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 EnCler: Letter to Clerics¹

EpCust: Letter to Superiors1 EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful¹ EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo

EpMin: Letter to a Minister EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God

ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare

Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221 LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours OffPass: Office of the Passion

OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix RegB: Rule of 1223

RegNB: Rule of 1221 RegEr: Rule for Hermits SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues Test: Testament of St. Francis

UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect loy 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 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

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

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REFLECTION:

For Everything There Is A Season

SALLY SUMMA

Trees surround the chapel. Their thin, flexible trunks gently sway with the exuberance of youth, free in the blowing breath of God on the mountain. The maples praise their creator with uplifted limbs against an often ominous sky. They appear feeble against the harsh words of nature and vet even these young arbors have a deep rooting and the closeness of similar hardwoods to protect them.

A long, devastating ice storm left its mark on several counties in Western New York State on March 3, 1991. Walking the trails of Mt. Irenaeus, a Franciscan retreat, near West Clarksville in Allegany County, New York, days later, the loss was evident and disheartening. Monstrous trees uprooted and pulled down by the weight of the ice upon their limbs now littered the grounds. Others around them still stood mourning the loss but sharing similar damage. Dead limbs severed from the whole lay suspended and caught among their brothers. A few tips of branches became dangling twigs unable to sustain the impact of the water when the branches had frozen.

Old and young, strong and weak, made no difference in the random selection of nature's wrath. The rain streamed evenly and the temperatures fell the same degrees across the region. Why then did some fall and the neighbors live on? Why were others left to suffer with their bark torn back, their wood exposed and beads of sap bleeding along their grains?

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Around the quiet wooden chapel, the young maples sway unscathed by the destruction around them, new buds now forming on their uplifted limbs. Life goes on and peace returns to the mountain despite our questions.

I returned to Mt. Irenaeus with four of my friends a few weeks later. The weather had become warmer, but a cool breeze forced a few of us to put on our gloves. We all agreed on one thing, however:

"We have to go for a walk to where those trees have fallen." "We have

to go play on the trees."

Standing over the uprooted pile of pines we did not weep at their sorry fate but instead stood in awe at the richness of the light brown soil the roots had unearthed and we marveled at the process of rejuvenation already begun. Limbs lining the ground had started to decompose and, covered with moss, were soft to the touch and were already becoming one with the needles and the thawing earth.

The giant fallen pines themselves proposed the greatest excitement. The trees lay a foot or more off their ground and the trunks of each were easily in leaping distance for an agile, courageous youth. Since the five of us considered ourselves neither agile nor courageous, nature had build out of its destruction, a superb playground of swings and branch handles to aid us across the natural bridges. We accepted the challenge. Though only a foot off the ground, we had to know our limitations, overcome our fears, and maintain our balance.

Several times we fell — only to realize we were back on firm ground only a step below. On the trunks not high off the ground, however, having been braced by another neighboring pine on its descent downward at the time of the fall, reason for caution increased.

Halfway up the huge limb, surefooted and confident, I suddenly felt myself begin to lose my balance. Grabbing hold of one flexible branch, I quickly realized that my fall was inevitable. Butt-first into the tangles of pine branches I would go. I closed my eyes...

Seconds later, opening my eyes, I felt the comforting support of many hands around me, cradling me inches above the ground. I had been caught by the intertwined branches and now sat nestling in their protection. They waited to give me further support when I would rise again.

At that instance, I laughed to myself at the fears I had had a moment ago. Safe and protected by nature's loving limbs, I contemplated the warmth and safety of God's arms that have seen me falling from much higher branches but are always there to catch me and hold me as long as I need to be held before I ascend again.

How sad that I had to get up at all. I felt so at home and comfortable in the tangled pines. I've wanted to stay in God's arms as well many times but always chose to leave. More challenges, sadness and suffering may

have been in my future but the reminder that the safety net would always be there reassured my decision to move on. Why did I go? Why haven't I returned now?

We all can learn a lesson from the nature God has created. All the trees on the mountain, like Christians, stand vulnerable to the slightest breeze or the strongest storm. We must emulate them and become strongly rooted in our faith with arms forever raised in praise of God. They change with the seasons and bear hardship as best they can. If, by some blow of nature, they are broken, this change too has its purpose. Each tree becomes part of a new cycle of rejuvenation in which their decay becomes the fertile soil of new forests of the future.

Pain and suffering are a part of everyone's life. We must accept our suffering as change with a purpose instead of assigning blame or feeling sorry for ourselves. Suffering can be used as a vehicle to become closer to God. He places fallen trees on our journey to challenge us to overcome our fears and learn about ourselves. Every change we allow Him to make in us is a step in His perfecting of us and our eyes and hearts become more open to the ways and graces of God.

We should also not forget the numerous neighboring trees God has placed in our lives willing to support us if we fall. We don't have to wait until we are falling or failing to get help from those or from God. They all wait for us to turn and reach to them and answer "Yes, you may help me." And even if you don't remain in God's comforting arms for very long, they are still there — always open.

Explanatory note:

Mt. Irenaeus is a Franciscan mountain retreat near West Clarksville, NY, in Allegany County, about 35 minutes from St. Bonaventure University. The mountain-top farm is comprised of more than 228 acres including more than three miles of trails, woods and clearings.

Atop the "enchanted" Allegany Mountains, Mt. Irenaeus privides a family place for common prayer and family meals. It is "where you can forget everyday concerns and be yourself with people who do the same," says Dan Hurley, OFM, one of four Franciscan friars who reside on the Mountain.

A one story main house serves as a gathering place and offers all the basic comforts. It overlooks a small pond.

Three "hermitage" cabins are set aside for solitude and allow for additional overnight accommodations.

On the hill, an all-wooden chapel with large clear windows opens to the world around it.

Anyone who is looking for a place to slow down and get started again is welcome at Mt. Irenaeus. For more information contact Fr. Daniel Riley, OFM at (716) 973-2470.

A Reclaimed Heritage: Franciscanism in the Anglican Communion

GORDON J. DE LA VARS

One of the most encouraging results of the nineteenth-century Catholic revival in the Church of England, also known as the Oxford Movement, was the reappearance in Anglicanism of religious communities of professed men and women. This was a quite natural outgrowth of the Oxford Movement, concerned as it was with Anglican identity and how this related to "the apostolic character of the Church and its ministry, and in particular with the succession of the historic episcopate" (Rowel 158). The desire to rediscover and reclaim an ancient Catholicity led ultimately to the appreciation of the benefits of monasticism and to the belief that a spiritual model involving lifetime vows and adherence to a rule of conduct (disciplines that had all but disappeared in the reformed churches after the sixteenth century) was not only a necessary link with the early Church but potentialy a source of enrichment and renewal in a highly commercialized and increasingly secularized society (Moorman, *The Anglican Spiritual Tradition* 193-95).

Although meeting at first with popular resistance stemming from centuries of anti-Romanist prejudice, societies and congregations of both men and women patterned on the monastic-Benedictine model began to appear in the 1860's—a model, incidentally, with deep roots in the English church since its founding in the seventh century by Augustine of Canterbury, himself a monk, sent by the Benedictine pope, Gregory the Great (Hale 82-84). Given this new interest in community religious life, it is not surprising that the Franciscan model of spirituality and the Franciscan way of life also began to gain adherents. After all, it was remembered, Franciscans could likewise claim a distinguished English heritage, with

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the first friars arriving in England during Francis' lifetime, disembarking at Dover Harbor in September, 1224. These were as John Moorman affectionately describes them, "a little group of nine men, all scantily clad in old, patched garments and with nothing on their feet," all of them "members of the religious order which had emerged in Italy some fifteen years ago as the result of the genius, inspiration and courage of a man known as Francis of Assisi" (The Franciscans in England 1).

