

The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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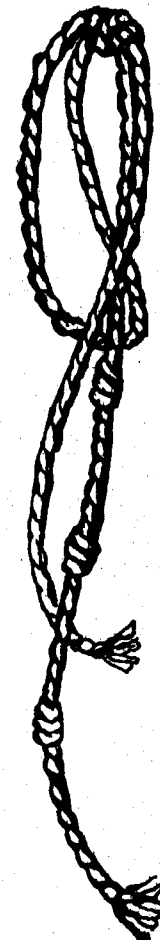
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The CORD

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	Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221
BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo	LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God
CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun	LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours
EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony	OffPass: Office of the Passion
EpCler: Letter to Clerics ¹	OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix
EpCust: Letter to Superiors ¹	RegB: Rule of 1223
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful ¹	RegNB: Rule of 1221
EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo	RegEr: Rule for Hermits
EpMin: Letter to a Minister	SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady
EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order	SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues
EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People	Test: Testament of St. Francis
ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God	UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare
ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father	VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy *
FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare	¹ I, II refer to First and Second Editions.

II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis	LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis
2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis	LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis
3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles	LP: Legend of Perugia
CL: Legend of Saint Clare	L3S: Legend of the Three Companions
CP: Process of Saint Clare	SC: Sacrum Commernicium
Fior: Little Flowers of St. Francis	SP: Mirror of Perfection

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

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

EDITORIAL

Facing 1991 with Franciscan Hope

Christian hope confirms us in our desire to make no concession of finality to the many glaring and frightening anti-gospel phenomena of our times. Much like the great Saint Augustine who as the Vandals were besieging the city of his bishopric, Hippo, nevertheless continued his ministry of writing refutations of heresy, our desire is to press on toward the gospel demands even in this somewhat distressing hour.

Francis and Clare are resplendent images of unwavering, Spirit-filled hope for us. Their steadfastness during periods of disappointment and darkness is a powerful reminder of the Spirit's gift of fortitude — a gift, by the way, which St. Bonaventure saw especially operative in Mary's life of discipleship. It is perhaps this gift we must call upon if we are to be the evangelizing and evangelized People of God we are called to be, especially as the events of our times suggest images of Armageddon. Neither Francis nor Clare was immune to temptations against hope. Both, however, ultimately were able to overcome them and to commit their spiritual energies to even more creative ways of allowing the reality of Jesus to pervade their lives and, thus too, the lives of those among whom they lived and ministered.

The Spirit has in a special way during the last twenty-five years awakened the Church to a vital and dynamic conviction regarding evangelization. Just as Francis and Clare, we too are empowered to intuit the deepest demands of this call and to actualize the spirit of evangelization in prophetic service to the Church and to the world. Like them, also, we can in this way add a special Franciscan nuance to this new dynamism in the Church.

This New Year is a special year of concentration in this regard as we prepare for the Fifth Centennial of the Evangelization of the Americas in which Franciscans played such a prominent role. To this end, The

CORD is pleased to begin with this issue a series of articles on Franciscan evangelization by Fr. Charles V. Finnegan, O.F.M., a friar eminently qualified to address our topic. Fr. Charles brings to his subject an expertise grounded in almost two decades of missionary activity in Brasil as well as several years of ministering to Hispanics in the Bronx and in the Washington, D.C., area. A former provincial minister of Holy Name Province, he has served the General Curia of the Order on international commissions of vital importance. During all of these years of ministry he has had a special interest in liberation theology and evangelization. His current writings for the Franciscan Mission Service of Silver Spring, Maryland reveal the depth of his thought and the zeal of his spirit.

We are convinced that all of our readers will discover in Fr. Charles' articles a graced opportunity to take to heart in a spirit of Franciscan optimism the promising and prophetic message of evangelization especially as enunciated in Pope Paul VI's "Evangelii Nuntiandi." The General Chapter of the Order of Friars Minor which is to be held in San Diego from late May to early July of this year has chosen evangelization as its theme. The CORD is privileged to be a forum whereby all Franciscan men and women can be awakened to creative images of ministry that serve as sources of hope for themselves and those to whom they minister. As the gnawing uncertainty of world events casts a shadow of gloom over this new year we not only refuse to succumb to any form of fatalism, we also let ourselves be seized anew by the power and love of the Holy Spirit without whom, St. Bonaventure states, whatever the Father and Son do remains ineffective.

May this New Year continue to be one of enthusiastic Franciscan contribution to the spreading of the Word of God thus displacing the darkness as well as the false glitter of this world with the Gospel light of hope.

Fr. Joseph Doino O.F.M.



Franciscans and the "New Evangelization"

CHARLES V. FINNEGAN, O.F.M.

Introduction

This is the first in a planned series of articles in The CORD on the Franciscan mission charism, or Franciscan evangelization. These essays are being offered as a modest contribution to promote Franciscan participation in the "new evangelization" (a term first used by the Latin American bishops in their 1968 Medellin Conference), proposed by Pope John Paul II in 1984 as he inaugurated the "novena of years" preparing the churches in the Americas to observe our Fifth Centennial of Evangelization in 1992. Franciscans had a prominent role in the evangelization of the Americas from the beginning, as will be pointed out in the next article of this series, and our calling to be evangelizers today is surely one of our most urgent challenges and valuable opportunities.

This series of articles is not being presented as a scholarly treatise on Franciscan evangelization. That kind of project, surely worthwhile, would have to be undertaken by those with the time, resources, and competence to do it. Those interested in a complete study of the Franciscan mission charism will find a valuable tool in the publication *Build With Living Stones*.

ALL Called to Evangelize

It has often been noted that, unlike many other founders of religious institutions, Francis of Assisi did not start a religious family to undertake any specific work, or to meet any one specific need of the church or the world. His followers had no need to change their work when joining his gospel venture; rather they "should exercise that trade which they [already] know, provided it is not harmful to the soul and can be done honestly" (Reg NB 7,3).

We present a brief biographical sketch of the author in the editorial contained in this issue of The Cord.

There was, however, from the beginning, one task common to all of Francis' followers, whatever their specific work. All were, and are, called to proclaim the gospel. "Let all the brothers preach by their work" (Reg NB 17,3), *ALL* preach; *ALL* proclaim the gospel. A Franciscan non-evangelizer is a contradiction in terms.

This universal Franciscan calling is emphasized repeatedly in chapter 5 of the general constitutions of the Friars Minor:

— Just as the Son was sent by the Father, all brothers, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, are sent to the whole world as heralds of the gospel to every creature... (art. 83,1).

—All the brothers share in the whole church's duty of evangelizing... (art. 83,2).

