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# The CORD

## A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



#### ARTICLES

THEOLOGY OF CREATION BASED ON THE  LIFE OF FRANCIS OF ASSISI	
FEATURES	
EDITORIAL:  MAKING A MISSION STATEMENT  ST. BONAVENTURE ON THE LAST SUPPER  Harry Aveling, T.S.S.F.	97 112
POETRY: PIETA: A DIPTYCH	99
ISAIAH 60	
MATINS	

Volume 40, No. 4

#### The CORD

#### A Monthly Franciscan Spiritual Review

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

#### I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony EpCler: Letter to Clerics1 EpCust: Letter to Superiors1 EpFid: Letter to All the 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

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

1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis 2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis 3Cel: Celano. Treatise on Miracles

FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare

CL: Legend of Saint Clare CP: Process of Saint Clare

Fior: Little Flowers of St. Francis

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

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

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

**EDITORIAL** 

### Making a Mission Statement

It would be rare today to find a religious group or institution without a mission statement. Mission statements abound; and those I have seen capture in prophetic tones the finest Christian values imaginable. They are a tribute to those who have dedicated time, energies and talents demanded by such an important project.

We might be led to think that mission statements are confined to the religious world. Nothing could be farther from the truth. For example, not too long ago, while working as a member of an ad hoc committee reviewing our St. Bonaventure University mission statement, we were presented with one from perhaps the best known worldwide financial services organization. One could not help but be surprised by the similarity of their language with ours — "realizing our mission," "our vision of the future," "commitment," "dynamic change," "shared values." I must admit, however, that my imagination was somewhat challenged by the second sentence of the statement which asserted that the company's "objective is to be the acknowledged leader in the value we offer our clients,...." I found it difficult to imagine what values a company engaged in worldwide finances might offer its clients!

Statements of mission have a purpose: they are intended to heighten the consciousness, the minds and hearts, of people so that their bonded lives and activities may move with commitment and enthusiasm toward achieving a common goal. The language employed is high-powered and stimulating; for obvious reasons it is value-oriented. People are reminded of and reinstated in what is considered to be a tradition of unusual import, whether that tradition is that of a religious order or an international finance corporation.

Francis had a profound sense of mission and he communicated it in burning words to his brothers. We find one stirring expression of it in his "Letter to the Entire Order:" ".... for He has sent you into the entire world for this reason that in word and deed you may give witness to His voice and bring everyone to know that there is no one who is all-powerful except Him" (EpOrd 8). Francis is keenly aware of being sent and there is obviously no limit to the vertical and horizontal dimensions of his mission consciousness. He boldly situates the brothers in immediacy before God and the entire world and there is no doubt as to the nature and content of their mission. The horizons are boundless and the imagination is awakened to incredible gospel opportunities. Francis' perception of his mission, and that of his brothers, is, as Joseph Ratzinger has written, truly universal and eschatological.

The unusual intensity with which Francis perceives and expresses the brothers' mission has a very special explanation. Francis' original inspiration was rooted, as we know, in the missionary address of the Lord which, in typical fashion, he understood to be directed to his own heart and hidden desires. This sense of being sent directly and immediately by the Lord was a burning flame in his consciousness. He lived and moved and had his being in its mystery. It drove him constantly to that solitude that would permit him to deepen his love for the God who called as it also launched him toward global evangelization. In this regard, Jacque de Vitry saw him as a man "carried away by an overwhelming enthusiasm and ardor of spirit" as he made his way to the camp of the sultan of Egypt.

Following Jesus taught Francis that more than language is required for a mission statement. One must "do the truth" as well; otherwise one betrays the very gospel one is sent to preach. That is why for a person like Francis a mission statement is incomplete without "witness," and "word and example." The compelling conviction of being sent drives one beyond words to deeds; in fact, without deeds the words lose their force, no matter how expressive they themselves may be.

Whenever Franciscans gather to review or rewrite their mission statement there is, I believe, a sense of incompleteness or failure. As we attempt to express our most cherished values in our finest words and may even succeed in this, we come up feeling the need for something more or maybe even something less. And so various answers suggest themselves to us. Perhaps we have been too idealistic, too impossible in our dreams; we have let Francis put medieval demands upon us who are now almost second millenium people. Or we might feel that we still haven't learned the always valid gospel lesson that he learned: "plus exemple quam verbo," more by example than by word. Or does the answer lie in a different direction? It may be that we haven't really spent enough time with the "You are sent" of Francis. Do we awaken each day to this awareness? Do we allow it to give unusual depth to the quality of our lives, our ministry, our prayer? Have we truly allowed the grace of our calling to awaken within us what was awakened in Francis when the sending words of Jesus to the disciples were explained to him? Maybe we must first of

all overcome our fears and realize that somewhere in our hearts there are waiting to be respoken, over and over again, the words of Francis: "This is what I wish, this is what I seek, this is what I long to do with all my heart." Wouldn't it be a great blessing were we to let ourselves be engaged prayerfully by the simple notion that with Francis we share the same immediacy before Jesus as those who were the first to be sent by Him? Maybe then we would discover untapped spiritual energies not merely to write, but to make a mission statement!

Joseph Doino OFin

Pieta: A Diptych

Yesteryears'...
Michaelangelo's masterpiece
Sculptured in cold marble.
Her dead Son's Head to Knees
Arm-cradled by
His Mater Dolorosa.
Her eyes; dulled with loss
Looking, looking for her Boy
Unblemished ... Lamb of God
Born in a stable.
First to come ... Shepherds,
Heard glad tidings,
Younger, shouldering a lamb
Umblemished.

Today...
A young mother
Eyes aglow
With love
And tenderness for
Her first-born son
Cerebral-palsied:
Blemish . . . blest.
His silken curly head
Tight against her breast
Knees upon her knees.
With maternal volition
Her heart
His captive.

Sister M. Clarice Sheehan, OSF

Sister M. Clarice Sheehan's last assignment was as Librarian-Teacher, Archbishop Walsh High School, Olean, NY. This Franciscan Sister of Allegany is presently retired to her Congregation's St. Elizabeth Motherhouse, Allegany, NY. Sister wrote these lines of paralleled thoughts after a visit that afternoon of the young mother and her son.

#### Isaiah 60

Something is happening. It's like the flash and glare of light in Jacob Boehme's pewter dish. It's like the sudden petal shower from Normandy's precious Rose. It's like the awesome awakening of the Child in the arms of the Skeleton at Greccio. It's like Damien transfigured and returned to the Emerald Forest. It's the reproach of seven years lifted. It's the end of the blood soaked sheets. It's the rider espoused and the pale horse fed. It's the Light in the darkness. It's the nations streaming to the outcasts. It's the empty tomb.

William Hart McNichols, S.J., S.F.O.

# A Theology of Creation Based on the Life of Francis of Assisi

#### TIMOTHY VINING, T.O.R.

In response to the ecological crisis facing their country, the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines recently issued a pastoral letter on ecology. In the letter, they wrote:

We will not be successful in our efforts to develop a new attitude towards the natural world unless we are sustained and nourished by a new vision. This vision must blossom forth from our understanding of the world as God intends it to be.<sup>1</sup>

Such a vision called for by the Philippine Bishops can be found in the life and thought of Francis of Assisi, a poet and nature mystic of the medieval period. The Franciscan vision of harmony among God, Humanity, and Nature takes on an added significance in light of today's growing ecological awareness. One need only think of the recent oil spill off the coast of Alaska and the nuclear sword which presently hangs over our world as a threat to the destruction of our planet in order to appreciate the groaning of all of creation for the peace and harmony of God's Kingdom (Romans 8:19-22). This essay is an attempt to develop a theology of Creation based on the life and thought of Francis of Assisi, drawing out some of the ethical implications of such a view.

