2; Cant. Sol. 1; Ep Leo I,3).

¹²W. Hellman, "Poverty: The Franciscan Way to God," *Theology Digest* 22 (Winter 1974): 340.

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Franciscan Contemplative

Francis, King's herald, Seraphic lover of God! Clare, radiant light, Spouse of God's Holy Spirit! Franciscan mirrors of Christ.

Arch-typal Woman —
Resonate with Poverty.
Model Peacefulness....
Thank "Benevolent Giver" —
Mystical Lover... your Soul!

Contemplate Yahweh,
Holy Mirror of your Soul!
Center.. Life's graces —
Enjoy His Presence within —
Let God contemplate your face!

Tanka structure Sister Barbara Mary Lanham, O.S.F.

St. Francis of Assisi Within the Framework of the RCIA

KEVIN M. TORTORELLI, O.F.M.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a program prescribed by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops for the Church in this country. Its decree of implementation further specifies both its approval by the Apostolic See on February 19, 1987 and its mandated place in every diocese of the country as of September 12, 1988. The structure of the RCIA is designed to lead an unbaptized adult to the sacraments of initiation through a process of catechesis and personal formation. It will be with us for a long time and many have yet to get used to it. It will require some adaptation not only from diocese to diocese but within a diocese as well. This can all sound too involved and one may fear that the program is a bureaucratic and intrusive thing. It is for this reason that I want to share with the reader what I discovered to be an indication of the potential and wealth contained in the RCIA. It was quite by accident that I found myself reading the life of St. Francis within the framework of the RCIA and the general effect was to be reading him with fresh eyes and as it were for the first time.

The RCIA is made up of four major parts. The method I have employed is equally basic. To an attentive reading of the text of each part I have wanted to develop its theological dimension which would serve to draw attention to points of meaning or consequence in the text. Finally, this theological dimension seemed to find its counterpart in the life of St. Francis. Here it is a generous matter both of Francis illustrating aspects of the RCIA and of the RCIA explaining aspect of Francis' life in terms of the mystery of the Church.

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This first part of the RCIA opens the rectory door to greet an inquirer. How did he get here? What has brought her? The fact of the matter is that this inquirer is a manifestation of the evangelical mission of an often hidden grace. It is God at work drawing this very real person to his ecclesial self. One might pause before this profoundly hidden mystery—the interiority of the Church and the interiority of the inquirer are in touch however wistfully and frail such tender contact be. But this is a genuine effect of a real activity. And its fruit ripens into the life of conversion. Here is a development of the human spirit in the direction of a beauty issuing from a great depth and purity.

Conversion is a decision about who I am and why I am. It is a movement from one horizon to another, from the unauthentic to the authentic, from fear to love. What could possibly move a person along this way, littered with the debris of once entrenched horizons and attitudes? The operator of that ascent is the experience of God's love poured forth "into our heart through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rm 5:5). This kind of reality Lonergan named a specifically religious conversion and he characterized it as a response of total self-surrender, bereft of conditions, qualifications or reservations, urging us to love God with all one's heart and soul and mind and strength. Everything is simply different — and my own self principally and first of all.³

What makes Francesco Bernadone tick, this inquirer at the door? He is likeable. Dreamy as a schoolboy yet his attention could be instantly quickened by the telling of the gallantry of St. George against the dragon. He is exquisitely courteous and impulsive. Generous. His times were the stuff of headlines and evening news broadcasts — Saladin capturing Jerusalem, for example, or the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry VI, reasserting German authority in Italy or any number of new spiritual movements like the one that takes its name from the merchant Peter Waldo.

His conversion seems gradual. Who can overlook the signature of grace when Francis shows the importunate beggar the door? How dare the wretch endanger a delicate business deal with his rude stink and mumbling drone "for the love of God!" Yet in the next instant Francis hurls himself into the street, abandoning shop and customers, to make amends and to give mightily "for the love of God." This incident is followed by the humiliating return from Spoleto. Bidden to serve the Master and to return home the would-be knight finds an Assisi choking with contempt and a father violent with rage. This is all quite gradual and more could well be added but the hidden and evangelizing grace has laid hold of his heart. Its fruit, the conversion that is a conscious decision about myself and

therefore about everything, emerges from the shadow and silence of San Damiano. There the word of the cross and the word of the gospel speak. One feels the strain bursting and the strange freedom of the cross adding abandon to his emotions. Here is that specific religious conversion which is manifested as the pure foundation for what I *now* affirm to be true and hold to be worthwhile. But differently, this religious conversion leads to intellectual and moral conversion.

