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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

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 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. 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).

Shame on You: Insights into Francis and Conversion

GUY FRANCIS NOONAN, T.O.R.

Whenever one mires down in a willful attempt to master life, the strongest feeling encountered is loneliness.

(Gerald May)

For the person... who appropriates to himself his own will and thus exalts himself over the good things which the Lord says and does in him ... it is necessary that he bear punishment.

(Francis of Assisi, Admonition II)

These words are written within a mysterious exchange. They are birthed within grace and sin, redemption and despair. There is nothing novel about this state. It is our great heritage: Desiring wholeness yet know ing incompletion. Wanting the One yet feeling divided. Loving togetherness yet choosing isolation. Standing up, yet stooping at least invardly in shame. Our condition. Our original condition. 'Original grace' and 'original sin.'

"Adam." "Eve." We name in them our tension. Their tale is our own, a way of making sense of our great struggle: Bliss and wholeness; fear and brokeness. It is hard to face, and so often times we cover up the nakedness of our long, inherited, generational shame. Maintained from branch to branch on our family tree, the trees in our social forest conspire together to block out light and overwhelm with one shared shadow of shame.

Shame is cyclic. It feeds upon itself as in a shame-bound family. It is insidious, deadly and dull. It lies dormant in most of our understandings; it robs us of our true self and lets a false self reign; it stifles spontaneity under cover of enforced conformity.

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Shame is shame-bound. Deviations are disliked and walls of outer standards become the unbroken rule. One's name comes from without, not within, and inner, personal dignity is sacrificed for the outer group. One must be very strong to resist this and not get caught within a cycle of addiction to conformity and control.¹

Shame indicates power given to an oppressive extra-personal source. As such, we have allowed it to distance ourselves from an inner harmony, the undivided, pre-rational self which is our core. Symptomatic of our state, we have lost the personal art of play. Not play as pure frivolity, but that which is authored by earnest participation and expression from within rather than motivated by the need to perform for an outside source. Our shame has divided us within ourselves and our world and calls for redemption by an inter-personal source. A source which re-unites that which is broken, a source which turn things around with our collaboration. This Source we call God.

Shame relates to an unachieved tantasy of ourselves, a fantasy based on other people's standards. Yet it is rarely played out in healthy ritual or behavior. Instead, we rely on pride, an external manifestation to coverup a psychic/spiritual nakedness within. We grandiosely take on more and more an outer mask to cover up inadequacy within. And so we are never really free because we are excessively dependent on another's admiration. Also, because our self-respect is dependent on qualities, functions, achievements and expectations that can suddenly fail and over which we may have little or no control.⁴

This situation is present in all ages, though the issues differ from time to time. Not only is coping with it a part of our own social fabric and personal growth toward maturity, but it has been formative of major figures along the way. Francis is one such example. His medieval town was not only enclave of party, friends and chivalry but also autoclave of stricture and control. The 'fama publica' (public face) ran wide and deep. It arranged citizenry in caste and maintained strong social control. Nobility, merchants, lower class and poor; all had their function and status within the whole. 'Fama publica' tended to want to know, if not to control and to oversee, people's behavior in its totality. ... A dialogue that could have its peak moments... it could also show pitiless ferocity when someone erred."

All the components of a shame-bound system were intact: Self as part of a larger city-system with only vague boundaries of healthy individuality; perfectionism of behavior and dress within an assigned/inherited level of caste; shame, despair and discouragement for striving to break out; rigidity to expectations; alienation and distant relationships rather than repair and

resolution; outer images and control of self rather than wholeness and integrity within.⁶

Albeit a town of delight for Francis, Assisi also breeds a heritage of shame. Yet somewhere deep within Francis' own being was given the grace to break out. He does not simply cope; he also grows. A divine spark deep within (the True Self) would not be stifled and a growing consciousness would not be put to rest. Right within the wound of shame was found healing grace. Francis' new journey would begin with conversion within himself. On this journey he accepted the call to acknowledge a dialogue with aspects of himself that had been cut off and caused a separated self.

This dialogue, what we authors call 'CONVERSION-WITH,' is a theme of this edition of The Cord. Francis accepted the call to bring together 'split aspects' of himself. Within his conversion process we see him become the great collaborator, maintaining a dialogue with all the aspects of himself and his world.

The fruits of this exchange have made him a hallmark of our history in Christ: Within him we see the supportive power of God's reign ('symbolein': bringing together) rather than the oppressive power of brokenness ('diabolein': that which is broken). First the grace of awareness and of emptiness; a desert experience. His friends report that distant far-off look from time to time. Then, an 'emerging consciousness' followed by slow, progressive mounting until a bursting forth of change, insight and union within his self and all his world. His Being becoming...

Two events might serve as symbols of this process of emerging self. Francis' unlikely embrace of the leper and his choosen nudity. Both show dialogue within himself and beyond himself, and both set the stage for dialogue with other creatures and all created life.

Strikingly dramatic in terms of public fame was his association with the lepers. It is therein that Francis testifies that God inspired him to enter the life of Penance and new awareness. The inner and the outer transitions are obvious in the words themselves:

The Lord granted me, Brother Francis, to begin doing penance in this way. While I was in sin [static state], it seemed very bitter to me [old awareness] to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me [inner process] among them [outer process] and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them, that which seemed bitter [old awareness] was changed [illumination] into sweetness of body and soul [union]; and afterward I lingered a little and then left the world [climax of inner/outer movements and transition].

It seems that it is not poverty which is the hallmark here. Rather, the striking inner and outer movement: Inner, away from conformity to the

public's expectation; outer, a passage from one prescribed condition to another equally proscribed. The unheard of acceptance of his own place with those whom society had abandoned. The entrance into the midst of the excluded ones. And the cause? 'Conversion-with.' Dialogue with hidden aspects of the self and with hidden, discarded others — members of a state wherein people could not hide behind their pride.

Spiritual authors have often spoken of the dangers of pride; it is one of our capital sins. Yet, pride is superficial and only a symptom of a deeper root which needs be tapped if spiritual growth is to be realized along our journey-way. For this reason, Francis' nudity is important for ourselves. It clearly symbolizes his breaking free of an outer source of shame.

A shaming father, frustrated of the fama publica goals which he strived to instill within his son, brings him before the square in ultimate test. 'Here, perhaps' says he, 'I will finally break his spirit and bring him to his/my/our senses.' And Francis, for his part, removes himself from the caste of father's jurisdiction, sheds the garments of his proud status to the ground, encloses himself within a new mantel of meaning and repudiates his past. His actions before the doorway of the Church symbolize transition, movement from a status which was externally secure, though grandiose, to a different dimension. He enters a 'penitential' state, one which no longer hides behind the symbols of the fama publica but becomes free and more spontaneous along the way.

This is no easy passage for Francis or ourselves. Ego wants walls to shore it up. Indeed, we often will use anything we can find to mortar up our shaky understructure. Power, prestige, compulsions to distract, anything to take off the weights that sit within. Even religion itself can militate against the True Self coming forth.

Sea walls are instructive. We design and erect them because they seem to offer us control. High enough, deep enough and wide enough they will hold the water back. And so they do... for a time. But eventually the very form which served as friend becomes our foe. Water from the depths meets our resistence. It is held back and yields a little, but only to return with twice the force. Turning in upon itself the water's waves increase in quantum leaps. Churning sand and shell and any other life, nature seeks her rightful place. Over shore and over dunes, beyond the originally endangered, depth levels-out the surface we protect.

