

FEBRUARY, 1990

# The CORD

## A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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# The CORD

## A Monthly Franciscan Spiritual Review

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## Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

### I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions

BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo

CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun

EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony

EpCler: Letter to Clerics<sup>1</sup>

EpCust: Letter to Superiors<sup>1</sup>

EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful<sup>1</sup>

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

<sup>1</sup>I, II refer to First and Second Editions.

### II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cal: Celano, First Life of Francis

2Cal: Celano, Second Life of Francis

3Cal: Celano, Treatise on Miracles

CL: Legend of Saint Clare

CLP: Prayers of Saint Clare

FLF: 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 Commernium

SP: Mirror of Perfection

<sup>1</sup>Edited by Marion A. Habig, ed., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies*. English Om-  
nibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

<sup>2</sup>Edited by J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., *Francis and Clare: The  
Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

## GUEST EDITORIAL

## The Cry of the Poor

STEPHEN LYNCH, O.F.M.

The rich and powerful too often take the side of society's well-off. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, has chosen to side with the poor, the oppressed, and the powerless. Vatican II made a preferential option for the poor that was ratified by the Latin American Bishops at Medellin in 1969 and at Puebla in 1979. But, the price tag for siding with the poor in efforts to change evil structures is high and bloody.

On November 16, 1989, while the world's attention focused on Eastern Europe, six Jesuit priests and two lay people were brutally murdered in a death-squad raid on the Jesuit residence in El Salvador. All six Jesuits were learned men, dedicated to academic pursuit who lined up on the side of the poor because they saw Christ in suffering humanity. Unlike some intellectuals who live in ivory-towers detached from the life and struggles of the ordinary people, these Jesuits were creative thinkers who brought learning and imagination together in a way that proved they heard clearly the cry of the poor.

Along with love and compassion, they brought a remarkable courage and willingness to make personal sacrifices to change a repressive power structure where human rights were violated without guilt or remorse. The Jesuits insisted that Christian values, especially the beatitudes of Jesus Christ, must be part of the equation for social justice in El Salvador. They paid for this conscious moral choice with their lives. They died because they were working for justice and fairness in a country where all too often the few who are rich oppress and tyrannize the many who are impoverished and dehumanized. As Jesus picked his hill on which to make his stand, these six Jesuits picked theirs, and we, too, must pick ours. In their willingness to give up power for the sake of the Gospel,

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these martyred Jesuit priests attained ultimate power. Their belief in the transcendent forever transformed them.

These barbaric murders silenced some of the most vocal advocates of reconciliation that could have ended the decade-old civil war. The suffering caused by the heavy fighting in the capital and the murders of the priests and others seems to have compounded a sense of collective guilt and war weariness. For the U.S., it has again raised the moral dilemma of aiding a country where such acts of violence have repeatedly gone unpunished and where violence itself seems out of control in spite of the four billion dollars we have given to make democracy work.

The killing of the Jesuits recalls the assassinations of Fr. Rutilio Grande in 1979 and of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero in 1980. On December 2 of the same year that Archbishop Romero was assassinated, three American nuns (Ita Ford, Dorothy Kazel, and Maura Clarke) and a lay worker (Jean Donovan) also gave their lives for the people of Central America. All were martyred advocates of the poor and oppressed against the rich and powerful.

In the killing fields of El Salvador, much too frequently the messenger is killed to silence the message: human rights and social justice. Human nature's propensity for evil all too often erupts in violence, taking on the metaphor made famous by the Irish poet William Butler Yeats:

*Mere anarchy is loosed  
upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide  
is lossed...  
(The Second Coming)*

In the article in the New York Times (9/20/89), Professor of History, James Hijiya, of Southeastern Massachusetts University reports that Fr. Ignacio Martin-Baro, one of the six murdered Jesuits, once told him that when he came to El Salvador after completing his studies in Spain, "he thought that he would teach the poor peasants about Christianity. But he was wrong. They taught him because they possessed a courage and a dignity that he had never seen before, never imagined. They showed him the meaning of suffering and faith. They taught him who Jesus was. After that, his life was never the same."

Fr. Martin-Baro was a social psychiatrist whose special field of research was the psychological rehabilitation of children who were orphaned by the war, displaced or traumatized by the endless mayhem. Conducting sociological surveys and analyzing the social evils of the oppressed in El Salvador, Fr. Martin-Baro discovered that the social structure was so awful that to say what was reality was subversive.

By giving pastoral support and encouragement to the landless peasants

and desperate slum-dwellers, Fr. Martin-Baro and his colleagues were not only following Jesus' example, but they were also faithfully complying with the explicit policy of their church which has made a preferential option for the poor. Death came as the price for such total love. They were convinced that between the dispossessed and their privileged tormentors non-partisanship or neutral arbitration were not options.

Writing in the Boston Sunday Globe on November 20, 1989, Harvard's Harvey Cox points out: "These Jesuits were rediscovering the central impulse of the Gospel: Jesus' unconditional love for the poor and his willingness to risk confrontation with the heartless elite of his day at whatever cost. In Jesus' case, it was the cost of his life. The Jesuits followed in the footsteps of their Teacher. After all, Jesus himself was visited by a death-squad that also took his life".

Archbishop Romero prophetically predicts his own demise: "There would be something wrong with the Salvadoran church if its priests were not dying alongside the people."

A country is in trouble when the law of the jungle replaces the rule of law. Right wing and left wing death-squads, escalating the spiral of violence during ten years of civil war, have produced the senseless slaughter of more than 70,000, most of them civilians. In a previous conversation with Harvey Cox, Fr. Martin-Baro told him, "Instead of the church making an option for the poor, we found that the poor had already made an option for the church, or — more accurately — for the gospel the church is supposed to teach and represent."

Fr. Martin-Baro used to say, jokingly, "In the U.S. it's publish or perish. But for professors who speak and write on behalf of social justice in a totalitarian society, it's often publish *and* perish." He also pleaded for human beings to see each other as neighbors committed to caring about one another. Then, "nobody's pain and nobody's joy will be alien to you."

In October of 1989 the Catholic church lost another outstanding advocate for the poor and an extraordinary witness to the Gospel message of human rights on behalf of those Latin Americans oppressed by structural forms of poverty. The remarkable Catholic journalist, Penny Lernoux, died of cancer at age 49. Penny understood the cry and the helplessness of the Latin Americans poor and marginalized. She was a voice for the exploited and chronicled their lives during the past twenty-five years. Her book, *Cry for the people*, (1980) was a monumental contribution to the cause of human rights in Latin America. Penny told the stories of people who were murdered because they supported a farmers' cooperative or the construction of a sewer system in a slum or because they repeated God's commandment, "You shall not kill."

Her last book, *People of God*, (1989) tells heart-wrenching stories of

people living in the midst of terror and death in the El Quichee region of El Salvador. But, she also points out that the quality of their deaths was "drenched with the possibility of resurrection." Penny concludes her report: "In such a community of faith, people fear not death but infidelity — to one another and to their beliefs. They daily live the drama of Christ on the cross, yet they are convinced of the possibility of transformation because their struggle itself is a sign of resurrection. They love one another and are prepared to die for their communities.... They possess a sense that there is a moral way of life."