#### Creation as Sacrament

The Dutch theologian Edward Schillebeeckx described a sacrament as a mutual encounter between God and humanity. For Schillebeeckx, any

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understanding of sacraments must include this dynamic interplay between the offer of God's gift of self-communication and humanity's response to that gift through praise and worship.<sup>2</sup> This encounter is possible when the sacrament "makes present in earthly garb" the saving mysteries of God. Can one extend this notion of a sacramental encounter with God to include not only humanity but all of creation? This is what I believe is at the heart of the experience and life of the medieval nature mystic Francis of Assisi: a vision of all of creation as the locus of contact with the Divine. In the Franciscan sources, Francis is presented as one who discovered God in creation and then joined all of creation in praise and worship of the Creator.

#### Creation as God's Self-Communication

Fundamental to understanding Francis' creation theology is the notion that the Incarnation somehow involved the sanctification of nature. For Francis, all of nature spoke of God by pointing beyond itself to the Creator:

Finally, he called all creatures brother, and in a most extraordinary manner, a manner never experienced by others, he discerned the hidden things of nature with his sensitive heart, as one who had already escaped into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God. (1 Cel 81)

As a nature mystic,<sup>3</sup> Francis' experiences began with phenomena of the natural world which came to their fruition in a vision of God:

In every work of the artist he praised the Artist; whatever he found in the things made he referred to the maker. He rejoiced in all the works of the hands of the Lord and saw behind things pleasant to behold their life-gving reason and cause. In beautiful things he saw Beauty itself; all things were to him good. "He who made us is the best," they cried out to him. Through his footprints impressed upon things he followed the Beloved everywhere; he made for himself from all things a ladder by which to come even to his throne. (2 Cel 165)

Francis sought occasion to love God in everything. He delighted in all the works of God's hands and from the vision of joy on earth his mind soared aloft to the life-giving source and cause of all. (LM 9:1).

This experience of God in creation can be considered a sacramental encounter if one compares the traditional definition as "an outward sign of an inner grace" with Sorrell's definition of a nature mystic: "an intense identification with something spiritual seen in concrete reality." Thus, Francis' vision of sublime creation catalyzed a mystical experience with the divine. This closely parallels Teilhard de Chardin's intellectual vision of creation as sacramental.<sup>5</sup>

Francis has been accused by some of being a pantheist, due to his concept of the brother/sisterhood of all creation. Yet, these critics fail to make the important distinction between pantheism and sacramentalism: "But suspicion that he was inclined to pantheism such as have been voiced from time to time rest on the error of not distinguishing it from sacramentalism. The saint was a devoted sacramentalist."

He therefore had a special and profound love for God's creatures and especially for those which he thought of as representing some truth about God or religion. (SP 113)

For him, nature spoke of God by serving as a means of God's self-communication. All created things pointed beyond themselves to their Creator. Even two twigs crossed together reminded him of the Cross. (1 Cel 45)

#### Creation's Praise to God

Not only did Francis come in touch with God's self-communication in creation, but he also joined creation in singing praise and worship to God as a response to God's gift of self-communication. Perhaps one of the most beautiful expressions of Francis joining with all of creation to give praise to God is found in his popular Sermon to the Birds:

My brothers, birds, you should praise your Creator very much and always love him; he gave you feathers to clothe you, wings so that you can fly, and whatever else was necessary for you. God made you noble among his creatures and he gave you a home in the purity of the air; though you neither sow nor reap, he nevertheless protects and governs you without any solicitude on your part. (1 Cel 58)

Francis' manner of addressing the birds as brothers (as sisters in the Fioretti, no. 16) is an expression of the saint's profound compassion for all Creation. The birds are not looked upon as merely providing for human use. The earth with its resources and beauties are for their use and pleasure as well as ours; they are regarded as kin to us, members of God's family. As this cosmic brother/sisterhood acknowledges a mutual dependency, they are together to join in singing the praises of their Creator God.

This motif of humankind and the birds praising God together reached its highest refinement in a story that belongs to a time subsequent to Celano's biographies. As recounted by Armstrong:

While Saint Francis and Brother Leo were enjoying a meal together in the open air, they were delighted by the singing of a nightingale close by. Francis suggested: "Let us sing the praise of God antiphonally with this bird." Leo excused himself as he was no singer, but the saint lifted up his voice and phrase by phrase sang alternately with the nightingale.<sup>7</sup>

In this story we have the essence of Franciscan creation spirituality, a glimpse of the earthly paradise, humanity and nature together singing the glory of the Creator. For Francis this is not merely a background philosophy but a whole way of approaching the world. Gone now is the old notion of domination, of conquest, of stepping on creation in order to ascend to God. The hierarchical and paternalistic vision is replaced with a cosmic vision of creation as a brother/sisterhood, and all is seen as a way to God and a revelation of God. The ultimate praise of the Creator goes up when humanity cooperates with rather than exploits creation. The divine vocation for Francis is primarily to "care for creation" (Gen. 2:15) rather than to "subdue creation" (Gen. 1;26).

#### Harmony Among God, Humanity, and Creation

It is important to note in examining the above quotes from the lives of Francis that the early hagiographers were impressed with Francis' experiences because they believed that he had lived out in a most concrete and literal way the same ideals they had discovered in their own intellectual training. For example, one can clearly see the hand of Bonaventure in the following excerpt taken from his Major Life of Francis:

He followed his Beloved everywhere by his likeness imprinted on creation; of all creation he made a ladder by which he might mount up and embrace Him who is all-desirable. (LM 9:1)

Here, Bonaventure appears to be attempting to integrate Francis' experience of creation into the prevailing mindset of the day. Such a mindset was influenced by the Augustinian fear that the observer of nature be absorbed in the natural world and fall prey to the temptation to forsake the Creator for creation. Thus, Bonaventure presents one with an anthropocentric view of creation in which all creatures form a ladder ascending to God. Humans are considered to be at the top of the ladder and the meaning of nature becomes swallowed up by human meanings. In Bonaventure's spirituality, as humans ascend to perfect spiritual communion with God above, the animals, plants, and minerals are left behind at the lower rungs of the ladder. As he writes toward the end of his Soul's lourney:

For transcending yourself and all things, by the immeasurable and absolute ecstasy of a pure mind, leaving behind all things, and freed from all things, you will ascend to the superessential ray of the divine darkness.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, in Bonaventure's great work on spirituality, the movement up the ladder is so emphasized that virtually no direct attention is given to nature at all. Although the whole world is portrayed as being charged with the

glory of God, it is interesting that Bonaventure never once mentions one particular creature by name much less refer to a fellow creature as "brother" or "sister." His understanding of the spiritual life is most fundamentally understood by the metaphor of ascent. For Bonaventure, each creature is like a stepping stone by which the human mind ascends to the eternal God. For Francis, each creature is a brother or sister who joins with us in praising the Creator.

One can also find such ambivalent views toward nature in Dante's Divine Comedy. A similar hierarchical vision is presented. Although the cosmos is believed to be charged with divine glory, the final home for the individual is arrived at by an ultimate escape from creation. "The goal of Dante's cosmic pilgrimage is thus perfect, transparent spirituality, total release from the biophysical order. This is the aluring vision he leaves with us." 10

Francis of Asssi, however, offers us an alternate view of creation. Rather than being the top rung of the ladder of creation, Francis sees humanity as a part of creation. Francis replaces a sprituality of hierarchical ascent with one of a descending solidarity between humanity and creation. Instead of using creatures to ascend to God, Francis loved all creatures as brothers and sisters. As Francis left us with no Summa or Divine Comedy, we must look to his life in order to piece together his innovative theology of creation. Theology and spirituality are not to be separated. For Francis, both must be a way of life!