What is his intellectual conversion? It is the mission to "rebuild my church." How? The peace of the gospel of the gentle and humble Christ. "Pace e bene!" and the befriending of each and all. This is the poverty of the gospel, the voice of her who alone "mounted the cross with Christ." And his moral conversion? The lepers of Rivo Torto with whom the brothers lived and whom they served with a gentle, humble joy are the fruit of Franciscan moral conversion.

It is these dimensions of evangelizing grace and conversion which are constitutive of this first part of the RCIA and which cast their light on the life of St. Francis.

II. Period of the Catechumenate

The period of the Catechumenate is marked by a liturgical rite which receives the catachumens into the Church. To my reading there are three aspects of this rite worthy of mention. First, we note a brief conversation in which the candidate is addressed in this fashion: "What do you ask of God's Church?" The answer: "Faith." "And what does faith offer you?" "Eternal Life" (RCIA, 50). Second, the candidates are signed with the cross on the forehead and then all the senses may be signed with the cross (RCIA, 54-56). Third, there is a procession through the Church to the table of God's Word where the candidates receive the Scriptures (RCIA, 60-64). The rite of entry into the Catechumenate emphasizes the period as one of formation in faith and in the Scriptures.

What is faith? If we recall that religious conversion is the condition of total self-surrender as the fruit of God's love poured forth in our hearts then we may define faith as the knowledge born of that love, 6 the eyes of the heart (Eph 1:18), the eyes of love. We are brought to this matter of faith because love wishes to be understood and affirmed as true. Faith affirms love as true and so faith is knowledge of that love. Is this understanding of faith to be found in the life of our saint?

Francis's own formation in the knowledge that is faith is best seen in the encounter with the wolf of Gubbio. Here the conversation with Brother Wolf is instructive. His behavior is wicked. He is forbidden by Francis to continue in this destructive vein. To live in peace and to be reconciled he must renounce evil. As for the townspeople, they are invited to imitate the repentance of Brother Wolf and to have a care for him by feeding him and looking after him. This is a worthy parable of faith spoken here in the Galilee of Italy. It is representative of Francis' preaching whose content is the distillation of faith as the knowledge born of religious love. The instances of his preaching are numerous enough. At bottom, his preaching, the knowledge of God which he had in faith, is that Christ became poor to let us see the glory of the divine love and it was the poor who let shine the love of God in Christ. If one is poor, one lets Christ manifest love in that poverty. Here is a summons to let God be all in all, to be silent in God, to be freed from illusion by the wealth and faith of poverty who alone mounts the cross with Christ, who alone knows Christ. Here is a faith worthy of the Catechumenate period. It is a faith that draws out the deep things of God even with reference to Brother Wolf.

III. Period of Purification and Enlightenment

On the first Sunday of Lent, the catechumens are enrolled and admitted to election. In this rite of election, their intent is examined, their catechumenate formation attested, and their fellowship with their brothers and sisters affirmed. This rite now recognizes that these elect are "to enter fully into the life of the Church through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the eucharist" (RCIA, 132) at the Easter Vigil. As a result, Lent becomes a heightened, even an intense preparation for Easter. Its principal feature are the three great Scrutinies which aim to strengthen and purify the resolve of the elect.

These Scrutinies are conducted in terms of three Johannine gospels—the Samaritan Woman at the Well (Jn 4:5-42) on the third Sunday of Lent; the Man Born Blind (Jn 9:1-41) on the fourth Sunday of Lent; and the Raising of Lazarus (Jn 11:1-45) on the fifth Sunday of Lent. These three gospels offer an instruction to the Church regarding Baptismal faith as a way of living in this world and teaching the Church the whole doctrine of Christ in whom the Father is disclosed and our own Resurrection announced. The presentation of the Creed and of the Lord's Prayer may also be added to this Lenten preparation and even an anointing with the oil of catechumens. At the Easter Vigil they received the sacraments of initiation as the fruit both of a hidden grace and of a formal period of formation. The Church prays for them, for courage, faith, for the life of the Holy Spirit (RCIA, 220-236).