Some see Penny Lernoux as a kind of journalistic Joan of Arc holding up the mirror of truth in the face of violent opposition from the forces of cruel and unjust oppression. Penny sounded a clarion call to involvement and solidarity with the poor in their struggle for liberation and for the advancement of human rights.

From those regions of inaccessible light, may the men and women who have laid down their lives out of love continue their transforming ministry of liberation that God's kingdom of justice and peace may reach its fullness.

*(From THE CANTICLE, January 1990, monthly publication of St. Anthony's Shrine. Printed with permission).*



## The Sound of Silence: Empowerment for Fraternity and Mission

SR. ROBERTA AGNES, O.S.F.

In the midst of the outer chaos that surrounds us and the inner chaos that sometimes overwhelms us, we are called to silence. Or, better yet, stillness. And we seek it out, at various times, because we know that unless we can surrender ourselves to it, with it, through it, we will be estranged from the presence of God forever. Francis of Assisi embodies this truth.

The sources reveal a Francis whose journey took him from the role of "typical product of his times" as a youth to that of a loving, lovable, compassionate, and challenging model of complete conversion, a holy man of God. Among the many contributing factors in that process of change was Francis' continuous return to silence. As heirs of the Franciscan tradition, we, too, must recognize that our journey will call us repeatedly to periodic returns to silence, not just for its own sake or as a meeting place with God, but *for the sake of that empowerment in mission it generates.*

Within the Franciscan tradition, "silence" presents an interesting dilemma. One does not find multitudinous references to silence in the writings of Francis, Clare, or Celano, among others. What references do exist almost universally place silence in the context of "solitude" and in conjunction with the development of a prayerful life. According to CETEDOC, "silentium" is used only four times, and "sileo" twice, within the writings of Francis and Clare. The references are equally divided between the writings of Francis and those of Clare.<sup>1</sup> These references seem to address silence in terms of an essential prelude to prayer or

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contemplation. However, silence can also be examined in terms of being a counter-balance to mission or ministry or work.<sup>2</sup> It is within this framework that a Franciscan concept of silence will be addressed.

Legislative specifications about silence are few until the Chapter of Narbonne in 1260. Why? Actually, to understand this, one would do well to go back *before* Francis to examine the eremetical tradition. Within the framework of the Desert Fathers, "silence and speech were directed to a better understanding of Scripture which leads the monk to God."<sup>3</sup> Silence was prescribed for specific times and places, and, in the vision of Augustine, helped make one an "inner tabernacle for the Word of God."<sup>4</sup> Benedictine tradition involved three specific areas where silence was essential to the spiritual life; it contributed to better learning, increased self-control, and supported the practice of temperance and continency.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, then, silence helped one avoid sin, maintain seriousness of purpose, and listen to the voice of God. However, by the early Middle Ages monasticism had so thoroughly separated itself from the people that contemplation seemingly became an end in itself and not something to be shared with others for the sake of the Kingdom. By the 10th century, to fill their need, "laypeople or secular clerics began to withdraw directly into solitude without passing through a period of monastic formation."<sup>6</sup> Somehow they became associated with itinerant preaching, especially to the poor and rejected. These "preaching hermits" who became itinerants are easily recognizable as precursors of the primitive Franciscan eremetical life, as are some elements of the earlier monastic eremetical tradition which are also present in the life of the fraternity.

So how is silence related to itinerant Franciscan preaching? It seems that each (silence and preaching) is a mirror (cf. *Itinerarium*, Prologue) for the other. Silence is a way to empty oneself so as to be filled with God, and that fullness then overflows and is taken into the world to reveal the reality of God to all. At the same time, Franciscan fraternity in its earliest form was "non-monastic and completely open to the world of the poor and the outcast."<sup>7</sup> Silence and solitude beautifully nourished warm fraternal love. Fraternal love nourished the poor and hungry in the world through the friars' witness and preaching. The cycle was really a complete circle. Ignatius Brady writes: "Prayer was considered by St. Francis so much a part of the Franciscan vocation that he saw no need for formal legislation. No one, he claimed, can make progress in the service of God unless he is a friend of prayer."<sup>8</sup> Actually, the *Regula non Bullata* states nothing legislatively about prayer or silence, and is "content to state the ideal."<sup>9</sup> The only context in which the word "silence" appears in *RNB* refers more to fraternal charity than to anything else: "And all the brothers should beware that they do not slander or engage in disputes (cf. 23 Tim 2:14); rather they should strive to keep silence whenever God gives them

[this] grace." (*RNB XI*) There is a faint echo here of the monastic concept of the practice of silence as an aid in avoiding sin. It seems fair to say that for Francis both inner and outer silence, or at least the cultivation of it, was a *given*. It simply was unthinkable that silence would be missing for any length of time in any friar's life. And where it *was* missing, Francis had some very real difficulties:

"1. Blessed is that religious who takes no pleasure and joy except in the most holy words and deeds of the Lord 2. and with these leads people to the love of God in joy and gladness (cf. Ps 50:10). Woe to that religious who delights in idle and frivolous words and with these provokes people to laughter." (*Admon. XX*)

These words echo a second monastic tradition, maintaining seriousness of purpose. But Franciscan silence has more significance than that. From the earliest days, friars minor treasured silence because in silence they were able to value more deeply and integrate more completely into their lives the words and deeds of the Lord — that is, the Gospel itself.

Francis *heard* the words "Take nothing for our journey..." (Lk. 9:3) precisely because the previous months and years had been ones of inner growth, much of which occurred in a milieu of silence, alone. And when joined by his first brothers, he (and they) sought to become

free from everything of this world, lest the serenity of his [their] mind be disturbed even for an hour by the taint of anything that was mere dust. He [they] made himself insensible to all external noise... and... therefore frequently chose solitary places so that he [they] could direct his mind to God... Walking, sitting, eating, or drinking, he was [they were] always intent upon prayer." (*1 Cel 71*)

Once having accepted his mission as itinerant preacher, Francis never forgot that he should return to silent communion with God and nature, nor that he should then return again to his preaching mission. In his *Rule for the Hermitages*, he arranged that the four brothers living together alternate the role of pray-er and "mother." Silence is enjoined in terms of "they should be eager to keep silence," and is immediately followed by "and to say their hours, and to rise for Matins...." (*Reg Er 3-4*), that is, to lift their voices in prayer for and with the whole Church. There is also time to be "free from silence" so as to "speak and go to their mother." (*Reg Er 4*) ("Mother" refers to the brothers who served the needs of the pray-ers). This alternation of service and prayer in the microcosmos of the hermitage is a model for the alternation of ministry and contemplation on a larger scale.