— Wherever they are and whatever work they do, the brothers should dedicate themselves to the task of proclaiming the gospel: whether they live a contemplative and penitential life together as brothers, working for the fraternity, or in the world while undertaking intellectual and material activities, or exercising a pastoral ministry in parishes and other ecclesiastical institutions, or finally by the witness of a simple Franciscan presence that announces the coming of God's reign (art. 84).

Similar statements are made in the documents of all branches of the Franciscan family.

Notwithstanding the extraordinary variety that exists among Franciscans, all followers of Francis who wish to be faithful to the very essence of his charism, need continually to:

**HEAR THE GOSPEL — LIVE THE GOSPEL —
PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL.**

The reflections in this series will deal especially with the third of those imperatives: the Franciscan mission charism, or the Franciscan evangelizing ministry. Since all Franciscans share certain priorities and a common "Franciscan style" of evangelizing, these essays, based largely on Franciscan sources, will, it is hoped, be of interest to both religious and lay Franciscans.

Francis the Evangelizer

In their excellent translation of the writings of St. Francis and St. Clare, Ignatius Brady, OFM, and Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap., state: "St. Francis clearly emerges as a leader in the beginnings of the modern missionary activity of the Church." The *Dizionario Francescano* states: The friars minor are the first missionary order in the Church.

These statements make extraordinary claims, but not without reason. Francis is indeed the first founder of a religious order to treat in his rule

of mission to non-Christians. He is the first founder to go himself and send followers to peoples who did not believe in Christ. In his excellent volume "A History of Christian Missions" Stephen Neill writes:

Almost the first Christian to attempt to act [in a respectful manner towards pagans] was Francis of Assisi... This trip made by Francis to Egypt was more than an expression of personal interest or missionary zeal. It meant that a new spirit had come into the Christian world.

While it is true that in the centuries preceding St. Francis many monks undertook arduous missionary journeys throughout Europe, monasticism was not normally understood to be a missionary vocation. No less an authority than St. Gregory the Great (himself a monk, who sent Augustine and other monks to England) declared that "ecclesiastical missions and the monastic life do not belong together." Monks who went on missionary journeys were considered to have left their abbeys definitively and were not allowed to return. Important as missionary work was seen to be, it was not compatible with monastic stability or with the monastic emphasis on "flight from the world."

It is true that the word *mission*, in our modern sense, does not occur in the writings of Francis or in early Franciscan sources. It was not until the middle of the 16th century that church documents speak of "mission" to mean the sending of preachers, both to Christians and non-Christians. From the beginning of the 17th century the word was used in a more restrictive sense: the sending of preachers to non-Christian lands, which were in turn called "mission countries." In the ecclesiastical literature of the 16th and 17th centuries, the word *mission* was often associated with the Jesuits.

Beginnings of Franciscan Evangelization

Nonetheless, the idea of mission is prominent in St. Francis' thinking and in Franciscan literature from the start.

St. Francis discovers his vocation with clarity when he hears the *mission discourse* of the gospel while at Mass at Portiuncula. The mystical experience which Francis had earlier (the dream of Spoleto and the message from the Crucifix at San Damiano) left Francis a kind of undecided hermit. It is hearing the gospel, and specifically it is hearing the *mission discourse* in the gospel that enables Francis to exclaim for the first time, after some three or four years of searching: "This is what I want. This is what I am looking for. This is what I long to do with all my heart." Francis then takes off his hermit's garb and dons the habit of an itinerant preacher.

A Franciscan non-evangelizer is a contradiction in terms.

The Franciscan movement was born. In a magnificent paragraph, Thomas of Celano describes what would be Francis' work thereafter:

For eighteen years that were now coming to an end, his body had had little or no rest. He had travelled great distances through many regions to sow the seed of the word of God everywhere... HE FILLED THE WHOLE WORLD WITH THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, visiting in one day four or five towns and even cities, telling everyone about the reign of God. He edified his listeners as much by his word as by his example, and made his whole body into a tongue [to proclaim the gospel] (1 Cel 97).

When Pope John Paul II visited Assisi on November 5, 1978, he said something similar: "In very clear letters [Francis] wrote the gospel of Christ in the hearts of the people of his time... he carried in his own heart the misfortunes and concerns of his contemporaries." Do not those final words contain an important clue as to why Francis was such an effective evangelizer?

As with Francis, so with his followers — from the beginning. When they are only six in number, Francis sends them out on mission. The first papal document to mention the friars, *Cum dilecti filii* of 11 June 1216 by Pope Honorius III, says: "After the example of the apostles [the friars] spread the seed of the word of God."

Francis' Catholic (Universal) Mission

Notwithstanding the respect that Francis had for the church's prelates, and especially for Cardinal Hugolino, Francis would not allow that Cardinal to dissuade him from sending friars to other lands on missions:

As though in reproof the lord Cardinal said to him: "Why have you sent your friars to such distant places?" Blessed Francis replied with deep fervor: "My lord, do you imagine that God has raised up friars solely for the benefit of these provinces? I solemnly assure you that God has chosen and sent the friars for the benefit and salvation of the souls of all peoples in the world. They will be welcomed not only in the countries of the faithful but in those of unbelievers as well, and they will win many souls (*Mirror of Perfection* 65).

Notice the *universal* dimension in Francis' missionary thinking: "all

people in this world... the faithful and unbelievers as well."

Similarly, Francis' exhortation to the first six friars before sending them out on mission:

Dearest brothers, let us consider our vocation and how God in his great mercy has called us not for our salvation alone but for the many; we are therefore to go through the world exhorting all men and women more by our example than by our words (*Three Companions*, 36).

He expressed this same conviction in his *Letter to the Entire Order*:

[God] 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 no one is all-powerful except him.

Perhaps the most catholic example of missionary zeal that one can find anywhere is in chapter 23 of the rule of 1221. Francis writes in the name of all his friars to

ask and beg [all] priests, deacons... all clerics, all religious men and women, all lay brothers and young people, the poor and the needy, kings and princes, workers and farmers, servants and masters, all lay people, men and women, all children and adolescents, the young and the old, the healthy and the sick, all nations and all peoples everywhere on earth who are and who will be [to persevere in faith and penance].

Francis' missionary zeal is universal because his love, expressed in service, is universal: "Since I am the servant of all, I am obliged to serve all and minister to them the sweet words of my Lord." The great Franciscan service is precisely "ministering the sweet words of the Lord" to the world always so desperately in need of that saving word. And this "to all nations and to all peoples everywhere on earth, who are and who will be" — no one is to be excluded from the loving concern of Francis' family.