First settling in Canterbury, these Franciscans—called "Greyfriars" because of the color of habit they subsequently adopted—quickly established communities throughout the kingdom, so that by 1255 there were over twelve hundred friars in England, divided among forty-nine religious houses. In time communities of the Second and Third Orders, of Poor Clares and professed laypeople, were added to this number, introducing "a new and influential element into the religious life of the country" (Moorman, *Franciscans* 26). This presence lasted up to the dissolution of the religious houses by Henry VIII in the 1530s.

Memory of this heritage, coupled with the growing attraction of Catholic spirituality, increased the appeal of St. Francis, and by 1900 a deluge of books, about the saint (especially the English translation of Sabatier's Vie de Saint Francois) had already drawn many Anglicans to follow the example and rule of the "little poor man." Perhaps no other person of the time did more to articulate this appeal of Franciscanism, and to promote the active, professed Anglican Franciscan movement, than James Granville Adderly, who, as vicar of Plaistow in East London, had worked in one of the nation's poorest urban districts. Desiring to live a life of austerity and poverty while providing spiritual and material help to his neighbors, Fr. Adderly, together with two friends (a priest and a layman), established in 1894 a brotherhood they called "The Society of the Divine Compassion." Their description of themselves and their goals has about it an unmistakable Franciscan ring: they were

a community of priests, deacons and communicant laymen, banded together in a common life of poverty, chastity and obedience for the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and for the benefit of His Holy Catholic Church: to worship Him and to work for Him in all mankind, especially the poor and suffering, in imitation of the Divine Master, seeking the help of one another in thus obeying Him. (Moorman, *Franciscans* 113)

In fact, the Society hoped to reestablish in the Church of England something similar to the Order of Friar Minor, and as though to underscore outwardly this intention, its members were the Franciscan habit and knotted cord.

The brotherhood that James Adderly began inspired other Anglicans to band together in communities that sought to adapt the Franciscan way

of life to parochial ministry to the poor, the homeless, the oppressed. A number of these Anglican Franciscan communities exist to the present day (the most prominent being the Society of St. Francis, established in 1921) maintaining similar goals and comprising celibate men and women as well as lay married persons, in all representing "a flourishing Franciscan movement in the Church of England and the Anglican Communion throughout the world" (Moorman, Franciscans 120). Each of these congregations and societies follows a distinctly Franciscan rule and thus seeks to imitate its patron saint as he sought to imitate Christ, especially the call to serve the needs of his "little ones." So in his many sermons and lectures on Francis, Fr. Adderly addresses the related theme of service to the poor and transformation of society, the liberating message of Francis through whom the Church may be renewed and the world restored. Quoting a fellow "convert" to Franciscanism, he asserts "no revolution, no war, no declaration of rights advance the cause of human freedom so much as did the life and example of Francis of Assisi" (Adderly and Marson 48).

Yet these English admirers of St. Francis did not view him merely as an enlightened social reformer, but rather as one in whom a personal transformation of a profound spiritual character had taken place, and it is on this radical turning of the mind and heart and will to God that Fr. Adderly focused his attention most frequently and elequently. Above all, he writes, Francis was

a child of grace. It is the Christ in him that he discovers and allows to live. He lets Christ live in him, and abandoning himself unreservedly to the Spirit, just acts, and talks and sings, and loves, and weeps. Thus it is that the Sacred Humanity seems to live again in him and the Sacred Heart to beat. (52)

It was only as the result of this emptying love, and as a consequence of this indwelling, Fr. Adderly suggests, that Francis was able to reach out to suffering humanity. "To [Francis] Christ meant love, and love meant selfgiving, to have attained to Christ meant to have found out that, life to be true life, consists in love of others" (55-56). And so it was through Francis, and through those who followed his way of life, that humanity realized its full worth and found lasting hope. "Love was still an active force that could heal, and tend, and succour." Francis "aimed at creating in others a sense of their own dignity as children of God, and their own potentiality as members of the Body of Christ" (56).

The embracing spirit that such remarks reflected at the turn of the century has since contributed to the cause of ecumenical outreach and understanding between the Anglican and Roman Communions, advancing the possibility of full unity between these "sister churches" (Hale 4). A

great celebration at Canterbury in 1924 marked the 700 anniversary of the arrival of the Franciscans in England. Services were held in Anglican Canterbury Cathedral, followed by a grand procession through the city's streets to the ancient Roman Catholic friary, which had been recently restored to its original condition. Speakers at the Cathedral included Paul Sabatier, the writer who had first impressed on James Adderly the significance of Francis of Assisi. Fifty years later, in 1974, in the wake of Vatican II and the commencement of the ongoing Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue, an even grander celebration took place in Canterbury, including special prayers of thanksgiving for the return of the Order of Friars Minor to "the city of their first foundation" (Doyle 75). It is now common throughout the world to see Anglican and Roman Catholic Franciscan communities working closely together with friaries of both churches often serving as centers of ecumenical activity, of shared ministry, research and worship. (Hale 158).

As John Moorman notes, the history of Franciscanism in England has been one marked both by progress and stagnation, by renewal and repression; yet throughout the centuries "St. Francis has touched the hearts and minds of men and women and urged them to make great sacrifices in order to obey the divine purpose interpreted by St. Francis himself". (Franciscans 120). So with this knowledge, and reminded of this heritage, Fr. James Adderly, at the end of one of his sermons, recites a prayer whose hopeful call echoes a transforming moment in history even as it addresses the circumstances of our own time:

Speak to us, Lord, speak to us as Thou didst to Thy servant on the Umbrian hills; send us another message; breathe into us again his spirit, which is the Spirit of the Lord Himself. Raise us from the sloth of sin unto the life of righteousness. Make us poor in spirit, that we may be partakers of Thy heavenly treaure. (Adderly and Marson 62)

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The Form of St. Francis' Prayer: Models for Creative Diversity Today

SÉAMUS MULHOLLAND, O.F.M.

It is perhaps an overstatement to say that as with all great holy men and women Francis was a person of deep prayer and prayerfulness. However, it does not mean that Francis was 'skilled' in the art of prayer immediately after his conversion experience. Instead, he had to be instructed in prayer: he had to learn the language of prayer; learn the skills of prayer; learn varying forms of prayer; and above all learn the hurt, the pain, the suffering and the love that prayer could also bring.

The encouraging aspect of Francis' prayer for me is that there is nothing in it which can be particularized so that one can point to that and say: "THIS is the way St. Francis prayed so let's all do it this way." But while this may be the case, the journey of Francis' prayer can be charted with some confidence, and not just the journey, but the forms of prayer he used can be identified and used to encourage us today.

Francis' life of prayer was intense and invigorating; prayer challenged the way he saw himself, the world in which he lived and the God to whom he prayed. It is not that God used Francis' prayer as intensive therapy so that Francis could see the reality of himself; no, it was rather that he showed Francis in prayer where he was coming from, where he was at, and to where he would be taken.

There is a sense in which, therefore, it is right and fitting that there is no specific mode, method or form to Francis' prayer—sbecause

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it remains vibrant, free, spontaneous, and universalized. This takes nothing away from the many pains he suffered as he sought through prayer to understand and answer what he perceived and discerned to be God's will for him. It merely sets it within the context of his unusual life.

This reflection on Francis' prayer forms is not therefore intended to offer any interpretational look at Francis' prayer life. It is rather to highlight some of the many ways in which Francis prayed and what these prayer forms may be saying to us today as we try to follow God in the way of the Little Poor Man.

Francis prayed throughout his life — from the first beginnings of his conversion (1 Cel 17, L3S 3, LM 1,1) to the height of La Verna and at the very point of his death. Yet his prayer was not confined to praise of God and thanksgiving for everything God had done for and through him. He prayed during times of struggle and crisis (1 Cel 6, L3S 12). He prayed in times of solitude (2 Cel 9, LM 2, 5) and in fear (1 Cel 10, L3S 16, LM 2, 2). He also prayed when he was hurt, sad and angry.

