

# the CORD

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## CONSPIRACY: MARIAN YEAR

Sound never a trumpet. Only let her name  
Go up like flocks of birds from every land.  
Fire no salute. Her fragrance shall possess  
The earth like arms, like eloquence of eyes.  
Let there be silence, that no foe may guess  
How Mary comes to wreck his careful wars.  
Deep in the very tents of battlesmoke,  
Her gentle plot is sprung; and we are doomed  
To watch our terrors melt before her gaze.

Oh, write her name for jubilee upon  
Our dreariness! until the heart recalls  
How we were meant for sun and song and splendor,  
And earth remembers how it was paradise.

Light her pure name to bonfires on the rubble  
Of earth's despair; for, in our darkest season  
Of bitterness and blood, there sounds no trumpet,  
But Mary laughing with her little Child.

*Poor Clare Monastery  
of Our Lady of Guadalupe,  
Roswell, New Mexico*

*Sr. Mary Francis, P. C.*

## OUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE

*The things that were gain to me, these, for  
the sake of Christ, I have counted loss (Phil. 3, 7)*

The love of God in the heart of a saint becomes a fire. The love of God in the heart of Francis was a mammoth flame, and the great torment of it drove him into a sublime madness. God poured into his heart in unusual fulness the Spirit of His Son crying, "Abba, Father" (*Spiritum... clamantem*, Gal. 4, 6), and the heart of Francis almost burst with the echoing cry in the same Spirit, "Abba, Father" (*Spiritum... in quo clamamus*, Rom. 8, 15). And thus, at length, the love and the echoing love grew to a thunder.

Love blazed in Saint Francis. Almost as an outward proof of this, the Fioretti recounts the incident when Saint Francis and Saint Clare were conversing on the love of God under the open sky: "Saint Francis began to speak of God so sweetly, so sublimely, and in a manner so wonderful that the grace of God visited them abundantly, and all were rapt in Christ. While they were thus rapt, with eyes and hearts raised to heaven, the people of Assisi and of Bettona, and of all the country round about, saw Saint Mary of the Angels as it were on fire, with convent and woods adjoining. It seemed to them as if the church, the convent, and the woods were all enveloped in flames, and the inhabitants of Assisi hastened with great speed to put out the fire."

And at the giving of the stigmata, the Fioretti tells us: "Then did all the Mount Alvernia appear wrapped in intense fire, which illuminated all the mountains and valleys around, as it were the sun shining in his strength upon the earth." This was the answer to Francis' prayer that Christ "would grant me in my lifetime to feel, as far as might be possible, both in my soul and body, all that He had suffered in His most bitter Passion. The second favor which I asked was that I might feel in my heart that exceeding love which enkindled His, and moved Him to endure so great a Passion for

us sinners. And then God put it into my heart that it was granted to me to feel both as far as it is possible for a mere creature; and this promise was well fulfilled to me by the impression of the stigmata." Here the transforming power of love has come to a glorious consummation: by the stigmata Saint Francis is conformed to the likeness of the supreme Love, Christ crucified.

It was a torment to him that men were heedless of the love of Christ; yet, Love must be loved; so Francis often climbed to the rocky caverns of his Umbrian hills—a trysting place with Christ—and there he would parley long and fervently with the love of Christ. Then he would go down to the valley to spread abroad the fire that flamed within him. Christ had said, *I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?* But the fire was burning low, so Francis wore himself out, going from place to place, blowing the hot coals into a streaming flame, till the flames leaped up and the fire of divine love roared again in the land.

A love such as that of Francis is uncompromising; it leads to a holy folly. It is so utterly engrossing, so ravishing that all else is nothing. Having this love, he would have naught besides. Saint Paul experienced this intoxication: *The things that were gain to me, these, for the sake of Christ, I have counted loss. Nay, more, I count everything loss because of the excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord* (Phil. 3:7-8). Francis was of the same mind: every temporal thing would be an encumbrance to him. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And earth does not delight me if I am with thee. My flesh and my heart melt away; the Rock of my heart and my portion, God forever* (Ps. 72, 27). Thus, detachment followed from love. If the Son of God stripped himself of glory for love of Francis, he in turn would strip himself of everything for love of Christ. For, in truth, that heart is too avaricious which, possessing such treasure, would want other treasure besides. "I beseech thee, O Lord, that the fiery and sweet strength of thy love may absorb my soul from all things that are under heaven, that I may die for love of thy love as thou didst deign to die for love of my love." Therefore, Francis gave back his clothes, he abandoned his former social prestige, he surrendered every right of possession, he flung comfort to the winds. To the

carnal and worldly-minded all this seems to be a madness. Yes, let us grant the madness, but a madness of excessive joy, an intoxication of love, a heroism born of immortal desires, for who would not gladly pass through fire and water that he might at the last embrace the living God? That is why self-conquest, and detachment, and fasting, and vigils, and long hours of prayer are sheer delight to a soul who has fallen in love with God, for all this is like a thundering declaration to Him who sits upon the throne, that you love Him above all things.

Such is the folly of divine love when it truly seizes you: it alienates you, by its ecstasy, from your worldly prudence and makes you a fool in the eyes of the world. And thus, at first, Francis became a laughing-stock to men, for *the sensual man does not perceive the things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him and he cannot understand* (1 Cor. 2, 14). That is why his father raved at the very thought of it all, and why the boys pelted him with mud and stones because their elders had told them that Francis was mad.

Yes, in truth, Francis was beside himself because he walked in an ecstasy of love, and that makes every man a fool, for no one can understand such a lover unless he himself is deeply in love. Saint Augustine says very much to the point, *Da amantem*. . .—"We are fools for Christ, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, but we are without honor! . . . We have become as the refuse of this world, the offscouring of all" (1 Cor. 4. 10-13). Such, in the estimation of the carnal man, is the spiritual man.

It seems, therefore, that the poverty of Saint Francis has a sublime explanation; it is the expression of his all-absorbing love for Christ. The great poem on divine love, the Cantic of Canticles, would put it this way: *If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing* (8, 7).

"Ah! is Thy love indeed

A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,

Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?" (Francis Thompson).

Yes, an amaranthine weed, a never-fading flower whose beauty and splendor make all other blossoms vile.

It will not be given to us to have the seraphic love of Saint Francis—its consuming ardor, its ecstasy. Yet, we too have the Spirit of the Son crying, "Abba, Father." And if we do not have the rapture, we can have the devotedness, and this is the true touch-stone of love, for *He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me* (J. 14, 21). *He who keeps his word, in him the love of God is truly perfected; and by this we know that we are in him* (1 J. 2, 5). If, then, we are loyal and devoted to the will of God we can have assurance.

