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The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



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Volume 39, No. 9

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: Exhortation to the Praise of God
ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father
FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare

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

II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis 2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis 3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles CL: Legend of Saint Clare CP: Process of Saint Clare Fior: Little Flowers of St. Francis

LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis LP: Legend of Perugia L3S: Legend of the Three Companions SC: Sacrum Commercium SP: Mirror of Perfection

Omnibus: Marion A. Habig, ed., St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

AB: Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., Francis and Clare: The Complete Works (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

REFLECTION:

The Question of Stigma "Tell the truth and shame the devil"

SR. ROBERTA CUSACK, O.S.F.

Yesterday I attended a well prepared program on HIV psychosocial assessment and intervention. Very heavy stuff! And I must say it has given an interesting light to the matter of Francis' stigmata, and the marks we all bear, hopefully in the Name of Christ Jesus.

A very large part of the first day was devoted to the stigma, associated with people having AIDS. In fact, the entire first morning was entitled "STIGMATIZATION." I immediately began to draw parallels from my own experience, at the same time thinking with St. Francis, and the lepers of his day and ours. After journeying through conceptual considerations, various dimensions of stigma, and reactions to stigma by others, we were encouraged to enter into our own story and name some of the stigmatization we have struggled with or perhaps deal with some of the marks we are presently bearing.

Too often the stigmatization which might be so very negative, damaging and very generalizing derives from those most intimate in our lives, our parents, family members, loved ones, the order, or community, or parent community, the institutional people. Supposed friends. How often we declare those bearing the stigma in our all wise opinion as "deserving of what they get," morally corrupt, all wrong, possessing no truth. We

Roberta Cusack, O.S.F., is a past contributor to The CORD. Her 21 years of ministry have been primarily in the field of spirituality. She served as member of the International Rule commission for the TOR Rule and as Executive Director fo the Federation of Franciscans. Roberta is a founding member of a new Franciscan religious Community, THE LITTLE PORTION FRANCISCA aims at offering a gospel presence to the world. Address: In FRANCISCANS, Rte 3 Box 88 Republic, MO 64738 117

. University might even find special companions on the journey, lifetime faithful friends fearful of our contact lest perhaps our sin, our thinking, our behavior, our urgency to move on in the conversion experience — it all might be infectious. After all, the most harmful kind infect silently and might be universally fatal. Or perhaps we experience ourselves ostracized by the system and therefore socially stigmatized as we mingle with today's leper.

I have very recently lived through the most interesting, soul-searching, life-giving, and significant experience in my personal journey of faith. This has not been without its marks, a real stigmatization of a sort, which are almost daily catching up with me via old friends in the Franciscan family, people who write or call, whose paths intersect along the journey, or those who come for time and space here to Little Portion. It's amusing to pick up the attitudes from those who once appeared to share your thinking and values, but who somehow have swung into a very opposite, safe and secure mode. I often wonder has the stigma, my stigma, the marks I bear become too much for these to carry with me?

Last summer while visiting my younger sister and her dynamic clan of nine grandchildren in California (one of my annual high energizing experiences) I soon became aware that the little ones were being challenged very frequently by their grandparents to "TELL THE TRUTH AND SHAME THE DEVIL!" This dare has continued to echo within me. How far we adults have removed ourselves from this ideal, so often letting ourselves be backed into spiritual, emotional, or psychological corners in agreement, perhaps allowing ourselves to stay smug in our shame and guilt. How frequently we shake our heads at the network of dependencies and co-dependencies we eventually develop in our communal relationships, which unintentionally but inevitably grow into a horrendous dysfunctional group situation. We find ourselves avoiding imposed or possibly stigmatizing circumstances in order to circumvent the shame or guilt which is the punishment experienced in the vicious game of such a tangle.

Now on the bright side we might also use our experience of being stigmatized to understand someone else's situation. For we have all carried the marks of some type of branding. We might know of it as shame, guilt, alienation, a label of outsider or recipient of an attitude of tolerance or condescension. Hopefully, we also know the experience of "telling the truth and shaming the devil" regardless of the cost as the result of trusting the Spirit within and then making a responsible decision in truth. Hopefully, we also have experienced all kinds of freedom that comes from being an "outsider." For in this freedom we are enabled to let parts about ourselves show; parts about which we feel a new sense of gratitude, new discoveries, new awareness, new truths, new pain, new joys, new relationships. All of this enables our own "compassion for the passion" in another.

So what are the stigmas of our lives? What are the stigmas of our Franciscan history and our personal history? As individuals and as the family of Francis have we always "told the truth and shamed the devil"? or have we conformed to the expectations of peers, of those who might show displeasure or be threatened by another view, another insight, another style, another color, another price, another idea, another lifestyle? What can I do and how can I be to enable people to live a fuller and more meaningful life in the family of Francis, in my immediate community, in the world of God's creation? Now, "tell the truth and shame the devil."

How refreshing it is to reflect the summary of our Franciscan charism in the Legend of Perugia, #43, "We are the minstrels of the Lord, whose duty it is to uplift the minds and hearts of people and move them to spiritual gladness." How enriching, affirming and challenging that our founder, St. Francis, did not specify or write in the details for us. How wise was Francis in trusting the Spirit in the hearts of his brothers and sisters.

Now, "let's tell the truth and shame the devil." We all have our blemishes and scars; some upfront and many many hidden ones. Are we able to look each other in the eye or does shame cause us to disown and turn our faces away? The Buddhist's have taught me the wisdom of eye-contact which is so very healing. Especially the eye contact with the creature we greet in the mirror each morning. How do we greet our own person? Now, "tell the truth and shame the devil." Yes, it's easier to deny, but we can never move on and grow if we use "distancing" behavior toward our very self.

Wouldn't it be great if we could live with the transparency my sister encouraged in her grandchildren? I sense this is all Jesus is inviting us to become in his simple but wonderful interchange and frolicking with the children in his journey. Wouldn't it be great if we could be that upfront, and not wait for a crisis? Wouldn't it be great if our limbic system were heeded and respected as a barometer for our balancing needs? Wouldn't it be great if we let God speak for Godself and we really did live with the freedom of becoming our very best selves as we encouraged each other long life's pilgrimage to do and be the same? Wouldn't it be great if what happens inside us was as important as what is happening outside? Wouldn't it be great if we allowed each stigmatized person the same power we give to ourselves or equal to that power we assign to others in our religious and social systems?

"Tell the truth and shame the devil!" Is my Franciscan life-style helping me to arrive at that kind of honesty, that kind of wholeness, which urges me to become my very best self, to be more balanced and free, to be the most beautiful person I might become? Or do I allow the imposed stigma to hinder my process and progress? Do I permit the threat of stigmas to paralyze the possibility of movement?

There is a sense of rebirth which happens for people with AIDS, people like Francis of Assisi, people like the lepers, people like ourselves, if we let it. It seems to me that even working with such people bears the so-called "courtesy stigma" enabling us to cut through the nonsense of our lives and forcing us to be more honest and free. Much of salvation history and a sense of rebirth and conversion happens out of being faced with questions raised by people bearing marks or stigma. Perhaps bearing the stigma, the marks of our Lord Jesus Christ, isn't so bad after all. "Tell the truth and shame the devil!"