His life of prayer was never static but always searching and trying to probe out the depths of what God's will for him was. God promised that he would answer Francis in prayer (1 Cel 7; L3S 13) and so Francis heard the voice at San Damiano (2 Cel 10-11; LM 2,1; L3S 13-14) and it is from this prayer experience that Francis begins his first tentative steps towards fulfilling what the Lord has in mind for him. He renounces his worldly good and claims God as his Father (L3S 20; 1 Cel 14-15; 2 Cel VII 12) and goes rebuilding churches (1 Cel 18; L3S 21) and finally becomes Herald of the Great King (1 Cel 23; L3S 26).

The initial stages of his conversion are opportunities for the Lord to teach and instruct Francis in the way he is to live and the work he is to do. So Francis' prayer never stands still; it grows and develops and matures. It moves from the prayer of inquiry; "Lord, what do you want me to do?"; to the prayer of loving union: "Welcome Sister Death". It is because of the very vibrancy of this prayer that one can begin to understand why no one particular form of mode of prayer would have been appropriate in Francis' life. Rather there was newness and freshness; there was daring and unusualness; there was creativity, challenge; anger and frustration. The forms of Francis' prayer show that he never allowed himself to become staid or stagnant in his approach to God but rather grew and matured into a rich inventive, intimate and dynamic relationship with God.

Song and Drama

Singing was always a part of Francis' life and it became a favorite form of prayer for him. As a youth he loved to sing (1 Cel 2), and even as a dying man he never lost it. Celano tells us that when he wished to pray

he sang in French as if French was the secret language of love he had for God (2 Cel. XC, 127). He wrote the Canticle as a prayer-song having composed a melody for it (LP 43) and used the singing as a prayer of reconciliation between the bishop and the mayor of Assisi. The Lady Poverty is serenaded with prayer-songs ((1 Cel. 3, 7; 2 Cel. XXV, 55) and Celano has a beautiful description of Francis pretending to play a medieval rebec (2 Cel. XC, 127: this is translated as a viol in the Omnibus but the viol was not invented then; the rebec is the forerunner to the viol and all instruments associated with it). And the Speculum Perfectionis (121-123) gives us the description of his death and the prayer-songs which went on at that moment. Augustine's dictum: "He who sings prays twice" is most true in Francis' case. Song as form of prayer is central and important to his life and the singing of hymns, composing of religious songs is important for us too.

This creativity of Francis in prayer, this daring and different prospective in his approach to prayer also shows itself in his use of drama and the dramatic. I have written elsewhere about Francis as a dramatist¹ but here it is the context of his prayer I wish to write and reflect upon now. The most obvious instance of his use of drama as a form of prayer is of course Greccio. But it is not simply that Francis gave us the first crib which is now such an important feature of Christmas celebrations — but rather the response that Francis makes to what is in essence a prompting of the Holy Spirit. Bonaventure writes:

"...three years before he died Francis decided to celebrate the moment of the birth of the child Jesus at Greccio, with the greatest possible solemnity.." LM. X,7

So it is a desire within Francis prompted by the Holy Spirit which brings about the response in the Greccio event. Bonaventure's description of the event is beautiful and too long to quote here, but there is one sentence which shows how intimately united with God Francis was on that night:

".. the saint stood before the Crib and his heart overflowed with tender compassion.."

Too often we stay with what is safe, with what is laid down in the rubrics. Yet this action of Francis was innovative and in many respects daring. One need not introduce here the Medieval Mystery plays since they are not pertinent, but they do serve to show that the dramatizing of biblical events was not the sole inspiration of Francis. However, what is new is the exactness of the Greccio event. It brings alive what was often mere words heard but not listened to. The images that come to mind as we read the Scriptures can be given a profound expression through daring, creative drama.

The sending of the friars to sing the Canticle to the warring factions of Assisi and the peace that ensued is another example of the drama-prayer. La Verna is drama-prayer; the preaching to the birds is drama-prayer; going to the Sultan's camp is drama-prayer. All the creative arts, as I have suggested about song, can be used to enrich, deepen, strengthen, and express our call to intimate union with God in and through prayer. Poetry, music, art, sculpture, dance, drama, mime and movement are all in themselves forms of prayer, which, given the spontaneous creativity of Francis, we could utilize more.

The Office and Repetition

Many of us will have engaged at some stage in repetetive prayer, quite apart from the Liturgy of the Hours. Whether it be the Rosary, the "Jesus" prayer, or my own prayer "Jesus, remember me when You come into your kingdom", the repetition serves as a mantra-like focus for the reality we are praying about or to. It allows us to concentrate on the reality rather than the actual form being used. Francis used repetitive prayer frequently, as Celano tells us:

"...he wished that the course of his own life and those of his brethren be shown to him by the Lord; he sought out a place of prayer as he had done often, and he perservered there with fear and trembling standing before the Lord of the whole earth and he thought of the years he had spent wretchedly, frequently repeating this word: Lord, be merciful to me a sinner..." 1 Cel 26)

In this context prayer becomes familiarity breeding intimacy and acceptance, confidence and hopefulness because, Celano goes on to write:

"little by little a certain unspeakable joy began to enter his innermost heart...there was poured into him a certainty that all his sins had been forgiven and a confidence of his restoration granted to him.." (ibid)

Repetitive prayer helps us 'tune' into the presence of God in our prayer so that the words themselves become a focus for the mystery we are contemplating yet move beyond themselves so that, as for Francis, focus becomes more important than content.

The same can be said in many respects for the Divine Office. Francis had a tremendous devotion to the Office and although as a cleric bound to say it daily, there is nothing empty about this particular form of repetitive prayer in his life — something can unconciously creep into our saying of the Office. So much so did Francis venerate the Office that he chose this as a special (though not particular) form of prayer and developed his own paraliturgical office: the Passion, Advent psalms, Litany of Praise,

Blessed Virgin. Francis' commitment and devotion to the Office is well attested to by Celano:

"When he went through the world on foot, he always stopped to say his in office," 2 Cel 96

And in the Rule of 1221, 3, Francis commanded the friars:

"...and so all friars, both clerics and lay brothers must say the Divine Office with praise and prayers as they are obliged to.."

And in the rule of 1223 Francis reiterates this only in much stronger terms (cf. RB 3), and in his Letter to a General Chapter in 1224 he asked that the Rule be observed exactly in relation to the Office, and in the Testament he branded as "...not Catholics.." those who wanted to bring changes to the Office.

But it was not legalism which prompted this in Francis, rather it was the spirit of prayer and devotion which he also asked the friars never to extinguish. The Office was central to Francis' prayer life though not the only form he used. For us today the Office is central since it is the prayer of the Church. Yet, uniformity does not mean everyone doing the same thing at the same time. The Introductions of the Office permit beautiful ways of praying the Liturgy of the Hours and we can remain faithful to Francis' exhortation while at the same time adapting the way we pray the Office to our needs and the needs of the Church and world.

Sharing prayer

Francis often prayed with the Brethren in a quite spontaneous way sharing their prayer and his with them. The Little Flowers 14 relates that

"..our holy father Francis plunged all his thoughts in the Blessed Christ and directed all his efforts and desire and way of praying and speaking and conversing toward His pleasure, both for himself and his other companions."

This introduces a very moving text in the Fioretti and it gives us both an indication of Francis' attentiveness in prayer and how he saw the importance of prayer not just for individuals but also for groups, communities. The text goes on to say:

". The devout father was sitting with his very blessed sons and in a fervour of the Spirit he commanded one of them in the name of the Lord to open his mouth and say about God whatever the Holy Spirit suggested to him.."