Francis expressed his solidarity with even the lowliest of creatures since the Incarnation sanctified all of life. Francis' compassion for lowly despised creatures is realized in the incident with the lowly worm, which caused his biographer to ask, "Who could ever express the height of affection by which he was carried away as concerning all the things that are God's".

Toward little worms even he glowed with a very great love, for he had read this saying about the Savior; *I am a worm*, not a man. Therefore he picked them up from the road and placed them in safe place, lest they be crushed by the feet of the passerby. (1 Cel 80)

This is not at all unrelated to his embrace of the leper which he attributed as the beginning experience of his conversion process:

This is how God inspired me, Brother Francis, to embark upon a life of penance. When I was in sin, the sight of lepers nauseated me beyond measure; but then God himself led me into their company, and I had pity on them. When I had once become acquainted with them, what had previously nauseated me became a source of spiritual and physical consolation for me. After that I did not wait long before leaving the world. (Test. 1-3)

Thus, through an embrace of the lowliest and often most despised creatures

(both human and non-human creatures), Francis had a deeply moving experience of God. <sup>11</sup> Francis treated all of creation, the human and non-human with the same reverence and courtesy. Thus, in the birds, worms, and trees we not only discover something of the nature of God but we also discover something about our humanity. Nature is a book revealing much about both God and humanity!

Nature provided Francis with a fundamental experience which left an indelible mark on his life and thought. Francis discovered that the universe forms a unified and marvelous arrangement reflective of the beauty of God which is not hierarchically erected but is determined by fraternity. His vision of universal brother/sisterhood was an expression of a reconciliation among God, Humanity, and Nature. The common factor of creature-hood was more important to Francis than any categorical distinctions among human, animal, and inanimate things. Repeatedly, the sources report how Francis called all things his "brothers" and "sisters," urging them to praise and obey God, speaking to them as though they were human beings with a consciousness of their own. Near the end of his life, as a doctor was preparing to treat his eyes with a red-hot iron, Francis pleaded with brother fire:

"Brother Fire, the Lord created you as something noble and useful among all creatures. Be courteous to me in this hour, for I have always loved you and will continue to do so for the love of the Lord who created you. I pray our common Creator to temper your heat that I may be able to endure it." After saying this prayer, he made the sign of the cross over the fire. (LP 48)

"The same is true in reverse: the Sun brightened Francis' eyes, fire behaved courteously to him, birds listened to him, crickets kept him company, the lark announced the Hours of the Office, the lamb reminded him of the time of Mass, flowers consoled him, and all creatures called to him, 'God our Creator is the Absolute Good.' "12

The Canticle of Brother Sun is without doubt the most clear expression of Francis' vision of the reconciliation of all created realities. In a lyrical spirit, Francis presents the sun, moon and stars, fire and earth, death and life, all as reconciled kin, forming one single family before the face of God. All of creation is to share in the koinonia of God's Reign. The Canticle represents the final expression, the final synthesis of Francis' thought in the area of relationships among Humanity, Nature, and the Creator. In the Canticle, Francis assumed there was a complex, multifaceted relationship implying much interdependence among Nature, Humanity, and God. While creation and humankind each had a certain autonomous character, creation at times served people. Likewise, humankind depended on the aid of creation. Both depended on and served God. In other places, Francis envisioned people subordinating themselves to

creation in obedience, and creatures depending on human consideration and respect for their well-being. Commenting on the *Canticle*, Fox writes: "Francis takes seriously the idea of the family of all creation, the interconnectivity of all creatures. All are bound together and connected by the divine light." <sup>13</sup>



#### **Ethical Implications of Creation Theology**

Many could be accused of sentimentality in their attempts to popularize Francis in order to respond to ecological crises. Although Francis certainly considered himself a brother to all of creation, he did not always remain passive to everything he experienced in creation. Once, when swallows were disrupting his sermon, Francis cried out:

My sisters, swallows, it is now time for me to speak, for you have already spoken enough. Listen to the word of the Lord and be silent and quiet until the word of the Lord is finished. (1 Cel 59)

Francis realized that men and women are made in the image of God possessing a dignity that is uniquely theirs. In the life of Francis one discovers a return to an ecologically balanced system as found in the mythological garden of Eden. Although humans have a certain responsibility as stewards of God's creation, they are called to cooperate with rather than "lord it over" creation:

As long as man acts as a creature, as a steward of God, harmony exists in creation, but once he claims the prerogatives reserved for God (as the story of the Fall shows), he is out of harmony with the rhythm of the created

order. The consequences of this are already shown in Genesis; man's relation to creation changes and becomes one of conflict rather than cooperation. <sup>14</sup>

It is interesting to note that Celano concludes the above reference of Francis' silencing the sparrows with "it is indeed wonderful how even irrational creatures recognized his affection for them and felt his tender love for them." (1 Cel 59)

Karl Barth recognized the special place given to humanity by God in the following manner:

God did not become a stone or star or even an angel. He became a man. Man, therefore, enjoys a unique status within creation. He is the "apple of God's eye." <sup>15</sup>

According to Barth, God's decision to become incarnate in a human person shows forth the unique role which humanity is to play in the salvation/redemption of the entire world.

Returning to Francis, we find a man who balances his belief in the special dignity of the human person as the steward of God's creation with a high regard for the reverence due to all creatures. Consequently, humanity has a religious duty to care for and cooperate with nature. God did not only become a human; God also assumed matter, common to all of creation. The respect given to all things is not given primarily for their utility but because they have all been created and redeemed/recreated by God. Humanity as God's steward on earth is to pay due reverence and respect for all creatures in a most caring and courteous way. The Franciscan vision of the relations among God, Humanity, and Nature is always one of cooperation rather than exploitation or domination.

As the Patron Saint of Ecology (declared so in 1979 by John Paul II) Francis of Assisi offers us a challenging vision, one so desperately needed in our world today. As the Church continues in its struggle to proclaim and build the kind of God on this earth, the exhortation of the Philippine Bishops as an impetus to the fuller actualization of the Franciscan vision:

More and more we must recognize that the commitment to work for justice and to preserve the integrity of creation are two inseparable dimensions of our Christian vocation to work for the coming of the kingdom of God in our times ... The destruction of any part of creation, the extinction of species defaces the image of Christ which is etched in creation. <sup>16</sup>

#### Creation and Eschatology

An aspect of the saint's life and thought often missing from most biographies is Francis' eschatological consciousness, a consciousness which was commonly shared among people living at the time of Francis. The

prophet Isaiah had foretold an era of harmony among all of creation in a future kingdom under the rule of Immanuel:

Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; The calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, together their young shall rest; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. (Is. 11:6-7)

The construction of the Christmas tableau at Greccio by Francis (1 Cel 84-87) has many parallels with Isaiah's eschatological vision of peace. Could the creation of the manger scene which included the ox and the ass be considered an act of eschatological piety? Rather than viewed as a return to the mythological garden of Eden before the Fall, is it proper for this act of Francis to be considered as an enactment of the "peaceable kingdom" to come at the end of time? Was Celano suggesting that the new heavens and the new earth promised by God were already being tangibly and partially realized in the life of Francis? I do not think it accidental that Celano thought of Francis in terms of the eschatological vision of Paul in Romans 8:19-22 in which the whole of creation was groaning in anticipation of the revelation of the children of God:

... he discerned the hidden things of nature with his sensitive heart, as one who had already escaped into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God. (1 Cel 81)

In light of a realized eschatology, Francis' preaching to the birds and flowers is more than simply pious, sentimental rhetoric. Rather, it can be theologically seen as an expression of his position of living in this world, in terms of the next, when all things are to be renewed/recreated:

Lo, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; The things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind. Instead, there shall always be rejoicing and happiness in what I create. (Is. 65:17-18a)

Thus, the harmony which Francis experienced among God, Nature, and Humanity need not be theologically explained as a return to the mythological garden of Eden before the Fall. The theological explanation which is perhaps more accurate is one of a partial actualization of the eschatological vision in which God will be "all in all." Such a theology of creation is primarily concerned with the final consummation rather than the origins of the world.