AIDS: An Invitation to Diminish Suffering

VICTORIA MASTERPAUL. O.S.F.

AIDS, the all-too-familiar acronym which literally and clinically stands for "acquired immune deficiency syndrome," in reality represents an immensity of suffering that defies full expression by even the most articulate and erudite of persons.

It began during the summer of 1981 when young homosexual men in Los Angeles, and later New York City, were dying of illnesses previously observed in patients who were immuno-suppressed by radiation and chemotherapy. Researchers discovered that, in these cases, a type of white blood cell, the T4 helper lymphocytes, essential for adequate immunological response, was being attacked. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, labelled this new disorder a syndrome, rather than a disease, because it is, in fact, characterizind by a cluster or combination of diseases related to the suppressed immune system. The two most frequently occuring AIDS-related complications are *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP), an opportunistic infection caused by a protozoan parasite, and Kaposi's sarcoma (KS), a form of cancer that, under ordinary circumstances, is rare in young male adults.

The majority of persons with AIDS (PWA) have contracted the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) via sexual contact; however, it is also transmitted by sharing contaminated needles, by tainted blood transfusions and blood derivatives, and transplacentally during the first trimester of pregnancy and childbirth.

Sister Vicki ministers as Patient Representative at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center in Camden, New Jersey. She generously granted us permission to reprint this article which first appeared in Review for Religious July - August 1988. We believe that our CORD readers will be inspired by Sister Vicki's deeply felt franciscan insights which powerfully call us to examine and, if necessary, to reshape our attitudes toward victims of aids. We thank all of our franciscan sisters and brothers who in ministering to those who suffer from this devastating affliction awaken us to the inexhaustible and unique love discovered and lived by Francis of Assisi.

Although the early cases were cited primarily in the homosexual and intravenous drug-abusing populations, and the largest percentage of cases remain in these two groups, it was soon evident that AIDS was not limited to these sectors. Blind to age, gender, race, vocation in life, place of residence, or sexual orientation, AIDS is not only "a gay disease." It is a human disease deserving at least the same measure of care, compassion and scientific expertise as any other disease.

The Center for Disease Control has predicted two significant shifts relative to this syndrome which have widened its boundaries considerably: first, it is moving into smaller cities, into rural areas, and into other regions of the United States so that within five years approximately eighty percent of all cases will be outside California and New York; secondly, the virus is being transmitted more and more through heterosexual contact. CDC also has estimated that by the end of 1991 the total number of cases in the United States will reach 270,000, with 179,000 deaths, and that the number of deaths for 1991 alone is projected at 54,000, a figure roughly equal to the American death toll in the entire Vietnam war. The syndrome has not remained within the confines of the United States. It has moved across Africa, up and down the Americas, across Europe, and is knocking at the door of Asia, menacing the entire globe. Other epidemics have caused more deaths, thus far, but AIDS, is unlike anything mankind has faced before. No other plague has spread so far so fast, or stirred such frantic worldwide reaction. Dr. David Baltimore, the Nobel Prize-winning biochemist, stated: "There is no question that AIDS will be with us as a severe medical problem of world-wide proportions well into the next century."2 Given this staggering pandemic profile, it is conceivable that very soon millions of Americans will know someone personally who succumbed to the illness.3

Those who suffer from this devastating affliction go far beyond those diagnosed with full-blown AIDS. There are those who have AIDS-Related Complex (ARC), living in constant fear of developing AIDS; there are the "walking wounded," those who test HIV positive and are terrorized by each common cold and each bead of perspiration; there are the "worried well," those in high risk groups, and those who have received blood transfusions or derivatives prior to 1985, all of whom need education, counseling and emotional support. There are the grief-stricken and bereaved who have already lost their loved ones and are struggling to recover not only from their loss, but also from the day to day pain of having lived with this relentless attacker. There are the health care-givers who work daily with these patients and their families, and suffer from their own form of AIDS: Anxiety, Isolation, Drain and Stress. There also are (religious) sisters and brothers who are involved in AIDS ministries and have

been forced, in some instances, to face their own conscious and/or unconscious fears. This is borne out by the words of Jim Nieckarz, a Maryknoll priest — words that express painful soul-searching and courageous admission:

"... as I listened, and waited, I discovered my own fear of death and dying, my own fear of AIDS, my own fear of being labelled and tarred with the same brush, my own homophobia. I had been suppressing fear for over three years. Suddenly when I was able to speak the monster's name, it began to melt away. The process is still unfinished, but I am aware of my feelings and fears at a more conscious level.⁶

Perhaps until now we have been able to view the AIDS nightmare as someone else's tragedy or misfortune, but how long can we ignore its farreaching destruction? The fact that AIDS has impacted our sisters and brothers with whom we share membership in the human community, and thus, in the body of Christ, leaving that body impoverished, weakened and maimed, calls each one of us to spiritual and moral accountability.

Moral theologian, Eileen Flynn, states: "... the Church, through its preachers and teachers has the means to define and shape an attitude of concern and compassion for persons with AIDS." When I read this I was reminded of the often-repeated sentiments of one of my professors, the late Father Eric Doyle, an English friar. A brilliant historian and theologian, a dynamic teacher, and an irrepressibly witty personality, Eric was, first and foremost, a vibrant Franciscan, fully alive and in touch with humanity in its truest sense. A gentle person of strong convictions on divorce themes, he spoke often with impassioned enthusiasm regarding the role of religious women and men in the Church. I could not help wondering, if he were here today, what he would have to say about our role in this crisis. The following is an excerpt from one of his theology lectures which I offer as an expansion of Dr. Flynn's promise, and also as one of the core messages of this article:

"The vocation of religious women and men in the church involves as indispensable, an amount of self-giving demanded by this form of Christian discipleship. If we (religous) have no word for those who seek the living God, in the imperfection of human history, then where will they go? Who will give fish instead of snakes, eggs instead of scorpions, and bread instead of stones to those who are searching for peace, equality and compassion in a truly human community? To the end of time the religious life in the Church will remain the guardian of Gospel wholeness, and in each age the Church will be only as alive as her active and contemplative congregations are alive in her."

It is not my intention or purpose to suggest anyone leave his/her present

ministry to commit one's self to daily, direct, hand-on care of AIDS-sufferers and their families. I do believe, however, that whatever our primary ministry, religious women and men, we are vested with the responsibility and empowered with a measure of ability to open our hearts and minds to this crisis, and to be a strong presence of hope, healing and reconciliation for those who have AIDS and ARC, for their loved ones, and for their caregivers.

Regarded as "the lepers of our times," they have met with every type of rejection imaginable. There are those who vociferously proclaim that AIDS patients should be banished as lepers once were banished. "The exiling of lepers is part of our Catholic past, but if we are true to the nobility and virtue which are evident in our tradition and the scientific knowledge of the twentieth century, we will not treat AIDS patients as we once treated lepers."