The Franciscan Lent is La Verna. Time and Space together. The Scrutinies are frozen in silence and reduced to an echo, "Who are you, Lord, and who am I?" Once before, the interiority of grace and human

interiority met in initial evangelizing and conversion. Now they merge anew, in the flesh of St. Francis, an identity of wounds, a reconciliation of the world. the dignity of revealed Scripture would not I hope be lessened were we to consider the La Verna "gospel" as integral to the three great Johannine gospels of Lent. Here too life and doctrine are exhibited in the cross of Christ, the focus of Franciscan silence and theology—in sanctitate et doctrina. As with Easter anywhere and everywhere, the dark of La Verna melts before the light of dawn, the light of love.

... the RCIA is able to bring a purely historical study of Francis to a deeper view as well as add a control of meaning to the hagiographer's reconstruction.

IV. Period of Postbaptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy

This last period of catechesis both for the community and for the neophytes extends from Easter until Pentecost. It is meant to strengthen the baptized in their living their baptism and the principal vehicle to achieve this end are the Sundays of Eastertide (RCIA, 244-251). Relevant to the Easter season is the number fifty. As with the forty days of Lent. the number fifty here symbolizes time as mediating. There the forty days of Lent really mediate the grace of conversion. Here the fifty days of Eastertide to the feast of Pentecost mediate the truth of Christ Risen. The gospels of these Sundays fairly burst with the transformed Christ in our world and in our history. The Risen Christ is himself transformed and he transforms grief and fear, betrayal and faithlessness. In all this the Lord is sovereign and free. He commissions and sends the believer even as the Father has sent him. 9 The centerpiece of these gospels as also the centerpiece of their proclamation is the Eucharist in which the Risen Christ is mediated in my time frame and life as true. Here is the mystery of the Church and a rich ecclesiology.

For Francis there was really only one Church and that was Little Portion chapel dedicated to St. Mary of the angels. It is the chapel of Franciscan birth and growth and death. Little Portion is the center which by that fact supports the periphery. Here is the setting for so much of the Fioretti and here we see the life which Bernard, Sylvester and Rufino lived together with John the Simple, Juniper, Masseo, Giles and Leo. Here Clare's consecration was received. At Little Portion the friars gathered regularly and in great numbers. Here Francis received novices. and here (perhaps for the first time?) death, pallida Mors, was received as his Sister.

Little Portion then is the center of a Franciscan view of ecclesiology and of the Eucharist. This view not so much illustrated in Francis' Eucharistic piety which strikes me as of a piece with his time. The mystery of the bride of Christ and of the Eucharistic Christ is seen in Sister Death. She comes to him at Little Portion and he receives her, giving her a name, at Little Portion, rather as though she were a novice. This a real transformation of death in the Risen Christ. In this transformation Francis lived the Eucharistic mystery, announcing the death of the Lord as his Sister who leads to life.

Among the great gospels of Eastertide, the doubting Thomas (Jn 20:19-31) occupies a privileged place. It is Thomas who raises the question of evidence. What counts for evidence that Jesus is risen? and it is Thomas who fashions a heuristic answer that is deeply empirical, one that will not accept as true the apostolic proclamation of his brothers. The Lord concurs in this extraordinary experiment. At the end, Thomas is brought to a high and Catholic faith. But what brought him? The wounds of Christ. Our wounds. These are the warrants and badges of our Resurrection, Lady Poverty is become Sister Death, his Beatrice, the escort of the Risen Christ. This astounding fact is visible to eyes informed by the Eucharist. For things Franciscan, Little Portion is the specific school and earnest tutor of Mystagogy.

Conclusion

These reflections and the method that has informed them have been built on an important premise. The RCIA provides the tools for an explanatory grasp of the pattern of grace in the life of St. Francis. This explanatory grasp yields fairly precise theological terms like conversion, faith, the Church and the Eucharist. Thus the RCIA interprets the event of Francis in terms of the high doctrines of Catholic Faith. In doing this, the RCIA is able to bring a purely historical study of Francis to a deeper view as well as add a control of meaning to the hagiographer's reconstruction. And Francis's life, in turn, is able to provide the materials on which an explanatory grasp operates and by which that grasp is illumined and kept biographical. It is just this fruitful exchange, like the upper blade and lover blade of a pair of scissors, that commends the RCIA. One can

and must substitute one's own experience for that of St. Francis and identify within one's own interiority the pattern of grace. I think that is the great promise of the RCIA.