And yet we persist. We prefer our walls, our divisions, our dualistic states of mind wherein we think we have control. We build up ourselves, and in doing so, we separate ourselves from other creatures and persons like ourselves. We think that this is the way of Spirit, but the best of our tradition says it is not:

We are being called to die to safe, conventional, protective piety; to dependencies, to spiritual immaturity; to the cult of safety first. Much in our religious life is geared to safety, not to sanctity, for sanctity involves danger, involves launching out into the deep, facing the wilderness, the dark-night and the perils...¹⁰

This is not our usual choice, and here we are in marked contrast to Francis. Raised behind Assisi's walls, he confronts himself, his fears, his delays. Francis comes to terms with shame and thus is truly able to become a 'minor' friar. He is able to give up the useless, superficial defense of pride since it no longer serves him well. The word-made-flesh breaks through and becomes his constant theme. Kairos force is needed to break the restrictive orbit gone awry.

Despite outer forces which intensify shame, a healthy human state displays things the other way around. Our spirit-flesh has a center and its gravity is God. Though we are not God, God and our True Self gracefully collaborate as one. But this True Self is gift and it eludes us well despite our outer pretense of personal control. The Christ event proclaims our True Self's struggle to come through:

The central truth is that God is in the human story, that there is only one story: so it is God who was born and suffered in the flesh for the salvation of humankind... The incarnation, in Christian theology and spirituality, is not simply an event but a process, 'a dynamic principle of transformation ... an action, an operation ... which continues without ceasing.'

We see this in Francis' writings, particularly three: The Admonitions (an exaltation of the 'lower' way to God), The Canticle (a song of the 'natural' way to God) and the Testament (his remembrance of his own powerlessness and what the Lord gave him as gift). Within these three can be stitched his theology of incarnation.

In Admonition Two Francis asks the friars to deepen their consciousness to understand that 'appropriation' is inappropriate! He calls to mind minority and exhorts against an outer manner which suggests autonomy and 'exalts himself above the good things which the Lord says and does in him.' 12 Herein Francis strikes at the roots of idolatry and grandiose pride. He understands that the will-to-power runs riot and overcomes the delicate balance between dominion and harmonious service-with others and the earth. He insists that the friars understand that the other creatures of the earth are more true to their nature and have more insight regarding their role within the whole. 'All creatures serve, know and obey their creator better than you.' 13

As the old Adam figures in the negative role of appropriation, the new

Adam/Christ is paradigm for Francis' way. He insists that Christ's is way of insight into life, that in-appropriation is appropriate (Admon 4 & 6), that flesh and Spirit must come together as True self (Admonition 12). And in Admonition 5 Francis tells us that this is the way of Christ. "Be conscious O man of the wondrous state in which the Lord God has placed you, for he created you and formed you in the image of his beloved son according to the Body (Flesh/spirit as one), and to his likeness according to the Spirit."

Francis' insight matches our own down deep. We know from the depths of life's experience that it is the subtraction of self-definition that leads to true unitive experience with self, others and nature as a whole. Superficial appropriation is inappropriate for who we are:

We know that the personality of man is a far deeper and mysterious thing than the sum of his conscious feeling, thought and will: that this superficial self — this ego of which each of us is aware — hardly counts in comparison with the deeps of being which it hides.

Since normal man is utterly unable to set up relations with spiritual reality by means of his feeling, thought and will, it is clearly in the depth of his being — in the unplumbed levels of the personality — that we must search, if we would find the organ, the power, by which to achieve the mystic quest. That alteration of consciousness which takes place in contemplation can only mean the emergence from this 'fund or bottom of the soul' of some faculty which diurnal life keeps hidden in the deeps. ¹⁵

Self differentiation begins at birth. We feel and see and experience the world around. At first all seems one, but gradually the hardness of the crib and the softness of the flesh instruct that boundaries exist. Concretely we categorize the world. One thing takes on where another leaves off, faces come and go and inspire humor or horror depending on how they fit within our infantile ranking and perception. Within this cradle are nurtured self-definition and self-image (body, will, desire, mind, relationships), the offspring of differentiation to the 'nth' degree. ¹⁶

But we are duped and dupe ourselves, for while it is true that a sense of individual boundary is essential for the self, the true self does not thrive *statically* in IT-self. Rather, we are related to other selves in dialogue of exchange and breakthrough which leads to love:

Exchange is what life and being are, and to prevent it is to turn the universe back on its course, a concept to examine in the nature of evil. But if it is true that to block Exchange is to contradict the very nature of reality, then it is no wonder that, eventually, something has to break.¹⁷

This dialogue of relationships is a core truth for all created life. Differentiation, subjectivity and communion must co-exist and inform one another. ¹⁸ It is the fundamental law of nature and of health:

Willingness implies a surrendering of one's self-separateness, an enteringinto, an immersion into the deepest processes of life itself. It is a realization that one is already a part of some ultimate cosmic process and it is a commitment to participation in that process.

In contrast, willfullness is the setting of one's self apart from the fundamental essence of life in an attempt to master, direct, control or otherwise manipulate existence. More simply, willingness is saying 'yes' to the mystery of being alive in each moment. Willfullness is saying 'no,' or perhaps more commonly, 'yes, but.'19

We know our basic needs, yet we go another route. But Francis, in his *Canticle*, sings of resolution of this conflict. He heralds the good news of accepting one's own humus and thus allowing one's creature-spirit to come full flower. The kenotic Christ is his example and his power. After years of struggle, conversion and a giving up of self, we are given insight into Francis' consciousness and our own life too.

Self-image in any dualistic sense completely disappears. Control is yielded. From first stanza of the text Francis assumes the role of creature: 'No man is worthy thee to name.' After proclamation of praise, Francis, distinct yet one in God, joins the other creatures in communion. 'Praise to you, My Lord, with all your creatures,' and the litany is chanted forth. This is no mere projection of nature as reflection of the self or as decorative embellishment of human life. It is 'conversion-with.' It is not simply a tool by which to contemplate the succession of his inner states. Nature has its own mission within his song: To open a way for him that lies outside and beyond him and ultimately to Being in its fullness. ... Francis' communion with nature is, first and foremost, the expression of profound detachment from himself.²⁰

But the paradox is that this humble route in fact exalts him and fulfills him on his quest:

Self-determination and self-assuredness are highly esteemed as signs of ego strength. ... [Yet] self image is the creation of a dualistic state of mind, and

it is always accompanied by images of the world. To creates 'you,' 'self creates 'other' and 'subject' makes 'object.' Simply, if one side of such duality disappears, the other must as well. It might be tolerable to see oneself changing within a world that is constant and sure, or to envision oneself standing on stable bedrock while the world changes around one. But in searching for the ultimate constancy of life, one has to sacrifice both self and world. This makes willingness extremely difficult. ²¹

Francis' song is a ballad of willingness and the transformation of his soul and all its symbols. Through almost playful lyrics he succeeds in descending into his own archaic depths where irrational forces dwell.²² Holiness and play overlap, as do imagination and faith.²² Reality is incarnational and the unifying inner principle is the great, redemptive, loving Word of God. And within the Spirit of this love, one giant conversation within himself, with other persons and other things.

Such a stance of faith is of great importance if we are to view humanity and the material order in a way that can lead to the sanctification and transformation of all.²⁴ Such faith is a created life. Francis' text was himself and his world, all ordered pages of one 'Divine Reading' beyond his own control and summarized in Christ. Differentiation: God – us. Subjectivity: God and us. Communion: God/us, Jesus, The Christ!

It is not possible to belong to the universe, to participate in its vital flow, if one is either being controlled by or trying to control it. There is no hope of realizing unity in an atmosphere of either submission or mastery." Francis knew this and leaves a Testament to the insight. All of life is gift: The Lord gave him penance. The Lord gave him faith in churches and in people. The Lord gave him brothers [and sisters] along the way. The Lord gave him the insight to not mire down in a willful attempt to master life with its consequent loneliness. Rather, while uniquely himself, he was one subject within a great conversation and communion was the gift.