Francis had learned two things about silence: in it he could "cleanse himself of any dust that may have clung to him from his association with

men" (1 Cel 19); and, he was called to re-enter the world to preach whatever truths God had shared with him in prayer. So, too, the other friars. We are told that they had "gathering places... located apart from the city to provide them with the solitude needed for prayer, yet they were close enough to make the cities easily accessible to them for their apostolate."<sup>10</sup> Franciscan tradition consequently provides that times of solitude are surrounded by times of fraternal care (cf. *Reg Er*) and times of apostolic preaching. The Franciscan pray-er encounters Christ in Word and solitude, absorbs the love of the Crucified, and pours out this love in whatever manner his/her ministry requires.

If Franciscan life is a covenanted life which balances a sense of mission and service with a regular return to silence and contemplative experience, silence must be re-examined in light of this purpose. It is not merely an end in itself. Walter Brueggemann, in an article dealing with "Covenanting as Human Vocation," comments that "Covenant does not happen in silence."<sup>11</sup> Covenant requires the speaking of One who is Other, and ".... a faithful human action is to listen."<sup>12</sup> Isn't that what Francis did on the feast of St. Matthias in 1208? And in response to that listening, a choice was made. "Listening to the voice of another with seriousness is, then, a decision to live by grace, to let [ourselves] be impacted and defined by the other voice."<sup>13</sup> So our understanding of silence must take on another shade of meaning: one does not listen well without silence, silence serves many purposes, and silence leads to action.

This may seem to some extent disjointed, but it is not. When a person becomes submerged in true silence, however briefly, interior change occurs. One cannot, I think, deny the change implicit in a truly contemplative experience, although its fruits can be rejected. Silence teaches things that can be learned through no other medium. For me, one of the most meaningful paradigms of the value of silence exists in a novel by Chaim Potok, *The Chosen*. In this story a father raises his son in silence (as the father himself had been raised), never speaking to the son except within the parameters of Talmudic discussion. The silence lasts from the time Danny Saunders is four until the spring of the year he is to receive his rabbinical degree. In the seven years of friendship between the Danny and another major character (Reuven Malter), there are several references to this silence, but there is never a full explanation of what it means until the very end of the book. At one point close to the conclusion Danny says to his friend: "You can listen to silence, Reuven. I've begun to realize that you can listen to silence and learn from it. It has a quality and a dimension all its own. It talks to me sometimes. I feel myself alive in it. It talks. And I can hear it."<sup>14</sup> Eventually it is revealed that Danny's father had recognized his son's brilliant mind and knew that Danny lacked com-

passion. Danny was destined to take his father's place as *tzaddik*; "... of all people *tzaddik* especially must know of pain. A *tzaddik* must know how to suffer for his people.... He must take their pain from them and

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*Silence teaches things that can be learned  
through no other medium.*

---

carry it on his own shoulders."<sup>15</sup> As a child, Daniel was a mind without soul. In the years of imposed silence he "learned to find answers for himself. He suffered and learned to listen to the suffering of others. In the silence between us, he began to hear the world crying."<sup>16</sup> Finally, Danny's father can allow his son to leave the Hasidic fold to study psychology because Reb Saunders knows that Danny will always have the soul of a *tzaddik*. "All his life he will be a *tzaddik*. He will be a *tzaddik* for the world. And the world needs a *tzaddik*."<sup>17</sup> Within the realm of his painful silence, Danny has grown into an awareness of his own suffering and the suffering of the world. It has changed him, and, one can suppose, will make him much more than a brilliant psychologist. In his loneliness and separation, Danny had found a hidden place within himself which became the "center" to which he could return at will for nourishment and strength. And, as Brueggemann's article suggests, listening to the silence led to a decision to respond to the painful sounds Danny had heard in the years of silence—in his own voice as well as in others' voices.

A resonant story in the *Legend of Perugia* describes Francis celebrating those brothers he called Knights of the Round Table; "The brothers who hide in abandoned and secluded places to devote themselves with more fervor to prayer and meditation, to weep over their sins and those of others." (LP 71a) [emphasis mine] In addition, Bonaventure tells us in the *Legenda Major* that Francis "had learned in prayer that the presence of the Holy Spirit... was granted more intimately to those who invoke him, the more the Holy Spirit found them withdrawn from the noise of worldly affairs. Therefore seeking out lonely places, he used to go to deserted areas... to pray at night." (LM X, 3) Further, at another passage, Francis "... sought out a hidden place of solitude where alone and in silence he could hear the secrets God would convey to him." (LM II, 5) And hear the suffering world as well, so as to suffer with it in compassionate understanding.

It might be worthwhile to reconsider the ideas about silence cited earlier: the *Regula non Bullata* is "content to state the ideal." (p. 3) Silence and prayer are inseparable, and in the Franciscan tradition are balanced against ministry and mission. Fraternal support enhances the richness of the contemplative experience. I submit that the concepts we learn from these sources about Francis are not all that different from what Danny Saunders learned in *The Chosen*. A hidden place in one's heart is just as valid as a hidden place in the woods, or a desert. Silence has many faces. It enters one's life in many different ways. It produces an infinite variety of graces. Compassion is one of them; courage to go to the world and share the benefits of suffering is another. And the Franciscan tradition never excludes the possibilities of anyone's encounter with God producing a new kind of presence in that world. Is there not a current in our ministry which is charged by the energy of solidarity with the poor? Does not our social action stem from Gospel values? And is not our regular return to silence the source of empowerment for mission?

It seems that a contemporary Franciscan theology of silence would have to rest on two components: becoming an "inner tabernacle for the Word of God," and learning to "feel myself alive" in silence or the pain or whatever that might drive one to seek out silence once more. It seems that an experientially-based integration of these two aspects of silence makes one the "good soil" wherein the seed of God's presence will be carefully nurtured and will eventually bear fruit. If the Benedictine tradition cultivated silence as an aid to solitary study and prayer for the sake of individual salvation, it can be said that the Franciscan tradition cultivates silence as a break between moments of ministry or mission, and as a form of discipline in which the individual discerns the voice of God and the call to new experiences of being Christ in the world. Silence teaches us compassion for all who suffer, and enables us to see the world as God sees it. □

#### End notes

<sup>1</sup>Corpus Des Sources Franciscaines, Jean-Francois Godet et Georges Mailleux, eds. Vol. 5: *Opuscula Sancti Francisci Scripta Sanctae Clarae* (Louvain: Universite Catholique de Louvain, 1976).

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Merton, "Franciscan Eremitism," *The Cord* Dec. 1966: 361.

<sup>3</sup>Matthew Stark, "On Silence," *Monastic Studies* Advent 1975: 132-33.

<sup>4</sup>Mayeuil DeDreuille, "Silence," *Monastic Studies* Advent 1984: 189.

<sup>5</sup>DeDreuille, 187-88.

<sup>6</sup>Merton, 359.

<sup>7</sup>Merton, 360.

<sup>8</sup>Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., "The History of Mental Prayer in the Order of the Friars Minor," *Franciscan Studies* 1951: 319.

<sup>9</sup>Brady, 321.

<sup>10</sup>Dacian Bluma, O.F.M. Cap., "Franciscan Life of Prayer. St. Francis' Thought on the Place of Contemplation in the Franciscan Vocation," *The Cord* Feb. 1963: 51.

<sup>11</sup>Walter Brueggemann, "Covenanting as Human Vocation A Discussion of the Relation of the Bible and Pastoral Care," *Interpretation. A Journal of Bible and Theology* April 1979: 119.