Francis continued to command each of them to pray in this way. This form of prayer is popular today in prayer groups, Charismatic renewal and in a sense the intercessory prayer during mass. But there is room for

a regular meeting of friars, outside the mass and Office to share prayers with and for each other. Shared prayer allows us to experience another person's relationship with God and opens further avenues to intimate union with each other in the presence of the Lord so that praying together becomes a source of great joy, comfort and support to each of the fraternity.

Written prayer

The Book of March 1 to see . Purch

The writing of prayers was important for Francis and this was above and beyond what he read. There is something profound about writing prayers, especially writing one's own prayers; and anything inspired by the Spirit can be written down and shared with the brethren. The written prayers of Francis are as follows:

PRAISE OF THE LORD
PRAISES OF GOD
CHAPTER 23 RULE 1221
LETTER TO A GENERAL CHAPTER
CANTICLE
PASSION OFFICE
BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER
LETTERS TO THE FAITHFUL
SALUTATION TO THE VIRTUES
SALUTATION TO MARY
PARAPHRASE OF THE OUR FATHER
PSALM 141
OPENING PRAYERS OF RULES

In writing these prayers, Francis has bequeathed them to us that we too might pray the prayers he prayed, as well as those prayers which the Holy Spirit inspires within our hearts as we come before the Lord in community, in solitude or in silence. In writing our own prayers, we can share these promptings of the Spirit within us and offer them to the brethren in the context of shared prayer. It does not matter what form the written prayer takes — poetry, song; formalized prayers, salutations, one word or one sentence. It did not matter to Francis; what he did he did with joy and love.

Contemplation

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Celano writes:

"...often, without moving his lips, he would meditate within himself and drawing external things within himself he would lift up his spirit to higher things. All his attention and affection he directed with his whole being to

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the one thing which he was asking of the Lord not so much praying as becoming a prayer..' 2 Cel. 95

And again later Celano writes:

"Francis was too often caught up in such sweetness of contemplation that, caught up out of himself he could not reveal what he had experienced because it went beyond all human comprehension.." 1 Cel. 98

Here we see the beginnings of the process of contemplation and the end product of contemplation both of which are first and foremost gifts from God. Francis deliberated whether he should give himself over to a life of contemplation or action until finally leaving it for Clare and Sylvester to decide through their own prayer and discernment. The La Verna event is in a true sense contemplative excess. What I mean is that the contemplation of Francis is not a process of A then B followed by C resulting in D. It is the essence of spontaneity. But spontaneity does not mean instant—spontaneity is the end of a whole process of identification with Christ so that Francis' contemplation is rather "Christemplation"—the total losing of one's self in the mystery of the person of Christ.

As friars we are called to the same "Christemplation"—that attunement to God's creative, loving power in our lives and our world and not just the instancy of immediacy. The development of this contemplative centre is a long process, at times painful yet deeply rewarding and fruitful. In Francis it becomes the will at one with self and Other; the same is granted to us as we strive to attune our wills to God's loving power. The end of the contemplative process is complete Christemplation— and it is not always necessary to "go into the desert", or always be alone. The cell to the eremetical life of contemplation is not given to us all, yet each of us is called to cultivate and develop within ourselves a Christemplative hermitage where we can meet and dialogue with God in serene solitude.

The Tangible

Francis had a keen eye, not just for the innovative or expressively unusual but also for the way in which objects showed him the God he so resolutely followed. He was not afraid to use objects such as crucifixes for prayer. Bonaventure writes:

... "the friars obeyed his teaching to perfection and whenever they saw a crucifix, even from a distance, they knelt down and humbly prayed as he had taught them.." LM IV.3

The use of objects for focussing our prayer is of central and crucial importance to us, not simply because it has always been part of the Catholic tradition, but because it is also part of the Franciscan tradition.

It is before the crucifix of Damiano that Francis receives his commission and the importance of such objects of devotion and prayer cannot be lost to us. The use of icons, crosses, statues and religious art for focusing prayer could be enlivened and enriched by the very action of praying before them. Such objects, I feel, are necessary since they affectively put us in touch with the reality they seek to express and which we ourselves seek. Thus any such object which encourages devotion could be used frequently. It will be recalled that Francis had great respect for the cross, statues and images. His experience of God was firmly rooted in the tangibility of the world, and we are called to the same.

... prayer challenged the way he saw himself, the world in which he lived and the God to whom he prayed.

Prayer of Empathy and Compassion

Compassion means to suffer with, empathy to feel the feelings of another beyond surface identification. Francis was granted the gift of compassion and empathy. He had compassion for the lepers, for the suffering Christ and for the Brethren who had "fallen into sin", for animals and for creation. Bonaventure tells us:

"One day when he was riding on the plain below Assisi he met a leper. The encounter was completely without warning and Francis felt sick at heart at the sight of him... but he immediately dismounted and ran up to kiss the leper. The leper stretched forth his hands hoping to get something and Francis put some money in his hand and kissed it.." LM 1, 5(6)

The action in itself is striking for its audacity but more so for the lack of thought of self and the instinctive intuitive response. One simply did not kiss lepers; yet Francis, in the very act of doing so, makes a break with the Francis who was riding on the plain below Assisi and the Francis, who rode back after the kiss.

The kissing of the leper is not only a singular act of profound compassion and empathy, but it is crucial for the Order because with the kiss the Order was born. But the action of kissing the leper is not action per se: it is *prayer*, for through the leper Francis responds to a prompting of the Holy Spirit and touches the compassionate Christ. Bonaventure goes on:

"... Francis now developed a spirit of poverty and a deep sense of humility,

and an attitude of profound compassion. He had never been able to stand the sight of lepers even at a distance, and he always avoided meeting them, but now in order to arrive at perfect self-contempt he served them devotedly with all humility and kindness, because the prophet Isaias tells us that Christ crucified was regarded as a leper and despised. He visited their houses frequently and distributed alms among them generously kissing their hands and lips with deep compassion." LM 1,6

Francis tells us in the *Testament* that this is what he did and also the very thing which he considered a barrier to growth and love i. e. his detestation of the lepers while he was "still in sin", was the very thing which God used to bring about the beginnings of his conversion.

The compassion/empathy prayer of Francis is not a prayer of words; it is a prayer of and in action. It is orthopraxis rather than orthodoxy because Francis, even in prayer, is a man of action. His prayers were never meaningless or empty babblings but gave rise to a concrete expression both of and in what he prayed. We need not look too far to find the lepers of our own societies and our work with them can also be orthopraxis.

Meditation and Reflection

Bonaventure gives us an insight into the prayer life of the early community gathered around Francis. The young group of friars spent its time in prayer, fasting, and as Bonaventure puts it:

"...devoting themselves to fervant mental prayer.." LM IV 3

They use the cross as the source of this meditation and reflection as-well as shared prayer and silence. The Legend of the Three Companions (7-9) gives us further insight into Francis' attitude to mental prayer and reflecion. The striking aspect of this form of prayer is the amount of time Francis spent in solitude, in quiet and in silence. He reflected deeply in prayer before any action and pointed out in this that unreflective action is sometimes worse than no action at all. But Francis was no quetist; the fervor and frequency of his meditation brought great comfort, hope and solace in what God had shared with him. It is almost as if there are some graces God can only give in silence.

It was after a period of meditation and reflection that Francis began to write the Canticle, Praises of God, the Our Father paraphrase. Meditation is not "quiet prayer", nor the prayer of silence, neither is it the emptiness of thinking "holy things" or thinking "about" God. It is more powerful than any of these, it is rather the intuitive grasping of the silence of the Godhead caught momentarily in time and space and for a brief untimable second, gone as quickly as it arrives — the totality of the person, is caught

up in the mystery of God himself. Meditation, as it comes to us in the prayers of Francis is being aware and in touch with the God who already fills us. It does not need silence as a prerequisite (though it helps) — it needs openness to hear and listen, humility to respond, and attentiveness to be changed so that it is a powerful, peace giving prayer form.