In this edition of The Cord many authors have come together to highlight this communion. The Word of God in Francis inspires us to see that conversion is not simply an inner state. It is a dialogue, and exchange, with inner and outer dimensions both.

And so, Sister Rachel West shares with you her insights regarding what is necessary for a cooperative society. She addresses 'Conversion-with Society' and the dualisms which frustrate our progress toward unity and truth. She exhorts that dominative patterns of behavior must be examined at their root and that subordination of women to men or any other caste is oppressive of the incarnate process of God's Word and plan.

Father Alan McCoy addresses conversion-with and for the poor. His unique twist is a focus on 'Conversion-with the Middle Class.' He shares

with us insights that affect the friar and the sister who work and live among the middle class themselves. Depth conversion to an option for the poor will only come when the middle class experience with the poor and are led through this experience to challenge root causes of poverty and oppression. Ultimately, the result should be mutual respect for the poor as co-authors who have the right to shape their own destiny.

Sister Elsie Silva, OSF, shares insights on conversion-with the marginalized. Redeemed within this process are our stereotypes, prejudices, expectations, and judgments as to what constituted 'success.' Those with whom we serve can teach us determination, courage, mutual concern and trust in God. This is especially true because those whom we have helped to marginalize live within their own powerlessness which leaves ample room for God!

Final word regarding our process for this edition itself. These articles represent the cooperative efforts of the Peace and Justice Committee of the Franciscan Federation. Individually we wrote, subjectively we shared with one another at two meetings to review our drafts, and in communion we offer these insights. Our hope is that all of us, in reflecting and observing these things, will be filled with the blessings of the Most High God, the Beloved Son and the Spirit. ²⁶

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¹Merle A. Fossum and Marilyn J. Mason, Facing Shame (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1986), p. 35.

²Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens, (Beacon Press, 1955), pp. 4, 6.

³Fossum, op. cit., p. vii.

⁴Alice Miller, Prisoners of Childhood: The Drama of the Gifted Child, (Basic Books, 1981), p. 42.

⁵Raoul Manselli, Saint Francis of Assisi (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1985), p. 26.

⁶Fossum, op. cit., p. 34.

⁷Regis J. Armstrong, OFM, Cap., and Ignatius Brady, OFM, eds., Francis and Clare. The Complete Works (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), "The Testament" Nos. 1 - 3 (adapted).

⁸Manselli, op. cit., p. 37.

⁹Johan Huizinga, pp. cit., p. 141.

¹⁰Kenneth Leech, Experiencing God: Theology as Spirituality. (Cambridge: Harper and Row, 1985), p. 159.

¹¹*Ibid*., p. 239.

¹²Regis J. Armstrong, OFM, Cap., and Ignatius Brady, OFM, eds., op. cit. "Admonitions of Saint Francis," II: 3, p. 27.

¹³*Ibid*., p. 239.

¹⁴Gerald G. May, M.D., Will and Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology (Cambridge: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 43.

¹⁵Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, (New York: New American Library, 1974), 52.

¹⁶Gerald G. May, op. cit., p. 106.

¹⁷Rosemary Haughton, *The Passionate God*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), p. 47.

¹⁸Thomas Barry, "Twelve Principles for Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process," (New York: Riverdale Center of Religious Research,), Notes.

¹⁹Gerald G. May, op. cit., p. 6.

²⁰Eloi LeClerc, OFM, The Canticle of Creatures, Symbols of Union: An Analysis of Saint Francis of Assisi. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1970), p. 217.

²¹Gerald G. May, op. cit., pp. 103, 104.

²²Eloi LeClerc, OFM, op. cit., p. 33.

²³Johan Huizinga, op. cit., p. 141.

²⁴Kenneth Leech, op. cit., p. 251. ²⁵Gerald G. May, op. cit., p. 13.

And Now the Dance Continues

My attempts, at first, were clumsy, Ill-timed and often unfeeling. Concentrating more on form than content I soon became disillusioned and bitter. And though I kept up a brave front. My house was crumbling from within. But I did not know, how could 1? That I was not alone nor abandoned. And being guided, none-the-less, Toward a grace-filled moment, A meeting of the mind — nay — the depth Of my being, where form does not Matter but only the sharing Of presence: yours and mine in harmony With the world about and within. And now the dance continues.

Fr. Charles Wible, OFM Conv.

Conversion with Society: "It shall not be so with you"

RACHEL WEST, O.S.F.

In the face of the number and complexity of obvious social ills, the conversion of society seems an overwhelming task. Certainly it seems too great for one individual, even for a great many individuals working together with a common goal. One needs some focus, some way to connect all the problems, to enable one to see how their interrelationships ensure that the work of conversion undertaken in open area of societal problems will assist in the solution of problems in other areas as well. Such a focus is even more necessary to enable one to see how personal conversion is integral to the conversion of society.

Similarly, reflection on root causes of the more pervasive and insidious ills of society — racism, classism, sexism, nationalism — leads one to seek a single paradigm applicable to some degree to all of them. Immediately obvious is the relational pattern inherent in each one — a pattern which involves dominance of one being — individual, group, or state — over some other entity possessing characteristics (physical, mental, economic, social, political) which in some way depart from norms established by the "dominator." Alternate patterns of relationship between persons, groups, or states may be described with such words as "cooperation," "collaboration," or "solidarity." One who seeks to convert society must somehow try to find the means to move social structures in the direction of such

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descriptive terms, each of which symbolizes in its own way the essential "oneness" of the human beings who invent social structures and systems.

Some contemporary scholars, many of whom describe themselves as "feminists," believe that they have found a unifying term or model for dominative relationships in the concept of "patriarchy." Because patriarchy is an historical reality which did not and does not exist in every culture and society, many of these scholars believe that its continuing dominative patterns can be changed or transformed. Indeed, it can be argued that the very attempt to transform patriarchal structures through collaboration (women and men acting together as brothers and sisters, partners and friends) achieves the desired "social conversion." The process is itself the goal.

It is important to note here that persons who believe in the existence of patriarchy within social structures and its broad applicability as a paradigm of dominative relationships are not, by any means, all angry, "radical feminists." They are, however, all people who have noted the destructive patterns which have marked relationships between men and women and between groups characterized by terms commonly applied to either men or women. Their numbers include many Christian feminists (both women and men) whose conviction that patriarchy as a pattern of dominative relationships must be denounced as contrary to the Gospel is matched only by their love for the Church Christ founded.

Defined in its narrowest form, patriarchy refers to the arrangement of society characterized by domination of the male head of the family over dependent female and male family members. As such, some historians conclude that, within western civilization, patriarchy came to an end in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the grant of civil and economic rights to women. Defined in a broader way, however, by modern feminist scholars, patriarchy refers to the structural and societal domination of males and what have been defined as "masculine" characteristics over females and what have been defined as "feminine" characteristics.

Patriarchal modes of thought, those which evolved over time within patriarchal cultures as narrowly defined, are characterized by dualisms which are pitted against each other: male/female; spirit/nature; heaven/earth; light/dark, etc. Invariably, the second part of the duo is associated with what is inferior and deserving of manipulation or destruction, and, modern students of patriarchy have shown, also invariably, it is associated with women's myth and reality as distinct from the myth and reality of men.

Some people now believe that it is the existence of patriarchal patterns of behavior within basic social institutions which is responsible for the exploitation of the earth and its resources, for "war mentality" and its tragic consequences, and for the failure of attempts of global cooperation.