<sup>12</sup>Brueggemann, 121.

<sup>13</sup>Brueggemann, 121-122.

<sup>14</sup>Chaim Potok, *The Chosen* (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1967) 262.

<sup>15</sup>Potok, 278.

<sup>16</sup>Potok, 280.

<sup>17</sup>Potok, 280.

\* \* \*

You have nurtured love,  
O Lord, when there was  
No nourishment,  
No watery light, no  
Stray kiss to feed upon.  
You have fed me with  
Dry biscuit crumbs and  
Chips of olive wood.  
I have sucked the  
Marrow from the words,  
Tasted momentarily  
A gush of fertile sweetness  
Inside my mouth of clay.  
You have nurtured love,  
O Lord, when there was none  
To feed, none to raise  
A coral droplet to  
My lips, none to kiss  
The leper well again.

Rita Kristina Weinheimer, OSF

## Francis of Assisi's Unnoticed Legacy

SR. M. FRANCIS ASSISI KENNEDY, O.S.F.

The world knows Francis of Assisi for his love of poverty. It knows him for his devotion to the poor. It heralds him as a champion of peace and social reform, as preacher of the Gospel and imitator of Jesus Christ. There is a facet of Francis' personality, though, which remains largely unnoticed among the lines of his earliest legacies to his followers. That hidden side of Francis warrants more attention, for it is a side that the saint himself cherished greatly. It is Francis' great devotion to the Liturgy of the Divine Hours.

Both the Rule of 1221 and that of 1223 admonished the friars to recite the Divine Office, or if they were lay brothers, to substitute "Our Fathers" for each hour of the liturgical cycles. Section 95 of *The Legend of Perugia* tells how when Francis travelled "on foot from place to place, he always stopped to recite the hours." If he was riding on horseback, "he dismounted to say his office." The *Legend* goes on to relate how on one occasion, Francis was drenched doing so.

Brother Leo testified in a note in the Breviary of St. Francis that when sickness prevented his saying his office, he wanted at least to hear it and was faithful to this practice all his life. Francis himself in his "Letter to a General Chapter," toward the end of his life, wrote:

... I have sinned in many ways, through my own most grievous fault, and in particular by not keeping the Rule which I promise to God, and by not saying the Office, as the Rule prescribes, through carelessness or sickness, or because I am ignorant and have never studied.

Like many things which the world has found attractive about the little poor man from Assisi, then, this lesser known gift, too, is evident chiefly

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from his actions and a few words, rather than from a lengthy explanation from the saint as to why the office was so important to him.

This minimal testimony, even though clearly significant, leaves present day followers of Francis, eager to discern his spirit and consequently take it on, with two choices. They can either simply heed their holy founder's advice, imitate his habit of prayer, and consequently experientially learn its value. Or if they are given to more modern methods of investigation, they can analyze this object of Francis' love and then, analyzing what else they know of his personality, attitudes and ideals, attempt to see how the two dovetail, and thus discover why a prayer such as the Liturgy of the Hours was so sacred to the saint. It is this writer's hope that having spent all of her religious life thus far pursuing the former course will make the latter method much easier.

Francis must have loved the Divine Office, first of all, for the same reason that he loved the poor, poverty, and all creation. It enabled him to find the will of God in its Scripture and joined him to the Word incarnate. This psalm and Scripture-based prayer was Jesus' prayer. Not only did Francis know it was Jesus' because Jesus was after all a devout Jew and revealed that even at His death by reverting to Psalm 22 in that moment of His greatest distress when he cried out to his Father in the anguish of abandonment in His final agony on the cross. In that instance Jesus' words are those of the psalms: the Fatherhood or Provident care of God (Psalms: 103,13; 125,2; 134,4-6,12,13), His transcendence (Psalms: 111,1-3; 113,4-6), His holiness and man's submission to it (Psalms 113,1-3; 115,1), the imperative coming of the kingdom (Psalms: 50; 128; 132,7,8; 132,13-18). That Francis understood this, at least innately, can be surmised from his substitution of "our Fathers" for those unable to recite the regular office.

Francis of Assisi was no shallow, superficial imitator of Jesus Christ. Spurred by months, days and eventually years of contemplation, this herald literally put on the mind of his Lord. Francis grasped fully the import and implications of Jesus' admonition to pray always. He noted that Jesus prayed before each major event in His life, before His miracles and not only before but also during His final discourse to His faithful followers. Francis recognized that this constant prayer was Jesus' unitive life with His Father, the source of His love and its ultimate goal. To Francis, the Church's institution of the Divine office to carry on this constant prayer of its Head provided a welcome opportunity to imitate his beloved Master. Since he longed with all his being to embrace Jesus and thus be taken up with Him into the Father's divine embrace, it was only natural that he should freely, gladly, even excitedly take on the prayer habit of Jesus. He, too, his biographers tells us, rose at dawn to



begin the day with his God; he too, gratefully ended the day by commending its gifts to the God Who supplied them, and he, too, Bernard of Quintavalle tells us, sanctified the night as Jesus had by incessant prayer. Nor does it detract from our thesis that Bernard's story is not specifically of Francis praying the office. Perhaps on other nights he did so. The point remains: though he personally may have modified the form either occasionally or even frequently, it was natural for Francis of Assisi to love the structure of the office, the sanctification of each day's several parts by the lifting of mind and heart to God. Nor could he ever drink enough of the Divine Word. Francis' was indeed the insatiable thirst of the psalmist. (Psalms 43 and 63)

If Francis learned when to pray from Jesus, the many things which are very well known about his life tell us that he also learned from contemplating Jesus what God had inspired in the psalms, what Jesus Himself as Jewish boy and man loved in them and passed on to His New Covenant community. Here are prayers which exalt God's creation, God's gifts of beauty, life and sustenance to this world.

Bless the Lord, O my soul!  
 O Lord, my God, you are great indeed!  
 You are clothed with majesty and glory,  
     robed in light as with a cloak.  
 You have spread out the heavens like a tent-cloth;  
     you have constructed your palace upon the waters  
 You make the clouds your chariot;  
     you travel on the wings of the wind.  
 You make the winds your messengers,  
     and flaming fire your ministers.  
 You fixed the earth upon its foundation,  
     not to be moved forever;  
 With the ocean, as with a garment, you covered it;  
 Above the mountains the waters stood  
 .....  
 You set a limit they may not pass,  
     nor shall they cover the earth again. (Psalm 104, 1-6, 9)

Here is testimony of God's predilection for the poor:  
 I will speak my thanks earnestly to the Lord,  
     and in the midst of the throng I will praise him,  
 For he stood at the right hand of the poor man.  
     to save him from those who would condemn him. (Psalm 109, 30, 31)

Lavishly he gives to the poor;  
     his generosity shall endure forever;  
     his horn shall be exalted in glory. (Psalm 112, 9)

He raises up the lowly from the dust;  
     from the dunghill he lifts up the poor  
 To seat them with princes,  
     with the prices of his own people.  
 He establishes in her home the barren wife  
     as the joyful mother of children. (Psalm 113, 7-9)

The psalms repeatedly proclaim God's nearness to His people in distress:

I love the Lord because he has heard my voice in supplication  
 Because he has inclined his ear to me the day I called  
 The cords of death encompassed me  
     the snares of the nether world seized upon me;  
 I fell into distress and sorrow,  
 And I called upon the name of the Lord,  
     "O Lord, save my life!"  
 Gracious is the Lord and just;  
     yes, our God is merciful.  
 The Lord keeps the little ones;  
     I was brought low, and he saved me. (Psalm 116, 1-6)

Psalms 121, 123, 124 and others proclaim again and again the Creator's understanding of human infirmity:

O Lord, you have probed me and you know me;  
     you know when I sit and when I stand;  
     you understand my thoughts from afar.  
 My journeys and my rest you scrutinize,  
     with all my ways you are familiar (Psalm 139, 1-3)

How Francis must have thrilled to that intimacy of his beloved.