In light of this eschatological horizon, one can understand how Francis was able to relate to his own death and suffering with such an inner peace. The circumstances in which Francis related to "sister death" are recounted beautifully in the *Mirror of Perfection*:

The doctor said to him, "Brother, God willing, all will be well with you."

Again blessed Francis said to him, "Tell me the truth. What is your real opinion? Don't be afraid to tell me, for by God's grace I am not such a coward as to fear death. By the grace and help of the Holy Spirit I am so united to my Lord that I am equally content to die or to live." Then the doctor told him frankly, "Father, according to our medical knowledge your disease is incurable"... then blessed Francis, lying on his bed, most reverently and devoutly stretched out his hands to God, and with great joy of mind and body, said, "Welcome, Sister Death." (SP 122)

Francis seems very familiar with the world into which he was about to enter upon his death for he had lived it by anticipation; he had shared in its anticipatory meal.<sup>17</sup>

Francis' ultimate destiny, like his life on earth, cannot be conceived of as being apart from that of the whole of creation. Celano recounts how on his death bed, Francis invited all creatures to join him in singing praise to the Creator:

He also invited all creatures to praise God, and by means of the words he had composed earlier, he exhorted them to love God. He exhorted death itself, terrible and hateful to all, to give praise, and going joyfully to meet it, he invited it to make its lodging with him. "Welcome," he said, "my sister death..." (2 Cel 217)

Francis died as he had lived — in solidarity with all God's creatures, partaking of the ecstasies of the promised land.

O good Jesus, he is now praising you as admirable in heaven with all the angels, he who on earth preached you as lovable to every creature. (1 Cel 81)

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Philippine Catholic Bishops, "What is Happening to Our Beautiful Land (A Pastoral Letter on Ecology)," East Asian Pastoral Review 26 (1989), p. 98.

<sup>2</sup>Edward Schilebeeckx, "The Sacraments: An Encounter With God," in *Christianity Divided: Protestant and Catholic Theological Issues*, ed. by D. Callahan et. al. (New York, 1961) p. 245.

<sup>3</sup>Francis as a "nature mystic" is considered by Sorrell to be the most innovative aspect of the Saint's life. See Roger D. Sorrell, Saint Francis of Assisi and Nature (New York: Oxford Press, 1988), pp. 89-92.

<sup>4</sup>Sorrell, p. 90.

<sup>5</sup>cf. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960).

<sup>6</sup>Edward A. Armstrong, St. Francis: Nature Mystic (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup>Armstrong, p. 68.

<sup>8</sup>Augustine, The Confessions (New York: Image, 1960), Book 10:34, pp. 262-264.

<sup>9</sup>Ewert Cousins, Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey Into God, the Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis, trans. idem (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 115.

<sup>10</sup>H. Paul Santmire, The Travail of Nature (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 105

<sup>11</sup>This led Santmire to describe the spirituality of Francis primarily as one of descent rather than ascent. The Travail of Nature, pp. 109-113.

<sup>12</sup>Build With Living Stones: A Program of Study on the Franciscan Missionary Charism (Pittsburgh: Franciscan Federation, 1987) p. 12/7.

<sup>13</sup>Matthew Fox, The Coming of the Cosmic Christ (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 113.

<sup>14</sup>Brian J. Lowden, "Francis: Model for Christian Ecology," The Cord 32 (Sept. 1982), p. 245.

<sup>15</sup>cited in Lowden, p. 246.

<sup>16</sup>Philippine Catholic Bishops, p. 99.

<sup>17</sup>It is interesting to note that in *The Second Life of St. Francis*, Celano mentions that Francis broke bread with the friars on his death bed. (2 Cel 217)

#### **Matins**

The silent misty steam rising gently off Kanuga Lake, a redbreast chirping cheerily from its home high in a pine, the fiery orange ring steadily scaling the Blue Ridge, all cry in a loud voice to me: Lazarus, come forth!

And I shedding my grave clothes arise.

Br. Joseph Molleur, S.S.J.E.

### St. Bonaventure on the Last Supper

#### HARRY AVELING, T.S.S.F.

This sermon on the Last Supper was preached by St. Bonaventure on Maundy Thursday, April 14, 1267. The original text is to be found in the Opera Omnia, vol. IX, pp. 255-9. A few extra numbers have been added to the translation to indicate the divisions and subdivisions more clearly; otherwise, the English is intended to follow the original fairly closely.

As is appropriate for a sermon given prior to Easter, particular stress is placed on preparing oneself for worthily receiving communion. The sermon affirms both the real presence of Christ in the sacrament, and the delight of sharing in a banquet with the King of Kings. Bonaventure is less interested in the transformation of the eucharistic elements than he is in the transformation of the person who comes to take communion: the purpose of the Supper is "the assimilation and transformation of the eater into the thing eaten" (III).

#### Sermon V

Come to me all of you who labour and are weary and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, because I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls, etc. Matthew, eleven (29-30).

(Protheme) He who hears, may he say: 'Come!'. The final word, which is in the Book of Revelation (22:7), is addressed to all who hear the truth, that they should also invite others to come and listen; because no one is worthy to come to the gathering of eternal worthiness unless he desires

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to bring his fellows; and the more one desires to have a greater number of companions, and the more one weeps for that gathering, the worthier he is to come. Significantly, he therefore says: He who hears, may he say: 'Come!' We are summoned, therefore, and we who hear must invite others to come, and we who are invited must diligently attend. Both those who hear and those who are invited are liable to blame if they do not diligently fulfil that invitation; because there is no one who can be excused from accepting this invitation. So, at the beginning, let us pray to the Lord that we may not be foolish boors or considered unworthy of being invited to the feast, which is for the salvation of our souls, and he speaks to all, etc.

Come to me, etc.

This word is in Matthew and it is spoken by the Lord of Salvation. In it the Saviour invites those who are wearied by the work of penance to the feast of eternal joy. He invites us in a threefold way: first, he invites us to the feast; second, to the cross; third, to rest. He invites us to the feast, with these words: Come to me all of you who labour and are weary and I will refresh you. He invites us to the cross, thus: Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart. He invites us to rest, thus: and you shall find rest for your souls. The first invitation applies to today, the second to tomorrow, the third to the Sabbath.

Ι

1. First, I say, it remains to see how God invites us to the feast; thus Come etc. He invites all who labour to rest. Just as those who can work, know how to work, and are required to work hard, but do not do so, do not deserve to eat; so, those who run away from spiritual labour do not deserve spiritual refreshment. Because, in this regard, until spiritual refreshment happens, it is necessary that labour, i.e. spiritual labour, be done first.

The labour which is spiritual labour consists of four things. Firstly, deploring of sins; and we have an example of this labour in David, who says: I laboured in my sighing, every night I will wash my bed, I will soak my pillow with my tears (Pr 6:6). — We must labour in the love of God and in the extermination of evil; and therefore David wept often and abundantly; he said: every night; as for the frequency of this work and its abundance; my tears, etc., as for the vigour of his weeping. David, a noble king and a hearty man desired to mourn for his sins, and this despite the fact that he only committed one sin. What must we older men therefore do? There are certain old men who are feeble in lamenting their sins, those of whom Jeremiah nine (v. 5) says: They have taught their tongues to lie, that they might act and labour wickedly.