Endnotes

¹Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Study Edition, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, (Washington, D.C., 1988), v. All references to the RCIA are taken from this final edition.

²Bernard Lonergan, S. J., *Method in Theology*, (London: Dalton, Longman and Todd, 1972), pp. 267-269.

³very helpful texts are RCIA, 36-37.

⁴Julian Green, God's Fool. The Life and Times of Francis of Assisi, Peter Heinegg, translator, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985), pp. 43-44.

⁵Dante, *Paradiso*, Canto XI, 72: "ella (the Lady Povderty) con Cristo salse in sulla croce."

⁶Lonergan, Method in Theology, pp. 115-118.

⁷Green, God's Fool, pp. 218-220.

⁸In addition to Green, God's Fool, pp. 249-252, references may be found in Marion A. Habig, O.F.M., (ed). St. Francis of Assisi, Writings and Early Biographies, English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis. (Chicago, II: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973) under "Stigmata, p. 1807.

⁹The theological exposition of Eastertide in the thought of the late Father Hans Urs von Balthasar comes to mind. On this matter, see Richard Byrne, "Hans Urs von Balthasar and the mystery of the forty days after Easter," Communio: International Catholic Review, 14 (Spring, 1987), 34-48.



Book Reviews

Deepening Christian Life. By Francis J. Buckley, S.J., and Donald B. Sharp, S.J. Harper and Row Publishers, San Francisco. 1987. Pp 150. \$7.50.

Reviewed by Sr. Marie Francis Galagher, O.S.F. Sister is presently working with the poor in the Ministry of Caring in Wilmington, Delaware.

How deep is the ocean, and how high is the sky? What is the length and breadth of the universe? Men and women are constantly exploring the world, and one new answer leads to many new questions. From birth until death, people are searching, finding, and looking for more. Some of us stop short of the next challenge, but many move on constantly in wonderment.

We are deepening our knowledge of life as we meet it. In general, each of us is born into a belief in God. Life and faith are similar in many ways. Both need to be nurtured as they grow in a positive manner. A true realization of one's faith can mean a strengthening of belief in God and neighbor. Despite all signs to the contrary, we are not made for death but for life. God made us to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him on earth, and then to be happy with Him forever in heaven.

The contents of this book are divided into two parts: Human Maturity, pp. 1-19, and Christian Maturity, pp. 21-134. The authors start with the human being who needs security, self acceptance, acceptance by others, interior and exterior integration, and finally a place to grow. Whoever has all these

qualities in their positive aspects is most likely to be on the road to life. Whoever has these qualities in a negative aspect is most likely to be on the path that leads to death and decay.

From our experience of living, we know that maturity is an on-going experience and depends on how our human potential is developed by ourselves, our family, our educational opportunities and the influence of others.

The first chapter is superb in its detailed message related to the achievement of human maturity. Basic human needs are the foundation of Christian maturity. Drawing on a profound understanding of psychology and religion, the authors find fulfillment in the love and freedom that are of God. Religious faith and its celebration are involved in an expressison of our humanity, not in its denial. One's faith in God is the center of a truly human person. One cannot be human without being in touch with God. Whoever attempts to be God-like while denying his humanity has a difficult, if not an impossible journey through life.

While every religion may be based on the love of God, the religion of Christ is precisely what deepening Christian life concerns itself. Through the power of God, Christ assumed His humanity on earth and showed us how to live and how to die.

Chapters 2-7 are built on a clear understanding of the first chapter, Human Maturity. We can understand the love of God when we have experienced love at home. We can have faith in God when we have faith in a friend. We can be

the best of whatever we are, when we realize why Jesus lived as He did. This is not a quick, easy task. It is the work of a lifetime.

If we are to cultivate our potential, certain physical needs must be met. Food, clothing, shelter, sleep and companionship are some basics. Otherwise, we become preoccupied with our own self.