As to Franciscan poverty, we have seen that it was begotten of divine love. We must love poverty as Francis did through a deep love for Christ. It would be senseless to surrender all things if we were not moved by the compelling love. And if in our present age we cannot be as uncompromising in fact as Francis was, at least let us be as uncompromising in spirit. We are renegades from the spirit of Saint Francis if we are renegades from the spirit of his poverty. We must be glad to be poor. Poverty is our riches. Therefore, *having food and sufficient clothing, with these let us be content* (1 Tim. 6, 6). *It were better for me to die than... No one shall make void my boast!* (1 Cor. 9, 16).

Old Mission,

Santa Barbara, California

Fr. Silvano Matulich, O.F.M.



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## THE TWO MEDITATIONS

(From the medieval chronicle, The Holy Friars of Saxony)

During the early days of the Order, Blessed Francis left such telling examples of devotion to his descendants that the Friars engraved them upon their hearts and never let them vanish from their memory. To the example of his devotion not only were the Friars who were priests most attentive, but the lay-brothers also panted after fervor of spirit and by their assiduous prayers besought of God the spirit of great and ardent fervor.

One of these was Friar Conrad, a laybrother who attained such devotion that the Lord deigned to work miracles through him... One day he was out as companion to a friar-priest, who was to say Mass in a nearby town. As they walked along, they came to a woods through which they had to pass. When they had entered to grove the priest, who knew Friar Conrad for a jolly fellow, was fearful that Conrad would delay him by some ill-timed prank; so he started some friendly yet serious conversation and talked quite lovingly and amiably to him. Then he said to Friar Conrad: "Say your prayers now; I want to prepare for Mass." And with that the priest walked ahead of him lest Conrad disturb him in his prayers.

Having said his own Office and prayers, this devout friar-priest began to meditate and ponder on the majesty of Him Whose blessed Body and Blood he was about to bring down, to touch with his hands, and to consume in Holy Mass, and meditating deeply on Him, he proceeded in his thought and came to the Passion of Christ Jesus. And as the eyes of his soul now saw Christ hanging on the Cross, covered with wounds and crowned with thorns, he considered himself unworthy to enter upon such a high ministry, both on account of the boundless love which he beheld in Christ and an account of his own sins by which he so often had offended Him. The soul of the priest melted within him with a boundless compassion for Christ Whom he never ceased to gaze upon interiorly. He then

began to weep very lovingly and with all his heart he suffered with Christ on His Cross. Thus he saw Christ within his heart, and his soul was filled with sadness in beholding Him.

But Friar Conrad, on his part, knowing nothing of what his companion was doing, also gave himself to meditation. He became deeply engrossed with the Holy Infancy of Our Lord, and was absorbed into the joy that the Holy Angels felt at the Nativity of Christ when they sang *Gloria in excelsis* and in the unexampled happiness of the shepherds when they found Him whimpering in the manger. In a similar way he entered into the delight of the Magi when they adored Him in the stable as the Evangelist tells us: *But seeing the star the Magi rejoiced with exceeding great joy*, etc. And while he was lost in such holy thoughts, he was thrilled with such mirth that he began to exult loudly and to talk heart to heart with the ever-blessed Infant.

And thus the two friars enfolded God in their souls: the priest who gazed upon Christ in grief and sorrow, and the laybrother in great mirth and joyfulness. More perfectly, however, did he see Christ and greater was the love of Christ in *him* whose soul beheld Christ on the Cross. So as to place Friar Conrad on the same level of meditation with his companion, the good God increased his joy by the following miraculous apparition.

While the priest, weeping bitterly over the Passion of the Lord, continued his way, and the lay-brother followed, rejoicing over the Lord's Infancy, the brother heard near the road a voice like that of a little boy weeping and whimpering. Rooted in amazement he stopped and listened carefully. But hearing nothing except the boy's voice, he began to call out and ask whether there was anyone with the child. Receiving no answer, he entered the forest to find what might be wrong with the babe. But when he came to the spot he found a very beautiful child smiling up at him. He lifted the child into his arms and the child's glance filled him with a wonderful happiness. He thought about taking him along to the town, but he feared to give scandal to those who might see him. But he feared even more to leave him there, lest he be devoured by wild beasts. Finally, however, he decided that the child had been left there by some careless person, and so it seemed best to him to take him along

and place him under the care of some good people when he and his companion emerged from the forest.

He carried the boy in his arms and the boy smiled up at him, and the longer the brother gazed upon him, the more beautiful the child appeared. Then he hurried after his companion and began to call after him to wait and see the beautiful child. But the priest in his heart saw Christ on the Cross and was weeping most bitterly, while the other saw the child in his arms and was transported with delight. And when the laybrother insisted that he wait for him, the devout Father, fearing that the brother would put an end to his meditation, called to him: "O Friar Conrad, I am afraid that you are about to offend greatly the good God Who just now has given me some good thoughts from which you will distract me." When poor Conrad heard that the Father felt annoyed, he ceased calling and followed him to town in silence. And when they were about to enter the town, he saw nearby a wall with a window fairly high up from the ground. So he decided that he would place the boy there and, after finding out whose child it was, he would return; he did not dare to carry the boy into town because he was afraid he would give scandal to the townsfolk.

But when he lifted the boy up, He disappeared from his hands and vanished before his eyes. Friar Conrad then understood that it had been the Christ-Child, on Whose Infancy he had been meditating. And now it was his turn to weep bitterly because he had to do without Christ's very beautiful appearance. When the priest now looked back because he heard the brother sobbing, he asked the cause of such bitter tears. And Friar Conrad said: "O dear Father, I have lost the Boy I had, and if I only had known, as I know now, Who He was, how tight I would have held Him!" And when the priest heard what Boy he was talking about, he wept even harder than the lay-brother, because he had not seen Him.

But the priest had seen something more perfect and lovable in his own heart. And so our Dear Lord, Who would not distract him from the contemplation of His most bitter sufferings and hinder the tears that so consoled him, withdrew the presence of His Holy Infancy.

Oldenburg, Indiana

Marian Douglas, O. F. M.  
Fintan Warren, O. F. M.