Because AIDS is associated with stigmatized groups such as homosexuals and lesbians, intravenous drug-abusers, prostitutes and prisoners, it has spawned a secondary plague as fatal as the primary affliction: a wave of hysteria characterized by discrimination, ostracism, homophobia, prejudice and even acts of violence. The problem of discrimination and hostility is not confined to homosexuals. Healthy siblings of children with transfusion-associated AIDS have been excluded from nursery schools, and litigation in many states attests to the rejection faced by hemophiliacs with the syndrome. Also, organizations and families offering refuge to these patients have been targets of bomb threats and vandalism. ¹⁰ Recently I read of a monastery in northern California which was refused service by some members of a local volunteer fire department because two infants with AIDS were sheltered and cared for there.

At the time of diagnosis parents and siblings often face a dual discovery: the realization that their son/brother will die a difficult and premature death, and also the fact that he is homosexual. This heartbreaking revelation is, for some, impossible to face and they abandon him at a time when he is crying out for acceptance, love and encouragement. One mother of a young man who died of AIDS expresses poignantly and forcibly:

"Daily life with AIDS does not fit into words as easily (as the clinical facts) ... it is not easy to watch your son waste away in front of your eyes. Peter's daily physical erosion was my emotional erosion. I can use words like fear, panic, despair, anger, frustration, horror and hysteria and still not describe my feelings adequately. He has the support of a loving family... they all came to visit and helped care for him, and when he died we were all around him. I have seen other AIDS parents die terrifying and lonely deaths, rejected by their families when they most needed them, merely because they are homosexual. I feel anguish for them and I am angry at their

families... a son is a son, no matter what... I believe that 'gay' is a tragic misnomer." 11

Despite the knowledge that AIDS is not spread through casual contact, there remain those who make decisions and choices which further alienate and isolate its victims. The fact that persons are well-educated and informed about the syndrome does not always erase their fears and/or prejudices. There are physicians and dentists who, despite their learning and commitment to healing, have refused to treat AIDS patients; there are nurses who have shown them coldness and indifference and given them only the absolute minimum of required care; there are dietary personnel who have left their meals on the floor outside their rooms, rather than serving them their trays personally; there are landlords who have evicted them without notice; employers who have terminated them without opportunity for discussion; there are insurance carriers who refuse them coverage; and the final atrocity, funeral directors who will not accept their bodies for embalming or burial, or if they do, overcharge grossly for their services.

Those who treat AIDS sufferers so poorly and discriminatively, and also refuse to associate with their families and caregivers, often staunchly defend their position by judgment that the syndrome is a clear sign of divine retribution. This cruel indictment is so demeaning of our gentle and merciful Lord who spoke his harshest words to the self-righteous. Rather, Jesus invited his disciples again and again to have mercy towards one another.

The Church's love and concern for the sick, which is rooted in Christ's concern for them, is expressed so naturally and graciously in the sacrament of the anointing. In the Introduction to the Rite of Anointing and Care of the Sick, the meaning of sickness and pain is drawn from the Lord's saving presence in the world: "... they (Christians) ... know that Christ loved the sick and that during his life he often looked upon the sick and healed them... Sickness, while it is closely related to man's sinful condition, cannot be considered a punishment which man suffers for his personal sins." (Jn 9:3)¹² Jesus' power over pain, sickness and disability testifies to the inauguration of the Messianic age. "The Christian — the Church — must not contribute to breaking the spirit of the sick and weakening their faith by harshness." 13

Quite some time ago I viewed a film on AIDS in which the young man suffering from the illness stated: "The trouble with some religious people is that they think God reacts the way they do." I do not remember much else about that movie, not even its title, but his words haunted me in that they seemed to reflect his special need to be understood and welcomed

by someone representing the Church, but rather, he must have encountered disdain. Often this type of rejection, coupled with paralyzing fear, recurring guilt and demoralizing physical debilitation, render the patient so emotionally vulnerable that he/she is driven to contemplate or commit suicide.

The person with AIDS, usually in the prime of life when stricken, very often fears being totally dependent more than he fears death. The syndrome forces the patient onto a proverbial roller-coaster, bringing with it a new set of burdens daily: the fear of one's sexual orientation and/or drug habit being discovered; the fear of being misjudged as a member of one, or both, of these high risk groups; the fear of losing one's friends; the fear of disfigurement from the wasting element of the disease, or from Kaposi's sarcoma; and the fear and concern for one's parents and siblings and how they will cope with the impending suffering and death. One young man wrote:

"Mom and dad have held me closer learning of my lifestyle and state of health, and I am so fortunate and grateful for having such wonderful parents. They truly epitomize the phenomenon called 'unconditional love.' Deep down inside I knew that their learning who the REAL was would never pull us apart. Now I feel so much closer to all the family since there are no longer any secrets or hidden skeletons, and no more shame. But I am so concerned about mom and dad... they have been raised to be stoic and find it difficult to express their true feelings. My mission will be to try to uncover the heavy lid that stifles their expression. It is important to me that now, more than ever before, they are honest with their feelings and communicate them to me. And it is important to me that during this difficult time for all of us, they vocalize and express their pain, tears and joy. I don't want to be jipped out of either emotion... I don't want to be protected from the bad and the sad, for it's all integrally related to the happy and the glad." 14

The August 10, 1987 issue of NEWSWEEK presents an incredibly personal and visually-stirring lead article, "The faces of AIDS". It is a photograhic journal of a single plague year, a gallery of 302 men, women, and children ranging in age from a child of one year to a widow of eighty-seven, with the mean age of thirty-six. Beneath each photograph is a two line summary of the person's background, and the manner in which he/she contracted HIV. "Taken together they form a mosaic portrait of the face of AIDS in America." It is virtually impossible, I believe, to read and reflect on this journal, (as well as the article which follows it), and remain untouched by the pain it conveys.

A sizeable majority of those shown in this story are male homosexuals which points out the significant impact of the syndrome on this particular

community. Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, in his pastoral letter to the church of Chicago, states: "It is indeed a community of grief. This grief is intensified for some because they feel alienated from the church ... With vigor and clarity we must proclaim the love of Christ and his church for every individual so that this message can be heard by members of the homosexual community and the broader community." ¹⁷

I was involved in an encounter which, although brief, bore out vividly the pain and alienation experienced by groups of homosexuals. I met two young men on the medical center elevator seeking directions to a patient's room. The patient — (I will call him Mark) — was twenty-seven years old, tall, dark, and certainly at one time, very handsome. But now he was suffering from several AIDS-related complications which left him comatose, blind and wasted to skeletal proportions. He lay there totally unresponsive and could be mistaken easily for a corpse. His friends had travelled to New Jersey from California to visit him. After a few moments at Mark's bedside, one of the visitors came out to the corridor. When I remarked that it must be so difficult to see Mark in this condition, the young man's reply stunned me. He said, "Sister, you may not believe this, but Mark looks good in comparison to our other friends who have died, and we have lost so many to AIDS." The remainder of the conversation further reinforced the isolation and rejection often associated with the lifestyle and the illness. I asked Mark's friend if he would like to wait and see his family. His reply was gentle but deliberate: "They do not wish to meet us, and that is all right... we wanted to see Mark once again before he dies, and our plane leaves for San Francisco in a few hours." Mark died three days later.