The psalms embody the fullness of the human heart; they were perfect prayers for the saint who embraced all of his Father's children. They also might be called paradigms of hope for humanity. The very structure of many of them is such that midstream in humanity's cries of anguish, suddenly intervenes the promise of rescue, of salvation.

God is our refuge and our strength,  
     an ever present help in distress.  
 .....  
 Though its waters rage and foam  
     and the mountains quake at its surging.  
 The Lord of hosts is with us;  
     our stronghold is the God of Jacob.  
 .....  
 though nations are in turmoil, kingdoms totter,  
     his voice resounds, the earth melts away,

The Lord of hosts is with us;  
our stronghold is the God of Jacob. (Psalm 46, 1,4,7)

It was such hope that both sustained and emanated from Francis.

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*... it was only natural that he should freely,  
gladly, even excitedly take on the prayer  
habits of Jesus.*

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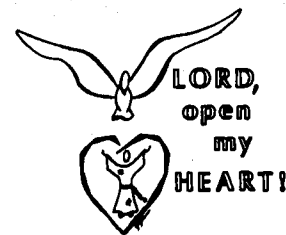
Lastly, the psalms both in themselves promise the kingdom, and as the prayer of the Church, incarnate that kingdom at prayer. Like all things sacramental, the office tends to effect what it promises. Surely this endeared it to Francis, who loved the Church as the Body of Christ so much that he left behind everything else he loved in order to bind up its wounds and build up again its weakened walls. Francis literally espoused himself to the Church, the Bride of Christ. Gladly he must have entered into the Church's prayer: taken up the cry of its poor (Psalm 54), lamented its communal sinfulness (Psalm 51), and joined its paeon of praise and thanksgiving. (Psalm 150). Although Francis did not always recite the office communally, he knew that it was the prayer of the Church for the Church, the people of God, that he prayed wherever he was when he said the psalter.

Although, like Jesus, he often went apart to pray, Francis knew too the value of two or three gathered in One name. Like Jesus, he gathered others to support him in both his joys and his sorrows. Like Jesus, he came from both solitary and communal prayer refreshed, renewed, inspired, clearer about the Father's will, ready to walk the road stretched before him. Jesus found in prayer the meat of his Father's will, the strength to lay down His life. Having pondered and striven to imitate that supreme gift until its marks signed his own flesh, is it any wonder that Francis of Assisi loved the prayer that allowed him to say in 150 ways:

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!  
My soul yearns and pines for the courts of the Lord.  
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.  
Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest  
in which she puts her young —  
Your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God!

Happy they who dwell in your house!  
continually they praise you.  
Happy the men whose strength you are!  
their hearts are set upon the pilgrimage:  
When they pass through the valley of the mastic trees,  
they make a spring of it;  
the early rain clothes it with generous growth.  
They go from strength to strength;  
they shall see the God of gods in Zion.  
O Lord of hosts, hear my prayer;  
hearken, O God of Jacob!  
O God, behold our shield, and look upon the face of our anointed.  
I had rather one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere;  
I had rather lie at the threshold of the house of my God  
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.  
For a sun and a shield is the Lord God;  
grace and glory he bestows;  
The Lord withholds no good thing from those who walk in sincerity.  
O Lord of hosts, happy the men who trust in you!

Psalm 84 might very well have been Francis' epitaph; it so describes his life. Perhaps, in the end, it is the best key to what it was that the little troubadour loved in His Master's and his Bride's favorite formulary of prayer. The psalter was a song fit for his poetic heart, a song which captured the Good News and shouted it to the world, a song encompassing the cry of the poor, the hymn of God's people united in His praise for all time, the chorus of creation, the anthem of the heavenly choirs. The Divine Office sang the glory of God, resplendent in words echoing down through the ages. It embodied the loving exchange of an ever-promising God and an ever-trusting people. It was ideally the song that filled Francis' own heart; he gladly joined his voice to this sacred chorus. □



my prayer  
punctuated  
by the cardinal's hymn

I dust  
the statue of St. Luke  
my finger bleeds

'three Hail Marys'  
the child broods over his penance:  
I know only one

praying the Psalms  
wears down the rock  
in me

ruffled apron tied  
to the headstone  
of a girl's grave

*Sister Mary Thomas Eulberg, OSF*

## On How the Plenary Council of the Fraternity, Meeting in India, Strove to Deepen its Understanding of These Words of Wisdom: "Light from the East"

HERMANN SCHALÜCK, O.F.M.

After the Chapter of Pentecost which took place in the Porziuncula in the year of Our Lord 1985, 1001 days and nights had come and gone in Rome when, lo, from hills and valleys all over the world, and from the five continents, "over land and from the sky" the brothers gathered in KRISNAJARAPURA near Bangalore in distant India. They gathered out of obedience to a venerable custom, enshrined now as a rule of the new General Constitutions, articles 193-195, which refer to celebration of the Plenary Council of the Order.

Mindful of their mission of advancing the work of inculturation (cf. GG.CC. art. 92) and the evangelization of cultures (cf. GG.CC. art. 94), the brothers had opted for holding this important meeting in the distant and mysterious land of India. Many undertook the difficult journey with the secret expectancy that, faced with so many problems which weigh upon the world-wide Brotherhood, they might have a profound experience of those hope-filled words: "Ex Oriente Lux" ("Light from the East").

On the vigil of the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker a large number of ministers and servants met in KRISHNAJARAPURA, in a seminary belonging to the sons of Don Bosco, because the Brothers Minor of the Province of Saint Thomas in that country live in "places" which are poor and simple. When the brothers from all over the world arrived at that seminary which is called KRISTU YOTI, they were filled with holy joy

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at learning that YOTI, in one of the many languages of that country, is the word for LIGHT. Because, in fact, it was the light of Christ for which they were all searching, and it was a torch kindled with this light that they all so ardently desired to bring back with them to Rome.

With the love of brothers and mothers the sons and daughters of that immense country devoted themselves to caring for the friar pilgrims with a smile always hovering on their lips. The friars themselves remained almost one whole month in that part of the Indian sub-continent. There they learned that, before undertaking the evangelization of cultures and religions, they must first listen to what the Lord God in his goodness wishes to reveal to them by means of those cultures and those religions. This helps every fraternity to come ever closer to the Gospel and become more credible in its catholicity.