- 2. Secondly, spiritual labour consists of overthrowing enemies; the Apostle's second letter to Timothy, chapter two: So strive to be a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one who is God's soldier involves himself with secular affairs; further: note: that no one will be crowned who shall not persevere. Work therefore to be a good sodier, keep firm watch over yourself, because the life of man on earth is a life of military discipline (Job 7:1). We have very strong enemies: it is proper therefore, that we be good soldiers. The way of this military service is, that a man should withdraw himself from all those things which distract him from good works; and this touches on that particular topic: No one who is God's soldier involves himself with secular affairs. It is proper, likewise, that one persevere in his labour. He who starts to work but does not persevere in working, unlike them Pslams: They do not do the work of men and they shall not be whipped with them (73:5), because they are with the demons in hell.
- 3. Third, spiritual labour consists in the perfecting of virtue; the Apostle's first epistle to the Corinthians, fifteen: By the grace of God, I am what I am (v. 10). Further: I have worked abundantly at all things (F 84:7). It does not say that he goes from strength to strength, but because he has worked abundantly, it is certain that each person will receive a reward for each task. He who does a lot will receive a large reward. In like manner, God weighed work and reward in his scales, and whoever shuns work shall have no consolation; whence Proverbs: When a man is reluctant to till the ground in winter because it is cold, he will beg in summer, and nothing will be given to him (20:4).
- 4. Fourth, spiritual work requires bearing tribulations patiently; Psalms: I went into deep water and the storm overwhelmed me. I am weary of calling out, from crying out my throat is hoarse (69: 2-3). Christ cried out for the cup to be taken away; and there are those who in trouble likewise call out to God. God gladly hears them. Whence Jonah called out to God, and the Lord God prepared a bush of ivy, to be a shelter over his head (4:4); Psalms: Lord, Lord, you are my strong protector, shelter my head in the day of battle (140:7).

П

God says of these four ways of working: Come to me, etc. So it is said in the Gospel: It is you who have stayed with me in my temptation. And I give you, just as my father gave me a kingdom, that you shall eat and drink at my table in my kingdom. (Lk 22: 28-30). But how does God feed those who are weary? Christ himself has eternal food in the church militant,

to which he invites us, and that is his most sacred body. And whoever labours in these predicted four means will be fed, firstly with magnificently prepared food; secondly, will be shown love; thirdly, will be pleasantly fed; fourthly will be spiritually supported.

- 1. Firstly, I say, the Lord will feed those who spiritually labour with food which has been magnificently prepared, in accordance with the magnificence of royal splendour and pontifical authority.
- 1a. First, I say, he eats magnificently prepared food according to the magnificence of royal splendour, whence in Ecclesiastes: Blessed is the land whose king is noble, and whose princes feast at the time proper for eating (10:17). — The land, of the holy mother the church, is the land whose king is noble, because he is the king of kings and the lord of lords (Rev 19:16), who prepared for the princes of his people, that is — the Apostles, food, not in a wantonly luxurious way, but in a spiritual way. The magnificent preparation was characteristic of a banquet; which is what is signified in Esther, where it is said that King Ahasuerus commanded that a most magnificent feast should be prepared for all the princes of the people (1:3). — King Ahasuerus that is — Christ, ordered that a most magnificent feast should be prepared, because his body is presented to the princes of the people to feast on, namely — the Apostles. This was not a physical but a spiritual feast; and was most magnificent, because nothing is more magnificent than the body of Christ and the soul of Christ.
- 1b. Secondly, this magnificent feast was prepared according to the dignity of pontifical authority; which is what is signified in Judith, where it says Uzziah took Achior into the house and made a great feast for him. and he called all the elders together, that is the Apostles, they ate, satisfying their hunger. Uzziah, the supreme pontiff which is to be understood as 'the strength of the Lord', signifies Christ; whence the Apostle: We have a great high priest, who has entered into heaven (Heb 4:14). He took Achior into his house, the light of my brothers; and you call all the elders together, that is the Apostles, and they ate, satisfying their hunger, namely in the Lord's Supper. This is the feast Christ prepared when he confected his body; the elders being together, when he ordered them, saying: Do this, wherever you do it, in memory of me. (Lk 22, 19).

This feast is royal and priestly, and is signified by the feast of Melchizedek, of whom it is said: the king of Salem, offering bread and wine, blessed Abraham (Gen 14:18-19). — The king of Salem means 'the king of peace,' or 'the king of justice,' and signifies Christ, who makes peace and will judge the world; having neither a beginning to his days nor an

end to his life, who, taking bread, blessed it, (Heb 7:3), when he confected his body. The king of kings invites us to the feast. We are careless if we refuse to come, because angels willingly participate in it. But those who have souls most vile are disgusted by this feast just as the children of Israel were disgusted by very simple food, because it came from heaven, and they desired cucumbers and all the other things which they are in Egypt (Nb 11:5), for they were carnal.

- 2. Second, this feast was a display of love in two ways, because of its humility and because of its generous sharing. The Lord himself came and received his own in this feast and distributed generously.
- 2a, First, I say, this feast is a display of love because of its nature as loving humility; whence Isaiah: this is my rest, refresh the weary (28:12). And not only did Christ receive his own at the feast, but he even offered comfort and support, which is signified through Abraham, who invited the Angels and ran out to meet them (Gen 128:2), saying: Let me bring some water and wash your feet and rest under a tree, and may I offer you a morsel of bread (18:4). In the same way he promised a morsel of bread and killed the fatted calf (18:5, 7). This is better fulfilled by the Lord: when he wants to make a feast for his friends he brought a basin of water and washed the feet of his disciples. Behold, how the divine Majesty is bent down, how he prostrated himself before the disciples' feet, and how, in this feast, one of his disciples reclined against Jesus breast (In 21:20). And at that time Iesus was able to sav: I will bring a little bread and comfort your heart (Gen 18:5). This is bread, non-physical, which is food for the physical body, but spiritual as well, which is food for the soul, of which Augustine wrote: "Believe and eat" (In Ioan. Evang. tr. 25, n. 12). This is his marvellous humility.
- 2b. Second. The feast was a display of love in so far as it is a generous sharing. Psalms: The Lord rules me and I lack nothing; he has placed me in a well-pastured place. Beside fresh water he has led me. (23:1) The Church of God is a well—pastured place, that is it is well endowed with joy and food. This well-pastured place is Mount Sion; whence Isaiah: the Lord Almighty will make a feast on this mountain (25:6), that is in the grandeur of the hierarchy of the church; a feast of fattened beef and clear wine. The fire by which the feast is prepared is the Holy Spirit, or the power of the divine Word; the priest is the Minister. This is a feast of fattened calf and clear wine; Psalms: And my cup is filled with clear wine!

Thus was that generous sharing. Never had such a thing been imagined before. — Thus was that meal made manifest with grace, as a consequence of simple humility and generous sharing; and this is signified in the Gospel, in the story of the prodigal son, who, when he came back to the father,

the father gave him a scarf of honour and a ring for his hand (Lk 15:22). The prodigal son is the sinner, who comes back to the father, when he repents, and the father prepares the fattened calf for him, that is — the body of Christ, and a choir and an orchestra, (Lk 15:25), that is — spiritual sweetness and consolation. the elder brother, the Jewish people, were moved by envy, he does not want to eat, that is — does not want to believe in the sacrament of the altar, but the gentile peoples were admitted to it, when they are enlightened by faith.