I have looked to Francis of Assisi's life and writings for inspiration and assistance in making some sense of this tragic crisis, and also for direction in responding in a Christian manner to its devastation. I have turned to Francis, not simply because I am a Franciscan, but more purposefully because I believe that his life speaks a meaningful, (and imitable) message to the epidemic and to those who suffer from it.

Often referred to as "everyone's saint," Francis' life has influenced persons from all traditions and disciplines. He has been a model and "hero for cardinals and hippies, environmentalists, artists, peacemakers and poets." What in Francis' personality attracts them? Many of his biographers point to his genuine humanity as being the source of his magnetism, a humanity that drew its life and strength from his oneness with the God-Man, Jesus. Francis did not credit himself with his ability to draw followers. In fact, he does not call attention to his leadership by using the term followers. Rather, as recorded in his TESTAMENT, he

says: "And then the Lord gave me brothers." This very brief declaration speaks volumes about his recognition of God as the motivating force behind his actions, decisions and choices.

"Francis belongs to that rare group of holy men and women who become more human through their holiness. Mahatma Gandhi, Dag Hammarskjold, Helda Camara and Mother Teresa of Calcutta in our time are new examples of this same process. They all prove the principle that grace does not destroy but perfects nature." ²⁰ The dynamic of Francis' holiness was his total commitment to the person of Jesus Christ, the most truly human being ever to have existed, and the embodiment and presence of God's love, forgiveness and mercy to all humankind.

Francis was able to look beyond weakness, neediness, imperfection and sinfulness to the person, always trying to see Christ in that person and event.

At a Pentecost Chapter in Assisi, Francis spoke words to his friars that are astonishingly timely, vital and valid in the face of the AIDS crisis, and which, I believe, encircle all the stages and dimensions of its pain:

"Since you speak of peace, all the more so must you have it in your hearts. Let none be provoked to anger and scandal by you, but rather may they be drawn to peace and good will, to benignity and concord through gentleness. We have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way. Many who seem to be children of the Devil will still become Christ's disciples."²¹

This passage re-echoes, for me, the proclamation of the Messianic era (Is. 61:1-11) and also captures the essential spirit of reconciliation and evangelization that should characterize our lives and ministries. I believe, too, that it offers several applicable parallels to the present AIDS situation, and that these are evident in the reflections that follow. I invite you to ponder these words with me, line by line. It is my hope that, given your individual gifts and imaginative powers, as well as the unique operation of the Spirit within you, these reflections will awaken further inspiration in the heart of each of you.

Since you speak of peace, all the more so must you have it in your hearts.

Francis recognized that words, to have true meaning, must flow from a sincere heart and also be fruitful of appropriate deeds. (Mt 7:16-18) Although his sensitivity to others showed definite preference for the lowly and outcast of medieval times, he remained open, and at home, with all people. "He went unhesitatingly to Pope Innocent, became Cardinal Ugolino's friend, and crossed the Mediterranean to bring the Good News to the Sultan of Egypt, whose respect he won by his own great nobility of spirit." His relationships and communications were always conducted under the sign and greeting of peace: "God give you peace." However, this greeting was not, for him, simply a rubrical gesture. He gave his salutation its full biblical and evangelical significance in that the peace he desired for each and all is "the divine favor, forgiveness, a return to grace, the recovery of divine friendship: in short, a complete reconciliation with God."²³

A firm believer that peace in one's own family is the direct result of deep inner peace, and the indispensable condition of making peace with those outside the family, and among nations, Francis saved the best of himself, so to speak, for his brother friars. He reached out to each one with reverent care and patient tolerance for their individual history and uniqueness. To paraphrase Chesterton, Francis saw not the mob but the man. He "wittingly... recreated the type of warm, compassionate Christian community that existed in the church during the time of the apostles. To a thirteenth century Church grown cold... he restored the appealing concept of caring community." Francis was able to look beyond weakness, neediness, imperfection and sinfulness to the person, always trying to see Christ in that person and event.

Let none be provoked to anger or scandal by you, but rather may they be drawn to peace and good will, to benignity and concord through gentleness.

"Francis demonstrated with his life that, to be a saint, it is necessary to be human. And to be human, it is necessary to be sensitive and gentle." Thus his gentleness was a far cry from sentimentality, lack of conviction, or self-centered subjectivity. His was an other-centered gentleness nurtured by his inner strength and his constant struggle to embrace the shadows in his own life. He was not without failure in taming his anger and his tendency towards eruption of that anger. So that "he was not non-violent out of impotence." Rather, his gentleness, non-violence and lack of condemnation were the fruits of his desire to situate himself in the dynamics of Gospel values and choices. Like Jesus, he was a bearer of goodness, magnanimity and mercy, rather than malice, selfishness, accusation or any other forms of control, manipulation or oppression.

There is not one of us, I am sure, who has not been provoked to frustration, hurt and rage by an experience of feeling personally demeaned, or by our compassion for those who suffer alienation, rejection or persecution on a wider scale. Francis, in these or similar situations, emerges as one who frees his sisters and brothers in Christ from this pain and suffering through his reverence and care for them, the source of which is, again, his rootedness in the person of Jesus, the Suffering Servant.

We have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way.

The finer you tune an instrument, the more delicate it must of necessity be. The more sensitive a person is, then, the more will that person usually suffer physically, psychologically and spiritually. Francis was no stranger to suffering in any of its guises. During his lifetime he had experienced setbacks and desertions, betrayals and isolation, as well as both physical and emotional illness.

The son of Pica and Pietro Bernardone, a cloth merchant, Francis interpreted literally the Lord's command to him: "Go and repair my Church," and began to restore half-ruined churches around Assisi. His father, extremely infuriated that his son was squandering his hardearned money on dilapidated churches, and dismayed at the change that had come over Francis, summoned him to appear before a civil court. But Francis appealed to the Bishop of Assisi. In the public square there, in the presence of the Bishop, his parents, and a crowd of townspeople, he renounced his father and stripped himself of his clothing, in so doing declaring to the crowd that he was beginning a new life, a life in which God was to be his father. In the words of another Franciscan, Murray Bodo:

"Francis is the son of Pietro Bernardone, and no decision to call only God his father can change that. The placid son of God is also the volcanic son of Bernardone... neither man is given to hesitation and timidity, neither is guarded of his feelings; both are dramatic, violent men... a whole other story is contained in his relationship with his father and the ineffectiveness of his mother's place between them. Everything that Francis' mother and/or father did for him only left him feeling emotionally abandoned by them. His mother was too weak to provide a buffer between Francis and his father's wrath, and his father refused to listen or even try to understand. All Pietro could do was curse, and all Francis could do was counterattack with rejection... It is not hatred that moves Pietro to curse his son, but love. Because he is not open to anything but his own image of what his son should be and his own plans for him, he is filled with frustration and rage that Francis, in becoming his own man, in growing up, as he should, is bringing shame on his father who loves him. Pietro has been publicly

disgraced by his son's behavior, and he cannot understand how Francis could do this to him. Francis, for his part, sees how imprisoned his father is by respectability and the need to preserve appearances at all costs... In rejecting his earthly father Francis simultaneously embraces his heavenly Father, thus escaping the terrible trauma of complete alienation, of not belonging anywhere, of being alone. Francis' new identity comes from God."²⁷

There is no historic evidence that Francis ever was reconciled with his father after the dramatic scene of public renunciation. This must have been one of the most, if not the most, exquisitely painful areas in his lifetime.