And, some believe, its destructive patterns not only pre-date class, race, and national divisions, but furnish the evils of classism, racism, and nationalism with their necessary symbolic rationale and vocabulary. In her pathbreaking work, The Creation of Patriarchy, the historian Gerda Lerner shows how such symbols are articulated in Aristotle's Politics and other sources of Western thought. Aristotle, whose thought has so heavily influenced western philosophers, argued persuasively that the division of humanity into two categories (male and female) possessing two quite different sets of characteristics — those of the male fitting him to rule and those of the female fitting her to be ruled — justified men's dominance, not only over women, but also over other men who possessed (or who were said to possess) characteristics associated with the feminine. Thus the strong could (and should) dominate the weak, and those who had possessions and political/social power should dominate those who had none.²

The cultural historian and theologian Thomas Berry lists "four patriarchal institutions that have governed western history... the political empires, the institutional church, the nation-state, and the modern corporation. ..." Each of these institutions is characterized by the domination of males; valued characteristics of each (power, strength, conquest, dominion, etc.) are those ordinarily associated with masculinity. Exceptional women who have assumed positions of power within any one of them have had to accept the prevailing philosophy or ideology set by males, together with a masculine management "style," if their rule was to be accepted within the institutional system.

According to Berry's analysis, each of these institutions is also characterized by patterns of thought which result, not only in the domination and oppression of women, but in the domination and exploitation of the resources of the planet as well. Symbolically, women are identified with the earth, and in patriarchal systems, both women and the earth are "fair game." "As these establishments endure," Barry states, "the consequences of their exploitation may soon be akin to nuclear winter. Their patriarchal plundering processes are devastating the natural systems of the planet." 4

What does the harsh and pessimistic exposition of the prevalence and effects of patriarchy have to do with personal and societal conversion? A great deal. If life is to continue on this planet, if a major portion of that life is not to be destroyed by the devastation of war or the consequences of a "nuclear winter," and (on a more local and personal level) if we are to find creative solutions to society's daily problems of crime, homelessness, and poverty, we must examine the roots of these problems. If patriarchy (or, at least the dominative patterns of behavior which it represents) is at their root, then we must examine it. Further, we must seek,

not just passing solutions, but genuine transformation of the ideologies and patterns which underlie the problems.

Such transformation calls for reflection upon and analysis of the reality of patriarchy and the patterns of dominative relationships it represents as they exist in all social structures. It calls for individuals interested in transforming these structures to reflect upon the hold patriarchy has on their own thoughts and actions. It calls also for reflection on the connection of this undertaking and the message of the Gospel.

Gerda Lerner distinguishes between the terms "oppression," and "subordination" of women within patriarchy. She rejects the former term as too "subjective" in its focus on the "victimization" of one group (women) by another (men). While not denying that, in many cases, women as a group have indeed been both oppressed and victimized, Lerner shows

Franciscans should always stand as a counter to societal relations based on dominance.

convincingly that "women, more than any other group, have collaborated in their own subordination through their acceptance of the sex-gender system". Subordination is a more "neutral" term when referring to the status of women within patriarchal systems, and it includes all forms of relationship between women and men within patriarchy — not least those which women have entered into voluntarily for protection and privilege.

This distinction is important, because it points to an essential element of "conversion" from a society characterized by structures of domination to one marked by cooperation and collaboration, particularly between women and men. If such conversion is to be accomplished, it must be undertaken by both dominator and dominated, by both women and men. To consider one sex, class, race, or nation the victim and another the "oppressor" is an error which leads, almost inevitably, to the desire on the part of the "oppressed" or allegedly "victimized," simply to reverse roles, to become the dominator rather than the dominated. Conversion from patriarchy does not mean, and can not mean, conversion to matriarchy (rule by women or the assumption that feminine characteristics are somehow superior to those deemed masculine). In reality, in a sexist, or classist, or racist, or nationalist society, all are "victims" of the oppressive structure. There are no real winners; all are losers.

Conversion from patriarchy to collaboration must, then, be undertaken collaboratively — that is, by women and men acting together. For Franciscans, the call to conversion from patterns of domination to patterns of collaboration and solidarity with ALL persons is a call to fuller realization of the brother-and sisterhood with each other, with all creation and with the Incarnate Christ which Francis understood so well. Francis' recognition of the interrelationship of all creation, of his solidarity with the least as well as the greatest, is, I believe, the Franciscan gift to the world and the church. Francis grasped, in an especially insightful way, the meaning of Jesus' words to his disciples: "The rulers of the world make their authority felt. It shall not be so with you." (Mk: 10:43) Because of this particular Franciscan call to conversion/collaboration, Franciscans should always stand as a counter to societal relations based on dominance. Ideally, relationships among male and female members of the Franciscan family should stand as models of that equality and mutuality so needed in the conversion of society.

On a personal level, conversion to solidarity with and for all demands that one examine the ways in which patriarchal models of dominance govern our thoughts and behavior in many not always obvious ways. The words of one feminist writer are instructive: "For me, to be a Christian is to become aware of the degree to which I am a participant in structures of oppression, structures of race, class, and national identity. As a woman, I am oppressed by the structures of patriarchy. Yet as white, I benefit from the oppression of other races. As a person whose economic level is middle-class, I am both victim and victimizer of others. As an American, I live within a nation whose policies are economically, politically, and environmentaly disastrous for far too many of the world's people."

Such recognition of one's own complicity in maintaining the dualisms which are at the core of patriarchy is a necessary first step toward conversion with society. It is not always easy to recognize this complicity. Women may fail to recognize the ways in which their failure to assert their own personhood and dignity, perhaps in the guise of maintaining a false idea of "femininity," has contributed to masculine domination. (Writers on the topic of women's spirituality suggest that while, for men, the root sin may be that of pride, for women the basic sin may be its opposite — a false humility that denies one's full human dignity). Men may fail to recognize that becoming a full human being means recognizing and affirming within themselves and others traits they have often rejected as feminine.

In another vein, recognition of the pervasiveness of patriarchal patterns of thought should lead Franciscan men and women to read the Franciscan sources with a more critical eye. A "wise" reading of these sources demands careful reconstruction of the historical past in the full realization that most

have been handed down to us in the context of a patriarchal system characterized by dominative relationships between men and women. Such reconstruction should have as its aim the exploration of the entire scene in which the documents were written — to discover both patriarchal and non-patriarchal elements. A fuller exploration of the sources can help us to learn from the past, not only what was "wrong" or oppressive to women within the era in which Francis and Clare lived, but also how these individuals managed, despite their cultural milieu of patriarchy, to attain quite amazing insights regarding such concepts as "discipleship of equals," and sister/ brotherhood. To fail to read the Franciscan sources with such a critical eye is to be a Franciscan "fundamentalist." Fundamentalists are hardly astute guides for positive social change.

Finally, we must work to counter, both ourselves and within all social structures, including our Church, those destructive elements of patriarchy which still remain. To denounce such patterns of dominative relationships can demand much courage, but it is an eminently Franciscan work.

Endnotes

¹Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1986), pp. 238-39.

²Ibid., pp. 207-09.

³Thomas Berry, "Our Future on Earth: Where Do We Go From Here," in Anne Lonergan and Caroline Richards, ed., *Thomas Berry and the New Cosmology* (Twenty-Third Publication: Mystic, Connecticut, 1987), p. 105. See also, Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (Siera Club Books: San Francisco, 1988), pp. 138-62.

⁴Ibid., p. 106.

⁵Lerner, op. cit., p. 234.

⁶Sharon D. Welch, Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Theology of Liberation (Orbis: New York, 1985) ix.