Questions for Reflection (preferably in common)

1. St. Francis "clearly emerges as a leader in the beginnings of the modern missionary activity of the church." What justification can you find for that statement?
2. Following the lead of the Latin American bishops, Pope John Paul II has called for a "new evangelization" in all the churches of the Americas. How can Franciscans, lay and religious, contribute to this "new evangelization"?
3. "St. Francis' venture of radical gospel living is especially relevant for the 'new evangelization' required today." Discuss.

Letter of the Blessed Francis to All the Peoples of Europe and to All the Leaders of the Nations on the Day Dedicated to World Peace

HERMANN SCHALÜCK, O.F.M.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

To all of you: men, women and children, to the young and the old, the christians, non-christians and atheists, to politicians and deputies, to citizens cleric and lay, I send these words from Chichicastenango in Guatemala.

MAY THE LORD GRANT YOU HIS PEACE!

For some time now, I have been present in this Amerindian continent with numerous brothers and sisters in order to give thanks to the Lord for the historic changes which result from His action in and through the people. The Amerindians, in common with all the poor of all times, teach us what it means to hope and to wait, and how we could together make preparations for the centenary of 1992.

The Lord in whom I place my confidence and to whom we all must render an account, reveals to us the profound meaning of history through simple and peaceful and apparently powerless people. The deeply felt conviction of being born free will never die in the hearts of men and women. From this place I plead with my old continent, with all its inhabitants and those in positions of trust: Abandon every kind of triumphalist policy and in 1992 choose instead a penitential celebration. In the collective memory of all Amerindians there is engraved the remembrance of

Fr. Hermann Schalück, O.F.M., of the Franciscan General Curia in Rome shares with us some powerful and profound thoughts in this "Letter of Blessed Francis." The Vatican Radio has begun to air his "modern Fioretti" which The CORD has published with regularity over the last several years.

having discovered invaders in their native land 500 years ago. But their thirst for freedom is inextinguishable; as is also their brotherly and peaceful disposition to help Europe to free itself from the burden of its own history.

I, a poor little man and your brother, who have heard the cry of so many peoples, beseech you; "One thing the Lord desires from you: to do justice, to be faithful and to walk humbly before our God" (Mi 6,8). Do not speak with haughtiness of the first, the second and the third world. Are you not aware that only one world exists, only one history of humanity, only one Earth, which is the mother of us all? Do you not understand that all men and all people live in mutual inter-dependence and are all dependent on one God; that they have a common destiny, that all have to give and to receive at the same time? No nation, no continent ought to enrich itself any more at the expense of the others.

Europe, do no longer export your arrogance, your egoism, your conflicts, your arms, your poison, your manner of living and thinking. Rather believe in the creative and peaceful forces of those whom you have herded together on the margins of society, those, indeed, in whom the Spirit of the Lord is equally at work. Be mindful to give a just recompense for the raw materials and the sweat of the labourers from the South. I am always mindful of the words of my brother, Bishop Oscar R. Madariaga from Honduras: "Drugs are the only product of our countries which is paid well." Why don't you export to us more true forms of solidarity, respect and help, forms that will allow us to be autonomous? Please give up sending us a civilization of consumerism and greed, built upon force and exploitation. Why not send us a civilization of fraternity, of respect and love for their people? Give your first priority to ecology, to the protection of creation for its own sake, in an economy geared to preserving life for the whole world. Ecologists should not be compelled any more to denounce poisoned products; producers should put on the market only what is safe, useful and beneficial.

Europe, please give up talking about "development" according to your standards; talk rather about "liberation" from all "oppressive, sinful structures," beginning with your own and the ones you have imposed on others. Our Lord Pope has often spoken about this need of liberation for all mankind.

Peoples and governments of Europe, when you become converted and are disposed to pay attention to the cry of the poor wherever they are, you will be contributing to your own liberation and be preparing your own future. Let yourselves be "contaminated" by the hope of your lesser sister in the faith. In spite of all your progress, you have too often given to the world the image of people who have no hope left but have come to fear the worst. When you cease to hope, then what you fear begins to happen.

Let us together have a look at another event of 1992 about which the whole world is speaking. You want to establish the bases of that which brother Mikhail of Moscow calls the "house of Europe," a project which the Lord Pope also has approved and blessed. Therefore I appeal to the politicians and the money-lords: Don't make a fortress out of Europe; make it rather a house of friends, with many apartments rich in color. Let the foundation you lay be respect of life; let the walls be your search for peace and your respect for all cultures and faiths. Finally let the roof be a tolerance like that of God, who sends rain upon the just and the unjust (Mt. 5,45) and who reserves to himself the judgment of history. Let your doors remain open wide. Demilitarize your hearts and your arsenals. Set up in your continent institutions which allow a large vital space for the intuitions of people, for dignity and liberty and human rights. Remember, you leaders of the people, that you have received a mandate from them and that, for the time being your special duty is the liberation and the well-being of your fellow citizens. The people themselves are the subject of their future. That is why they desire to change their leaders every so often. Do not act as if you were able to change the people according to your whim. Never treat your people as the mere object of your politics. "Prepare the way of the people" (Is. 62, 10). Let justice be your daily bread and for the future let national security be called respect for rights and liberty.

And you, peoples of Europe, as peace-loving, kindly, brave peace-makers, in these latter times have seen a great light. You have become brothers and sisters to all those who struggle for liberation and dignity. Your bravery and your deep intuitions have caused frontiers to become porous, have caused walls to collapse, and flowers of hope to spring up. The "new manner of thinking," of which the Apostle of the gentiles has already spoken (cf. Rom. 12, 2), will not fail to open a way for you. You have experienced suffering and persecution; many of you were not afraid to be precursors, "sowers," even martyrs. Your dreams and your utopias have achieved more than all the "realpolitik" of so many politicians.

No one has ever succeeded in walling in those lesser sisters of our faith, namely, liberty and creativity. You have shown to millions of your brothers and sisters throughout the world, that to live in hope is worth while, because the hopes rooted in the heart of a people produce more fruits than any ideology. Yes, you have demonstrated that the hope of the poor is long-lived and can not be quenched. No regime and no nation should in the future try to dominate or overcome another; nor should anybody again lay claim to a monopoly of the truth, apart from God. For that reason the various religions should not regard each other with suspicion;

rather should they discover and recognize their common responsibility for the life of the world and the whole cosmos.

Your courage has served as a lesson for all christians and for all church leaders. "Wherever there is the Spirit of the Lord, there is liberty" (2 Cor 3, 17). On 9 November 1989 I was in Berlin, in front of the broken wall. With my piece of wood as violin I played a duet with Igor Ros-tropovich for the poor and the oppressed of all times, a melody of Helder Camara for a more just and better world:

"When one dreams alone,
His dream is there forlorn;
When many people dream,
A new world is born."