Francis never enjoyed robust health. Throughout the year 1224 he endured a long, debilitating and depressing illness which at times, painted a picture of behavior akin to madness; he was misunderstood and alienated by a group of his brothers who wished to break away from him and from his ideals; and he struggled again and again with his own temptations, to the point, at times of doubting the Lord's call.

These personal experiences of suffering sensitized Francis to all types of human frailty and it was thus that he believed that "the evangelical brotherhood had to reflect the tenderness of God for all those whom life maltreats. That is why he inserted in his rule: 'Whosoever will come to the brothers, friend or foe, thief or brigand, let him be received with kindness.' "28 Is it any wonder, then, that he challenged his friars to heal the sick, to bind the bruised, and to reclaim the erring?

Many who seem to be called children of the Devil will still become Christ's disciples.

An exceedingly fastidious person, Francis abhorred those miserable outcasts of medieval society, the lepers. Their affliction was viewed to be related to their sinfulness, and thus they were judged to be suffering what they deserved. Because of this they were exiled to hovels outside the city gates. Francis found the sight of lepers repulsive and nauseating and just the thought of coming face to face with them terrorized him. He tells us in his TESTAMENT:

"This is how the Lord granted to me, Brother Francis, to start out on a life of penance: When I was in sin, I found it an exceedingly bitter sight to see lepers. Then the Lord himself brought me among them and I treated them with compassion. When I came away from them, what I had found bitter was changed to sweetness of soul and body."²⁹

One of the most popular and frequently recounted stories about Francis is his encounter with and embrace of a leper. While riding near Assisi

he came upon a leper standing in the road. He dismounted, went over to the leper and kissed him. Then, having mounted his horse again, he turned to bid him farewell, as he rode away, but the leper had disappeared.

There have been countless and diverse interpretations of what truly happened when Francis, contrary to all his former behavior and inner disposition, embraced the leper. Some choose the more obvious moral: "The leper was Christ... and he learned at first hand that what is done to the least, the outcast, the most despised, is done also to Christ."30 Others believe that Francis was healed in this incident, rather than the leper, and that the leper was the enfleshment of the Gospel challenge, for him, and therefore the minister of God's grace. 31 Whatever the interpretation I believe that this change in Francis' attitude towards lepers is among the greatest victories of grace in his life, requiring that he overcome not only his physical loathing and overwhelming fear of the leper, but also that he overcome (and embrace) whatever he loathed and feared in himself. And Francis' own words, as spoken and cited above from his TESTAMENT, make it clear, without a shadow of a doubt, that it was the Lord who brought him among the lepers, and I believe it was the Lord who changed what he had formerly found bitter into sweetness "of soul and body".

There is another story about Francis, not so widely known, which points out his lack of condemnation and judgment. It takes place within the context of Stephen of Bourbon's account of a visit Francis once made ot Lombardy:

"Being in a district where a local priest was living with a woman, he was asked by a strict Manichaen christian: If a priest keeps a concubine and so stains his hands, do we have to believe in his teaching and respect the sacraments he administers?' Instead of replying, Francis went directly to the priest's home and he said: 32

'I do not really know whether these hands are stained as the other man claims they are. In any case, I do know that even if they are, this in no way lessens the power and efficacy of the sacraments of God... that is why I kiss them out of respect for what they administer and out of respect for Him who delegated his authority to them.' "33

Father Eric Doyle describes this incident as "one of the most wonderful stories ever related about a holy man in the history of any religion." Francis, a passionate man, was motivated by his self-knowledge of those strong passions, to reach out with delicate compassion to the accused priest. Father Eric continues:

"We would admire him if he had refused to make any comment; we would be impressed if he had gently reminded the questioner not to judge, so that he would not be judged himself. But there is much more here than this, far more, in fact, than tolerance or forbearance. Francis' reaction was entirely positive. He looked for what was obviously good in the man, found it and emphasized that. What he did shows that Francis was utterly without self-righteousness."35

Both these stories portray Francis' embracing the apparently sinful. And both stories point out vividly his cognizance that Jesus could only be found in the living flesh of his sisters and brothers, thus he situated himself on these two occasions, and several others, in contact with all "lepers," whether in body or social condition. Like Jesus, he understood so keenly that whatever our "age, gender, race, vocation in life, place of residence, or sexual orientation," we all, at some time in our lives, miss the mark and make less than the better choice. But, so in touch with Lord's tenderness and mercy, Francis had no doubt that even those who appear doomed to eternal punishment, would, in fact, be invited by Jesus to share his Dwelling Place. Thus it was, that the "Sun of Assisi," as Dante named him, made the face of Christ appear as a beacon illumining the way and rescuing those who were lost and struggling painfully to find the way in the darkness of despair.

Does not Francis' Pentecost plea turn brokenness into wholeness, alienation into reconciliation, stigmatization into mercy, and self-righteous judgment into an assurance of salvation? And if this message was operative in us, would it not illume the way for many afflicted by the AIDS pandemic? "The death of Francis was not the death of his inspiration or his charism." Hopefully they are alive in us, and in the Church, by the operation of the Spirit within us. Hopefully we reflect Francis' strength — a strength that was at the very heart of his gentleness. Yes, I truly believe that Francis' Pentecost invitation to his friars — and to each of us — if heard and heeded, possesses a strength capable of giving life to a new AIDS acronym: An Invitation to Diminish Suffering! Will you accept the invitation?

Endnotes

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Thoughts of a Pilgrim

Why this journey filled with strangers, tongues, tastes unfamiliar to my midwestern palate? Why come so far and for what purpose? Pilgrim, what seekest thou?

Signore — Gesu! Christo — You, I seek. Knowing not the way, I cling to Francis, Clare, and those who follow them. Visiting shrines, caves, sanctuaries, holy mountains, I reach back into the centuries and touch the places hallowed by those who passed before.

Lovingly cared for, reverenced, filled with holy memories, these Italian by-ways elicit faith and new commitment. Each segment of the journey reaches deeply into the recesses of my heart and fans anew the fire that lies smoldering there.

Grazie!!!

M. Lonan Reilly, OSF

Conversion with our Sister, Mother Earth

MARGARET PIRKL, O.S.F.

"Conversion with the earth" ... what does it mean? Conversion for the sake of the earth would be easier to explore. Yet the title as it stands sugggests the earth's influence on us and her involvement in our "turning" or "changing." That point, I submit, is important for us Franciscans.