⁷See Carolyn Osiek, R.S.C.J., Beyond Anger: On Being a Feminist in the Church. (Paulist Press: Mahwah, N.J., 1986), p. 49.

La Verna

seraph love burns crossing over human dreams seared in blood white light

Bernard Kennedy, OFM

The Franciscan Conversion With the Middle Class

ALLAN McCOY, O.F.M.

A Franciscan, a follower of Francis of Assisi, who as Dom Helder Camara says is rash and brave to bear such a name¹ must always make choices suitable to each age, namely "How do I live as a Franciscan today, and how do I minister now as a follower of the Poverello?"

This article will attempt to address both these questions. My ministry as a Franciscan entails an ongoing personal conversion in which I hopefully accompany those to whom I minister.

To respond to the call for the Church in the United States, to give special attention to the African Americans and the new immigrants in our midst, it will be very important to look to the Catholics as represented in the post-immigrant Church. Much of our church structure and active membership reflects our middle class society. In view of this and of the great potential of middle America to help those struggling as a result of the injustices of the past and present, it can well be said that the proximate concern of the U.S. Catholic Church today should be the conversion of the middle class². Conversion is an ongoing process and to stress the need for conversion of an adult Catholic does not reflect on the basic goodness of the person. Each of us is in continuing need of conversion, a turning more completely to our living God. And this is true even of those who have reached a high stage of holiness. Our efforts for our personal conver-

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sion and for the conversion of those to whom we minister are to enable us all to become more truly Christian.

The initial call that Franciscan women and men received is one that usually found them in the middle class in our country. In responding to that call to become truly lesser sisters and brothers one realizes that there is need for much progress if one is to become a full Franciscan, a follower of the "poor little brother." Hence there is need for us to accompany our middle class Catholics on their journey of spiritual growth.

Today the Church acknowledges its call to a loving, preferential option for the poor. In examining the path that leads to true solidarity with them, I have found two articles to be especially helpful. One is "Spiritual Growth and the Option for the Poor", by Albert Nolan, O.P. in Maryknoll's World Apostolate Bulletin, Nov. Dec. 1985. The other is by Theodore Wiesner, C.M., "Experiencing God in the Poor," in Spiritual Life, Winter 1987. Although we describe stages of growth, we are not to take these in too rigid a fashion so that we would have to go through exactly one stage after another. Rather, these are to be seen as a model, so that we can see experiencing God in the poor as a process of spiritual growth. The one really bad thing that can happen is that we get stuck along the way.

The First Conversion

The first stage of conversion in our relationship to the poor and the oppressed responds to the reality that to be truly Christian one must come to accept Christ in them. It is a conversion which calls for true compassion, an appreciation of their needs and a sincere desire to do something about the situation. This calls us to direct aid. The biographers of St. Francis bring out clearly that his first conversion was toward the poor and suffering Christ in the poor. Even in his youth, he saved cloth from his father's store for the needy. After his conversion, the poor and the poor Christ were for him one and the same person. He was affectionate and gentle in a special way for the least of persons, the lepers. He began to live with the lepers, caring for them, healing their wounds, feeding them, denying himself to serve them, even to the point of kissing them on the mouth. Even before he changed his social status, he had begun to live for the poor giving them food and money. 4 He never forgot the poor in later life, even giving the only copy of the New Testament, used for the meditation of the brothers, to a poor woman with this comment: "The New Testament commands us to help the poor, I believe that God values more our giving alms than our reading."

Are there poor in our country today? This is seriously challenged by some who seem not to be able to open their eyes to reality. There are

an estimated 20 million hungry, 60% of them children. Between 1977 and 1986 the number of poor people in the United States increased from 24.7 to 32.4 million. Estimates of the homeless range from half a million to four million.⁵ In 1987 33% of the homeless population were families with children. 1/5 of all children live below the poverty level and nearly 25% of all children under the age of six are poor.

This first stage of conversion takes place when we come to experience the plight of these poor in our midst. This can be through direct contact or through someone bringing us a clear picture of what is happening in the lives of our brothers and sisters. We see the homeless, those who do not have food, sufficient clothing, basic medical care, — and with God's grace, our response is one of true compassion, actually suffering with them. We accept the call now to make every effort to make sure that their basic needs are taken care of.

The Catholic Church in the United States has outstanding examples of such a generous response of direct relief throughout the country. The Franciscan centers of direct relief in the United States give eloquent testimony of Franciscan involvement at this level, and witness to the fact that we have brought many of our middle class people to be co-workers with us in this direct aid. The cities of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, Washington, D.C., Milwaukee, Phoenix, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Stockton and many others can testify to the work of the Franciscans, secular and religious, involved in such direct aid. Many of our people continue to edify us in their generous response to the evident needs in their midst. There may be a struggle in the minds of some as to whether the poor are truly "deserving", but the great majority of our middle class Catholics respond well when they have come into contact with Christ in the poor. Our centers for daily meals, our food depots for families, clothing depots, shelters, free clinics, all demonstrate a truly Franciscan awareness of our call to help in this way and to engage others to whom we minister to assist.

Hopefully this conversion will bring us and our people to a more simple life style and a stance against the consumerism of our country, which devastates our brothers and sisters throughout the Third World. At this point we have all of us to reflect seriously on our experience in such service, and we must pray with our people for a heart that is truly one of compassion.

The Second Conversion

When we come to realize that in spite of all our efforts in direct aid, the poverty and oppression which we face are not decreasing, but in fact

steadily increasing not only here at home but world wide, a second conversion can take place. We come to acknowledge with Mother Teresa that "this (our efforts to feed, clothe etc.) is not the answer." Everything that we are doing must be supplemented by efforts to change the sinful societal and political structures that account for the situation. "... among the actions and attitudes opposed to the will of God, the good of neighbor, and the 'structures' created by them, two are very typical: on the one hand the all-consuming desire for profit, and on the other, the thirst for power, with the intention of imposing one's will upon others."⁶.

We come to see that our efforts to help the poor and suffering must be supplemented by efforts to change the societal and political structure that accounts for the situation. Surely the sin involved reflects personal sin, greed and pride as Pope John Paul II points out, but does exist in itself and must be addressed. Once our eyes are opened to the reality of the causes of poverty we see the exploitation of people and of whole countries for economic or military advantage over others. Poverty now becomes a matter of injustice and oppression, and not just an unfortunate but unavoidable situation. Poverty is a structural problem, a problem of unjust and oppressive institutions and systems, and we are part of it.⁷ This is a time of great difficulty both for the Franciscan sister or friar and for the entire middle class people we may serve and who are engaged with us in direct aid to the poor. If our spiritual life is truly centered on finding God among the poor, this experience of structural sin can bring real anger, anger against the rich, the politicians, against governments for their lack of compassion, for the policies that cause poverty and suffering. The anger may be justified, but what of forgiveness of enemies? Surely we are never allowed to hate. At this time we and our people may falter, give way to a certain paralysis, retreat from the fray. Or we may enter into activism and find ourselves exhausted, burnt out. Here is where we must have great trust in God leading us through, and with hope in His promise of the Kingdom.

Among the serious obstacles to this second conversion are the vestiges of the Puritan or American myth, absorbed by our Catholic immigrant peoples, which have perdured to this day. The myth would speak of the early American Puritans (and then later other European immigrants) as God's chosen people, called out of 'corrupt' Europe, crossing the Reed Sea (the Atlantic Ocean) and coming to the promised land. Here they met the peoples of the land who were obstacles to their progress, and would have to be removed or put on reservations. The myth brought with it the concept of manifest destiny in such a way that it would push our pioneers all the way to the Pacific Ocean, taking almost half of Mexico eventually. In the dream of Thomas Jefferson the destiny of our people

was to take over the entire hemisphere. In many ways this has been accomplished. Our political and economic dominance of the hemisphere is a known fact. To the South, we the neo-colonizers have replaced the original colonizers. The United States has come to feel that somehow we are to direct the lives of all in North and South America.