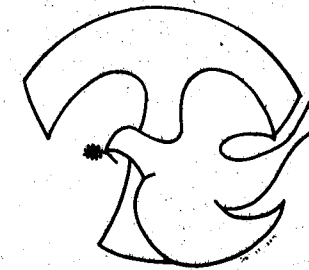
When will all the walls, of whatever kind, finally learn to dance?

Brothers and sisters, politicians and simple people of Europe, I ask you to accept these words of exhortation, a greeting and of thanksgiving from your poor little brother Francis, a citizen of Europe and of the world, standing at this moment on the high plateau of Guatemala. Later-on, in 1991, I should like to accompany the Lord Pope to Moscow and to Beijing. In 1992, on the wings of Brother Wind I shall fly to Santo Domingo, to commemorate the 500 years of evangelization of the Americas; a year which should also mark the beginning of a real discovery of Europe and its true values.

I salute you all, in East and West, in North and South, with these words of exhortation and consolation which I heard last year in Dresden and in Prague, words that I have sung with the native peoples of Chichicas-tenango during these latter months:

Hope is everlasting:
learn that as you stride.
And as you go on learning
Hope will be your guide.

Francis of Assisi, your brother.



Two Graces of Communication. *Bonaventure on Fruitful Preaching*

GREGORY SHANAHAN, O.F.M.

Before the modern "communication explosion" happened, people flocked to hear the preacher. The alluring voices of radio and television had not yet invaded their homes to become the prevailing domestic sound. A preacher held the field; he was not only the bearer of a saving message but story-teller, too, often tempering stern words with homely anecdote and relieving the terror-stricken with some amusing "incident from life." But people listened. An inflation of words had not yet dizzied their attention, nor a million advertisers pummelled them into sating spurious needs, nor hosts of broadcasting know-alls violated their sense of wonder. Teachers also enjoyed a similar platform of authority. A rapport was quickly established between respected speaker and receptive audience. By a kind of osmosis the message of truth was transmitted. It was, however, a two-way operation. The giving and the receiving were equally vital to each other. Preaching and teaching were valued as charisms, graces; but listening and learning were also seen as graces.

The Middle Ages fully appreciated this. True, time stood still when lives were simpler and "news," carried perhaps by some traveller or wandering minstrel, might be months, even years, old. And a medieval preacher or teacher was sure of an audience that was at least curious. At the same time, neither the grace of communicating nor that of listening was simply presumed or taken for granted; these were always prayed for.

Through his masterful insights and elegant translation from the original Latin, Fr. Gregory gives us an ever deeper appreciation of the preaching of Saint Bonaventure. Here we see how the Seraphic Doctor's evangelizing spirit manifests itself in unique ways from the very beginning of his sermons. Fr. Gregory writes from Greyfriars, the Capuchin College at Oxford where he is engaged in research.

We learn this from those *introductions* to medieval sermons, known as *prothemes*, which were in essence invitations to pray that the preaching of the word would bear fruit.¹ These introductions were also skillful applications of biblical verses or lines. The verse chosen (different to the sermon's main theme) was meant to stimulate a prayer for both preacher and hearer. They are examples of prayer based directly on Scripture. The *prothemes*, taken together, are a window giving us at least a glance at the medieval sermon's preparation by means of *lectio divina* and a view of sorts onto the orchestration of what was the most highly respected art in the service of minds and souls.

What was the prayer at the opening of a sermon for? The preacher, for his part, needed a profound knowledge of Scripture and a clear mind to expound it. For the medieval sermon was above all an exposition of scripture and an application of the word of God to the human itinerary. "For anybody to be considered a suitable teacher of what was brought to us by Christ and written through the power of the Holy Spirit," wrote St. Bonaventure, "an anointing with grace from above is a necessity." The preacher also needed, besides even this graced insight, the motive of charity and zeal for the salvation of the people who would hear him. He must also be humble, humble enough to know that his words belong to the Lord; humility would confer the grace of simplicity on his discourse and also lend him the confidence to realize he was being sent with the light and the power of God's message. The preacher must know he is to *bring good news to the poor*, he must be aware of being *sent* by the Lord in obedience, and he must feel "on fire with a fraternal friendship." The listener, too, must be a humble person who feels the need for the word of God, a mild and receptive person and not one who picks holes in the sermon, a person of faith before the announcing of Good News.² The word preached bears no fruit unless it finds a welcome in the "ears of the heart."

As examples, three of Bonaventure's Prothemes are here selected and translated. The first is attached to the sermon for the *Fourth Sunday after Epiphany*, the second to *Quinquagesima Sunday*, and the third to the *Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost*.³ Brief and succinct, they will be found to fulfill all that is claimed for them.

1

In the first chapter of his Letter to the Romans [verse 16] the Apostle says that *the Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith*. If the word of God, then, is directed to the salvation of our souls, do what the Letter of James says [1:21]: *Welcome with a mild spirit*

that word, which can bring salvation to your souls. It follows therefore that anyone who cares for the welfare of his soul is eager to hear the word of God; just as someone who has a care for his body's health is only too glad to listen to what his doctor says. Furthermore, the efficacy of God's word can sometimes be impeded; this is usually because of either a failing on the part of the preacher who is announcing it, or defective listening on the congregation's part. So, they both need the grace of God, the preacher for his communicating, the people for their listening. And for that reason, here at the beginning of this sermon of ours let us ask the Lord to help me to communicate and you to hear those things that should redound to His praise and glory and the salvation of our souls.

2

Listen, I have serious things to tell you — Proverbs, chapter 8 [verse 6]. In this second text, taken from the Book of Proverbs, the Divine Wisdom gives expression to three things that are needed when the Lord's passion is being preached on.⁴ And the first of these is for the hearer: listening with humble reverence, which is noted when it says, *Listen*. The second is for one who is suffering:⁵ depth of material for reflection; this is what the *serious things* indicate. The third is for the speaker: the skill to bring eloquence to what he expresses in words. This is what is meant when the text says, *to tell you*. And so, dearly beloved, as our sermon on the Lord's passion begins, let us entreat the Lord that, by his grace and goodness, on each member of this audience may be kindly bestowed the ability to listen with reverence, and on me announcing the word the readiness of speech to express my message. So may we be able, for the consolation of our souls, to carefully form some idea of the infinite privilege our redemption is and of the superhuman mystery of the Lord's passion. And that we may obtain more easily what we ask for, let each person please say the following verse:

*O cross, hail! sole hope of ours.*⁶

3

How beautiful are your feet in their sandals, o prince's daughter! — Song of Songs, chapter 7 [(verse 1)].