Maturity is never reached once and for all. It is an ongoing process. After our physical needs are met, we face the need for self acceptance and a strong desire for acceptance by others. Mature persons face the desires of their hearts. They confront their limitations and strive valiantly to open themselves to new experiences. This is the road of life and truth.

Freedom is the basic virtue with which all are born, and freedom is the central message of the Good News. To be redeemed means to be set free from whatever holds us back from God. Then, we are free to be our human selves and to become fully alive in Christ: As the bishops at Vatican II declared, "Authentic freedom is an exceptional sign of the divine image within man. For God has willed that man be left "in the hand of his own counsel" (Ecclesiasticus 5:14), so that he can seek his creator spontaneously, and come freely to utter and blissful perfection through loyalty to Him. Hence, man's dignity demands that he act according to a knowing and free choice. Such a choice is personally motivated and promoted from within. It does not result from blind internal pulse nor from mere external pressures. (CMW, No. 17).

It is necessary that Christians recognize that the Catholic Church is dedicated to freedom. However, we do find ourselves struggling to attain this free-

dom. Jesus came to set us free. When He spoke of the kingdom, Jesus stressed the need to be open to new growth and personal development. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven hidden in the dough silently affecting the mass.

The book calls all to question our lives as we read it because balance and maturity are abundant on every page. Counselors, teachers, parents and others will find this especially worthwhile reading. The authors make the readers believe that change is possible, that life is good and we have a responsibility to keep it that way.

American Martyrs From 1542. By Albert J. Nevins, M.M. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1987. Pp. 180. Paper, \$6.95.

Reviewed by Peter F. Macaluso, Ph. D., Associate Professor of History at Montclair State College, Upper Montclair, N.J., and Adjunct Professor of History, St. Peter's College, Jersey City. N.J.,

Father Albert J. Nevins, a Maryknoller, says that he has a three-fold purpose in writing this book: 1) to present the lives, works and manner of death of the Catholic American martyrs; 2) to show that the Catholic Faith developed in the United States at the cost of many lives; and, 3) to reveal that many Americans themselves were willing to give their own lives to spread their Faith beyond their own borders.

Father Nevins fulfills all three goals and more. He presents a chronological list of one hundred and forty six United States martyrs and accounts of their martyrdoms. The biographies start with Juan de Padilla, O.F.M., who was mar-

tyred in Kansas in 1542 and conclude with Father John Rossiter and two laymen, Ferdinand Roth and William Hammes, who were killed in Olenaska in Wisconsin in 1985 by a man who disapproved of the changes in the Church brought about by Vatican II.

The Index includes an alphabetical list, by place of death and by religious affiliation. He also identifies the abbreviation with the particular religious order or affiliation. There is a short bibliography of sources after each biography. The book is dedicated to the late Father Marion A. Habig, O.F. M., who was the foremost authority on Franciscan history in the United States and whose notes and encouragement contributed to this work.

The introduction explains the mediate sense of the term martyr as a person who stays at their religious task despite threat of anti-Catholic violence and dies as the result of that choice. All died with evidence of odium fidei.

Of the one hundred and forty six martyrs, seventy nine are Franciscans, eighteen are Jesuits, eight are Maryknollers, six are diocesan clergy and sixteen are of the laity. The author recognizes the fact that there are Protestant martyrs but must focus solely on Catholics. The author, however, could have presented some sense of proportion with a brief reference to the number of martyrs for the faith in other parts of the hemisphere or the world. (130,000 Vietnamese have died for their faith, for instance, since the late 16th century).

The story of the 1980 martyrdoms of Sisters Maura Clarke, Ita Ford, Dorothy Kazel and Lay Missioner Jean Donovan is told, as well as the 1908 martyrdom of Father Leo Heinrich, O.F.M., and his last thoughts and

movement being for the sanctity of the Blessed Sacrament.

There are very poignant stories here, and one senses the faith of men and women whose terrible suffering resembled Christ's, in the trust and silent abandonment to the Father's Will.

The Future of Catholic Leadership: Responses to the Priest Shortage. By Dean Hoge. Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1987. Paper, \$12.95.

Reviewed by Bob Donovan.