## SAINT BONAVENTURE'S RULE FOR NOVICES (I)

### *Preface*

*Be transformed in the newness of your mind that you may discern what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* These words the Apostle writes to the Romans as to novices, that they who in the world were deformed by sin and were dark, being now established in religious life, may be reformed by final penitence and become bearers of light, so that it may be said of them: *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk then as children of light.* Whoever, therefore, desires to reform in outlook and habit should strive to refashion his life according to the norms I have explained below. For him the good will of God will consist in the forgiveness of sin that deforms; the acceptable will, in the inpouring of grace that restores; while the perfect will lies in the enjoyment of the reward of glory, in which he will receive a crown of beauty at the hand of the Lord Jesus, Who will render to every man according to his works, *for He is just and has loved justice.*

### *The Divine Office*

Spiritual things are ever and everywhere to be given first place. When, therefore, you are in church or elsewhere to say the Divine Office, do not let your heart wander or admit harmful thoughts or other distractions, because, as Saint Bernard says: "It is a great abuse to have one's mouth in choir and one's heart in the market." Of such men the Prophet says: *They blessed with their mouth, but cursed with their heart.* Rather, say the Office with profound humility of heart, with reverence and fear. For, according to Holy Scripture, *the fear of the Lord shall delight the heart and shall give joy and gladness.*

And strive to understand what you are saying, if you can; if, however, you cannot understand the text, revere it nonetheless,

## RULE FOR NOVICES

because the Wise Man says: *For thy reverence, good grace shall come to thee.* And always stand erect during the Office, both for that of the Blessed Virgin Mary and for that of the day. Yet in the night office, after Matins of the Blessed Virgin, you may rest against the back of the stall.

Do not omit the Office of the Blessed Virgin on double feasts. Whenever you are saying Office, conduct yourself modestly, not gazing around nor speaking with anyone. But with head slightly bowed and eyes cast down, keep your hands in front of you, either in the form of a cross, or joined before your breast, but never in the pocket of your habit or in any unseemly place. And remember that you are not only before your brethren, but also in the presence of God and His Angels. For the Psalmist says: *The Princes, i.e., Angels, went before, joined to the singers.*

And pay careful attention to the psalter, lest negligence or excessive modesty cause you to omit any word of the Office. And in praying your hours, do more than merely say the words, lest you be like those pious hypocrites, of whom the Lord complains by the Prophet: *This people with their lips glorify me, but their heart is far from me.* Beware of doing or saying anything which would provoke others to laughter because, as Saint Isidore says: "Compunction has no entrance where there is immoderate joking and laughter." But rather let your joy and your meditation rest always in Jesus that, praying and meditating, you can say with the Prophet: *May the words of my mouth please Thee: and the meditation of my heart be ever in thy sight.* And when you have completed any hour, say the *Miserere* and the *Salve Regina* with the oration *Omnipotens.*

### *Prayer*

Since the Lord says in the Gospel that we *must always pray and not lose heart*, strive always to spend your time in prayer or in reading or in profitable thought or at work, "for he does not cease to pray who does his duty well. Your prayer should be frequent and sorrowful, rooted in deep devotion and humility of heart. For, as the Wise Man says, *the prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds.* And whatever you ask in prayer, do so with confidence that it will be heard, for Truth Itself says: *All things whatever you ask* . . .

*believe that you shall receive, and they shall come to you.* And let your prayer be based on the highest charity, for Saint Gregory says that "the power of perfect prayer lies in the intensity of its charity."

Let it be also secret, modest, just, tearful, and frequent. And since prayer is nothing but the "ascent of the mind to God", therefore, before you begin your prayer, prepare yourself for interior devotion if you desire to attain to divine delights. For, as Saint Gregory says again, "prayer is a matter of the heart, not of the lips; nor does God merely listen to the words of the petitioner but He also scrutinizes his heart." And therefore the Wise Man says: *Son, before prayer prepare thy soul and be not as a man that tempteth God.* A man who prays is said to tempt God when, without any interior preparation, he runs to vocal prayer and asks to understand divine things. But rarely, if ever, will he obtain this, for such a man does not pray devoutly, but rather barks out his words.

If, therefore, you seek consolation in prayer; prepare your heart for devotion; for of this preparation Christ says through His Prophet: *Thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart.* Thus also we read in the lives of the Fathers: "As we wish to be found in prayer, so should we prepare ourselves before the time of prayer."

Three things go to make up this preparation. First, as Saint Gregory says, we must turn the five senses from exterior things to attain quiet of mind, lest the soul, which intends to dwell only on God, be drawn by them to other things. For if the invisible soul is like the invisible God, then in prayer it should forget all visible things that it may easily concentrate on heavenly things without earthly admixture. For, as the tree grows upward, so must the soul grow toward the things of God. And therefore Saint Gregory says: "The man who prays will receive the interior taste of wisdom more avidly, the more he tries to repress the delight of the flesh for its wisdom." And therefore the Lord says: *But when thou prayest, go into thy room and, closing the door, pray to thy Father.*

The second element of this preparation, viz., consideration of our own smallness, follows from the fact that no one ascends to the contemplation of God unless he first descends through his own humility. Now if you who pray wish to learn your own littleness, consider the immensity of Him to Whom you pray; for you are nothing

in comparison to the living God. You are a vile worm, but God is eternal; you are a creature, mortal and weak, but God is the omnipotent Creator; nor, since you are nothing, have you honored God as the creature should reverence his Creator or the servant his Lord; but to your discredit, by your sins *you have provoked Him to wrath* and have used His very gifts against Him. And therefore you do not deserve to be heard, but rather to be tormented eternally. And thus tearfully picture Hell to yourself, considering the grave sins you have committed and the great glory you have lost and what dire punishment you have incurred, that thinking thus, you may come to know your transgressions and how justly you were condemned, and the Passion of the Lord, by which you were redeemed.

And from this follows the third element, namely, burning love of Christ the Redeemer. If you would love Christ perfectly, consider how greatly He loved you. For *greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends.* But Christ did more, because He died for us, His enemies. *For when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.*

Think, therefore, of these great benefits that God has given you. For, although you deserved to suffer eternally in Hell, the Son of God Himself, to save you, willed to be born of a poor woman and to suffer most cruel torments and to die a horrible death, that He might descend to Hell and free us therefrom and place us in the heavenly company. And then ascend mentally to that company of the Blessed and, fired by divine love, begin to pray fervently that you may say with the Prophet: *My heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall flame out.* And for the remainder of your prayer, continue to picture that glorious heavenly Jerusalem, that you may say with the Apostle: *But our citizenship is in Heaven.*

Let your private prayers be of a certain determined number, and do not set any of these aside unless forced to by pressing necessity or illness. These I recommend: first, in praise of God and the Blessed Virgin, say daily between dawn and evening one hundred Paters, Aves, and Glorias, with as many genuflections; second, say the Seven Penitential Psalms with the litany daily for living benefactors and one nocturn of the Office of the Dead for deceased benefactors. And other prayers as God shall prompt you.