The initial call that Franciscan women and men received is one that usually found them in the middle class in our country.

Even though the myth has collapsed in the minds of many of our dedicated religious leaders and others, it has still a great hold on those who would turn to a certain fundamentalism for security in this time of great change. Along with the myth there has been a tremendous growth of individualism and of the independent stance, rejecting any concept of true interdependence with other nations, especially with those who are considered below us financially and culturally.

In facing up to the challenges of this second conversion we are in danger of alienating many of our good, middle class people. Without compromise we have to bring true Christ-like love to the situation and try to understand their predicament when faced with this challenge to so many things taken for granted in our society, a call to reject the consumerism, the competition that drives us on. And it is true that many a benefactor may drop out of the picture once we face up to the need for structural, political change. But as God leads us through this stage we enter into a genuine dialogue with those we serve, namely the poor and oppressed. We will continue to simplify our life-style, even as we engage in the struggle for social change, through boycotts, and political action.

There is another very trying discovery that comes at this time, a discovery important for both ourselves and our middle class Catholics. The poor and oppressed must and will save themselves, hopefully assisted by us. Here we have to come to grips with genuine humility. A shock comes when we realize that the poor know better than we what to do and how to do it, in face of this challenge for structural change. It is a gradual discovery that social change can come only from the poor, the working class, the Third World. We must learn from them, learn the wisdom of

the poor. They know better than we what is needed and they, only they, can in fact save us. This realization can bring a severe crisis. We can discover, experience God acting, and God's presence in the poor not merely as an object of compassion, not merely seeing the face of Christ in their suffering, but discovering in the poor, God saving us, God acting and speaking to us today.

Humility will bring us to search with the poor and the oppressed for the answers. This second stage is often accompanied by a great deal of frustration. Caution must be taken not to burn out. There will probably be antagonism on the part of those who do not understand what we are trying to do. Dom Helder Camara reflects on his own experience as he tries to face structural change. "When I feed the hungry poor, they call me a saint, but when I ask why are they hungry, they call me a communist."

St. Francis' working with the poor, his identification with them, did not lead him to organize them. The possible consciousness of his time did not place the question in political and social terms, as we do today, and as we must in our consciousness. But he achieved an incomprehensible liberation with and for the poor. Francis saw that he was to remain in the world with them, and not retreat to hermitages or convents. This attitude of Francis implies a protest, and act of love, a protest against a society that expels the poor from its midst and hides them in inhuman places outside the mainstream of life. 9

Examples of our working with the poor today are seen in our middle class people joining with us in groups of poor organized for basic justice, groups such as UNO, neighborhood groups, base communities in the Third World. Our Franciscan formation could well prepare us for such participation, giving us something very valuable to share in our ministry with the middle class.

The Third Conversion

The third conversion is a true solidarity with the poor and oppressed, a living out of the truth expressed by St. Paul that we are all one in Christ Jesus, even slave and free. (Gal. 3) It means we are not merely doing things for the poor, not even just doing things with them, but that we have truly become one with them, one of them. This solidarity, becoming one with all God's people and in a special way with the suffering, must be the goal of anyone striving to respond to Christ's invitation to really see Him in the poor, and to see the poor in Him. Pope John Paul II in his letter "Solicitudo Rei Socialis" stresses the fact that the nations themselves are called to solidarity among themselves. Actually all Christians

have received a special call to be witnesses to the world of this urgent call of Christ.

Francis identified with all the poor, did not feel good seeing someone poorer than himself, and this not because of vanity, but because of a feeling of the deepest compassion. And if it is true that he was content with an extremely miserable and threadbare tunic, he many times wanted to divide it with another poor man. Francis essentially abandoned his social class, the dominant order of his day; he left the society of the maiores, as they are called and decidedly wanted to be minor. 10

One might well speak of a night of faith, a night which follows our experience of working with the poor, an experience that may well be romantic. And one must go through this night in order to become truly one with the 'little ones'. In our contact with the poor and oppressed we come to realize they too have 'feet of clay.' They often disappoint us. They show the same faults we have seen in our own milieu. They are not always the Christ-like figures we imagined them to be. They can be as selfish and greedy, as lacking in commitment and political insight, as weak and sinful as their middle class brothers and sisters. We reach a crisis of disappointment and a crisis of belief. How do we find Christ in them when these faults emerge? But Christ did identify Himself with them, even though they were sinful and had 'feet of clay.' He can say that he was in prison and we visited him. He identifies not only with the innocent.

In our first conversion there is need for deep love and this must deepen as we progress. In the second conversion hope is called for urgently. And here in this third conversion our love and our hope must be accompanied by an ever greater faith. We need to pray earnestly for great faith in the word of God, realizing that we can accept God's presence in our midst. Together with our middle class Catholics we must beg for the faith to accompany us on our journey.

We thank God for the many blessings that have come to our post-immigrant Catholic Church in the United States. We are privileged to call them to journey with us as the Lord calls us to these three conversions. Looking back on the process, we see the need for the four steps urged by Bernard Lonergan: experience, understanding, judging, deciding. Experience is so important that all our pastoral activity must be in the context conducive to helping our people experience their oneness with all God's people, especially his 'little ones.' After that experience there is need for understanding through an analysis of the causes of the poverty and needless suffering experienced locally, nationally and internationally. Next, the process of discernment as to what should be done and how, and this followed by a grace-filled decision to actually take the steps that are necessary so that eventually we can become truly one in Christ.

Endnotes

¹Through the Gospel with Helder Camara (Orbis: New York, 1987), p. 59. ²"The Church in the United States as Prophet", unpublished manuscript of John Grindel, C.M.

³"Letter of Pope John Paul II to Brazilian Bishops," L'Osservatore Romano, April 28, 1986.

⁴St. Francis, by Leonardo Boff (Crossroads: New York, 1985) pp. 53ff.

⁵5 Cf. Rachel and Her Children, (Crown Publishers: Kozos).

⁶Pope John Paul II, Solicitudo Rei Socialis n. 37.

⁷Weisner, op. cit. p. 216.

⁸Nolan, op. cit. p. 3.

⁹Boff, op. cit. p. 76.



Conversion with the Marginalized

ELSIE SILVA, O.S.F.

Conversion is an on-going, life-long process. Although for some it may be initiated by a particular event or inner experience, metanoia or change of heart continues throughout life. Conversion is a learning of what St. Paul means when he says, "It is not I but Christ who lives in me." Gradually, our hearts open up, emptying themselves of their own ideas, dreams, desires, hopes, plans, and preferences. Also gradually, often imperceptibly, these empty spaces are filled with the love of God which allows the ideas, dreams, desires, hopes, plans and preferences of Christ to become our own. We learn to look beyond the obvious in situations, persons, encounters and to find the deeper meaning. We begin to live day by day waiting on the Lord to show us that which through our own efforts we have failed to understand. Love becomes the measure we use to decide our responses, actions, and commitments.