Conclusion

I have said nothing about Francis' prayers through Creation and Scripture since I am at present working on a project on the topic, nor about his use of the holy Name (LM X,6; 1 Cel. 115) as I have in mind an article—reflection on this topic. What then can one say about Francis' forms of prayer and how can we franciscans derive inspiration for our own prayer life?.

Prayer is not "acquired", nor is it "learned" in the sense that prayer manuals will "teach" us prayer. While such things are useful, prayer is essentially a gift from God and it is HARD WORK! There is nothing easy about prayer: it involves pain and hurt, but also joy and serenity; calmness and oneness in unity with God — but it is all gift, It means to be moulded to the form of Christ: Paul's "potter" analogy is useful here. The potter throws his unworked dry clay onto the wheel and begins to turn, to set the process in motion. He/she gives the dry clay water to keep the clay pliable and manageable — more easy to be shaped; and works the hands with master craftsmanship, with great care and attention — the potter spends time with the clay. God spends time with the clay that is us; spends time with us in prayer — it is not the time that we give God in prayer, but the time He gives us. The form is not IMPORTANT IN ITSELF, though as we arrive at each form of prayer it becomes a stepping point for deeper union.

Through these varying forms of prayer Francis is in touch with every level of his human person and the forms reflect the journey of his prayer which culminated in La Verna. Intimacy is greater than the form which helps bring it about: ALL forms of prayer are useful and helpful, but ALL forms of prayer are gifts — Francis above all found that out. No one form should suit us as Franciscans, but every form could be used with creative, spontaneous expression to draw each and every one of us closer to the Mystery in which we already participate. La Verna is a possibility for us all.

Endnotes

¹Séamus Mulholland, O.F.M., "St. Francis as Dramatist and Poet," **The CORD**, Vol. 38 (1988), 339-343.

Evangelization and Liberation

CHARLES V. FINNEGAN, O.F.M.

Until 1975, when Pope Paul VI published his apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi" (to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the close of Vatican II) the word evangelization was used very infrequently among English-speaking Catholics. Today the word is used with the utmost frequency even though the meanings attached to it vary considerably. One writer said evangelization has become "the Catholic buzz word." Some confusion is bound to result. For example the general secretary of Evangelization 2000 stated in an interview that the Church's mission is "supernatural" — the Church is concerned with "saving souls". He was frankly critical of the 1979 Latin American Bishops' conference in Puebla and the "liberation-minded church people" whose understanding of evangelization includes the need to address the social injustice of our times.

The purpose of this article is to make a modest attempt to demonstrate the solid basis for viewing evangelization as proclaiming "salvation, this great gift of God which is liberation from everything that oppresses human beings [in the official latin text "liberation ab iis omnibus quibus homo opprimitur"] and which is above all liberation from sin and the evil one, in the joy of knowing God and being known by Him, of seeing him and of being given over to him." (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 9) While all would accept the final clauses in that description of evangelization, not all are enthusiastic about viewing salvation as "liberation from everything that oppresses human beings." It may be useful to look again at the scriptural and patristic tradition, at the teaching of the church's magisterium and the Franciscan tradition, to find a justification for understanding salvation

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Scripture

In his introduction to the book of Exodus in the "Christian Community Bible [Catholic Pastoral Edition]" Fr. Francis writes:

The Exodus is the liberation from Egypt. This in the Bible [i. e., the Hebrew Scripture] is the great deed of God... God liberated his people "with great power, with strong arm and outstretched hand" opening a way in the sea.

The Exodus is the heart of the Old Testament and what gives it significence is that it shows us a God who liberates people. How is it that many people (non-believers) say: "Fear creates gods." And Lenin adds to his book Socialism and Religion, "Religion teaches patience and resignation to those who toil during a lifetime of misery, and puts them to sleep with the hope of heavenly reward."

But it is not so. In the Exodus, God does not come to instill fear, he listens to the cry of the oppressed — giving them trust, awakening in them the hope of a real and total liberation and raising a generous leader for them. The Exodus is the model of all genuine human liberation.

The Exodus was not "a purely spiritual" event — it was also and very prominently so, economic, social, political and cultural liberation.

In a similar vein, the book of Deuteronomy expresses concern eight times for the "have-nots" of that era: "the alien, the widow, and the orphan." (Cf 26, 13) And a curse is reserved for those "who do not respect the rights of the alien, the orphan and the widow" (26, 19).

If Israel's prophets were "the conscience of God's people," one of their major concerns was surely the defense of the poor. The first of the classical prophets Amos is rightly called "the prophet of social justice" — his entire work is concerned with this theme. Speaking through the prophet Isaiah (1:1-15) God issues a scathing denunciation of Israel and its worship. How can Israel set things right? "Seek justice, give hope to the oppressed; give the orphans their rights and defend the widows" (1:17). For Jeremiah, a good leader is one "who defends the poor and the needy." To do this is "to know Yahweh" (22:16).

In its turn the New Testament also shows a "preferential option for the poor." This is especially obvious in the writings of Luke. As Donald Senior, C.P. notes: "Luke's stress on the prophetic character of Jesus ministry as well as his confrontation with issues of justice fit the powerful concerns of liberation theology" (The Biblical Foundations For Mission, p. 255).

When Paul and Barnabas visited "the acknowledged pillars [of the early Church of Jerusalem] James, Cephas and John," those leaders made only

one stipulation: Paul and Barnabas "were to be mindful of the poor." Paul notes that that was "the one thing I was making every effort to do" (Gal 2:10). That apostolic "preferential option for the poor" is also part of the apostolic tradition!

Is it any wonder that a number of military dictatorships in Latin America forbade the singing of Our Lady's Canticle of Praise (Lk 1:46-55) calling it a "subversive hymn?" For regimes that oppress the poor it is subversive to sing:

The Mighty One has scattered the proud with their plans. He has put down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up those who are downtrodden. He has filled the hungry with good things but he sent the rich away empty.

Pope John Paul II, on his first visit to Poland called Our Lady the "Queen of Social Justice." In the Americas, the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe conveys the same message.

It comes as no surprise therefore to learn that during the shameful decades of slavery in north-america, slave-masters saw the bible as a threat: in many places it was a crime to give a bible to a slave. (See *Before the Mayflower* [5th ed.]. p. 87 by Lerone Bennett Jr.) From beginning to end the bible proclaims liberation! The God of the American slaves was the God who delivered the Israelites from slavery. A Negro ditty said:

Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel. then why not every man?

In a system that sanctions the enslavement of human beings, that is a subversive question.

The bible is still seen as a threat by those who oppress the poor in our own day. Fr. Charles Beirne S. J., vice-rector of the University of San Salvador (the successor of Ignacio Martin-Baro S. J., murdered by the Salvadoran military in November of 1990), said: "I know women and men in El Salvador who have been arrested and tortured because they had a subversive document in their homes. The subversive document was the Bible." (Address to the National Catholic Educational Association, Boston, 3 April 1991)

The central message in Jesus' preaching is "the good news of God's Reign." So important is this that everything else becomes "the rest" which "will be given besides." (See Mt 6:33) As Paul VI notes: "Only the Kingdom therefore is absolute and it makes everything else relative". (EN 8) The Kingdom of God is not built up only within the confines of the church; it is built up also in secular human history. Whenever and wherever people are open to God's saving intervention in their lives, freeing them

from whatever form of oppression, there the Kingdom comes into being. While all human beings are invited to belong to the Kingdom, the poor have a specially privileged place. In *Redemptoris Missio* (14), Pope John Paul II wrote:

The Kingdom of God is meant for all mankind and all people are called to become members of it. To emphasize this fact, Jesus drew especially near to those on the margins of society and showed them special favor. To all who are victims of rejection and contempt Jesus declares: "Blessed are you poor" (Lc 6:20). What is more, he enables such people to experience liberation even now. The liberation and salvation brought by the Kingdom of God come to the human person in his physical and spiritual dimensions.