- 3. But one could say: I do not know what this feast tastes like. For that reason Christ says: let me refresh you, that is feed with pleasant food, through the bond of social harmony, and through an influx of spiritual joy.
- 3a. Therefore the Apostle says: Go, brother, let me enjoy you in the Lord, refresh my heart in the Lord (Phil 1:20). This he says to demonstrate the love which Christ had; his heart was shown love by another's kindness. The love of Christ is shown in this, that whatever one eats, we eat that morsel with Christ; and in this is the bond of unity. The Apostle in the first letter to the Corinthians: I would not want you to be ignorant, brethren, that when all our fathers ate, they ate the same spiritual food, and that they all drank the same spiritual food (1 Cor 10:1-4), that was only by faith, but we do it by faith and by the Sacrament. Whence it is said: You have nourished your people with the food of angels (Wisd 16:20). Lord, that is eternal life. Of which it is said in John: This is eternal life, that they might know you, the only true God, and he whom you have sent is Jesus Christ (17:3), and in the Book of Wisdom: You furnished them with bread from heaven, bread prepared without any labour, and having within itself all delight and sweetness of every taste (16:20).
- 3b. But this bread seemed bitter to sick souls, although it changed itself to whatever taste they wanted, as it is said in the book of Wisdom. It brings all into one, but no matter how great the love and unity, great still is satisfaction; Christ loves the soul above all else. Therefore all the delights of this world are nothing with respect to this delight, when the soul enters into Christ.
- 3 c. Likewise, this banquet is a sweet food in as far as it is an influx of spiritual joy; whence in Deuteronomy: Your hearts are to be gladdened and refreshed in the Lord your God (12:18), namely, in the viewing of divine beauty and in the tasting of divine sweetness. This is the sweetly intoxicating cup. Be gladdened now by faith, and in the future by the sight, when we shall be drunk with the richness of his house, etc. (Ps 36:8). With the Psalmist we must greatly desire this repast, he who says: Just as the deer longs for springs of water (42:1). But they who prefer

foul flesh to the flesh of the *spotless lamb* are carnal, and being such dogs, they are excluded from this feast.

- 3 d. Fourth. This feast must be undertaken spiritually. This is to be understood in this way: whatever a man undertakes spiritually first requires that he should prepare himself by previous devotion; secondly, it is necessary that he should receive it with concommitant devotion.
- (i) First, I say, it is right that a man should prepare himself by previous devotion; which is signified in Mark, where his disciples asked: Where do you wish that we should prepare for you to eat the passover? (14:12) Then: He sent them into the city, saying, 'A man carrying a jug of water will meet you, who has a large dining room; say to him: 'The Master says: "Where is my repast?" '(vv. 13-14). It says: He sent them into the city, that is the Church, through feelings of love for the afflicted one and in gratitude to God. He says: a large dining room, which means with extended charity. The soul of Christ transcends al the heavens, and he who has charity loves everyone and transcends the world. It is necessary, therefore, that a man prepares himself to come to this feast, and that in so far as God enters in.
- (ii) Second, it is necessary that it should be undertaken spiritually, through concommitant devotion; which is what is meant in Exodus, where the Holy Spirit teaches the children of Israel how they must eat the paschal lamb, saying: You must eat the flesh of the lamb with unleavened bread and wild lettuce. You must not eat it raw or boiled in water; you will eat head and the feet and the innards; armed with a staff, and having sandals on your feet. And eat it quickly; it is the pasch (that is, the passing over) of the Lord (12:8-11).

#### Ш

The Holy Spirit shows here in what way a man is worthy to receive the body of Christ. It is necessary that he should have a burning and transforming devotion, so that there might occur the assimilation and transformation of the eater into the thing eaten; wherefore it is necessary that a man should have the fire of *pure love* and the strength of *perfected virtue*.

1. First, I say, on this topic, that for a man to be worthy to receive the body of Christ it is necessary that he have the fire of pure love, which is the love arising from a pure heart; but because the fire of pure love must be joined to mercy, which makes his conscience pure and clean, it is therefore said: So let us feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Cor 5:8). — Likewise, it is necessary that there be present

the love which arises from a good conscience, and no carnality or crudity; and so it says: You shall not eat of this raw or boiled in water, that is, let it not have an uncooked or fleshy heart. — Likewise, it is necessary that there be present the love which is not fashioned from faith, as it is said: this is love, which universally and most completely claims what a man must believe; the head, that is — in the Divinity; and the feet, that is — in the humanity, and the innards, that is — in the Sacrament; you must eat, which is what a man does when he freely asserts faith without any possible doubt; you must burn the rest, that is — if there is anything else remaining which you cannot resolve, you must burn it with fire, that is — set it aside for the counsel of the Holy Spirit. Christ was conceived in the womb of the Virgin without corrupting her virginity and born without physical damage to her; this is what the Holy Spirit teaches and it is what one can truly learn from this Sacrament.

2. Secondly, in this regard, how a man is worthy to receive the body of Christ: it is right that he should have the strength of perfect virtue to conform himself to this Sacrament. I have heard about a certain layman, who had great faith in the sacrament of the altar. He was feeble and could not keep his food down. And when the priest did not dare give him the body of Christ, he prayed that he might at least look at it. And when he saw it, he said: 'Lord, how gladly I would receive you!'. And when the priest moved away from him, he had him summoned and said: "Because I cannot receive my Saviour, grant, sir, that my chest may be bathed, and a towel placed on my chest, and may you put my saviour on my chest.' When this was done and everyone was watching, the body of Christ penetrated his chest, and then he died greatly consoled. Of Master Hugh of St. Victor, who was a man of great faith, it is said that when he was sick and at the point of death, a priest, who had celebrated Mass that same day, came to him. And Master Hugh asked the priest to breathe into his mouth. And after that, he died greatly consoled.

We must conform ourselves to this sacrament: firstly by holiness of modesty, and so it says: having staves in your hands. Secondly, by promptness of obedience; and so it says: sandals on your feet, so that we may be able to walk without any obstacle. Whence the Apostle: Having shoes on your feet (Eph 6:15). Thirdly, indeed, we must be conformed by strength of patience, thus it is said: staves in your hands. Fourth, we ought to conform through the solitude of attentive wakefulness, by which is to be noted the virtue of temperance; therefore it says: Eat slowly, do not hesitate.

From what has been preached it may be gathered that seven virtues are required to eat this sacrament: three are theological: faith, hope and love, which is the love of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and a

genuine faith. Four cardinal virtues are required as well, these have been touched upon: and when we will have had these virtues, the Lord will say: Eat, friend, and drink, and be inebriated (Song of Solomon 5:1). And if you should be without these virtues, he will say to you: Friend, to what have you come? Do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss? (Mt 25:50, Lk 22:48). In like manner, we find in the Apostle's writings: He who eats unworthily, eats the judgment on himself (I Cor 11:29). Let us pray to the Lord, etc.



# The Diversity of the Third Order Regular — in Isolation Its Weakness, in Unity Its Strength

#### SERAPHIN CONLEY, T.O.R.,

One of the great strengths of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis down through the centuries has been its amazing diversity. In every age and in varied lands and cultures, new congregations embracing the Third Rule of St. Francis have been founded to meet the needs of people of the Church of that time and place. This vitality flowing from the "fruitful ideal" of St. Francis is still evident. Today there are more than 430 Institutes of contemplative or apostolic life following The Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular. The witness of some 200,000 Franciscan men and women is surely a tremendous sign of Christ's love for His Church. It reflects something of what Pope Paul VI wrote in his Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life:

"And so it happened by divine plan that a wonderful variety of religious communities grew up. This variety contributed mightily toward making the Church experienced in every good deed (cf. 2 Tim. 3:17) and ready for the ministry of service in building up Christ's body. (cf. Eph. 3:17)"