The beauty of a virtuous life, liveliness in the cause of truth, and the expanse of charity are what cause and hold together any religious soul's excellence. Hence, in the latter quotation, taken from the Song of Songs, the first words, *How beautiful*, touch upon the beauty of a virtuous life in regard to the quality of excellence in any christian soul, a soul called "daughter of Christ," prince in the highest degree.

Next, the phrase *your feet in their sandals* touches on liveliness in the cause of truth. *Feet* here is to be understood as referring to preachers and teachers; *sandals* are symbolic of the evidence of Scripture; for just as footwear protects the feet, so does the evidence of the Scriptures fortify preachers and teachers, in the sense in which Ephesians [6:15] says, *Your feet shod in readiness to publish the gospel of peace*.

The third phrase, *O prince's daughter*, refers to the expanse of charity. A faithful christian's soul is daughter of Him who is prince in the highest degree when, in opposition to avarice, it imitates His poverty, when, in opposition to lust, it imitates His chastity, and when, in opposition to pride, it imitates His obedience or his humility. Thus the beauty of a virtuous life exposes disfigurement, or else casts a veil over it, liveliness in the cause of truth entices the negligent, and an expansive charity censures the reluctant.⁷

And so, as our sermon begins, a prayer must be offered to the Lord that by His grace and kindness, during this present conference,⁸ He let me take my share of the beauty of virtue by my action, liveliness in the cause of truth by my speech, and an expansive charity in my heart. So may I at last be able to say something which will redound to the praise and glory of Jesus Christ the Blessed One, and for the consolation of each person listening to me.

Endnotes

¹On the *prothème* and its connection with the initial prayer, see J. G. Bougerol. *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure* (Paterson, N. J., 1963) 137-138.

²These precise requisites in preacher and listener find mention in the prologue to St. Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (*Opera omnia* VII, 3-4).

³J. G. Bougerol, ed., *S. Bonaventurae Sermones Dominicales* (Grottaferrata, 1977) 199. 227. 473. Cf. *Opera omnia* vol. IX, 188 (Sermon 1). 201. 450 (Sermon 1).

⁴The Prothème refers to the *first* text of the sermon; it has already been announced, and the theme is the Passion (*Lk* 18:21).

⁵This suggests that the main sermon, covering Christ's sufferings, will offer meditation material conducive to sharing in the Passion.

⁶First line of sixth verse of the Holy Week Vespers hymn *Vexilla Regis*.

⁷This sentence is obscure in manuscript, and its sense has to be supplied from context.

⁸One of those collected and revised by Bonaventure personally in 1267 - 1268 (see Bougerol, *Sermones*, 29), the sermon which followed and is here referred to seems designed as a theological conference for religious, perhaps for an assembly of friars at Paris.

For the Sake of the Child

For the sake of the Child
Wisemen took another route.
Dazzled first by the star,
they found the
tiny king
covered only by
the young mother,
and the gentle boy
at her side.
The Child continued
to burn in their dreams,
brighter than the star,
and into that night
crept the warning voice
of the angel,
teaching them
the other way.
For the sake of the Child
Light will stream
from the borders
of the outcast.
For the sake of the Child
violence will surrender
one day... in shame.
For the sake of the Child
justice will genuflect
and love will seed
the hidden life,
given only his
infant cry
and the answer of
the poor couple
who watch and chant
his lullaby.

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

Mercy in Francis of Assisi According to St. Bonaventure

LYN M. SCHEURING, S.F.O., Ph.D.

In this essay, we will focus on Bonaventure's understanding of Francis through the prism of mercy. First of all, we will consider the scripturally based "mercy seat" referred to by Bonaventure; secondly, we will look at the virtue of *pietas* and its link with mercy; and thirdly, we will conclude by noting Francis' compassion with the poor, as mercy incarnated.

The effect of Bonaventure's *Legenda major*, the biography of Francis, according to Regis Armstrong, is a portrait of the inner life of the Poverello.¹ Before his conversion, writes Bonaventure, "Francis was ignorant of God's plan for him. He was distracted by the external affairs of his father's business and drawn down toward earthly things by the corruption of human nature. As a result, he had not yet learned how to contemplate or acquire a taste for the things of God."² It so happened that at that time he had a prolonged illness which seemed to prepare his soul through a sense of personal poverty and dependence on God, for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. After his strength was restored, he became more sensitive to the poverty of others and compassion was growing within him. During a certain moment, when he was praying and became "totally absorbed in God," Jesus Christ appeared to him fastened to the cross.

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"Francis' soul melted at the sight" ...³ In the PROLOGUE To The Life of Francis, we read:

In these last days
the grace of God our Savior has appeared
in his servant Francis
to all who are truly humble and lovers of holy poverty.
In him
they can venerate "God's superabundant mercy"
and be taught by his example
to utterly reject ungodliness and worldly passions,
to live in conformity with Christ
and to thirst after blessed hope with unflagging desire.
He was poor and lowly,
but the Most High God looked upon him
with such condescension and kindness
that he not only lifted him up in his need
from the dust of a worldly life,
but made him a practitioner, a leader and a herald
of Gospel perfection⁴

Francis was so conscious of God's superabundant mercy on him that it moved him to an ongoing conversion. Chesterton has written that Francis has seen the whole world as if hanging on "a hair of the mercy of God."⁵ Like the law of gravity, as if all reality were hanging upside down, all depending on God's merciful love.

Bonaventure explains in Chapter VI "On Humility and Obedience," that in Francis' "own estimation he was nothing but a sinner,"⁶ depending on God's merciful love. Here Bonaventure gives an example about Francis and another friar:

As they went along the road talking together about God, the friar, not unmindful of his vision, skillfully asked Francis what he thought of himself. The humble servant of Christ said to him: 'I see myself as the greatest of sinners... If Christ had shown as much mercy to the greatest criminal, I am convinced that he would be much more grateful to God than I.'⁷

Francis felt in such need of God's mercy and was so taken by it, that he didn't think he could thank God enough... Francis could not get over God's mercy through Jesus crucified!