Last night at the small suburban Church I go to for daily mass, I got a glimpse into the future. The visiting seminarian announced that there was a temporary shortage of priests. Not to worry, he assured us, the Church provides for such things. And so I was a participant in my first "communion service." I was tempted to leave since I had come for "the real thing." I stayed. It was nice but not the same. And in a number of dioceses, it is already common fare in those parishes that have a permanent shortage of priests.

So having heard about the impending priest shortage for so long and finally experiencing it temporarily it was really a pleasure to read a balanced study of its reality. Professor Dean Hoge of Catholic University has accomplished this in a very readable yet scientific manner. He is true to his discipline, sociology, and not being a Catholic is able to stand back from any personal bias as to future choices. He sketches many choices and suggests what probable impact each would have on the shortage.

In the first part of the book, taking advantage of a number of sociological surveys, Hoge draws an interesting conclusion. The shortage of priests has an institutional cause and thus calls for an institutional cure. "The vocation crisis is not occurring because of any alleged rejection of the faith. The crisis is at the institutional level." (p-. 18). The Episcopal and Lutheran churches have no lack of pastors or pastoral candidates. So, he argues, the Church has no other option but to choose one of the eleven institutional options offered in this book.

Each of the eleven options, some familiar, some already practiced, are all discussed and rated as to their institutional impact. Since research has shown that neither the clergy nor the laity want to close any parishes Hoge has sketched his options to allow for this desire in the face of a shortage of "priest pastors." Hoge divides the options into four types: "reshape parish life or institutions to reduce the need for priests (pastoral associates are already functioning in many dioceses), get more priests. using existing eligibility criteria (even the best case scenario for this option will not put a real dent in the shortage). get more priests by broadening the eligibility criteria, and expand the diaconate and lay ministries." (p. 35) Hoge, ever the social scientist, makes no decision himself. But he does suggest very engagingly near the end that not to choose any is the most radical choice of all.

Using the words of Father Gerald Broccolo, Hoge asserts that to stay where we are with more and more parishes being led by lay pastoral assistants who perform communion services in the absence of a priest is taking the most radical step. For it leads to replace

ing the Eucharist, "the corner stone of our Catholic tradition" with communion services: basically masses "without a Eucharistic prayer." (p. 212) That was exactly how the young seminarian described the communion service I attended.

The less radical step says Broccolo/ Hoge is "to ordain people to the priesthood who are not celibate and not male." (p. 213). This, Broccolo claims, is only a disciplinary change not a doctrinal or theological change. While there may be debate about the type of change, it is a change that seems to be rising from the people in places where the "pastoral assistants" are already being used. According to Hoge, parishioners in lay-lead parishes in Portland "are asking why their pastors couldn't be ordained, since they are ministering well." (p. 99)

The future is taking shape. If you are a Catholic concerned about the future, you will find this book "practical, realistic and helpful."

Praying Our Goodbyes. By Joyce Rupp, OSM. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press. Pp. 183. Paperback \$5.95

Reviewed by Richard Mucowski, O.F.M., Ed. D. (S.U.N.Y. Albany) Psychologist and Vice President for Administration & Finance. St. Bonaventure University.

This book is a very reasonably priced, thoughtful series of chapters written to help those readers taken up with the issue of mourning to deal with their issue. The author's goal for this volume was to have those who were touched

by her materials acknowledge their "leave takings." This was to be accomplished within the context of their own life of faith, with psychology serving as a foundation for such work.

Written in popular language so that the ordinary Christian might resonate with the experience contained within it, the author manages to spend her six chapters touching the hearts of thoughtful readers. She uses a reflective style of writing in which she interviews personal experiences of leave-taking with stories from the lives of others who shared their personal experiences with her. She uses a method of reflective questioning to encourage her readers to face their pain.

That pain, she maintains, may come from simple goodbyes that are involved in leaving friends to the deeper losses of years of friendship in a marriage which ends in divorce or with the death of a loved one. Her method involves an honest self-searching which, she contends, builds trust and courage in her readers to allow them to take many of the same risks that she did in moving ahead with life's challenges. Her paradigm is that of the death-resurrection experience of Christ which is the ultimate mystery that every Christian must face in his or her life. There are no quick fixes. That is refreshing in an age which offers instant cures and empty promises.