The Pope then drew the conclusion:

Working for the Kingdom means acknowledging and promoting God's activity, which is present in human history and transforms it. Building the kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms. In a word, the kingdom of God is the manifestation and the realization of God's plan of salvation in all its fullness.

The Patristic Tradition

Since early Christian teachers were thoroughly immersed in the Scriptures it comes as no surprise that they were deeply concerned about justice. Patristic teaching about the rights of the poor will perhaps seem very radical to many Christians today. A few examples:

Didache (end of 1st century): "Never turn away from the needy. Share all your possessions with your brother and do not claim that anything is your own. If you and your neighbor are joint participators in things immortal, how much more so in things that are mortal."

St. Ambrose: "God has ordered all things to be produced so that there should be food in common for all. When you give to the poor you are not giving what is yours, you are giving back to him what is his."

St. John Chrysostom: "The rich are in possession of the goods of the poor even if they have acquired them honestly. Do not say: 'I am using what is mine.' You are using what belongs to others. All the wealth of the world belongs to you and to the others in common, as the sun, air, earth and all the rest."

St. Augustine: "Of whose possessions do you give if not from Christ's? If you were to give of your own it would be largess; but since you give of what is His, it is restitution."

The North-American Catholic bishops wrote in their pastoral *Economic Justice For All*: "From the patristic period to the present, the Church has affirmed that the misuse of the world's resources or appropriation of

them by a minority of the world's population betrays the gift of creation since 'whatever belongs to God belongs to all' (St. Cyprian)." For a good study of the patristic teaching on justice the pastoral refers to Ownership: Early Christian Teaching by C. Avila (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983). Another excellent resource is The Faith That Does Justice ed. John C. Haughey.

Magisterium

It needs to be recognized honestly, at least in passing, that the first social encyclical was not Leo XIII's 1891 letter Rerum Novarum. but Nostis et Nobiscum of Pius IX issued in 1848. Pius had little sympathy for liberation movements (which deprived him of the papal states). He considered the existing social order to be willed by God, and any attempt by the poor to better their lot to be sinful. In a similar vain, the bishops of Brazil; in a 1915 pastoral letter, instructed their priests to inculcate in the faithful "a spirit of obedience and submission" and to lead the faithful to accept their proper situation and the conditions into which they were born and not to hate the modest and difficult life in which Providence (sic!) has placed them."

Leo XIII saw things differently, and subsequent Popes have shown an ever increasing interest in social issues and the plight of the poor. This interest has been especially intense since the pontificate of Pope John XXIII. The second Vatican Council devoted special attention to questions of justice and peace in the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. The plethora of magisterial statements on these questions makes even a sketchy summary impossible here. A few samples must suffice. I have chosen those that have special relevance because of the new conditions that have arisen with the happy demise of marxism.

Pope Paul VI was simply repeating the centuries-old Christian tradition when he wrote: "Private property is not an absolute or unconditional right for anyone. No one is justified in keeping for his exclusive use what he does not need, when others lack necessities" (*Populorum Progressio*, n. 23). That teaching caused chagrin in some quarters. The Wall Street Journal in an editorial entitled "A Blessing For Secular Error," dismissed the encyclical as "an entirely worldly analysis" and "warmed-over marxism" (sic!).

Pope John Paul II has repeatedly reaffirmed the teaching of his predecessor. For example, during his 1986 visit to Columbia:

Nobody should forget that the gifts which God has conferred on humankind have a universal destiny, and therefore cannot be the exclusive property of the few, be they individuals, groups or nations. Because of this, those carrying out the responsibility of administering the gifts of creation must take into account — according to the divine will — not only their own

The bible is still seen as a threat by those who oppress the poor in our own day.

needs, but also those of everyone else in such a way that no one, especially not the poorest, is excluded from access to those gifts.

See also John Paul's "On Social Concern" (n. 43) with the references in notes 78 and 79.

The blissful demise of marxism presents very welcome challenges to the magisterium. In his May 1990 visit to Mexico, Pope John Paul II claimed that it is "superficial" to "view the setbacks suffered by contemporary socialism", as proof that capitalism "is the only path for our world." In his "On Social Concern," the Pope claimed that both the capitalist and the collectivist systems "are in need of radical correction." He insisted that "the Church's social doctrine adopts a critical attitude towards both." (p. 21)

In Centesimus Annus (1 May 1991) John Paul takes up the same theme: "It is unacceptable to say that the defeat of so-called real socialism leaves capitalism as the only model of economic organization" (no. 35). In speaking of the ideal economic order, the Pope prefers not to call it "capitalist" but rather a "business economy, market economy or simply free economy" (n. 42). This acceptable economic order is one which "demands that the market be appropriately controlled by the forces of society and by the state, so as to guarantee that the basic needs of the whole of society are satisfied" (n. 34). (Does anyone seriously think that "the basic needs" of all north-americans are being met, or even that there is a serious attempt to do this?) John Paul quotes with approval the teaching of Leo XIII: "If the question is asked how must one's possessions be used? the church replies with hesitation that man should not consider his material possessions as his own, but as common to all" (n. 30). In harmony with the patristic tradition, John Paul states emphatically: "God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favoring anyone. This is the foundation of the universal destination of the earth's goods" (n. 31). To bring about a more just social order, the Pope asks for "a concerted worldwide effort ... which also involves sacrificing positions of income and of power enjoyed by the more developed economies" (n. 52). This truly revolutionary perspective is not what the west understands by capitalism. as economist Arthur Jones notes in The Tablet (17 Feb. 1990).

Capitalism, meaning the capitalist system, could provide the mechanisms through which the world's needs could be met. But capitalism will not do

that; it has no motive for doing so. There is no buck to be made. And all that capitalism can do — and at its best it does it brilliantly — is find new ways of making a buck. Capitalism by its very nature quickly conditions the world to extract, for itself, the maximum for the minimum. That is its sole goal, its unique purpose, and in the final analysis an insufficient and unworthy end when measured on the yardstick of Christian values.

In Octogesima Adveniens (1971), Paul VI noted that the inequitable distribution of wealth is one of the problems that "jeopardizes the very future of the human race." (n. 7). Capitalism continues to foster that inequality which increasingly gets worse.

Consider the United States of north america. During the 1980's the wealthiest 400 Americans tripled their fortunes even as more and more homeless families were being driven onto the streets. In 1981 there were about 600,000 U.S. millionaires. By 1990 they numbered 1,500 million, together with 100,000 decamillionaires; 1,200 centimillionaires and 51 billionaires — "an unprecidented concentration of U.S. wealth" (Thomas C. Fox). At present, the top 1% of the U. S. population makes more than the bottom 40%. Over the last 15 years, the wealthiest 10% received a 36% tax cut, while the poorest 20% had their taxes increased by 21%. Meanwhile federal domestic programs were cut \$129.6 billion dollars from FY 1982 through FY 1988. In the presidential budget for 1991, discretionary program for low income families are only half of what they were adjusted for inflation, ten years ago. One effect of this is an increase since 1981 of nearly 20% of the number of children living in poverty. (See "The Washington Spectator" 15 May 1990, p. 2 f,) The U. S. national debt has exploded from \$908 billion in 1980 to an estimated \$3.1 trillion, (sic!) in 1990, much of the increase due to the military buildup. The national debt grows at the rate of \$4,000 a second (!).

Thus in the U. S. today, while enormous sums are spent on "an insane arms race" (CA n. 18) basic human needs go unmet. The U. S. takes 1st place in military power; 13th place in public healthcare; 16th place in per capita support of education; 19th place in infant mortality.