Always remember that the most important thing in our prayers is their devotion, not their completion. Thus, when you find Christ in devotion, immediately discontinue your vocal prayer, enjoy Him Whom you sought, saying with the bride of the Canticle: *I have found him whom my soul loveth: I held him: and I will not let him go.* When Jesus withdraws devotion, continue the prayer you had begun. I advise you not to leave that prayer undone, for he who begins is not commended, but he who perseveres to the end.

Pray, therefore, dearly beloved, and exercise yourself in prayer, because eternal punishment is promised to the poor man who does not pray. For Saint Bernard says: "Pray, my brother, pray always, because he who nourishes his flesh on the sweat of the poor is said to have a coat stained with blood. By our chanting, these good things come to us; therefore pour forth for them heavy groans, otherwise, what you take here in joy, you will later vomit forth in torment." Therefore, as you see yourself to have been more greatly blessed than others, strive to surpass them also in the frequency, duration, and devout fervor of your prayers because, as Saint Gregory says: "A man's office and dignity should make him more humble and quick to serve God, the more he sees himself bound to render an account." And let your whole prayer be centered either on the blessings of God, and then give thanks; or on your own sins and those of your neighbors, and then be sorrowful and weep.

Prayer is the ladder on which Jacob saw angels ascending and descending. Once a day, separated from your brethren, strive to release your soul from all care and, without taint of evil thoughts, recall all the blessings of your Creator with deep humility of heart, devotion, and thanksgiving. Remember especially that for your sake He willed to be born in lowliness, to suffer bitter torments, and to die the basest death. Saint Bernard tells you how to think then of His Passion: "See, Man, how great reparation you owe to your God. See the bloody sweat, the outrageous blows, the stinging lashes, the thorny crown, the blasphemous spittle, the mocking words, the weighty cross. See the anguish of Calvary, the bloodshot eyes, the pallid lips, the gall and vinegar, the bowed head, the agony of death. No need for more! Life Itself has died for us!"

And when you have thought of these things at length, return

again to yourself and consider that Christ suffered not only these but many other torments to free you from the slavery of Satan. And you, in black ingratitude, do not realize the blessings your Creator gives you, although you were redeemed by His death. Not only have you not loved Him as He deserves, but by sin you have rebelled against Him, as He complains by the Prophet: *They repaid me evil for good and hatred for my love.*

For a good hour think with sorrow how gravely you have offended God, what great glory you have lost, and what terrible punishments you have incurred by so doing. And let your soul melt with sorrow and break forth in bitter tears, that you may say with the Psalmist: *My eyes have sent forth springs of water; because they have not kept thy law.*

But at the end rise up with hope in the mercy of Jesus Christ, for *He is long-suffering and full of mercy.* And therefore humbly and confidently beg Him, since by His death He redeemed you and then called you from the world and placed you in religious life, to preserve you sinless in the number of the Saints to the end.

Finally, pray for the Roman Church, i.e., for the Pope and cardinals, and the other prelates of the Church Militant that, having conquered the enemy of the human race, with their flock they may triumphantly receive their heavenly reward. Afterwards pray for all religious, especially for our Order, that He Who has called us before all others to the height of perfection and has marked us with the sign of poverty, may likewise call us to His heavenly kingdom to receive the crown which he has promised to all the perfect. Then pray for the whole Christian people, especially for our benefactors, that they, who have given their goods to the needy, may merit to receive great things for small, heavenly things for earthly, those that are eternal for those of time. And finally, pray for the dead and for the infidels who are deceived by the devil's cunning, that divine mercy may recall them to the light of Faith. And do not despair of anyone for *it is a question not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God showing mercy.*

(to be continued)

Jersey City, N. J.

Joseph F. Mahoney F.



## THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

The ancient Romans coined the phrase: *Nomen atque Omen*, which indicated their custom—superstitious or not—of seeking to determine a man's destiny by his name. In the Old Testament the belief prevailed that divine Providence has a part in the assignment of a name to a person. Thus whenever a new name was given to a man it signified that the person so named was given a new office, and that he was destined to perform a certain function or work, usually in the spiritual realm. Our Lord followed this custom, as is evident when he changed the name of Simon to Cephas, which means "a rock" (in Latin *petra*, hence Peter).

Mother Church has placed the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus right at the entrance to the ecclesiastical year. The reason is evident: the faithful are to begin the new year in the Name of Jesus.

Have we ever seriously considered the spiritual power, the extraordinary wealth, the ineffable sweetness that this Holy Name contains? We often wonder if the humble Saint Joseph fully understood the meaning of the Angel's command: *And thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins* (Mt. 1: 21)? This name came from high heaven; it was destined for the second Adam. If the first Adam took his name from the earth ("Adam," from *adamah*, "earth"), it was proper that the second Adam should receive His name from the realms above. Saint Paul puts it tersely when he says: *The first man was of the earth, earthly; the second man is from heaven, heavenly* (1 Cor. 15: 47). The same Paul grows eloquent when he extols the glories of the name of his Master: *Therefore God also has exalted him and has bestowed upon him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth* (Phil. 2: 9-10).

To every child of Saint Francis devotion to the Holy Name is a sweet heritage. We have but to recall Celano's description of the

Christmas celebration at Greccio to realize something of what the Holy Name meant to our Seraphic Father. "He preached to the people standing about," writes Celano, "and spoke in the sweetest words concerning the birth of the poor King in the little town of Bethlehem; and often when he would name Jesus Christ, glowing with exceeding great love, he would call Him the Child of Bethlehem, and, uttering the word Bethlehem in the manner of a sheep bleating, he filled his mouth with the sound but even more with the sweet affection. Moreover, when he named the Child of Bethlehem, he would, as it were, lick his lips, relishing with happy palate and swallowing the sweetness of the word." And can we ever forget the glorious triumph of that name, achieved, humanly speaking, by the devotion of Its two great champions, Bernardine of Siena and John Capistran? The latter had experienced Its power at Belgrade; the former did not cease to extol Its spiritual power in every sermon he preached, and had Its symbol posted at the roadsides, in front of houses, and at the very gates of the cities.