Everyone of us, at one time or another, has stood transfixed at the sight of a glorious sunrise and received a surge of strength and light for the day. Or we have heard the storm wind high in the trees and felt connected with the deepest forces of the universe within and without. We have drawn in a breath of surprise and delight at the rich color of an autumn maple leaf gracing our path or at the fragile beauty of a single snowflake caught on our dark coat sleeve. We have all experienced the earth in moments like these, moments of recognition and union. We have spoken beautiful words and created moving prayer services around earth themes. Since summer 1988, we have witnessed enormous media coverage of environmental problems. Yet, as a species, we humans, capable of knowing union with the earth, have moved forward with industrial technology and lifestyles that are harming the planet, sometimes irreversibly. Even though we love the earth and we acknowledge that her predicament is deteriorating to a dangerous degree, we seem unable to change. Why?

Fidelity to our experience of earth is integral to our conversion with earth and it helps us to live well in the present and to choose wisely for the future. Particularly relevant for the unfolding of this statement are the attitude of Francis of Assisi toward earth and its implications for us

Margaret Pirkl, O.S.F., is a member of the Sisters of Saint Francis of Rochester, Minnesota. She is especially concerned with our religious responsibility for the earth's future. Coming to this concern from the academic area of physical science and from a deep love of the Franciscan tradition, she believes that we hold an irreplaceable gift for our age in Francis' attitude toward earth.

in the present-day ecological crisis. Consideration of Francis' relation to our Sister, mother Earth, will help us to learn from our planet and respond to her in ways conducive to both her health and ours.

Francis' attitude toward earth's creatures has been universally acknowledged as unique in its compassion, emotion, sensitivity, and courtesy because it was basically a loving attitude of a brother toward his brothers and sisters. In his spiritual journey, Francis' conversion both affected his attitude toward all creatures and was affected by them. We have abundant evidence that in minority and fraternal love he, more than most, experienced mutuality in his conversion with all members of the earth family. Flowers, lamb, robbers, swallows, cricket — all were "Brother" and "Sister" to him. 1

Francis' "Canticle of Creatures" reflects an attitude that came from a well-integrated recognition of his own creaturehood, had its basis in deep union with all of creation, and saw human beings as part of the earth family, not separate from it. This attitude, which I claim was different from one of stewardship, permeates the Canticle. Francis' relationships with creatures sprang from a mutuality that had to do with giving and receiving at the same level. He talked to them about God, they talked to him about God; he taught them about simplicity, they taught him about simplicity; he freed them, they freed him. This was something quite different from caring for something he dominated. He seemed to know creatures directly; his contemplative soul recognized them and enabled them to recognize him. Thomas of Celano's description holds a key to understanding this mutuality:

[Francis] called all creatures brother [or sister], 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 [children] of God.²

Francis' great love for God spilled over into his relationship with creatures not only because he saw them as gifts from a loving Creator but also because he perceived their intrinsic worth and sacredness. The Canticle is an integration of praise of Creator and praise of creature. "Praised be you, My Lord, through Brother Wind, through Sister Water, through Brother Fire, through our Sister, Mother Earth. ..." His insight into creatures as good in themselves enhanced and was enhanced in a profound way by his deep love of Jesus. Francis was overwhelmed with gratitude when he reflected on the Architect of Earth becoming a Child of Earth, and he knew well that this mystery made holy everything of earth. I believe Francis had special entrance into the mystery that links the crucified and risen Jesus and the incarnate Logos, the creative Word. It

is possible the main reason Francis was fascinated with Brother Fire, Sister Lark, and Sister Water and saw each as a revelation of the Divine was his personal experience of its Designer present in his heart. Francis understood in a unique way that only in this formative presence can the creature be what it is. As a mystic, Francis knew firsthand that "Christ is the first-born of all creatures" (Col 1:15b) and that "Christ fills the universe in all its parts" (Eph 1:23). His intimate love for Jesus the Christ and his affectionate love for individual creatures were as one. We cannot separate out the one without doing violence to the other. It is this union of loves which Max Scheler, in his important book, *The Nature of Sympathy*, saw realized in Francis — the coming together of a "non-cosmic personal love of Jesus" and an "animistic sense of union with the being of nature." In response to those who ask why Francis was not considered a pantheist, Scheler says:

In this sense [of Nature being a manifestation of God's glory], even for [St. Francis], Nature is not an immediate object of identification with a life universal either dissevered from God as Spirit, or actually equated with Him...; for Nature itself is but a symbol and a parable, as the "Hymn to the Sun" makes sufficiently clear.⁵

I believe anthropologist Loren Eiseley experienced a bit of what Francis enjoyed. After a night of wakeful searching for a miracle of meaning, Eiseley found himself face to face on the seashore with a baby fox who had not learned to fear:

Yet here was... the wide-eyed, innocent fox inviting me to play, with the innate courtesy of its two forepaws placed appealingly together, along with a mock shake of the head. The universe was swinging in some fantastic fashion around to present its face, and the face was so small that the universe itself was laughing.

It was not a time for human dignity. It was a time only for the careful observance of amenities written behind the stars. Gravely I arranged my forepaws while the puppy whimpered with ill-concealed excitement. I drew the breath of a fox's den into my nostrils. On impulse, I picked up clumsily a whiter bone and shook it in teeth that had not entirely forgotten their original purpose. Round and round we tumbled for one exstatic moment. We were the innocent thing in the midst of the bones, born in the egg, born in the den, born in the dark cave. ...

 \dots I had seen my miracle. I had seen the universe as it begins for all things. It was, in reality, a child's universe, a tiny and laughing universe. \dots ⁶

Is it true that for the one who identifies as a member of the earth family almost anything can happen? "... Unless you become as little children..."

Eiseley's experience, his miracle, came about because of his sincere sense of mutuality with the little fox. In this, it was a Francis-like experience. Was it a case for conversion with the earth? I think it was because both Eiseley and the fox moved toward the freedom and meaning for which all creatures are waiting (Rom 8).

Even though we may not dare hope for such high degree of mutuality in freedom, we can know that our sister, Mother Earth, is teaching us and calling us through our experience of both her gifts and her suffering. If we truly see and hear her and are faithful to what we see and hear, we will change, we will know conversion with her. Examples of balance, moderation, community, self-education, and self-healing abound in her structures and her processes.

Consider, for example, Brother Beaver working out of his instincts. If his home becomes uninhabitable, he will build a dam rather than find a deeper water hole elsewhere so that he does not disturb a part of the wilderness hitherto untouched. He laboriously hauls logs over great distances so that he neither interferes with his food source and the immediate landscape nor endangers his home site by erosion due to absence of trees. Rather than cutting down trees indiscriminately, the beaver selects trees in a way that does not upset the balance of nature.

How about humans? When one home becomes unsuitable we abandon it for another. Cost-efficiency and labor-saving are criteria which govern much of economic development. And we often drain our natural resources to the last dregs. It seems obvious that the earth's way in Brother Beaver is relevant to us today.