For the Christian conscience, issues of justice and the plight of the poor are important moral issues and are of the greatest concern to the Church. They impinge on the very understanding the Church has of its mission. It is difficult to exaggerate the influence that the declaration of the 1971 Roman Synod of Bishops had on the Church's understanding of evangelization.

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel or, in other words, of the church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.

Transformation of the world and liberation from every oppression —

all this is part of the church's mission. in Centesimus Annus (n. 5) John Paul insists:

To teach and spread her social doctrine pertains to the church's evangelizing mission and is an essential part of the Christian message" (emphasis added). The new evangelization, which the modern world urgently needs and which I have emphasized many times, must include among its essential elements a proclamation of the church's social doctrine.

That very clear statement cries out for implementation. The ignorance of our Catholic people, including those who frequent Franciscan churches, schools and other institutions concerning Christian social teaching is appalling.

A spirituality that is so "otherworldly." that it is not concerned about justice, liberation and the transformation of this world is thoroughly inadequate. A "Iesus and me" spirituality, that says in effect "the rest of the world be damned," is thoroughly unchristian and unfranciscan Evangelization is above all proclaiming Christ, and as St. Ambrose wrote: "When we speak about justice, we are speaking of Christ. When we are speaking of peace, we are speaking of Christ. When we speak about truth, life and redemption, we are speaking of Christ." (Explanation of the Psalms [ps 36])

Pope John Paul speaks of "the personal sins of those who are in a position to avoid, eliminate or at least limit certain social evils but who fail to do so ... producing specious reasons of a higher order" (Reconciliation and Penance n. 16; repeated in On Social Concern, note, 65). The clearest example of a "specious reason of a higher order" is precisely that which claims the Church should be concerned only with "saving souls." The Pope brands that attitude as sinful.

To exclude justice and peace questions from the church's mission would be to deprive whole areas of human activity — and areas of the greatest importance - from the saving influence of God's word. It is a grave disservice to the Christian tradition to make it appear irrelevant, and nothing would make the tradition appear more irrelevant than the claim it has nothing to offer in solving the most urgent problems of our times, Justice, Peace and Respect for Creation are among those most urgent auestions.

It is one of the great merits of the Theology of Liberation that it has kept the world's most compelling challenges before the ecclesial conscience and continues to seek a solution in the authentic Christian tradition. No doubt that is why Pope John Paul II in his letter of 9 April 1986 to his brother bishops in Brazil said: "the theology of liberation is not only opportune but useful and necessary." And necessary not only in Brazil!

Holy Spirit leads us to understand more clearly that holiness today cannot be attained without a committment to justice." No committment to justice = no holiness! That very emphatic statement surely is enough to alert us to a very serious obligation to communicate the church's social teaching to the people to whom we minister. At the heart of that teaching is the "preferential option for the poor." an option "to which the whole tradition of the church bears witness" (On Social Concern, n. 42). Putting that option into practice is at the heart of our continual conversion, just as for Francis his ministry to the lepers, led him to redefine what was bitter and what was sweet. (See Test 3)

Putting the preferential option for the poor into effect requires the cooperation of all people of good will, and especially the commitment of public officials, economists and business people. The church's teaching authority has been enunciating the moral principles for decades — what more can be said? In a very important address to business people in Mexico, in May of 1990, the Pope said: "The magisterium has fulfilled its mission, and now it is up to you, the experts, who are also the church, to make a serious effort to find real, courageous and practical solutions."

Conclusion

In almost every instance where St. Francis uses the word "just" or "justice" in his writings, he is speaking of an attribute of God. Thus "You [Lord] are justice." (LaudDei 4); "... the one true God...Who alone is just." (RegNB 29,9). The closest Francis comes to using the word "justice" in the modern sense of "social justice" is in Fragm (76): "Alms are the inheritance and justice that is owed to the poor, and was acquired by Our Lord Jesus Christ."

Francis did not set out to be a social reformer. He did call people to conversion to the gospel. Living the gospel himself with his brothers and sisters in such a radical way was a powerful summons to abandon self-centeredness and live a God-centered life. When people respond to that summons, social structures are changed to conform more to God's plan. The vices that Francis most warns against are those that cause the injustices of our times also: pride, arrogance, greed, vanity.

Most importantly Francis' strong conviction about universal brother-hood of all men and women provides the most secure basis for our concern for justice. The millions of people whose most basic needs are not met, "the many millions who are deprived of hope" (On Social Concern, 13), are indeed our brothers and sisters. It is impossible to really believe that and not strive for a more just, peaceful and fraternal world.

God alone is the "great almsgiver" (2Cel 77) and proprietor of all creation: "The earth and all its fullness belongs to the Lord" (24,1). Hence

the brothers are never to "appropriate" anything to themselves. The theology of liberation and the preferential option for the poor are of the service of God's plan for the creation that rightly belongs to God alone. What is God's plan for creation? St. Paul answers: "there should be a certain equality among you" (2 Cor 8:13). Equality is God's plan, and we've a long way to go.

Reflection Questions (preferably in common):

1. In Centesimus Annus (n. 5), Pope John Paul II claims that the church's social doctrine "is an essential part of the Christian message ... [and] an essential element" in the new evangelization. In your experience (listening to/giving homilies, participating in religious education programs, retreats etc.) is Christian social teaching given its due? If not, why is this so?

- 2. In his first visit to the U. S. as Pope, John Paul II said: "You will want to seek out the structural reasons (emphasis added) which foster the different forms of poverty in the world and in your own country, so that you can apply the proper remedies. You will not recoil before the reforms even profound ones of attitudes and structures that may prove necessary" so the poor can have "a fresh chance in the hard struggle of life." (Homily, Mass at Yankee Stadium, 25 October 1979). Why is it important to identify the "structural reasons" that cause poverty? Can you identify some unjust structures? Are you aware of any attempts to reform, them?
- 3. All Franciscans are invited to work for the liberation of both the oppressed and the oppressors. (See, for example, "The Vocation of the Order Today," Madrid OFM General Chapter, 1979, n. 15.) Why do oppressors also need liberation? How can we work more effectively for the liberation of both groups?

Hold back nothing of yourselves
for yourselves
so that
He Who gives Himself totally to you
may receive you totally.

LETTER TO THE ENTIRE ORDER, 29

Skywatch and Advent

clear as water, only drier on the night-chilled face the winter air abrades with the fine grit of stardust (hardness: infinity)

eyes gritty too, water through the long watch and waiting

finally — face fully polished bright with expectation upturned in longing

a great streak of light sizzles through the darkness a pathway of momentary dazzle that encounters earth as a humble lump — —

heaven's gift

Sr. M. Felicity Dorsett, O.S.F.

Book Reviews

Making Saints: How the Catholic Church Determines Who Becomes a Saint, Who Doesn't, and Why. By Kenneth L. Woodward. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990. Pp. 461. Cloth, \$24.95.

Reviewed by Bonaventure F. Hayes, O.F.M., Library Director and Assistant Professor of Sacred Scripture, Christ the King Seminary, East Aurora, NY and Archivist of Holy Name Province, O.F.M. (NYC).

Kenneth Woodward, religion editor of Newsweek magazine for 26 years, well-known writer, and articulate and apparently committed Cahtolic, has given us in this fascinating study an account of the beatification/canonization process currently in use in the Roman Catholic Church which is at once fairminded, probing and, above all, eschewing any and all sensationalism. It is a noble feat! Its twenty pages of detailed notes and eleven closely-packed pages of bibliography, to say nothing of the numerous and lengthy accounts of personal interviews with many of the principal 'players' involved in the handling of concrete cases both on the local scene and in the Roman congregation for the Causes of Saints, all attest to the thoroughness of his research into this complex and intriguing world of 'saint making.