Tired from such a long journey the brothers retired early to enjoy a refreshing sleep.

The real-life lessons, which they were called upon to learn during the following weeks, began on that very first night: lessons all the more enlightening and surprising in so far as they were not the result of lively debates and subtle reasonings about "The Procedure of the Plenary Council"; rather were they the fruit of a new encounter with nature, religions and cultures, without forgetting the brothers and sisters of that vast country.

The encounter with nature took place during that night or rather at the crack of dawn with the cawing of brother crow looking for food (cf. Ps. 146,9) and the lowing of their sisters, the sacred cows, which were happily grazing around the house. Those members of the brotherhood who had come from cold climates, were not a little surprised at the multitude of small creatures which shared the same cell with them and filled the place with a sheer variety of sounds. There were ants, frogs, reptiles, locusts and mosquitoes, — all eager to feed on brother Friar. The brothers who had come from the so-called developed countries very quickly asked for insecticides, all set for chemical warfare without mercy. It was then that Brother Fidelis, Provincial Minister of the Indian Fraternity, smiled in his most brotherly way and proceeded to impart his first lesson: "True to a tradition at once brahmanic, hindu and franciscan, we ought to harbour sentiments of peace towards all creatures, including those little beasts which may appear unintelligent and useless." He based this statement on GG. CC. art. 71, which says that "the friars are to maintain a reverent attitude towards nature, threatened from all sides today, in such a way that they may restore it completely to its condition of brother." He appealed to them to allow the hard-working ants to continue their laborious activity — what a good example for everyone! — and to carry the other little creatures out to the garden if their company

should prove a burden to them. Finally, to the surprise of some, he sowed in the hearts of the brothers the seed of a soutra of PATANJALI, the celebrated author of aphorisms on yoga; one which says: "He who is a firm believer in non-violence creates around himself an atmosphere of peace which disarms the violence of all who come near him" (II Soutra 35). Some of the brothers who like to think that Francis had come to India in some mysterious way immediately went leafing through the Franciscan Sources to see if they could find any point of contact with that country so full of mystery and so rich in traditions. Their professional investigation lead them to a sermon of Jacques de Vitry (1180 - 1240), that good friend of the early friars. In 1240 this cardinal preached to the brothers his sermon on the Book of Proverbs 30, 24-28:

"Four things are among the smallest on the earth,  
and yet are exceedingly wise:

Ants — a species not strong,  
yet they store up their food in the summer;  
Rock-badgers — a species not mighty,  
yet they make their home in the crags;  
Locusts — they have no king,  
yet they migrate all in array;  
Lizards — you can catch them with your hands,  
yet they find their way into kings' palaces."

The preacher compared the brothers to these creatures: The friars who are unselfish workers and feel obliged always to seek the good of others, particularly that of the weak: these are the ants. The friar who is not ashamed of his weakness but places his confidence in the help he receives from others, especially from the Lord, the true rock: he is the rock-badger. The brothers who have received from God the gift of building the Christian community and who make great strides thanks to study and contemplation, these are the locusts. Finally, the indefatigable itinerant preachers who distribute the bread of the Word among the People of God, these are to be compared to the lizards who are to be found in the palaces of kings.

The brothers gave thanks to the Lord for these lively instructions and, thanks to them, learned to understand their mission in a new way. Had not Brother Francis, indeed, shown the greatest respect for all creatures, including the very smallest and those apparently deprived of reason? (cf. 1 Cel. 58; Sal. Vir. LP 110). And had not Christ Jesus, himself the model of all inculturation, appeared in the Third World, far from the centre of the Roman empire, among the animals and among the poor?

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The meeting with other RELIGIONS also brought with it its harvest of new experiences. To the brothers convened in KRISTU YOTI college the Lord gave such confidence in their hindu brothers that they went one day to pay a visit to an ASHRAM. They asked a SWAMI, who was dressed in his sari, to speak to them about his great master, SRI RAMAKRISHNA, about his love for all creation, about his radical poverty and the way that leads to illumination. To their great surprise they learned that just as Francis, the elder brother of RAMAKRISHNA, had despised money and had thrown it far away from him (cf. 2 Cel 65), in like manner the hindu monk had trodden it underfoot, and, as if it were no more than the dirt of the street, thrown it into the Ganges. On the banks of the sacred river he had cried out: "If at any time I should have money in my hand, may it wither and may my breathing fail." Thereupon the swami told them of a disciple who wished to put the great master to the test. One day when Ramakrishna was not in his cell, he placed a coin beneath his mat. When the master returned and sat on his mat, he let out a cry of pain. It was as if an arrow had pierced him. He looked around him bewildered, unable to find an explanation. Then the disciple came in and saw his guru. At the same time, a servant entered and found the silver coin beneath the mat.

These meetings and anecdotes had quite an effect on the brothers, even to the point of confusing them. On the one hand, they thought of the preferential option for the poor, which they had so joyfully embraced and, on the other, of the financing of the General Curia and of other houses which the fraternity has in Rome.

In the city of MYSORE the brothers paid a visit to a second ASHRAM, one maintained by a son of St. Ignatius and so, a most catholic one. There they celebrated the Eucharist resting on their haunches, according to local tradition. There were many reverences, flowers and much incense in an atmosphere of strange words and exotic chants. During a homily the Indian priest invited the brothers to deepen their vocation in an asiatic context. "In accordance with hindu tradition," he said, "the thought-process of Francis is more associative than logical, more intuitive than analytical, more subjective than objective, more inductive than deductive, especially if one compares his thought with the reasoning processes of western scholasticism." With great patience the christian guru explained to the brothers that the true "theology of liberation" of the East is the fruit of a pure interior and of contemplation. It springs up from within and overflows on to the poor and suffering. However it always tries to appear before the Goodness of God with empty hands. At this the brothers never ceased to give thanks to the Lord for the "communion of saints of all the religions of the world." Neither did they cease to marvel at the words

written by an Indian poet, Rajjib, some four centuries ago: "All the religions of the world are like streams which flow into God, the only Ocean."

Among the many meetings with brothers and sisters which were a means of evangelization for the brothers of the Plenary Council, allow me to mention the visit of one brother of St. Francis, a man called DAYANAND, dressed in a sari. His manner of living was based on that of the hindu monks. Like a SANNYASI, he lived with the poor in an attitude of absolute non-violence (AHIMSA), the kind which our brother MAHATMA GHANDI had displayed before the whole world. Brother DAYANAND gave a description of SANNYASI in accordance with the "Treatise of the Equivalents."

"Free as an infant newly-born, without any ties to property, place yourselves resolutely on the road of BRAHMAN. With purity of heart and as a means of sustaining a languishing life, fill the receptacle of your stomach with the alms which you receive. Whether it is that you receive something or absolutely nothing, always maintain an unchanging disposition. You may live in an abandoned house, in a temple, in the shade of a tree or in an abandoned ant hill, among the roots of a tree or in a potter's cabin, beside a bivouac or in the sand of a river-bed, on a hill or in a cave, in the cavity of a tree or beside a waterfall, or, finally, on the bare earth with no cover. Without self pity, without constraint or tension, in an attitude of deep contemplation, and concentrating on the great YES, you should apply yourselves to face up to the consequences of evil actions of the past, abandoning yourselves to renunciation" (Jabala Upanishad 6).