This devotion, however, was not directed toward the symbol or sound of the Name, but to the Person Who bore it, to Jesus Christ, Son of the Immaculate Virgin, the Incarnate Word of God. The name "Jesus" means "Savior," and indeed, this name stands for all the love and mercy, the benignity and kindness, the forbearance and forgiveness of the Lord of Hosts, the Ancient of days, recorded in the forty-six volumes of the Old Testament. And when to this venerable volume the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were added, it became known to all men that *the goodness and kindness of God our Savior appeared* (Tit. 3:4), which means nothing else than that the Holy Name of Jesus had reached the fulness of Its signification. Thus Jesus is the Alpha and Omega of the sacred writings, of divine revelation; It should also be the beginning and end not only of every task we perform, of every day we spend, but of our whole life.

In our Office we read the glowing words of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, the "Honey-flowing Doctor": "The Holy Name," he writes, "is like oil poured out." It is "*lux, cibus, medicina*"—light, food, and medicine." No one has ever pointed out more beautifully

and aptly the virtues of the Holy Name. If you read the appellations in reverse you have the whole spiritual life—the Purgative, Illuminative, and Unitive Ways. If you analyse them singly, you see that they provide you with everything you need for every task, for every mood, for every need. The *lux* is the light of faith, in which you see things as God sees them, in which you see the sweet workings of divine Providence in whatever befalls; *cibus* is the food that gives you strength, integrates your whole being, gives you fortitude in battle, vigor in your daily work, happiness in performing your daily tasks to please God and Him alone; and *medicina* is intended for the times of stress, depression, illness of sundry kinds. Invoke the name of Jesus, and, as Saint Bernard says, it will be “honey on your lips, music in your ears, and brightness in your vision.”

*Christ the King Seminary. Very Rev. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M.*



More than two million Korean children returned to “school” this fall. Classrooms in many cases were nothing but tents or open fields with sand for blackboards and twigs for pencils. A contribution to “CARE for Korean Children”, 660 First Ave., New York 16, N. Y., or your local CARE office will send school kits containing pencils, notebooks and other supplies.

## FULL OF GRACE

*St. Bonaventure—Sermon V on the Annunciation*

In greeting our Lady, the Angel said: *Hail, full of grace*; and thus gave us the way to greet the Virgin, a way simple yet meaningful. It was not without reason that she was addressed as “full of grace”, for the Virgin Mary was graced in a sevenfold way.

Just as in us sanctifying grace purges the soul of the filth of sin, in her the plenitude of grace so completely prevented sin, that with Ecclesiasticus we can say of her; *A holy and modest woman is grace upon grace*. The woman, made holy through the influx of grace and made modest through the gift of an incorruptible flesh, truly describes the Virgin Mary of whom Bernard wrote the people of Lyons: “The Mother of the Lord was sanctified before birth, not only was she sanctified but she was made chaste” And so the same Bernard continues: “I think that so great was the grace of sanctification that descended on her, that it not only sanctified her birth but kept her life free of all sin.” The prophet assigns the reason of this full and perfect sanctification when he says: *Holiness becomes thy house, O Lord, in all its days*. Therefore Anselm says: “It was fitting that Christ be conceived of a Mother of such purity that under God no purer could be known.” And thus not only is she called grace but rather grace upon grace for she was full of sanctifying grace. Therefore let us say with the Angel: *Hail, full of grace*.<sup>1</sup>

She was also full of a grace which would fortify her against the downward tendency of our weak nature so that she would never be overcome by temptation; whence Proverbs can rightly be applied to her: *A gracious woman shall find find glory*. A woman, I say, full of the grace of fortitude in battle, shall attain the glory of praise and honor in victory. But who shall find this woman who will crush the head of the enemy, the serpent of old? By his greeting the Angel shows he has found this woman, for she alone has the power to crush the head of the serpent with her heel and destroy all the malice of

<sup>1</sup> The theologians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had neither a solemn definition nor a clear teaching of tradition on the Immaculate Conception.

heresies. So says Bernard: "She is the woman once promised by God, who with the foot of her virtue has trampled the head of the serpent for whose heel he has plaited many cunning traps; but foolishly, for she alone destroys all the evils of heresies. Without a doubt she did crush the poisonous head of the evil one and bring to naught his temptations both of the delights of the flesh and of the pride of life." She alone can boast that her conscience in no way was troubled during her whole life. And thus Augustine says: "When I treat of sin, I wish in no way to include the Mother of God". Let us then say, *Hail*.

She was filled with a superabounding grace to supplement the defects of nature so that there would be nothing wanting in her; hence she could say with the Apostle: *But by the grace of God, I am what I am; and his grace in me hath not been void*, as if to say: The Lord not only gave me my nature but filled and perfected it with the fullness of grace. "She was not empty because she was full." Whence Bernard says: "Who shall call her empty whom the angel salutes as full of grace? Not only that, but the Angel also says that the Holy Spirit would come upon her, which could only mean that if the Holy Spirit came to her she would be filled herself: but as the Holy Spirit came upon her she became superabundant for us". That her grace was most superabundant is witnessed by Saint Jerome: "Just as no one is good in comparison to God, so in comparison with the Mother of God no one is found perfect no matter how extraordinary his virtues". Wherefore we can rightly say to her with Solomon: *Many daughters have gathered together riches; thou hast surpassed them all*, and with the Angel cry, *Hail*.

Mary was filled with a grace that beautified her life. Nothing, therefore, in her is worthy of reproach and, like Esther, *She was exceeding fair and her incredible beauty made her appear gracious and lovely in the eyes of all*. She was favored above all and beautiful, not only in body but also in mind, for *favor is deceitful and beauty is vain; the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised*. And since she was beautiful within and without, we can say: *Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee*, which Bernard, when commenting, applies to the Virgin: "You are wholly beautiful because your face is most beautiful, your body inviolate and your soul most holy." And also: "The Virgin Queen, adorned with the jewels of

virtue, resplendent with the double grace of mind and body, known among saints and spirits for her comeliness and beauty, draws to herself the glances of heavenly dwellers so that she moves the soul of the king with desire for her and draws to herself a heavenly messenger." And Jerome confirms this: "If you look closely you will see that she lacks no beauty, no lustre, no glory. For she was clothed with many virtues and merits; she was purified beyond the whiteness of snow by gifts of the Holy Spirit and in all things shows the simplicity of a dove."