Woodward devotes chapter-length treatment to the following topics: local promotion of causes; historical development of the concept of sanctity within the Church, the cult of saints, and the beatification/canonization process (most recently changed—and rather radically

so — in 1983 from a substantially legal process to an historical one); the various persons/offices involved in the process (including a survey of what it all costs); martyrs and the evolving concept of martyrdom; mystics, visionaries and wonder-workers; the role of miracles in the process; proving heroic virtue; interpreting holiness; papal saints and causes (and the politics thereof); sanctity and sexuality; the causes of intellectuals; and questions about the current process and possible future directions.

The completed (at least as far as beatification) and on-going cases of the following persons receive more than a passing mention, indeed, at times a lengthy discussion: Cardinal Cooke, Dorothy Day, Archbishop Romero, Edith Stein, Titus Brandsma, Maximilian Kolbe, Marcel Callo, Padre Pio, Theresa Musco, Alexandrina da Costa, Anne Catherine Emmerich, Junipero Serra, Phillippine Duchesne, Katherine Drexel, Cornelia Connelly, Louis & Azelie Martin (the parents of St. Therese of Lisieux), Cardinal Newman, Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, and Popes Pius IX, Pius XII, and John XXIII.

Woodward gets to the heart of the matter in the closing chapter, which centers on several questions surrounding the current process, its presuppositions, and its candidates. All of these questions need to be attended to by those directly involved in the process with utmost honesty and all seriousness. The author takes the occasion to also address contemporary society which all too often finds it hard to take the matter of saints seriously due, according to Woodward, to a notable lack

of a sense of connectedness, dependency and particularity in our society. For the cult of the saints, when all is said and done, is about the interconnectedness of all humanity, how the story of God revealed in Jesus is made our story, and how Christian holiness is essentially incarnational. Woodward ultimately reveals why he has so thoroughly engaged himself in this subject and why his presentation is, thus, so thoroughly engaging:

In the course of preparing this book, a number of people, including several at the Vatican, asked me why I was interested in the making of saints. My initial answer was: because no one has adequately explained how and why it is done. But now that I have observed the process firsthand. I recognize another motive: because saints matter. It follows, therefore, that the way saints are made also matters not only to those Roman Catholics who venerate them but to anyone who seriously asks, "What does it mean to be fully human?" (p. 403)

Any reader of this journal is likely to find this book a worthwhile and enjoyable reading experience; anyone even vaguely interested in promoting the cause of some servant of God will ignore it to his or her peril.

Miryam of Jerusalem: Teacher of the Disciples. Ann Johnson. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press. Pp. 161. Paper, \$6.95.

Reviewed by Sister Frances Ann Thom. O.S.F., M.A. (Franciscan Institute, member of the editorial board of The Cord, parish minister in Baldwinsville (Syracuse).

Ann Johnson's Miryam of Jerusalem is an experience no one should miss.

The author dramatically places flesh and blood over the otherwise stereo-typed women of the Bible. We see these women, including Mary, as the very center of Christianity: the very pulse and heartbeat of a new society of Christians. Mary recalls and aptly tells the stories that we have longed to hear about those valiant women who have come before us and who have survived tragedy, passion, and temptation in their lives and used these as means to come to a greater conviction that Iesus is the Messiah: Iesus is alive and Iesus loves us with a personal love. She artistically weaves themes of justice, healing, holiness and fidelity into beautiful prayers which enliven the soul.

In our present day, when women are trying to find a place in society and wipe away the stigma of being second class citizens, Ann Johnson brings great hope from the past using the women who lived complete lives of Christian faith and service. I found this book inspiring for spiritual reading, information, prayer and have used many of the prayers to uplift other persons who were suffering from various hardships.

I recommend this book to any person (male of female) who is interested in living more deeply a Christian life of faith and love.

Naming Your God. The Search for Mature Images. By Pat McCloskey, O.F.M. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1991, 192 pp. Paper, \$7.95.

Reviewed by Francis Berna, O.F.M. (Ph.D. Fordham). Assistant Professor of Theology, St. Bonaventure University.

Too often people retain the image of God formulated at the time of Confirmation, graduation from religious instruction, if you will. While sophistication develops in an understanding of the sciences, politics, economics and literature similar growth is neglected or even avoided when it comes to understanding the Holy. Unfortunately this can leave God and religion on the sideline of life or lead one to reject the God who cannot meet the complex questions of the modern world.

One can comprehend the resistence to growth. Pat McClosky points out quite sharply the risk of wrestling with our understandings of the Holy. "Our images of God do not exist in a vacuum; they are connected to our own self-image and the way we see other people" (p. 89). An adjustment of our image of God requires a good hard look at ourselves and an honest evaluation of our relationship to our neighbor. To go beyond imagess of God developed in a small, safe and local world involves taking the risk of adventure into the larger, more diverse and unknown world. Quite correctly the author observes that one will make such a move only when they decide that searching for the new image is less risky than living with the old image.

McClosky's text offers a solid spiritual theology. He articulates some profound theological insight along with personal experience into a language which lends itself to good spiritual reading.

In the chapter on the images of God in the Hebrew scriptures the author firmly establishes the relationship between the image of God, self-image and the way one sees other people. This point is worth careful pondering. In the same chapter he offers another pow-

erful insight. "A particular culture sometimes limits God's self-revelation in the same way that a child's level of maturity limits a parent's possibility of self-revelation" (p. 40). Without suggesting the "immaturity" of a particular culture the author helps the reader appreciate that the self-revelation of the Holy always occures in the context of culture. Those who live in that culture can then articulate the encounter with the Holy only within the parameters of that culture's strengths and limitations. One can find here the foundation for appreciating the development of images in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. One might also find here the foundation for a deeper appreciation of non-Christian religions.

The author's presentation on modern methods of biblical criticism offers a fine introduction. His wide sweep of the Hebrew scriptures serves to peek the reader's curiosity. Some might view his approach as a bit "simplistic." Yet, there is value to well-founded broad strokes which suggest the richness of the biblical text. The book makes one want to return to the biblical well to draw more fully of its images of God. The same can be said of the author's survey of Paul and the Gospels.

Beyond the biblical text McCloskey points out how the image of God grew in the lives of people like Francis of Assisi, Dorothy Day and Simone Weil. Again, his brief introduction to these people combines the depth of sound scholarship with a sense of excitement that one wants to learn more.

The weakest chapter of Naming Your God is the one entitled "Growing with the Scriptures." The author intends to develop a very significant point — the believing community provides a critical element for personal growth. McClosky provides solid historical information in a readable fashion. But this, the "most scholarly" chapter, touches on too many issues making it too difficult to appreciate the author's direction and intent.

One instance of too much information centers on a discussion of Marcel Lefebvre. The case does exemplify the Christian tension of personal commitment and communal life. However, this example would seem to be of little value except for those attracted to the archbishop's perspective. One won-

ders if such people would be reading McClosky's book. A discussion of Teilhard's work could demonstrate a more satisfying resolution. The example of Lefebvre, however, might spark the less conservative Catholic to take more seriously the struggle of the traditionalist Catholic and that would be good.

There is no need to be in a rut with one's images of God. Pat McCloskey shows the importance and the possibilities of growth. He suggests the rewards. Above all he declares that the risk, while risky, is also safe, for God is more than one has ever dared imagine.



"Embers"

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Brittle integrity scattered day after day, Sinful faults brought stinging nays. Stoicism! True self irresponsibly and naively hushed. A nightmarish upbringing, (forward) to a man slowly crushed.

Enrapture desired. The battle engaged. Ambivalent heart always enraged. The flame grows brighter; the embers glow. A heart revives with love to sow.

Now, man rises forth armed with maturity, Leading to victories of goodness and sincerity. So, rest not in your heart's desire, Lest sin prevail and destroy the fire.

My God, my God, why have I abandoned You?

J. W. Harrington

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	Celeste Crine. OSF
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