At times, however, the author's writing style is a tad saccharine for this reviewer's liking but, the substance of her message allows one to overlook differences in style and the use of an occasional cliché. The major insight which this reviewer received from this book was that each of us has our suffering work to do and that life's goodbyes call each person to journey into an interior

life. Following such a call is not always easy, but Sr. Rupp maintains that it is the only journey whereby a person can reach unity with self and God. The journey through life ultimately becomes the familiar home.

The final section of *Praying Our Goodbyes* is a compendium of prayers for those experiencing goodbyes. This section of the book alone makes it a worthwhile addition to the pastor's library of resources. In a nutshell, this book is an excellent pastoral resource for those who are pastors, counselors and those who seek help in working through a process of grieving over goodbyes. Considering the cost and the wise counsel contained within its pages, this book serves a purpose that will keep it in the class of books that are timeless in their value.



Mezza-Voce Little Poems Recollected

the poet's patience over religious attire the rose remains at the spring — it arouses me from a long unawareness

the triumph of the word, winter's somber fire fades in the almond blossom

with my eyes closed, my gaze guesses the secret of the rose — it cannot give up its frailty

I raised my hand toward the moon the shadow from the rose on my face

the rose is the drop of water within me not polluted by winter. My first cry, my last sigh

listen to the murmur of the blood in my heart

the rock becomes rosy in the reflection from the sky, the wind sways its palms

rose let my cheek approach your stream, my nape bent by daylight's scorching

the bird pecks at a puddle of cloud

in the heart of the rose remembrance of the moon, the remembrance of breathing as closed lips

I name you rose; if I knew your name I would die

cry within me of the pain which is trying to summon breath

two pure, tall holes, on the face of the moon —
night came on the chirp of the redbreast
may my poem disclose your chant

the shadow of the cross on the rose

A STATE OF THE STA

I passed through time and I saw the sign the rose forever chooses silence — the poet dies

for a long time I awaited a mouthful of moon — I await fire and water

this evening but this is morning, I have a great desire to play the reed flute, I am going to summon my breath when the sky soars toward the almond blossom

to laugh like a cascade of foam carrying me away contrite

don't you see that I am elsewhere, that my silence is not attentive it is the gaze toward the note suspended

I have tracked up hills in search of my name

space is open at night and unfathomable.
awaiting the mystery which dawn should reveal to me — ardent
patience — ardent blossoming
silence of religious habit and of whitewash the hills are blurred
the psalm surges and rises fleeting central point
I saw a face I stripped myself of my wanderings
a gaze draws me to the desert

the word is the place of the obscure encounter and of absence

I have no other chant but the sound of your name

spaces resound with the cry not projected the spiderweb on the whitewashed wall the workbench with the pale, crooked legs an open book wool the color of religious garb the Japanese cypress stretches the spiderweb on the whitewashed wall to the spot where the river subsided yesterday

Lisa Boscane*

Chemins (Paris: Editions Saint-Germain-des Prés, 1986), pp. 7-10. (translated by Sister Mary-Theresa McCarthy, R.S.M., Professor of French, Georgian Court College, Lakewood, NJ, who holds the American rights)

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The Kiss

The lips that once attracted me were full and luscious, shining with cosmetic gloss — soft to the touch.
The skin I loved was white as lily, framing sea-blue eyes beauty glistening with awakening;

not lips where skin flaked like dry stone, not eyes shrunken behind suppurating seeping sores.

I would give much could I lean to kiss lips such as those but I lack your trust, your generosity

to understand beauty as the inner reality of humanity.

Séamus Mulholland, O.F.M.

Books Received

- Taylor, Mark Kline. Paul Tillich. Theologian of the Boundaries. The Making of Modern Theology 3. London: Collins pub., 1987. Pp. 351, including Bibliography and Index. Cloth, n.p.
- Westermayer, Paul. The Church Musician. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. xiii - 128, including Bibliography and Index. Cloth, \$15.95.
- Wiederkehr, Macrina. The Tree Full of Angels. Seeing the Holy in the Ordinary. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. xvi 158. Cloth; \$13.95.
- Wilson, A.N. ed. The Lion and the Honeycomb. The Religious Writings of Tolstoy.

 Translated by Robert Chandler. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. 158. Cloth, \$14.95.