Our attitude toward life changes. We no longer need to feel in control of everything but are willing to allow God to lead us. As love of God and of God's people grows within us, it impels us to go forth to persons and places we might not have chosen earlier on our spiritual path. We begin to listen more carefully and understand more clearly Jesus' words: "How blessed are the poor in spirit: the reign of God is theirs." (Mt. 5:3) "I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me." (Mt. 25:40)

The followers of Francis have an especially powerful example of this conversion process. Allowing the love of Christ to transform his heart,

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Francis was empowered to embrace the leper. He understood that Jesus identified himself with the lowly of this world and that in lovingly serving these little ones, the outcasts, he would be serving Christ. He, therefore, chose to live as the poor, as a minor, and to spend his time with the rejected, the marginalized, allowing them to be his teachers in the meaning of minority. So crucial did Francis consider this attitude of minority that he wrote: "They (the brothers) should be the lesser ones and subject to all who are in the same house." (RNB VII, 1) "And they must rejoice when they live among people [who are considered to be] of little worth and who are looked down upon, among the poor and the powerless, the sick and the lepers, and the beggars by the wayside." (RNB IX, 1)

Those who followed Francis were never to take the stance of superiority, considering themselves greater than others thought to be less knowledgeable, less educated, less spiritual, lacking in power or wealth or social skills, weaker in character or health or morals. They were to share the lives of the rejected by society and to offer hope through their joy and love as they worked together, brothers and sisters.

This attitude of minority also includes mutuality. Once we recognize that we are not superior to the marginalized, we see that it is not a matter of those who have been helping those who do not have, but rather of human beings sharing what each is able to share. Our process of conversion becomes a conversion with the marginalized, a walking together toward God that again and again calls us to a change of heart as we, so frequently imbued with middle class values, enter a world alien to us - a world inhabited by the destitute, the addicted, the street people, the prostitutes, the drug dealers, those in and out of jail, the psychologically unstable, the mentally deficient, those with AIDS, all the throwaways of our society who range from runaway, troubled children through the poor elderly.

Conversion-with begins as we face our stereotypes regarding the marginalized. Living in a world in wich mass media, movies, and literature have influenced our perceptions, we have formed images of who these people are, how they act, and why they are that way. Serving the marginalized, we begin to encounter individuals who defy being placed in the categories our minds have created. We meet street people who, although they work, cannot save enough money to rent a room, but who have too much self-respect and pride to take any monetary help. We encounter children who are drug dealers in order to help their families financially. Slowly we realize there is no one profile for a person who has become marginalized. Some are selfish, cruel, thoughtless, and violent. Many are kind, courageous, cooperative, and determined to better their condition. Some are noble, loving, generous, and holy. All are human beings with strengths and weaknesses and with a need to be loved and

accepted. Causes leading to their present situations are likewise multiple with each person having his or her own particular set of reasons and circumstances. The Christ in each person comes forth through a unique personality and a unique history.

Our assumptions and opinions about life and about what constitutes a good life may also be challenged as we see that much we take for granted is not as universal as we had thought. We may assume that living on the street is the worst that can happen. For some, however, being confined in a room and/or having freedom curtailed is a much greater horror than the dangers of the street. We often think of family as the biological family, but discover that for those who have little or no connection with the biological or adoptive family, family may be the ones who have helped them on the streets.

Conversion-with begins as we face our stereotypes regarding the marginalized.

Our process of conversion-with also leads us to face our prejudices. Our hidden biases emerge as we face fear, mistrust and suspicion of another because of his/her race, language, culture or customs. Extreme physical illness or moral deprivety may arouse our repugnance. We may have difficulty dealing with those involved in pimping, drug dealing, or sexual abuse. We may have to struggle to find Christ in these people who arouse fear or horror in us, and only by allowing God to empty us of these feelings will our hearts be open to the truth of God's presence in them.

As we serve our marginalized brothers and sisters we find ourselves having to examine our expectations. We may expect gratitude, cooperation, and courtesy which are not present. We may demand an interest in and acquiescence with our efforts that are not be given. To let go of expectations and disapointments, to put aside the hurt and pride, to see Christ in those who may seem to ignore or reject our efforts to help all this is a strugge as we strive to empty our hearts so that they can be filled with the unconditional love of Christ.

Another area in which we may experience conversion with the marginalized is our judgments of others. We have opinions as to what the poor and outcast need or should do, but often those we serve do not agree. We may find ourselves acting as their superiors and imposing our solutions on them for their own good. We may judge them as lazy, incorrigible, stupid, or hopeless when they do not cooperate with our plans for their betterment. We may get angry because the street person we wish to place in a shelter refuses to go. We may feel indignant because the youth for whom we found a minimum wage job rejects it and remains on the streets prostituting or selling drugs. We may forget that the marginalized have a right to make choices for themselves and so insist on the wisdom of our approach. To remain open to them, loving and accepting, respectful and attentive to their needs, waiting for their time of change and growth requires a letting go of our judgments in order to allow our hearts to change.

Judgments may also arise regarding the lifestyle of some of the marginalized whose way of life may deviate from our values. This can raise numerous issues, evoke self-righteousness, and produce censure, sometimes very subtle, of the persons involved. Imperceptibly a judgment that such people are not worthy of our help or our interest or our love may arise. To achieve a balance of acceptance and love of these persons with their continued destructive behavior is a process in which we struggle to live Jesus' words, "if you want to avoid judgment, stop passing judgment." (Mk. 7:1)

Closely related to our judgments of others is our judgment of success. Service to the marginalized may make us aware of our need to feel successful. We may discover our service is not as selfless as we had thought because we look for results to help us feel that we are doing something worthwhile. We may find there is a real attachment to success within us and that we measure our success by the success of those whom we serve. Since what we considered success in the past does not occur frequently, we may become discouraged and angry and judge ourselves as failures. We may blame the marginalized for their inability to achieve their goals and feel disappointed in them. If we do not allow ourselves to release the standards and opinions we have regarding success, burnout will be the consequence. If, however, we learn to look for the small triumphs that the simple and humble achieve, our concept of success will change. We will recognize the success in holding a job for three months, in staying off drugs for a month, in maintaining proper hygiene for a week. When we allow ourselves to be with the marginalized in their small triumphs, we encourage them to continue their attempts to change their lives for the better and open ourselves to a change of heart.

As we experience with the marginalized and learn to be with them, allowing them to teach us and challenge us to change, we may find that some of their attitudes are those we would like to incorporate in our lives. We see areas within us that can grow through the development of the qualities we see in our brothers and sisters. One such quality or attitude

is the importance given to maintaining human dignity. There is a great sense of dignity in some of the marginalized. There are those who while living on the streets still find ways to keep themselves as clean as possible and to look neat. There are the poor elderly who remain in their apartments, fearful but proudly independent, often hungry but holding on to the right of being able to choose how to live. As we become more mindful of the human dignity of the marginalized, we also grow in the awareness that dignity is sometimes violated, often with good intentions.

Courage and determination are qualities also present among the marginalized. Buffeted by life and frequently rejected by those who should be loving and helping them, some of these people courageously refuse to stay down. There are the prostitutes who decide to testify against their pimps in order to protect others, even though it means endangering their own lives. There are the young people who decide they want to make a better life for themselves and so choose to stop selling drugs, thus risking reprisal or death at the hands of the dealers. The lives of the marginalized can challenge us to put our own difficulties in perspective and to learn from the lowly, rejected ones what it means to persevere in the efforts to better ourselves and our lives in the midst of great obstacles.

Another quality of some of the marginalized is the concern they can show for each other. Having little or next to nothing themselves, they will share with others who have less. There are street people, who seeing others who are new and fearful on the streets, will take them under their wings, showing them where to go, sharing what they have, warning them of potential dangers. There are those suffering from AIDS who, filled with their own pain, still make time to reach out to others who may be sicker or more frightened or more alone. As we put aside our notions of superiority and of being the ones who give, we begin to recognize how much these poor give to us and how their unostentatious giving encourages us to give more fully of who we are and not just of what we have or can do.