She was filled with espousing grace to make her a bride and unite her indissolubly with God, that of her as of Esther, the spouse of Assuerus, we can say: *She was brought to the chamber of king Assuerus in the tenth month, which is called Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved her more than all the women, and she had favor and kindness before him above all the women, and he set the royal crown on her head*. The Virgin Mary is Esther who was led to the chamber of Assuerus, when through intimate love she was brought to share the divine union. Thus Jerome says: "The grace of the Holy Spirit completely filled her whom divine love had set on fire so that there was nothing worldly in her to shatter the union; there was only a continual flame and the ecstasy of unending love." Thus she is said not only to have grace but to have it above any other woman, because before all she was loved more dearly by God, as Bernard says: "My Lady, how close to Christ have you become, how near! Rather, how intimate have you merited to become! What great favor you have found with Him! He lives in you and you with Him; you clothe Him and are clothed by Him; you clothe Him with flesh and He clothes you with the glory of his majesty". Truly, as was said in the foregoing verse, *he set the royal crown on her head*.

Our Lady was filled with a grace that prepared her for a conception that was completely virginal; hence the Angel says to her: *You have found grace before God. Behold you shall conceive and bear a son and you will call His name, Jesus*. Truly she was full of grace which filled not only her mind but also her womb. According to Jerome, "she was full because the grace which others receive at Mary received at once in all its fullness." And Bernard:

chosen the best part. The best because, though conjugal fertility is good, and virginal chastity is better, the best is virginal fecundity. This is the privilege of Mary; it is given to no other for it will not be taken away from her." And again: "The womb of Mary which is integral, chaste, and inviolate has produced a flower whose beauty never withers, whose glory never fades." And because of this virginal fecundity we should say, *Hail*...

Finally, she was so full of grace that it overflowed unto the salvation of men. No one *can hide himself from her warmth* and in the words of Ecclesiasticus: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth. In me is all hope of life and of virtue. Come over to me, all you that desire me, and be filled with my fruits.* In me, she says, there is every grace of way and truth, because I have given birth to the Incarnate Word. But the Only-Begotten of God the Father is full of grace and truth; and, therefore, knowing that she bears overflowing grace, she invites all to share her fullness. Thus Jerome: "The Holy Virgin Mary is the help and protection of those looking to her, the refuge of Christians who flock to her, the consolation of the troubled, the way for the erring, the ransom of sinners, and Mediatrix with God for all men. All have received of her fullness." Wherefore Bernard exhorts us to fly to her: "Why should human frailty tremble before Mary? In her there is nothing hard, nothing rough, nothing severe, nothing bitter; she is wholly sweet and pleasant, wholly merciful, offering to all nourishment and rest". Therefore we can rightly say:

*Hail, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*

*St. Bonaventure University Fr. Vincent de Paul Sullivan, O.F.M.*



Tattered rags will be the winter attire of many of Korea's thousands of orphans. A CARE woolen suiting package containing three yards of material will make several warm jackets. Send your donation in any amount today to "CARE for Korean Children", 660 First Ave., New York 16, N. Y., or your local CARE office.

## FRANCISCAN EDUCATION (I)

*The following paper was prepared for private distribution by Father Cajetan Esser, O. F. M., Definitor of Holy Cross Province, Germany. Because the problems herein described seem so prevalent among Franciscans everywhere, and because the solutions offered are so practical, we have thought the paper of sufficient interest and value for publication in THE CORD. (The Editors.)*

Nowadays when we take up the question of Franciscan Education, we indicate by the very fact of posing the question that many of its aspects have become open to question. The stating of the question alone indicates a kind of perplexity, and it seems to me that today we should calmly admit this perplexity. Let us confess that we do not yet know—or no longer know—how Franciscan education is to be carried out, how it is to be realized. To admit our ignorance is certainly better than to go on acting as if we knew all the answers. This "as if" attitude is too dangerous in the relationship between educator and pupil. When we admit that we have reached the end and do not know where or how to begin again, only then shall we see clearly that here we face a problem that we must no longer avoid, no matter how very difficult it may seem to us, no matter even if we very much doubt its genuine solution.

Have I drawn too black a picture in these introductory remarks? I can imagine that one or another may think so. Perhaps, then, it would be well for us here and now to examine our conscience on just how, up to the present, education has been carried out among us and in our Order. Then each may judge for himself whether or not I am too pessimistic.

The first part of our reflection should be a very sober stock-taking of Franciscan Education as it currently exists. But let us begin with a few observations on education itself.

1. Education among us has been and still is looked upon primarily

as a means of imparting religious knowledge. The novice master has to convey a specific amount of knowledge according to a definite plan. The "schola," therefore, plays an eminent role in the life of the novitiate. The same holds true for the master in the clericate. During the first three years he has to say the necessary things about the religious, and during the last three years about the priest and the pastor. With our Brothers the situation is much the same, if not still more difficult; for after the novitiate even the systematic conveying of necessary knowledge is then left to chance—or to the zeal of him who holds the little-craved office of Master of Brothers. And in our colleges—all is overshadowed by academic training. Briefly, then, we educate by giving lectures to which we add (if we *dare* at all!) reprimands and corrective measures for gross faults. From this situation proceeds our first question: Is it not true that education today is too much influenced by the Socratic error that virtue is a matter of right knowledge? Please do not misunderstand me. I am fully aware that for all sound education right knowledge is indispensable; but I am equally aware that the imparting of knowledge by lecture alone is not sufficient. There is a long road leading from right knowing to right doing—and the educator has to accompany or even urge his charge all the way to the *end* of that road.