Another member of earth's family who invites us to turn to her way is Sister Alder Tree. Alders fix nitrogen by means of their roots, as much as 175 pounds of nitrogen per acre per year. Through networking of roots, they provide fertilizer not only for themselves but also for adjacent trees (not always alders) and other plants. Underground root connections stabilize trees and help to prevent their being blown over; they also allow water and nutrients to move to the individual tree in most need, as if out of a sense of community. Alders contradict the general notion that plants are self-serving, independent, and competitive when it comes to survival. They provide convincing evidence that plants can live out cooperation in community by supporting, feeding, and helping each other. Sister Alder's call to conversion with her is gentle: where there is isolation put community and where there is competition put collaboration.

Incentives to change also come from our experience of the earth's travail. Not only are the ways of Brother Beaver and Sister Alder endangered but the very existence of these creatures is threatened. For the

first time in human history we are affecting the planet as a whole in a destructive way. We are literally changing her chemistry, upsetting delicately balanced systems, extinguishing species — all at rates to which earth's myriad families cannot adjust quickly enough to insure their survival. Earth is letting us know that the entire geosphere, the biosphere, and humankind are moving together toward much more serious trouble than most of us know now. Some populations have come to experience the extremes. Worldwatch Institute estimates that already 10 million persons, "environmental refugees," are fleeing from lands no longer habitable. While scientists do not claim the ability to predict exactly what will happen on a large scale if present patterns continue, they do offer some astounding and sobering trends.

We humans are harming Brother Air. The fragile ozone "layer," about three kilometers thick at altitudes of 12 to 25 kilometers, is actually composed of only six to seven molecules per million air molecules; yet, this bit protects humans, animals and plants from harmful ultraviolet solar radiation. Due to certain chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), widely used in foam insulation and packaging, coolants and solvents, ozone is depleted to an alarming degree; at times the "hole" in the ozone layer over Antarctica exceeds the area of North America. Ozone depletion caused by CFCs near the earth at present probably will not be detected for another six to seven years. As we reflect on the data, shall we muster the will to change so that we do not disrupt further Brother Air's ordered ways and cause harm to ourselves and others? If ten million persons in the United States sought out biodegradable foam cups or paper cups made for hot beverages, they would contribute significantly to ozone's survival and to the health of all on earth.

We humans are violating Sister Water. Precious groundwater comes from springs and wells to quench our thirst, to cleanse, to share its transparency and lowliness. Up to the present age our planet's water cycle involving land, sea, and air has kept a balance; it has renewed and purified earth's fresh water supply by providing rainwater that moves to replenish the aquifers after filtering through overlying earth. Now hundreds of millions of tons of poisons are yearly making their way through soil and rocks to violate this groundwater. In some cases over many years, they enter even the deepest major aquifers. Herbicides, pesticides, industrial toxic wastes, household wastes, seepage from landfills, ashes from waste incinerators — all contribute to invisible deadly contamination of the gift Francis once called precious and pure.

In 1984, the Worldwatch Institute indicated that if overall water pollution is not reduced or adequately treated it could make a fourth of the

Francis' relationships with creatures sprang from a mutuality that had to do with giving and receiving at the same level.

world's supply unsafe by the year 2000. This projection is in itself a call to change. We hear the call of Sister Water in aquifers and lakes and rivers as well as in the living creatures deprived of safe draking water. Can we respond by conversion with her and participate in her patient purifying processes by refusing to contribute to toxic wastes and by not using lawn fertilizers that poison her?

We humans are enraging Brother Fire. Fire in the quiet form of heat is useful and necessary in moderate amounts and in natural balance and is healthful to living creatures. However, an extreme of too much or too little upsets natural processes and life patterns. Although controversial in the minds of some experts, today's question of the greenhouse effect and possible resulting climate changes became very real to millions in the sizzling dry days of summer 1988. As a very result, more of us have become familiar with some of the facts related to global warming: the five warmest years of this century have occurred in the last decade; the agent most responsible for warming of the atmosphere is carbon dioxide (CO₂); the two chief sources of CO₂ are the burning of fossil fuels and the removal of forests which use CO₂ for photosynthesis; the level of this heat-absorbing gas is increasing in the lower atmosphere in an unnatural way.

Very small variations in the earth's average temperature over a relatively short time cause a large-scale disruption of the existing conditions.

A temperature increase of 1 degree Celsius per decade in mid-to upper [north] latitudes translates into a shift in vegetation zones of 60 - 100 miles northward. Terrestrial ecosystems cannot migrate that fast. ... Biological diversity, already being reduced by various human activities, may be one of the chief casualties of global warming. ¹⁰

Another consequence of temperature increase is the rising level of the seas as glaciers and polar ice caps melt. Some say the level could rise by as much as a meter if the earth's average temperature increases by 3 degrees Celsius by the middle of the next century (a reasonable forecast if present air pollution continues); this would cause catastrophic flooding of low-lying lands adjacent to the oceans and seas.

We are challenged to hear this warning from Brother Fire and take action at a rate sufficient to ward off major global catastrophe. Are we willing to carpool, to use mass transit, to move toward an alternative to our petroleum economy?

We humans are raping our Sister, Mother Earth. In return for giving us life, security, nourishment, and growth, our earth is suffering terrible violence at our hands. The rapid destruction of rain forests is one example of unabating abuse, due largely to a widespread attitude of domination on the part of us humans. Last April, Brazil announced measures intended to slow the destruction of its Amazon forest. Presently, however, in the name of development, about 75,000 square miles of tropical trees are cleared every year — an area almost the size of Kansas. At this rate, the earth's rain forests will be gone in thirty to forty years. And with them will go millions of exquisite creatures, most of whom we will not have the opportunity to know. The habitats of nearly half of all plants and animals, known and unknown, are being bulldozed or burned. These are the most diverse ecosystems on earth, coming from billions of years of evolution, and humans are presuming the right to do away with them in a few decades.

How urgent is earth's plea for our response! In the face of so much death, can we have the will for hope? Can we "choose life that we and our descendants may live"? (Dt:30:19) For the sake of our children, as well as for the sake of exquisite creatures we may never know, can we take action to save the forests? As citizens we might urge our elected officials to support life-giving international efforts toward alleviating destruction of forests everywhere. In this country, are we wlling to save trees by cooperative efforts in recycling paper? The typical family can preserve a healthy medium-sized tree by the paper it saves for recycling over three months or less.

God comes close to us through our memories of perhaps very few unitive moments with the Divine; what is expected of us is fidelity to the memory of those moments. We are being asked to live in right relationship with all creatures and their irreplaceable revelation of the Divine and to be faithful to our experience by remembering. As we hear the call from earth to conversion with her in her gifts and hear God through her, I believe our first response is to be one of wondering and remembering. A few years ago, Garrison Keillor said, "Caring about the world does not begin with fear or morbidity, but with fascination." Learning how we might change according to the earth's ways requires first that we watch her ways and marvel at them, that we hear her music and revel and dance in it, that we sense her sacredness and reverence it. Whether it be in

snowflake or crocus, in lazy summer clouds or spiral conch or brilliant autumn maple, earth in her beautiful creatures is cause for celebration, awe, and joy — in us as it was in Francis. Whether it be in Brother Beaver or Sister Alder, Brother Wind or Sister Water, earth is patient teacher for us, her children, inviting us to live as part of her family according to her natural rhythms.