The marginalized sometimes display a firm faith and a childlike trust in God. Pushed to the edges of society, they turn to the One who is power and strength. There are the youth who live on the streets and who at night before attempting to sleep ask God's protection for themselves and their friends, feeling it is the only real defense they have against the dangers of the night. There are the addicted who realize only God can save them and so live day by day trying to overcome the temptation of drugs through prayer and reading the bible. Knowing their littleness, these people can turn to God in simplicity, not concerned with theology but filled with the knowledge that God cares for them and is active in their lives. It is this awareness of God's love which enables them to continue trying daily to survive the difficulties and dangers of living on

the edge of society and to hope that something better can happen in their lives. As we look to these little ones of God, we are called to examine our lives and hearts and to see whether our trust and faith is as firm.

Entering the world of the marginalized is entering a world of powerlessness. The poor frequently have no power. The causes may be multiple but the end result is the same: both in society and frequently in their personal lives, powerlessness dominates. If we listen to them, we begin to understand what it is like to be invisible to others, to not matter in society, to live judged negatively, to have others make decisions for our lives without consulting us, to be considered worthless or lazy or crazy, to see no future because all our efforts meet with a wall placed there by society, to want so much to better ourselves but to find every effort fails because we do not have the inner or outer resources to support us. We experience powerlessness as again and again we are unable to offer the assistance needed, we give all our energy and effort to have it thrown back in our faces, as we work for months on a project only to have it fall apart in one moment. We find that we have to give up our illusions of power and ability to save others from themselves and from society. Faced with our powerlessness, once again we learn that it is only God who can bring about the changes within ourselves, within the marginalized, within our society that will produce a world in which each sees the other as a sister or a brother and so is willing to work to insure that each has what she or he needs to live a fulfilled life.

Serving the marginalized never allows us to forget the powerlessness of being poor and rejected, weak and simple. In them we discover the crucified Christ, sometimes obvious, sometimes disguised under the mask of anger, hate, violence, addiction, dirt, or bizarre behavior, yet, always there, suffering in them, experiencing the powerlessness of being nailed to a cross of pain and rejection. As we allow ourselves to enter into this mystery and into the process of conversion with the marginalized, our hearts are transformed in ways never even imagined from hearts of stone to hearts that are loving and free of judgments, joyful in being little ones who look to God for all and who recognize in other little ones who are outcast by society brothers and sisters with whom we are one in Christ.

little poor man knight these quiet salt tears and minstrel now my heart Bernard Kennedy, OFM Religious Life According to Vatican II and the New Code of Canon Law. By Elio Gambari, S.M.M. Translated from the second Italian edition, updated according to the New Code of Canon Law. Daughters of St. Paul. Boston, MA, 1986. 669 pp. Cloth, \$25.

Revewed by: Fr. Vincent B. Grogan, O.F.M., J.C.D. (Catholic University). Canonist for Holy Name Province, Judge of Metropolitan Tribunal of Archdiocese of New York.

You might catch the text of a particular document pertaining to religious life in the local Catholic press or in a news service such as *Origins*. You might even read pertinent excerpts of a document or an interpretation of it in the secular papers. But where to find the various post-Conciliar decrees/ papal exhortations integrated into a logical whole or unit, with their practical ramifications for the contemporary religious? This book provides the answer.

The very title alerts the reader to the major thrust of the opus: Religious Life according to Vatican II and the New Code of Canon Law. The latter can be understood only with an awareness of Perfectae Caritatis and the myriad official pronouncements that guided the renewal of religious life up to the Code's promulgation in 1983. The author also includes references to a post-Code document: Pope John Paul II's letter to religious during the jubilee year of redemption, "Redemptionis Donum" of March 25, 1984.

In the Preface, Gambari clearly sets forth his purpose: "I have proposed to outline the teaching on religious life within the framework of ecclesiology, in the light of Sacred Scripture and the Second Vatican Council, commenting on the canonical norms which guide institutes and their members." He then proceeds to highlight the various perspectives or dimensions to be included in his treatise on religious life: theological, spiritual, apostolic, ecclesial and canonical/juridical. Notice that the author himself places the canonical aspect last. Hence, this is not a dry, legalistic commentary on the canons for religious of the 1983 Code, intended for jurists; rather, it is an all-encompassing discussion of religious life in light of Church documents (which, of necessity, include the pertinent sections of the Code).

The author emphasizes repeatedly the strong ecclesial dimension of religious life and the role of the Church vis-avis religious. The Church not only accepts the vows of a religious but presents these vows to God. Also, the pastoral activities of the religious institutes assume a clearly ecclesial perspective and must be harmonized with the ministry of the local church. Gambari goes so far as to say that religious cannot place themselves or be placed on the margins of the life of the diocese.

In a similar fashion, Gambari makes the point vehemently that it is the very nature of *being* a religious that must take precedence over any and all apostolic endeavors. Interestingly, he clarifies that it is the call from God that consecrates one as a religious, not the profession of vows. The latter is the juridical and ecclesial response to the divine call. He then continues, relating the three vows to the Gospel counsels and, significantly, to the beatitudes.

Quite logically, the author treats succinctly the genesis of religious life within the Church and the variuos manifestations or forms that religious life has assumed through the centuries (monastic, contemplative, conventual, apostolic) and even concludes his book with an expose on secular institutes, a product of the twentieth century.

This reviewer found the treatment of the following to be particularly helpful: priesthood within religious life; lay religious in a clerical institute; the purpose of common life (not for the smooth and efficient exercise of an apostolate that would not otherwise be possible on the individual level, but for the sanctification of the members); the role of superiors in mediating between God and the individual religious (the divine element, if you will, is not found in the content of a directive nor in the motives supporting it, but in the very authority itself of the superior); the individual but also social value of an atmosphere of silence in religious houses (the religious find God, discover themselves and prepare to meet God in their brothers and sisters).

The book is enriched by an abundance of footnotes, many of which contain references to pertinent articles and studies on various aspects of post-Conciliar religious life. The topical Index is of value, as is a list of certain canons of the 1983 Code and the pages which discuss each of them.

Gambari is well-qualified to author a book such as this. The holder of a doctorate in both canon and civil law, he has focused much of his ministry precisely on religious life. For several decades, he was a staff member of the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes and also served as a peritus on religious life at Vatican II. In recent years, he has assisted several religious institutes in the task of renewal.

The author makes a few points that, I think, are arguable. For example, he maintains that the three counsels, professed in a stable manner, can be found in the Gospels. He holds, too, that the establishment of a religious house in a particular area is tantamount to a kind of "incardination" into that diocese (my quibble is with the use of the canonical term "incardination" to depict the relationship of the house to the diocese). Moreover, certain topics were not addressed as completely as they might have been, at least from the standpoint of American religious life, such as the need for psychological formation vis-avis the vow of chastity, and the tension between dialogue and religious obediednce.

Technically, a few defects surfaced. For instance, there is a consistent mistranslation from the Italian of the phrase "depends on" — it comes out "depends from"; Signatura is spelled Segnatura; the date of publication of the Instruction Renovationis Causam is January 6, not June 6, 1969. And there seems to be an historical error particularly of interest to Franciscans: the author states that Francis obtained approval of his Order in 1219; this actually occurred in 1209.

If one is seeking a book that provides an overview of the theological, ecclesial and canonical underpinnings of contemporary religious life, then this is it. I recommend the book as a respected and valuable addition to your personal and/ or house library. A two hour video has been made of this event and is now being offered to you for your use in formation work, continuing education, parish meetings, retreat centers, discussion groups, and third order meetings.

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