2. There is another point that seems to me still more important: Our present system of education stands too much under the sign of "as if." This is what I mean:

a) We act, for example, "as if" communal living were as familiar a thing to the people of today as it was during the Middle Ages or even about fifty years ago. Take the most basic of all human communities, the family. Formerly the community life was the natural and most appropriate training school of community life in religion. A young person was educated in the family to become an *ens sociale*, not by lectures but by actually living a community life. The larger the family the better and more thorough the education. The Christian family especially possessed in its very Christian being sufficient creative power for this kind of communal education. But in these times of ours, we all know into how sad a state this "first school for community life" has fallen. As the family succumbs to the spirit of

liberalism and individualism that characterizes our age, so the young people who come to us are no longer capable of forming a community in the proper sense of the word. And where the Christian element is missing from the family, so much the worse! Our second question, then, is this: Knowing that the difficulty besetting family life has already become the difficulty of religious community life, can we still sit back and wait for *chance* to educate our young religious—acting "as if" it were going to happen all by itself? Our educators will have to meet the problems and difficulties that arise from this condition at the very first stages of the religious life, even in our colleges. Each and every educator must face these problems squarely, and try to solve them, even if it means endless spade-work. But more about this later.

b) David Gathen, the well-known sociologist, remarked in a conference to the *Aachener Seelsorgeamt*: "Democracy is in its nature hostile to the family because it undermines the authority of the father."<sup>1</sup> This statement discloses a fact that has the greatest importance for us today: the hollowing out of authority. Have we thus far paid sufficient attention to this? Or have we not rather acted "as if" life under authority were still the most obvious thing in the world, "as if" the full acceptance of life under authority is something that develops in time by a kind of spontaneous generation? Let us rather bear in mind that in this era of ours the idea of authority has shifted from the objective to the subjective. Nowadays a man has authority not because through the sacrament he has become the representative of Christ, not because he holds an office as one commissioned by Christ; no, a man has authority today only when and if he possesses the human qualifications appropriate to his position. Every deficiency in the qualifications of an office holder leads immediately to corresponding loss of authority. This is the root cause of our present "superior shortage", of our desperate lack of good superiors and good educators. Office no longer implies reverence and respect. The office holder must *merit* reverence and respect, and above all he must take care not to lose what he has merited. It works havoc when an educator demands reverence, insisting on and to

<sup>1</sup> I.e., Democracy introduced into the confines of the family. See Epistle to the Galatians, chapter 4, verses 1-2. (The Editors).

enforce objective obedience upon those who have no mind to render it because of the educator's subjective disqualifications. To act "as if" this were not the actual fact, "as if" obedience and reverence for authority were self-evident, is extremely dangerous. And now that we have discussed briefly some of the problems attaching to modern education in general, let us turn to education in our Order as it has existed up to now.

3. Education in our Order has been and still is imparted without any particularly clear patterns or objectives. In almost every province the handbook of the Jesuit Zimmermann has been providing the foundation of our ascetical instruction.<sup>2</sup> In piety also, the most essential part of the religious life, the rising generation has been educated according to the pattern of strictly Jesuitical spirituality. This pattern has been further strengthened by the fact that most of the meditation books we use stem from the same school. Franciscan life has been taught only by the highly questionable means of explaining—more or less juridically—the Franciscan Rule. In the education of our students in the Seraphic college and Brothers the situation is much the same. It can be said without exaggeration that thus far education among us has not been conducted according to the pattern of life—especially community life—of the Friars Minor. This has been and still is its greatest deficiency.

4. Another point not to be overlooked is this: that in the novitiate and especially in the clericate there has existed a contradiction between the course or plan of our education and its objective. Life in the novitiate and clericate has been molded according to patterns that date from the time when the Recollect ideal still held in our province. All of us in my own class knew quite well that everything would be *quite different* once we were let loose to fulfill our ministry among the people. Thus we looked upon life in the clericate as possessing only a kind of temporary character, something that we knew would last only as long as we remained in this transitory stage. The fact that the master of novices had warned us of two great impending crises in our life—one after first profession in the clericate and the other after the granting of faculties by the province—proves that he

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Cajetan is speaking of Germany, of course, but the over-all situation in this country is not much better. (The Editors).

foresaw this precarious development, but in the face of existing realities he was unable to banish it. Thus it happened that we took part in the routine of the clericate but did not let it become the form of our life because we knew it could not be a real and permanent form for us. How we were going to cope with the problems that would inevitably arise in our later life was left to chance and the good will of the individual. In any case, we were ill equipped to meet the crises of life in the ministry and, left to ourselves, we had to find out our own way out of our difficulties.

5. All in all, education among us has been a very problematic affair; and its most problematic aspect is that we have tried to meet on a purely ascetical basis the difficulties that have kept arising on every side. Instead of hearing the matter spoken about openly and sincerely, we never heard anything official about it. Therefore, there has been the danger—and it is still with us—that the individual may cramp himself into an ascetic attitude which renders him interiorly and exteriorly unfit for community life. From this it is an easy step to the lie of life, which does "as if" but which in reality lives in a world of illusion. One knows about these things, no doubt, but fails to let the tensions come to a true and real solution in life, for one meets them with an ascetical short-circuit.

(To be continued)

Muenchen-Gladbach, Germany

Fr. Cajetan Esser, O. F. M.



Many of the boys and girls in Korea will go to bed hungry tonight. Hostilities have ended but the struggle against hunger continues. A contribution to "CARE for Korean Children", 660 First Ave., New York 16, N. Y., or your local CARE office will send a CARE package of rice and other staples to provide many nourishing meals.

## SYMPATHY

In the remarkable booklet entitled *De Sex Alis Seraphim* ("The Six Wings of the Seraph") which Saint Bonaventure wrote for superiors and directors of souls, under the Second Wing he treats of *Pietas*. It would be a great mistake to translate this word literally and call it Piety. This is a case where etymology fails us completely. In English the term "Piety" is used almost exclusively to express religious devotion of varying kinds. Saint Bonaventure, however, follows the usage of his day and applies the term *Pietas* to express the kindly relationship which exists among members of the same family and which, consequently, by implication should reach a high spiritual level in a religious family and govern the relationship between superiors and subjects. It is not Charity specifically, which is the source of all and embraces the whole category of such kindred relations. If we read the entire chapter and try expressing each relationship in turn, such as kindness, benignity, graciousness, mercy, compassion, condolence, commiseration, and so forth, we shall not be satisfied until we meet the word, Sympathy. Under the skillful touch of the pen of the Seraphic Doctor, Sympathy receives a religious halo and, when we come to the end of the chapter, we will agree that this disposition of heart and mind earns indeed a place of universal respect and dignity in every religious community. For, as the love of God, declares the author, inflames the Religious with the zeal for justice, so the love of neighbor engenders in him that affection which we understand to be sympathy. He calls attention to the Good Samaritan, who poured into the wounds of the half-dead wanderer the wine of fervent zeal and the oil of fraternal sympathy.

Who, then, needs our sympathy? There are two kinds of infirmities, corporal and spiritual. In the former class, which is rather extensive, Saint Bonaventure includes the aged and those who are exhausted because of hard work. Here he advises the usual physical remedies, and does not fail to recommend the prudent use of exemption from certain monastic duties.