These words recalled to them the life of Francis. The brother also referred to the life of Gandhi in prison who would continue to repeat: "The disciple of non-violence is never afraid. Although his enemy may deceive him twenty times, he is ready to trust the twenty-first time."

On hearing such things the brothers gave thanks to the Lord for the many delicious fruits still growing on the tree of franciscan living. Those who were most grateful were the brothers who have dedicated themselves in a special manner to the gospel priority of Peace and Justice, and who have suffered so many contradictions of all kinds. These felt very consoled and encouraged by such a testimony.

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After the brothers had studied and deepened their knowledge of "the things of God" (RnB 18, 11), after their encounters with the nature, the culture and the religion of that country, it was easy for them to enter upon the themes which they had chosen while still in their beautiful, spacious house in Rome.

1. In the light of their experience, they renewed their commitment to carry out in their lives the priorities of the six-year plan, viz.
  - to taste the sweetness of contemplation, even by adopting new forms of prayer more in keeping with today's religious sensitivity (cf. GG. CC. art. 29);
  - to become intrepid defenders of Peace and Justice, overcoming evil by the practice of good (cf. GG. Cc. art. 68, 1);
  - to be heralds of the Gospel in word and deed, by promising to seek out new forms of living the franciscan charism (GG. Cc. art. 115, 2).
2. They decided to begin renewal in their houses of studies along the lines of the encyclical of the Lord Pope, "SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS" by putting these at the service of the evangelization of cultures, and of listening to the voice of the poor. They would not neglect, however, SOLLICITUDO REI MEDIEVALIS which, in the opinion of some, should be given a new impulse, especially in Rome.
3. As regards finances, they decided to put into practice not only a more equitable system of contributions in favour of the Curia, but also a more radical sharing with the poor. All Provinces, without distinction, were invited to adopt this.

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Before concluding, we must not fail to mention the fact that the day before the departure of the brothers, just as they had joyously made a synthesis of their new projects and plans in the format of A MESSAGE FROM BANGALORE to be the ripe fruit of their stay in India, lo and behold, the well ran dry, the well which had served the needs of all the brothers and of the sons of Don Bosco alike! For half a day, beneath a broiling sun, they suffered severe thirst, and were unable to avail of their customary ablutions. Then they began to pray to the Lord in the words of the psalm which says: "My flesh pines and my soul thirsts like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water" (Ps. 62,2), and they solemnly promised for the future to follow brother Francis in all cultures with a pure heart, limpid eyes and a great openness of spirit (cf. Ex. 15, 22-25). And behold, the spring of water began to fill the well. All saw in this a sign of the goodness of the Lord, who is constantly trying the fraternity only to promptly bless all their efforts at renewal.

Refreshed and purified interiorly and exteriorly, the ministers and the brothers returned from the Plenary Council, some to Rome, others to their home countries, convinced that the Lord had shown them once more what he hoped from them. They were grateful for that light which they had seen in the east and which had guided them on their way.

In praise of Christ. Amen.

## The Third Order Regular and Parish Ministry

ROLAND J. FALEY, T.O.R.

When John O'Malley, SJ, wrote his telling article on religious priesthood a year or so ago, he had little idea that it would reverberate so loudly, even in the halls of Catholic officialdom. The article looks at diocesan and religious priesthood, finds the diocesan model very much in possession, and alerts religious to the importance of rediscovering their proper sacerdotal identity.<sup>1</sup>

For our purposes of looking at parish ministry in the Third Order Regular tradition, O'Malley's conclusions are helpful. I would like to summarize them briefly here.

1. Since the high middle ages, ministry has been central to religious orders' and congregations' self-understanding. This includes priesthood and the manner in which it has been pursued.

2. There are at least two distinct traditions of ministry that have shaped priesthood, found today in what we term the diocesan and religious clergy. There was a healthy "division of labor" which in earlier times clearly distinguished the two. O'Malley locates the diocesan clergy in a ministry principally centered on word and sacrament, within a stable community designated officially, at least since Trent, a parish. Religious were also involved in this type of ministry, but generally had a quite different locus,

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different groups, and different circumstances — schools, charitable works, retreats, missions (home and foreign), works with the spiritually alienated, etc.

3. The model of priesthood which has become normative is the diocesan. Vatican II in its documents which treat of priesthood refers exclusively to the structures and life which characterize the diocesan clergy. The parish becomes the locus of ministry *par excellence*.

4. If such a theological position were to prevail, without reflection, it would certainly result in an impoverishment of the whole idea of priesthood, would situate ministry for religious more in ordination than in religious profession, and run the risk of leveling important distinctions between religious and diocesan priests. This is not to place the blame at anybody's door, but rather to place it at everybody's door.

A word of clarification is necessary. At this point you might be inclined to conclude that this discussion of Third Order work in parishes begins by raising the question as to why we are even there. I would not espouse that position. The manner of our presence is, however, conditioned or should be conditioned by the historical nature of religious priesthood. We do have a valid parish ministry, but it is vital that we come together and examine it.

But having said that, I do submit that I would be hesitant, or at least very discerning, before taking on new parish responsibilities. This represents a development in my own thinking which I believe is well grounded. It is my belief that our services to any local church can be more specific and at the same time more flexible if it flows directly from the charism of the Order and not molded by parochial structures. To say that the present need for priests should move us to respond positively to diocesan needs is, I submit, a well intentioned but dangerous premise. To my knowledge, the Church has never indicated that religious should assume parochial responsibilities in the absence of clergy. This is not to deny the serious problem which the Church faces, a problem which at some point is going to have to be faced squarely and solved. Religious should not be seen as the interim solution.

What the Church has done and continues to do is to call religious to fidelity to their original spirit and tradition. This can be done best by living priesthood in a fashion that flows from our distinctive charism as members of the Franciscan penitential tradition. There are countless ways in which a diocese can be served by our religious apart from parishes.

## PARISH MINISTRY

With all of this as background, let us now look at parish ministry within the Order and the ways it might best respond to our founding spirit.

1. **Community.** To the greatest extent possible, a parish ministry should be a community expression. Without getting into the numbers game, I would nonetheless submit that single man parishes do not really fit this definition. The presence of a number of friars makes a broader ministry possible, inviting forms of outreach broader than the parish, while at the same time it facilitates the living of a common life envisioned by the constitutions.

In this regard, I would see the role of the brother as invaluable. To be quite frank, the brothers' involvement in ministry helps us to avoid total clericalization. It forces us to look beyond the more traditional parish duties toward a more pronounced religious ministry. Where community is being strengthened and enlarged, we are in a better position to evaluate our contribution to the local church, within which the parochial ministry is one dimension.