Mercy Seat

In the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, Bonaventure shares his own experience of seeking the path which Francis took in his journey to God:

Following the example of our most blessed father Francis, I was seeking this peace with panting spirit — I a sinner and utterly unworthy who after our blessed father's death had become the seventh Minister General of the friars. It happened that about the time of the thirty-third anniversary of

the saint's death, under divine impulse, I withdrew to Mount La Verna, seeking a place of quiet and desiring to find there peace of spirit. While I was there reflecting on various ways by which the soul ascends into God, there came to mind Francis' vision of the Seraph whose six wings surround Christ Crucified from whom he received the stigmata. There Bonaventure discovered the path Francis took... there is no other path but the burning love of the crucified...⁸

In this work, Bonaventure writes specifically of the mercy which Francis experienced through Christ by referring to the "mercy seat":

Christ is the way and the door;
Christ is the ladder and the vehicle,
like the Mercy Seat placed above the ark of God
and the mystery hidden from eternity.⁹

Bonaventure evokes the imagination to contemplate the original symbol of God's presence, as expressed in the "Mercy Seat". Bonaventure footnotes this as coming from the instruction God gave to Moses regarding the Ark of the Covenant, from Ex. 25:20:

The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings... And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark; and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.

On the day of atonement the high priest would sprinkle the blood of a sacrificed animal on the mercy seat. This sprinkled blood represented "life" given back to God, purified and consecrated anew, expiating the sins... It was a symbolic dedication of the life of the person who sacrificed it to Yahweh. It cleansed him of his faults in Yahweh's sight and reconciled him once more. We can refer to Paul in the Letter to the Romans (3:25), who seems to be looking on Christ's shedding of blood on the cross as the new "mercy seat" and the first Good Friday as the pre-eminently Christian Day of Atonement.

Bonaventure places Christ like the "Mercy Seat" at the center of the holy of holies, whose blood expiates, reconciles and redeems humankind. Christ, the way and the door, is the center of Francis' life and of Bonaventure's theology. He explains further, the significance of the "Mercy Seat":

For the Cherubim who faced each other
also signify this.
The fact that they faced each other,
with their faces turned toward the Mercy Seat,
is not without a mystical meaning,
so that what Our Lord said in John

might be verified:
'This is eternal life,
that they may know you, the only true God,
and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.'¹⁰

Like the Cherubim, Francis turned to Christ... the Mercy Seat:

Whoever turns his face fully to the Mercy Seat
and with faith, hope and love,
devotion, admiration, exultation,
appreciation, praise and joy
beholds him hanging upon the cross,
such a one makes the Pasch, that is, the passover,
with Christ.¹¹

Like the wings of the Cherubim who surrounded the Mercy Seat, so too in Francis' experience of the stigmata, the wings of the Seraph overshadowed and surrounded Christ Crucified, *the* expression of God's mercy.

After Bonaventure describes the stigmata of Francis, he concludes:

Now is fulfilled
the vision of the Crucified...
at the beginning of your conversion
which pierced your soul
with a sword of compassionate sorrow.
Now the voice that came from the cross
as if from the lofty throne and the secret mercy-seat of Christ...
is believed as undoubtedly true.¹²

The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures normally uses the Greek meaning for mercy ("eleos") wherever "hesed" occurs in the Hebrew Scripture. This term which images loving human relationships came to be applied to God's relationship with his people. God used this word to describe himself in Exodus 34:6: "The Lord, the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in *hesed* and fidelity, continuing his *hesed* for a thousand generations." God thus said that he was related to his people in mercy and faithful, compassionate love just as they were related among themselves when tied together by bonds of mercy and faithful, compassionate love.¹³ God's *hesed* is permanent and unconditional, and was seen as an aspect of his everlasting covenant with his people. The Latin word for mercy used by Bonaventure is "misericordia," meaning a heart sensitive to misery. One may describe mercy as God's historically verifiable and faithful sensitivity to misery through Christ crucified.

Francis was converted in this realization of God's mercy on him through

Christ crucified. Bonaventure notes that one day while Francis was weeping as he looked back over his past years in sadness (Isa. 38:15), the joy of the Holy Spirit came over him and he was assured that all of his sins had been completely forgiven.¹⁴ Subsequently, Francis experienced a need to "withdraw from the world" to a certain extent, but of course, not from the world of God's creation, which was dear to him, nor from the world of sinful humanity of which he was a part. He desired to "live for Him Who died for all,"¹⁵ and decided to withdraw from any distraction from the Lord's loving mercy, to let go of all encumbrances and embrace the poverty of seeking nothing but God. In his rule, Francis wrote:

We should wish for nothing else and have no other desire; we should find no pleasure or delight in anything except in our Creator, Redeemer and Saviour; he alone is true God, who is perfect Good, all Good, every Good, the true and supreme Good...¹⁶

Francis was initially tempted to "totally withdraw from the world," but after conversing with the friars and in consulting with Clare, Francis succeeds in freeing himself from this temptation.¹⁷ Celano writes:

They all conferred together, as true followers of justice, whether they should dwell among men or go to solitary places. But Francis, who did not trust in his own skill, but had recourse to holy prayer before all transactions, chose not to live for himself alone, but for him "who died for all" knowing that he was sent for this that he might win souls for God...¹⁸

Besides Francis' awareness of God's mercy on him, he was utterly moved by the mercy of God on his neighbors who were also redeemed by the blood of Christ.

Pietas

In Chapter Eight of the *Legenda*, Bonaventure describes this phenomenon of mercy toward one's neighbor as the virtue of piety in Francis. Another related word to "hesed" or "mercy" is the word "piety" which comes from "pietas." For the Romans, "pietas" was *the* glorification of virtue. *Pietas* implied interpersonal relationship and bonding. It meant love, loyalty, reverence, fidelity and compassion.¹⁹ Most of all, it was a family virtue and implied family ties.

Bonaventure presents the image of Francis who felt he belonged to the family of all creatures and creation, i.e. "brother sun," "sister moon" — have the same "Father of mercies." Francis saw each creature separately, distinctly, sacred — each being like a child of God and therefore a brother and sister to him. Bonaventure explains:

True piety
which according to the apostle
is helpful for all things,
had so filled Francis' heart
and penetrated its depths...

This is what
drew him up to God
through devotion,
transformed him into Christ
through compassion,
attracted him to his neighbor...
(as brother & sister)
through this virtue
he was attracted to all things
in spiritual love,
especially to souls redeemed by the precious blood
of Jesus Christ —²⁰
(i.e., the mercy of God through His Son...)

In the same chapter on Piety, Bonaventure noted that when Francis encountered people redeemed by God's mercy, involved in sin, ...

he grieved with such tender pity
that he seemed like a mother
who was daily in labor pains
bringing them to birth in Christ.
This was his principal reason
for reverencing the ministers
of the word of God,
because with their devoted concern
they raise up seed for their dead brother,
namely Christ,
crucified for us,
... when these ministers guide them
with their concerned devotion.
He firmly held
that such work of mercy
was more acceptable
to the Father of mercies
than any sacrifice.²¹

Francis rejoiced in spirit, because of those friars who by word or deed led sinners to the love of Christ. "He abhorred like a snakebite," notes Bonaventure, "the vice of detraction as a foe to the source of piety and grace; and he firmly held it to be a devastating plague and an abomination to God's mercy..."²² because of God's unconditional love for that other person who is a brother or sister, and who has the same Father.