## SYMPATHY

The saintly author is careful to note that the underlying reason why superiors and those of the same household should exercise sympathy towards the ailing, either physically or spiritually, is because all affliction is from God. Again, religious communities are God's families, in which the superiors hold the place of God. Thus it follows logically that the spirit of God, that is, the spirit of fatherhood, should manifest itself in the relationship of superiors towards their subjects. Hence the superiors should be true fathers and mothers, not step-fathers or step-mothers, or task-makers, or merely managers or procurators. To illustrate this point, the Saint calls attention to the Golden Rule, which our Lord borrowed from Tobias of old when he declares: *Therefore all things whatever you would that men should do to you, even so do you also to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets* (Mt. 7, 12; cf. Tob. 4, 16).

The serious and solemn lines of Saint Bonaventure seem to jiggle a bit when he humorously remarks that for many superiors and other Religious, who are blessed with a rugged constitution and have never known what it means to be sick, it would be a blessing if the Good Lord would favor them with a real dose of sickness. It would serve them as a valuable lesson for all days to come. In connection with this, we are reminded of a neat little convent where a *mulier fortis* had wielded the superior's staff for many a year. She was never sick, nor did she tolerate sickness in any of her subjects. "It's all imagination; take this pill and go to work." Such was her curt answer to every complaint. Then there was an epidemic of sore throats. Mother Superior stood her ground valiantly, until finally she too succumbed, so much so that she had to stay in her room. At the noon meal the acting superior gave "Deo gratias" and all response heartily, "Amen". It is not known whether this lusty response was elicited by the wonderful soup that was making the rounds, or by some other reason which it is not proper to mention.

Saint Bonaventure is always ready with an appropriate passage from Holy Writ. The following quotation from Saint Paul is most apt: *For we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tried as we are in all things except sin* (Heb. 5, 15).

But, to safeguard the good name of our superiors, is it not true that many of us frequently imagine or feign sickness when there is none? As the great abbot Saint Bernard puts it, from time to time some Religious always take out three days for an illness. On the first day they fear it coming. On the second, they imagine that it has come. On the third, they lament over what really did not exist. Human nature does not change, nor does the monastery gate take away all our freaks and foibles. At least, our natural propensities to ease and comfort remain, and it is the duty of every good Religious to battle against such human frailties.

However, Saint Bonaventure asks, is it proper to blame all for the vagaries and foolish notions of a few? By no means. Here the superior must use good judgment, and all Religious must co-operate in discovering those who feign sickness and those who really deserve attention, medical or otherwise. Meanwhile, charity or—to be specific—sympathy and justice must be brought to a proper balance then all will be happy. There will be perfect harmony if, on the one hand, the rights of inferiors are duly respected, and if, on the other, the charity and fairness of the superiors are not abused.

One of the oldest institutions in monastic life is the Infirmary. There is hardly a religious Rule or set of Constitutions which does not provide a place for the sick, where they may get medical attention, and spiritual attention as well. While too much visiting in the infirmary is apt to lead to much abuse, it is well, none the less, to remember that infirmaries are not to be considered as prisons of forceful detention and rigid exclusion, not to say consecrated concentration camps.

Sometimes the idea prevails that sick Religious are useless Religious. It is true that their ailments may make them absolutely unfit for work, especially when old age has overtaken them; but Saint Bonaventure strongly condemns that practise as purely secular and commercial which relegates such apparently unproductive people definitely to a state of separation from community life and contact. No; the sick and the aged are not a loss to the community; rather, they are a distinct gain. A young priest once attempted to

express his sympathy to an old Father in the community, when he lugubriously remarked: "It must be hard on you, Father Senior, not to be able to work any more." "What!" replied the Senior, "not work any more? I can still pray, young man, and I do so while you sit loafing at the radio."

A cloister that underrates the inestimable value of prayer and sacrifice is not worthy of its name, and it is precisely in this spiritual asset that the aged and infirm make—or should make—their invaluable contribution.

Among the spiritual ailments or infirmities Saint Bonaventure lists these three: the spiritually weak who in the rush of work have lost their fervor and spirit of devotion; those who are easily discouraged and are given to diffidence; lastly, those who are actually wavering in the pursuit of virtue and become unsteady in their vocation.

The difference among the three may appear slight, but the director of souls will easily discern the causes for such dispositions and know of the proper remedies. Here the director as well as other experienced Religious should play the part of spiritual doctors who understand symptoms and will not fail to render the necessary help in the spirit of true Christlike sympathy. Mark these beautiful words of Saint Paul: *Although as the apostles of Christ we could have claimed a position of honor among you, still while in your midst we were as children: as if a nurse were cherishing her own children, so we in our love for you would gladly have imparted to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own souls; because you had become most dear to us* (I Thess. 2, 7-8).

Saint Paul aptly speaks of nurses. This brings to mind the marvellous opportunities that our hospital Sisters have in the matter of exercising true Christian sympathy towards their charges. What is it that makes people of all classes and all denominations give preference to Catholic hospitals? It is not the medical staff, nor modern comforts and equipment; rather, it is that singular Christlike sympathy that our Sisters dispense with such grace and charm. They know well that a kind word, a smile, a prayerful wish has greater power



than the choicest medicine. Every human being, when in need or distress, is sensitive to sympathy, because true sympathy has a heavenly touch.

Nor has the strictest monastic Rule or the most rigid manner of life deprived us of our nature's weakness for sympathy. Some one has said that most Religious are "big children"; our superiors often say this with disdain, if not with disgust. And yet, they should be happy that their lot has fallen with big children rather than with unruly ruffians. Sometimes we forget how easy it is to give relief to a person who is sick either mentally or physically. They are looking for help, which cannot be given. Let them tell you the tale of their illness; listen with patience to their complaints; and the very consciousness that someone sympathizes with them makes them feel tremendously relieved. Which proves that man is a social being, that communion of hearts is better than medicine. Saint Francis of Assisi finds the happy medium when he writes in his Rule: "And wherever the Friars are and meet other Friars, let them show to one another that they are of the same household. And let one make known his needs with confidence to the other; for if a mother love and nourish her carnal child, how much more earnestly should not one love and nourish his spiritual brother. And if any of them shall fall into illness, the other Friars should serve him as they would wish to be served themselves.

Surely, Saint Bonaventure knew this passage, and undoubtedly this beautiful Seraphic sympathy inspired him as he wrote the third chapter of the "Six Wings of the Seraph".

*Christ the King Seminary Very Rev. Thomas Plassmann, O. F. M.*

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