The vocation of the priest, of the cloistered nun, of those brothers and

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sisters engaged in the works of mercy... each is represented in the Family of the Third Order Regular. It is very clear that one of the strengths of this religious family lies in its diversity. Paradoxically, this very diversity has also been a weakness at times. How many once numerous tertiary congregations, after centuries of dedicated service, have vanished... unknown, or at least unremembered by their brothers and sisters of the TOR Family! This was brought home to me recently as I read an article by a Sister from India on the history of her Franciscan congregation. She mentioned the presence of OFM and Capuchin missionaries but evidently had no knowledge of the presence of TOR friars of the Portuguese Congregation during the colonial period. Indeed, one of whom, a Frei Paolo de Estrella, was ordained Bishop of Meliapor on December 5, 1630. The convent of this congregation of friars in Lisbon was noted for its studies of oriental languages, one of which was Malabar (the language of the rite of this Indian Congregation of Sisters!) Since the missionary area assigned to the TOR friars by the Crown was Angola and Cape Verde, their contribution to the church in India was a modest one. However, it seems forgotten even by Franciscans from Indial Likewise, in Germany, the Low Countries, Ireland, France, Spain and Portugal, various national congregations or confederations of TOR friars and sisters have disappeared and their contributions forgotten. Perhaps, a principal factor in their disappearance lay in being "national" or "local" groups without the support and refuge provided by an international Order while they waited out the time of trouble. The upheaval of the Reformation, the attempt by the English to purge the Catholic faith and national culture in Ireland, the fury of the French Revolution (which gave the Church a TOR martyr Bl. Severin Girault)... all this may seem to belong to the distant past. However, the TOR Congregations of Spanish and Portuguese friars only disappeared in the civil suppressions of the 19th century. More recently and a sad loss to the whole TOR Family has been the transfer of some monasteries of TOR nuns from the profession of the TOR Rule to that of the Clares. We are not lamenting a loss of numbers or prestige but the loss this represents to the whole TOR Family of more than 400 years of tradition and witness to the aspect of contemplative prayer so beautifully expressed in the third chapter of the Rule. Surely, a sense of isolation, some lack of knowledge of penitential spirituality, being outside the currents of renewal among the brothers and sisters of the Third Order regular which culminated in the approval of our new Rule... all probably had some part in such decisions, understandable if still regrettable. These are some reasons leading to the conclusion that diversity in isolation has been a weakness of the Franciscan Third Order Regular.

Fortunately, the picture of our history is not all shadows! To replace what had been lost, God raised up modern "penitents of St. Francis",

those men and women who began anew. So, in France, Ireland and Spain congregations of friars were founded. These gave rise eventually to Provinces which would renew the ancient Third Order Regular of St. Francis "of Penance." This part of the title shows that this order finds its roots and origins in St. Francis and his followers in the penitential movement of his time (Brothers of the Order of Penance). Also, some monasteries of Tertiary or "Grey" Sisters which had accepted the reforms and Rule of Leo X with the corresponding obligation of cloister, in new circumstances were transformed into modern Franciscan congregations again dedicated to teaching or nursing. The Tertiary Franciscan Sisters of Blessed Angeline is one example. In the years following Vatican Council II, many ancient monasteries of TOR nuns in Spain, Italy and Mexico formed federations to strengthen and increase their charism of contemplative prayer. They have been blessed with an increase in vocations and the founding of new monasteries.

Along with these signs of vitality there has also been an increasing impetus towards unity while respecting our diversity. One of the earliest efforts in this regard was the promotion of Inter-Obediential Congresses composed of the Major Superiors of Tertiary Congregations of Franciscan men. The inspiration for these meetings came from a letter of Pope Pius XII to the Minister General, Fr. John Boccella, T.O.R., on the occasion of the 5th Centenary of the Third Order Regular. Following that first Congress, the delegates were received in a special audience by the Holy Father who was pleased that his suggestion had been followed up. In all there were 4 Inter-Obediential Congresses along with less formal meetings which served to foster a deeper fraternal knowledge and apostolic collaboration among the congregations of friars. A friar very dedicated to this vision was Bro. Joseph Shieffer, CFP, of the Franciscan Brothers of the Poor (Aachen, Germany) who served as the Secretary of the Inter Obediential Congress/Office for several years. The most lasting and widespread influence of these Congresses was in preparing the way for that historic meeting in Madrid, Spain in 1974. From that 4th Inter-Obediential congress of the friars and representatives of several Conferences of Franciscan Sisters came the document officially titled: A Statement of Understanding of Franciscan Penitential Life, which came to be known eventually as The Madrid Document. As Bro. Paul McMullen, T.O.R., explains in his study on the development of the new Rule:

"This document gave a distinct and unique direction to the understanding of Tertiary life today. It offered a clearer notion of penance in the biblical concept of metanoia, or ongoing conversion. Although we now have a new rule, this statement remains a valid spiritual document and expression of our Franciscan Penitential life."

Gradually, the studies and work projects towards a new rule which were being done independently in different countries or among various language groups in response to that renewal of religious life called for by Vatican II came to be known and shared. Over the subsequent 10 years there were a series of national and international meetings to coordinate these efforts. Commissions and coordinating structures were set up to guide the process of arriving at a clearer understanding of all the aspects of the charism of the entire Third Order Regular Family to be expressed in a new Rule. From a diversity of languages, nationalities, cultures and expressions of the Charism of the Franciscan Order of Penance came mutual respect and understanding leading to a real sense of unity among the many Congregations of the Franciscan Third Order Regular.

This article began by noting that one of the strengths of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis has been its amazing diversity which, in isolation often proved a weakness. Something new and wonderful has taken place in our time. The beauty and richness of our diversity remains but to it has been added a unity of spirit and heart, a unity of hopes and efforts crowned by the Church's approval of our new rule which has given new strength and vigor to the whole Order. May these efforts towards unity begun with such promise be continued and multiplied by all the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis throughout the world.

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#### **Book Reviews**

A Poor Man's Legacy: An Anthology of Franciscan Poverty. Edited by Cyprian J. Lynch, O.F.M. Franciscan Pathways. The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY. 1988. 759 pp. \$37.50 plus Postage.

Reviewed by Dr. Gordon De La Vars, S.F.O., Assistant Professor of English, St. Bonaventure University.

Simply stated, what this remarkable collection presents is over eight hundred years of a Franciscan ideal. The ideal of poverty, which became the governing purpose and character of St. Francis' life and the movement he founded, is richly illuminated here through ample representative selections from biographies, histories, personal writings, and other documents (149 in all, many translated from the original into readable, idiomatic English). Written by or about those for whom Franciscan poverty was and is an intimate permeating force, this volume crystallizes what Fr. Cyprian in his introduction calls the "wisdom born of [an] accumulated spiritual experience' (xxi).

While this is true enough, perhaps the most remarkable (surely the most encouraging) evidence that this collection provides is of the extent of that "poor man's legacy," of the fact that Franciscan poverty has inspired people living in the last quarter of our century as powerfully as it did those living a generation or less after St. Francis himself. Ironically, it may be that those of us living and working in today's world, in what Fr. Cyprian describes as "a

milieu of affluence dominated by consumerism and the cult of instant satisfaction," must, as a result, more urgently discover "ways to give authentic witness to the legacy of voluntary poverty which is [our] inheritance" (xx). So this inheritance is affirmed in the twentieth century by such writers as Pope John XXIII who, in his last will and testament, thanks God "for this grace of poverty" and proclaims proudly that "[b]orn poor, but of honorable and humble people, I am particularly happy to die poor" (590 - 91). And another modern writer, Mother Mary Francis, abbess of a Poor Clare monastery in New Mexico, speaks poetically of the poor in spirit as being "free and full of song, because they have already the Kingdom for their earthly dwelling place" (703).