In his Chapter on Prayer, Bonaventure wrote that on several occasions the friars heard Francis groan aloud, imploring the divine mercy for sinners and weeping for the Lord's passion as if it were there before his eyes...²³ The sight of Christ Crucified was that source of ever present mercy. Francis would be seen praying at night, with his hands outstretched in the form of a cross.

What Christ did was certainly good news for Francis. He was utterly moved to compassion for Christ Jesus... Going back to the beginning of Francis' conversion, Bonaventure wrote that the vision of the crucified "pierced his soul with a sword of compassionate sorrow." Francis returned compassion for him, who is the "Good News," i. e., the embodiment of the Father's mercy — His loving compassion toward humanity, every creature and creation; and He gave His only Son as the way to experience this news. Francis knew the real sense of the "Good News," that God had superabundant mercy on him in Jesus Christ.

Bonaventure notes that Francis also embraced the mother of the Lord Jesus with indescribable love because she had made the Lord of Majesty our brother and because through her, he writes, we have obtained mercy (I Pet. 2:10). After Christ, Francis put all his trust in her and made her his advocate and that of his friars.²⁴

Compassion

Reflecting on the paradigm of Francis' journey toward knowing God's merciful love, Armstrong concludes that the grace-filled person must first empty self by following a life of penance, i.e., a life of poverty and humility. This initial process of renunciation enables him to be more fully imbued with the Gospel spirit of compassion and encourages him to conform his life more closely to that of Christ.²⁵

Bonaventure accounts for Francis' purification through conversion as he radically realized that Christ himself went through the "awe-filled" experience of the Incarnation, of embracing the purifying poverty of the human condition, particularly the crucifixion. ... "Whenever Christ's crucifixion came to his mind, he could scarcely contain his tears and sighs ... from that time on he clothed himself with a spirit of poverty."²⁶

Conrad Harkins describes that before Francis' conversion, compassion for the poor had been at war with another side of him... "The pampered son of a rich merchant who never ate anything he did not like, who could live only surrounded with attention, who could not bear to look at the houses of lepers from a distance of two miles without holding his nose."²⁷ The spoiled playboy of Assisi heard the words of the Gospel, "if a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and begin to follow in my footsteps."²⁸ Francis' focus was the Father's

mercy (his sensitivity to misery) through compassion in the footsteps of Christ... In the first lines of his *Testament*, written shortly before his death, Francis reflects on his life's journey:

The Lord granted me, Brother Francis, to begin to do penance in this way: While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body; and afterward I lingered a little and left the world.²⁹

According to Wayne Hellmann, the spirit's leading Francis among the lepers... emerged from an experience of God's mercy on him ... and moved his heart to a new and deep compassion. For the first time his heart was opened and sensitive to the misery of his outcast brothers and sisters, and in his embrace of them, he was embraced. Francis realized that the poor evangelized him and that it was the Lord who led him, and thus to be among the lepers was his response to God. In the *Legenda major*, we find that the central spiritual experience of Francis is compassion, that is, the fleshing out of his own experience of God's mercy. Hellmann states that both Francis' conversion and the completion of his journey in contemplation are experiences of compassion. Francis' spirituality is thus realized in relationship to the humanity of his brother the leper and the humanity of his brother Jesus on the cross. In compassion for Christ and others, Francis reached the deepest level of likeness to our merciful God.³⁰

... now he rendered humble service to the lepers with human concern and devoted kindness in order that he might completely despise himself, because of Christ crucified, who according to the text of the prophet was despised as a leper (Isa. 53:3). He visited their houses frequently, generously distributed alms to them and with great compassion kissed their hands and their mouths.³¹

Recalling the events of his conversion, at the end of his life, Francis singled out his mercy through compassion for the lepers. When we consider that Francis as Minister General made clear to postulants that they must serve the lepers, perhaps the importance of this fundamental orientation of mercy through compassion for the poor can be appreciated.³²

Harkins notes that in Bonaventure's account, Francis has been so transformed into the leper, that the leper has disappeared. Francis, now free of his shackles, has been transformed into the leper, that is, into Christ. For medieval piety indeed every poor man and every leper was Christ... Such was simply the effect of a collective consciousness of twelve hundred years of hearing the Gospel text: "I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me" (Mt. 25:40).³³ Every Holy Week the faithful heard the words from the Book of Isaiah (53:3-4): "Surely

he has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted."

Since the people of Assisi treated lepers, as in the time of Christ, as outcasts, Francis made himself one with them. He saw Christ's image in all the poor; and when he met them, he not only generously gave them even the necessities of life that had been given to him, but he believed that these should be given them by right,³⁴ because of God's merciful love and preferential choice for the poor.

In summary, from the mercy which Bonaventure observed in Francis, one may note that basically the phenomenon of Francis' conversion, seemed to emerge through his "fully turning his face to Christ," the Mercy Seat. Francis' relationship with the Father of Mercies manifested in *pietas*, directly connected him with all creatures, his brothers and sisters having the same Father whose expression of mercy through Christ crucified was fleshed out in Francis compassion for his brothers and sisters.

Endnotes

¹Regis J. Armstrong, "The Spiritual Theology of the *Legenda major* of St. Bonaventure" (Ph.D. diss. New York: Fordham University, 1978), 4.

²*Legenda major*: 2, 187 (LM will be the abbreviation) from the translation of Ewert H. Cousins in *Bonaventure* (New York: Paulist, 1978).

³LM 1:5, 189.

⁴LM Prologue, 179. Ewert Cousins has translated "Bonaventure's text into sense lines where it seemed appropriate because of the rhetorical and poetic quality of a passage." See Cousins' *Introduction* on p. 46.

⁵C. K. Chesterton, *St. Francis of Assisi* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1924), 78.

⁶LM 6:6, 234.

⁷Ibid.

⁸*Itinerarium mentis in deum* Prologue: 2, 54 (translated by Ewert H. Cousins).

⁹*Itinerarium* 7:1, 111.

¹⁰*Itinerarium* 6:4, 106.

¹¹*Itinerarium* 7:2, 111.

¹²LM 13:10.

¹³George Martin, "Mercy", *God's Word Today* Vol. II, No. 7, July, 1989, 47.

¹⁴LM 3:C.