2. **Conversion of life.** With the research done in the seventies and the early eighties, especially in relation to the New Rule of the Order promulgated in 1982, the charism of the Order as mentioned or conversion of life is indisputable. We are the direct descendants of the earliest Franciscan penitents, who were directed in their evangelical pursuit by Francis himself. Both our personal and communal lives should find this spirit central and that centrality should emerge in ministry as well. Some ways in which this can be done suggest themselves. This list is by no means exhaustive; a creative spirit will surely open other doors as well.

A. **The Sacrament of Reconciliation.** A TOR parish could well give considerable attention to a pastoral renewal of this sacrament in both traditional and innovative ways. I would think of effective and coordinated preaching on the meaning of this sacrament; a more extensive and caring availability to people for reconciliation, even beyond parish boundaries; the use of the communal penance service in a timely and creative way.

B. **The order of Penitents.** This has become a developing pastoral expression in U.S. parishes. Just as the Rite of Christian Initiative introduces people to the life of the church over an extended period of time, the Order of Penitents follows a similar communal path in reconciling sinners to the church. In extending reconciliation over a period of time, e.g., the Lenten season, the Christian community joins humbly with Catholics being re-membered or reinserted in walking the path of reconciliation.<sup>2</sup> Further particulars can be found elsewhere; suffice it to say that the program is worth exploring, especially for Franciscan religious dedicated to reconciliation as integral to their founding vision.

C. **Outreach Ministry.** The Tertiary Tradition is strongly rooted in the corporate works of mercy. It is strongly marked by a concern for the poor,

the sick, and the needy. When this is coupled with the charism of conversion with its inherent concern for the spiritually alienated, possible outreach ministries come readily to mind. American society today has more than its share of the spiritually wounded, those alienated from the church, those scarred by bitterness. These are the spiritually homeless. This may mean pastoral "welcome home" programs such as that for the adult children of alcoholics, divorced Catholics, single people. It seems very evident that dedication to the AIDS ministry is well suited to our charism and tradition, the reason being that such a ministry combines the corporal works of mercy with a ministry to those who often feel isolated, misunderstood, and alienated from all segments of society, including the church.

Admittedly, a sort-out is necessary on this question. Any single parish is limited in what it can do, but the point remains. An outreach ministry is important for a variety of reasons, but what the ministry does is move our thinking beyond the stable, fixed parish community. Our work becomes less parochial (no pun intended). At the same time, it enlivens the sense of our charism in moving toward people beyond the pale of the customary parish ministry.

**D. Lay Bonding.** Historically there was one Order of Penance, comprised of the single and married laity (TOS, OFS) and those in community (TOR). The separation into two distinct ecclesiastical entities came about through Church decision accompanied by the growing line of demarcation between laity on one side and priests and religious on the other. Initially a single rule governed the life of both.

Many religious congregations and orders today see their life and ministry in the future as closely allied with the laity. Bonding between religious institutes and their counterparts is becoming increasingly common. As Franciscans of the penitential tradition, we realize that the lay component has been present from the beginning and should be maintained. Our relations to the secular Franciscans is stronger than any of the other Franciscan families. For this reason, I wrote a pastoral letter to our Order when the new secular Franciscan rule was approved. What I said then remains, I believe, equally valid today.

A revitalization of the secular Franciscans may well require new structures, a two track system, or something similar. But man was not made for structures, but structures, for man — forgive the lack of inclusive language. The Franciscan lay movement can move ahead because of the strong and lasting appeal of the spirit of Francis for all people. And that it has to do at times in spite of structures. This may require some very radical and innovative thinking.

What can we model in terms of lay collaboration? First of all, it should be genuine collaboration and not simply lay assistance in our tasks. It is

not simply a question of altar ministries or stronger parish associations. Rather, how can we genuinely plan our ministry as religious and lay people — coequal and coinvolved. Have we begun to think of lay management of parish temporalities, of collaboration in marriage preparation, RCIA, education, and outreach ministry? Is the parish council more than "window dressing," is it an undertaking of genuine shared responsibility? This all means sharing our lives in many different ways, including our spiritual life and Franciscan traditions.

Some may see this as a blurring of the distinction between religious and laity, between priest and laity. I do not share their view. Roles can still be clearly defined, but the concept does spell unity in diversity in service to God's people.

## THE WORD OF GOD

Franciscans have no corner on the scriptures. Therefore, much of what I have to say here is applicable to all involved in ministry, but I would make the *a fortiori* point. Francis rooted the direction of his life and the direction of his fraternity in God's word. This was normative. He had an incredible intuitive insight into the meaning of Scripture for one who lacked formal training. The inspiration for the Minors' Rule was deeply Scriptural. The tonsure which he and his confreres received from the Pope was in the interest of preaching which he saw as integral to his mission.

Today one of the people's strongest laments deals with the quality of preaching. To say there is widespread dissatisfaction is something of an understatement. In the past homiletics was an "also ran" course in the seminary; one wonders how much better it is today. Years ago when I was teaching at the Protestant seminary in Pittsburgh, I never ceased to marvel at the time and attention, on an interdisciplinary basis, that was given to preparing the Sunday homily.

The Sunday homily holds primacy of place and should be given considerable attention in terms of preparation. The daily homily should not be neglected, although it should be brief and focus on a single idea. Preaching means three things: a contemporary understanding of the scriptures, a knowledge of the cultural and social setting of the listeners, and good communication skills. Above all, it means a love for the Scriptures themselves.

Lay formation in the scriptures has a singular importance today. This means to form people in those biblical insights, recognized in *Divino Afflante Spiritu* and reaffirmed at the Council. Our people still have to learn to be at home with the results of literary criticism; otherwise we will be beset by that type of biblical fundamentalism about which we



currently lament. For this reason, continuing education of the laity should take a good look at programs like ABIL (Adult Biblical Interdependent Learning) which is gaining increasing recognition as a method of biblical instruction. The program has been developed by Dr. Eugene Trester and is gaining acceptance in an increasing number of U. S. dioceses.

## CONCLUSION

There are real challenges connected with parish ministry today. Studies show that in this country the parish remains the locus of religious identification for most Catholics, even though it may not be the territorial parish of one's residence. People are more prone today to cross lines at will, but the parish is still in possession.

Where religious are responsible for the parish, it is an important moment to do some critical and creative thinking. There is always the danger of settling into a "business as usual" mentality. Religious parishes, I would submit, have a responsibility to maintain a distinctiveness derived from their founding spirit. The charism of the institute can be creatively brought to life within the established parochial structures. The present paper has offered some suggestions. What I would really like to do is invite your own participation. Understanding the charism of the Order, I would ask you to raise the question: In my corner of the vineyard, how might I give a wider berth to conversion of life? Each new insight, each step forward enables us to carry out the Council's mandate: to rediscover the spirit of the Founder and to read it in the light of the signs of the times.

## End notes

<sup>1</sup>O'Malley, J., "Priesthood, Ministry, and Religious Life: Some Historical and Historiographical Considerations," *TS*, June, 1988, iv.49, n. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Lopresti, J., *Penance: A Reform Proposal for the Rite*, Pastoral Press, 1987.



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