These are but two stirring contemporary testimonies: this anthology is filled with such gems as wisdom and insight, works both by the famous and the little known, by clergy, canonically religious, and laity, works that reverberate powerfully through the centuries. The collection naturally begins with St. Francis who, in The Admonitions, dramatically paraphrases the beatitudes, exhorting his listeners to "despise the things of earth, [and] seek the things of heaven" (8); and who also sternly warns his followers, in the Legend of the Three Companions, to treat money "as the dust under your feet" (9). There is St. Bonaventure who wonders gravely "[w]hat Christian is so wretched" that he or she, after considering the "privations" of the Son of God, will continue to "love riches and hate poverty" (122); St. Margaret of Cortona who imagines

that, if Christ compelled her to "assume ownership of any temporary possessions," she "would not cease petitioning him with tears and sighs until he dispensed [her] from that precept" (152); and Mary of Agreda, a Spanish Poor Clare of the seventeenth century, who reasons graciously that, while God "cannot hate the beings he has created," he knows "the boundless damage caused by avarice and covetousness," an "insane love" that "pervert[s] the greater part of the human nature" (421). In addition to these personal reflections, there are chronicles narrated about exemplars of Franciscan poverty, such as the charming story of St. John Vianney and the poor cripple who cannot find a seat during the sermon. "Where was this pauper of Jesus Christ to rest his weary limbs?" the author has the saint ask himself. At length the writer says the "Cure d'Ars took the man into the pulpit and made him sit down on the seat, whence he commanded a view of all the people. Then in a joyful tone of voice, he uttered the one syllable, Na [There now). And he proceeded with his discourse, standing the while" (498-99).

What the end of this story reveals is a feature evoked by most of the selections in this anthology, a feature that happens to be, appropriately, another Franciscan ideal: the perfect joy that invariably accompanies our intentions and practices of spiritual poverty. So St. Bernadine of Siena can remind his audience that when they offer alms their giving should "always ring with cheerfulness and never with churlishness" (239); and Maximilian Kolbe, writing over five hundred years later, can state with confidence that "here we live poorly, at times even very poorly, but without misery" (559). The simple eloquence of these remarks. I think,

serves to further underscore the power and grace of all those statements of faith that make up this inspiring and handsome volume.

Franciscans Under Fire. Twenty Nuns, A Girl and A Dog. Edited by Duane Hutchinson. Lincoln, Nebraska: Foundation Books, 1990. \$7.95 plus postage.

Reviewed by Sister Mary Thomas Eulberg, O.S.F., Religious of the Sisters of St. Francis of Clinton, Iowa.

One, who picks up Franciscans Under Fire to read it, is in for many an incredible conflict. A member of the Iowa and of the Nebraska Fine Arts Councils, Duane Hutchinson came to Clinton, Iowa, in 1983 as a story-tellerin-residence. He was captivated by the title, Twenty Nuns, A Girl and A Dog, the first telling of which was written by Msgr. M. M. Hoffman. Probably in his room in Durham Hall of Mount St. Clare College, Mr. Hutchinson read the unpublished manuscript and then and there decided to begin his eighth book, the story of the sisters of St. Francis of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mount St. Clare. Clinton, Iowa.

The story is set in two locales: Kentucky and Iowa. It is centered on Sister Frances Walker and on the anomaly that Cistercians, because they are contemplatives, do not "run" schools. How was the stage for that drama set?

In 1848 the Trappists came from France to settle in Kentucky. Having obtained a "quiet permission" from their French headquarters to build the Gethsemane Abbey (later celebrated by Thomas Merton), Abbot Eutropius sol-

icited funds from the entire surroundings, promising in return to conduct a school for poor boys and girls. Several teachers were hired to handle the school up to 1860, when Abbot Benedict was elected. He set about to fulfill the promises of his predecessor and in 1861 built a new girls' school, Brothers from the abbey doing most of the work.

When Caroline (Cambron) Warren came from Tennessee to find the grave of her husband, killed in October of 1862 in the battle of Perryville, she went to the Monastery to request Masses for the repose of his soul. Abbot Benedict saw in her the ideal lady to take over his school for girls. It was she, who eventually as Sister Elizabeth, became the initial player in the story of the Clinton Franciscans.

She donned a religious habit under Father Anselm, the new Franciscan pastor of Saint Boniface Church of Louisville. When she made her profession, her niece Sally Walker and the other teacher, Lizzie Lillis, put on the habit of St. Francis, taking the names Sister Margaret and Sister Angela, respectively. Bishop Peter Joseph Lavialle gave his approbation for these three Sisters in their work in the free school under the guidance of the Rt. Rev. Abbot of Gethsemane, "it being understood that the Bishop of the Diocese of Louisville is to be the Ecclesiastical Superior of the Society with full power to direct its general government either by himself or through the Rt. Rev. Father Abbot." Therein lay some of the contentions to come.

Abbot Benedict erected the Mount Olivet convent "on a wind-swept hill," and the young women wanting entrance were sent to the Oldenburgh, Indiana, Franciscan convent for novitiate train-

ing (which the original three never had). Rumblings of trouble began. When time came for the election of a major superior, Sister Elizabeth did not get the votes; Mother Paula did. Deeply hurt, Sister Elizabeth "refused to be placated and turned on" her niece, suspecting her of being involved. Aunt Caroline left and Sally was ordered to leave the Order. But she returned. Probation and postulance over, she received the habit and a new name—that of Sister Frances, which she carried for half a century.

Troubles continued to hover over the "Mount Olivet Folly." By 1869 Bishop Lavialle was replaced by Bishop William McClosky. Sister Angela, second of the three original so-called founders, "began to show friendliness to dissatisfied, restive detractors." Eventually she too left for good.

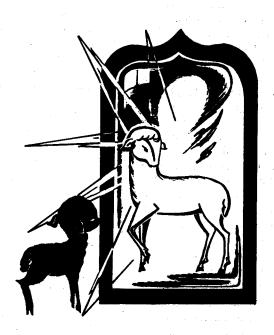
There followed intrigues, a fire, working under a mentally sick pastor, teaching at mission schools unable to support the Sisters so severely that they had not enough to eat nor sufficient clothing to wear or with which to cover themselves in winter. A new pastor invited two Jesuits from St. Louis University to give a week's mission for his congregation. Father J. T. Coghland told the sisters, "Except for the powerful grace of God, you couldn't have survived such trials.... You need another field for your zealous activities. Work in another diocese."

Briefly, the Iowa period succeeded—to this day—on a higher level. With Bishop John Hennessy's permission, twenty nuns, a girl and a dog entered Dubuque, Iowa. From the first motherhouse at Anamose for a short time, the Sisters moved to Clinton. Not really understanding ecclesiastical rules

for election of a major superior, the sisters had voted Mother Agnes in consistently. Both Archbishop Hennessy and Archbishop John J. Keane demurred. On January 27, 1900, Mother Magdalen Mattingly was elected. Before two months had passed, Archbishop John Hennessy died. She magnanimously appointed Sister Agnes assistant Mother, and later, novice mistress which well meant gesture proved eventually to be a mistake. Three years later, though Sister Agnes ran for re-election, Mother Magdalen was elected. When Mother Magdalen's second term ended, Archbishop Keane directed the January 27 election to be canceled. He came to Clinton to talk to each Sister personally because he had received notice that some complaints against the sisters had been delivered to the Papal

Delegate in Washington, D.C. After his interviews, he reported: "Seldom have I ever found a spirit of charity and unity such as yours." In the end, Sister Agnes took two of the Sisters, one younger and one older Sister, for the founding of a new community.

Sadly, Sister Frances pondered nostalgically: Sister Agnes "had been with me for two months in lovely Mount Olivet in 1873. She came to Shelbyville in 1875. Thirty-two years she had spent in our community, and for twenty-two years she had been our superior.... Mother Agnes was a saintly, powerful woman. It seemed as if she were the savior of our Order. Under her leadership we had emerged from the valley of suffering. She had brought us through the Red Sea of misfortune into the promised of Iowa."



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