In the present suffering of our Sister, Mother Earth, however, we hear a call to conversion with her that is more than a gentle invitation. Thomas Berry says it well:

What is clear is that the earth is mandating that the human community assume a responsibility never assigned to any previous generation. ... In its prior period the earth acted independently as the complete controlling principle; only limited control over existence was assigned to ourselves. Now the Earth insists that we accept greater responsibility, a responsibility commensurate with the greater knowledge communicated to us. 12

Accepting greater responsibility means changing our lifestyle. To change a lifestyle is difficult. We all participate in our society's wasteful ways more than we care to admit. And we need help to bring together in our lives the profound and the ordinary, the theoretical and the practical, the mystical and the mundane, the prayer and the action. Tapping the treasure we have in Francis' life will provide that help.

If Francis were here today, aware that we human creatures are injuring our home, our planet, sometimes to the point of irreversible damage, I believe he would find creative and loving but uncompromising ways of insisting on our ecological conversion, conversion with Sister Earth, which is a call to serve God by living in union with God's creation. Our will to act is crucial; it is the test of faithfulness to what our remembering hearts dictate out of our experience of earth, our experience of Francis, and our experience of God. We can almost hear Francis saying, "Let us begin, for up to now we have done very little." \(\begin{align*} \text{ \text{I}} \)

Endnotes

¹See St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies: English Omnibus of Sources for the Life of St. Francis, ed. Marion Habig (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972): LP 51, 1C 77-79, LP 90, 1C 59, LP 84, and others.

²1C 81.

³See the "Omnibus", p. 130, n. 1, and *Francis and Clare: Complete Works*, trans. Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., and Ignatius Brady, OFM (Ramsey, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1982), p. 38, n. 5.

⁴Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy* (London: Routledge & Degan Paul, Ltd., 1954), p 87.

⁵Scheler, p. 89.

⁶Loren Eiseley, "The Innocent Fox," in *The Unexpected Universe* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1969), pp. 210-11.

⁷Robert Swain, "Notes from the radical Undergorund," World Monitor,

November 1988, pp. 16-18.

⁸Jodi L. Jacobson, Environmental Refugees: a Yardstick of Habitability, Worldwatch Paper 86 (Washington, D.C.: Worldwatch Institute, November, 1988), p. 6.

⁹Sandra Postel, Water: Rethinking Management in an Age of Scarcity, Worldwatch Paper 62 (Washington, D.C.: Worldwatch Institute, December 1984), p. 19. The scarcity of water in large sections of Asia and Africa due to topography and climate can in some places be called a water famine due to natural causes. Major aspects of this problem are separate from the mismanagement resulting in water pollution. See pp. 6-11 in this Worldwatch Paper.

¹⁰State of the World 1989: a Worldwatch Institute Report on Progress toward a Sustainable Society, ed. Lester Brown and others (New York: W. W. Norton

and Company, 1989), p. 10.

¹¹As is often the case in "development," the poor and the indigenous suffer because of deforestation, either because their own livelihood is wiped out by "economic progress" or because the land they clear for growing food quickly is eroded or loses valuable nutrients. Generally, these people know how to promote forest renewability even as they use the trees. To treat the relationship betweeen the poor and today's ecological problems would require another article. Here, I refer you to: Alan B. Durning, Action at the Grassroots: Fighting Poverty and Environmental Decline, Worldwatch Paper 88 (Washington D.C.: Worldwatch Institute, January 1989).

¹²Thomas Berry, "The Ecological Age," Earthscape: Transitions toward World Order," Whole Earth paper 12, Global education Associates, East Orange, New Jersey, 1979), p. 11. This essay also appears in Berry's Dream of the Earth (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), pp. 36 - 49.

¹³LM IV, 1 (adaptation).

Book Reviews

Harper's Bible Commentary. Edited by James L. Mays et al. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988. Pp. 1344. Cloth, thumb-indexed, \$34.95.

Reviewed by Bonaventure F. Hayes, O.F.M., S.T.L., M.L.S. Assistant Professor of Sacred Scripture and Library Director, Christ the King Seminary, East Aurora, NY.

Anyone who wants an in-depth commentary on a particular passage of Scripture knows better — or, at least, ought to know better — than to turn to a one-volume commentary on the whole Bible. Yet one-volume commentaries on the Bible serve many legitimate needs, e.g., getting the general sense of a passage or an idea for preaching or preparing to lead a Bible discussion group. Harper's Bible Commentary (HBC) is such commentary and as fine an exemplar of this genre in English as this reviewer has yet seen.

than eighty members of the Society of Biblical Literature, the principal association of biblical scholars in North America. The editors have chosen the authors well and have evidently given them great leeway in going about their task. HBC was planned and written as a complement to the one-volume Harper's Bible Dictionary (to which there are numerous cross references), published a couple of years back; therefore, the reader should not expect to find a multiplicity of thematic essays on biblical themes alongside the introduc-

tion to and commentary on the various books of the Bible here in contradistinction, for example, to the Ierome Biblical Commentary (which, by the way, ix in the process of revision with publication of the revised edition projected for late 1990). This does not mean, however, that there are no appended essays in the HBC. There are, in fact, several. Five longer essays at the beginning of the volume deal with the theory and history of biblical interpretation, the literary and historical contexts of the biblical writings, and the biblical writings in the context of the communities that accepted them as sacred writings. The biblical books are divided (not, it seems to this reviewer, totally satisfactorily) into seven groupings, and each of these has an introductory essay, most of which concentrate on matters of literary interest. Finally, the individual commentators were allowed to insert excurses in the form of brief essays in the midst of their commentaries: there are nearly three dozen of these rather unevenly strewn throughout (e.g., eight in Ieremiah, but none in Exekiel: four in Matthew, but none in John). In additional, these 1344 pages contain a small biblical atlas and gazeteer, blackand-white as well as colored photos, tables, charts, diagrams, and brief perhaps, too brief — bibliographies at the end of each essay and commentary.

It is important to note that the commentary sections do not contain a verseby-verse commentary, but focus rather on the text passage-by-passage. For a commentary of this size, scope, and purpose this is undoubtedly a decided plus: there is no undue atomization of the text where the forest gets lost for the trees. The commentator on the Song of Songs, however, has forsaken even a passage-by-passage approach and has put in its place a three-page discussion of poetic types, themes, motifs, contexts and interrelationships. This strikes this reviewer as hardly adequate in a commentary even of this limited scope.

As in the case of the excurses, the introductions to the individual biblical books vary considerably in length and subject matter, some barely adequate (e. g., Matthew), others quite well done (e. g., Romans and I Corinthians). Having spot-checked much of the com-

mentary for those books of the Bible he is more familiar with, this reviewer found no glaring inadequacies and much that was genuinely illuminating and stimulating (cf., e.g., the commentary on Acts). The approach of the various commentators and the quality of their contributions vary considerably, as is to be expected in a composite work such as this.

This volume is not aimed at the biblical scholar, but rather the educated 'lay' reader; teachers of scriptures, nevertheless, can learn much from it as well. At its very reasonable price one can hardly afford not to buy it — provided one has a genuine need for such a volume.

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