¹⁵Franciscan Federation of the Brothers and Sisters of the U.S., Inc., *Build With Living Stones*, "Unity of Contemplation and Mission," 1987, 10:17.

¹⁶Rule of 1221 (23).

¹⁷Franciscan Federation, *Ibid.*

¹⁸I Cel. 35.

¹⁹See Cousins' footnote, 250.

²⁰LM 8:1, 250.

²¹Ibid., 251.

²²LM 8:4, 253.

²³LM 9:4, 275.

²⁴LM 9:2, 264.

²⁵Armstrong, 52.

²⁶Lyn M. Scheuring, "The Poverty of Francis of Assisi According to Bonaventure and its Relation to Poverty in John of the Cross" (Ph.D. diss. New York: Fordham University, 1990, 183-4; see LM I: 5-6.

²⁷Conrad Harkins, *The Charism of St. Francis*, Our Franciscan Charism in the World Today: Proceedings of Super Conference IV held at St. Bonaventure University, NY 12-17 July, 1987, ed. Alcuin Coyle (Clifton: F.A.M.E., 1989), 15.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹*The Testament*, 67 (*Omnibus*).

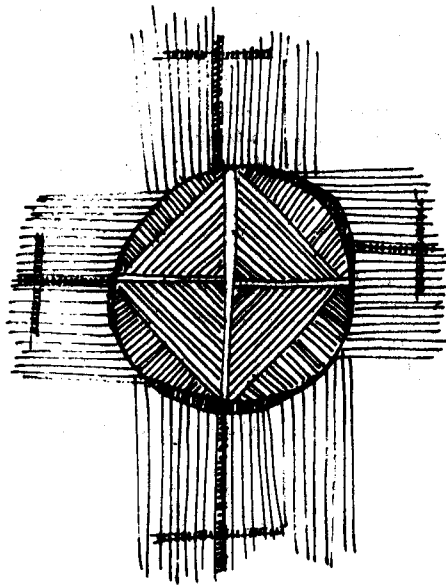
³⁰Wayne Hellmann, "The Spirituality of the Franciscans," *Christian Spirituality II*, ed. Jill Raitt (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 17:43.

³¹LM I: 6, 190.

³²*Legend of Perugia*, 90 (*Omnibus*), see Harkins, 15.

³³Harkins, 17.

³⁴LM 8:5.



Catching the Spirit

The proper stance, the right foot out in front
The lowered shoulder, the deft snap of the wrist —
And it is launched —

There, against the lattice of a flowering tree,
free as a bee,
It rides upon invisible support
To chart a course made by a wiser Hand;

Through comic ups and downs,
Surprising twists and turns,
Its flight remains quite faithful to its
higher law of Love,

And then, like feathered hope,
it gently comes to rest;

See, it was so easy —
Let's do it all again.

D. DeMarco

Spiritual Director

So often

I have knelt in prayer
and while I moaned beneath
the mystery of "vocation's" grace,
I have heard myself say
in the dark of the chapel and of my heart:
"LORD, SHOW ME THY FACE!"

For I have questions to ask
and feelings to explore
which seemed so unimportant before.

I had heard
and learned from others' hearing,
and even taught it to some as I had learned it —
"Christ is found in all around..."

And now I feel
that I have heard His voice and seen His face —
twelve times, I think,
in a certain place.

Sister Anne Marie Knawa, OSF

Book Reviews

The Franciscans. By William J. Short, O.F.M. Religious Orders Series, Vol. 23. Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc. (now distributed by The Liturgical Press), 1989. Pp. viii + 152. Cloth, \$14.95.

Reviewed by Dominic V. Monti, O.F.M., Chair of the Department of Ecclesiastical History, Washington Theological Union, Silver Spring, MD, and summer lecturer in Franciscan history at the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University.

After finishing this new introduction to the world of Franciscans, I sat still for a moment savoring it all, when suddenly the wonderful sonnet by Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Pied Beauty," came to mind. If you recall, the poem opens in a burst of praise, "Glory be to God for dappled things," and then jumps into a series of intense images reflecting the overwhelming fecundity of nature from cloud-patterned skies through the "rose-moles" on the flanks of trout and the yellow patches on finches' wings to the more distant view of "plotted and pieced" farmlands. Yes, praised be the God of variety! For what William Short, currently President of the Franciscan School of Theology, has strikingly brought out in this engaging second volume of Michael Glazier's new series on the religious orders is the marvelously manifold meaning of the word Franciscan.

The person wanting to get to know

Franciscans presumably has some questions — Who are they? How did they start? How have they grown? What do they do? What do they believe? Where are they today? (p. 1). Short's largely successful attempt to answer these questions, in a compact 150 pages, is founded on his awareness that "making generalized statements about "Franciscans is dangerous", since they are not a monolithic organization, but "a heterogeneous collection of individuals, united (and divided) by their history" (p. 3). Indeed, the great virtue of this book is that it reminds us that the word "Franciscan" is not defined by the Friars Minor. Here the Poor Sisters of Clare and the men and women of the vast Franciscan penitential movement — regular and secular — are given "equal time." One sister I know summed up the reaction of many: "We finally made it out of the footnotes into the text." Such an attempt at inclusiveness is difficult — especially in such a brief compass — and it is a tribute to the author that he accomplishes it as well as he does.

This approach is evident from the very beginning. The first chapter, on "the Founders, Francis and Clare," clearly presents us with the story of a Gospel movement, not just the tale of one man. Francis and Clare are pictured as collaborators, struggling side by side to create new patterns of evangelical life with their brothers and sisters. The next three chapters trace the checkered historical developments

— expansion, division, renewal — of each of the three Franciscan orders over the past seven centuries: the Lesser Brothers (Short avoids the Latinized official title, "Friars Minor"), Clare's Poor Sisters, and the Brothers and Sisters of Penance. The following chapter, "The Franciscan Spirit," is undoubtedly the high point of the book; it is a very successful (and highly readable) summary of the "spiritual environment" in which the Franciscan family lives and grows. This is followed by a brief concluding chapter on current conditions in the family — its response to the challenges of the contemporary situation in church and society, as well as movements for greater inter-Franciscan cooperation. For its purpose, this book would be difficult to improve on. I did catch a few inevitable historical inaccuracies here and there. For example, recent research has made it somewhat anachronistic to view John of Parma as a partisan of the Spirituality (p. 27). And he certainly was not still alive in 1294 (p. 41). The only real dissatisfaction I experienced in this fine book — and it may seem strange for a historian to say this — is due to excessive historical detail in the three chapters dealing with the development of the various orders. Perhaps this tendency comes from a too-heavy reliance on Iriarte's *Franciscan History*, which is long on "factology" and short on interpretation. In any case the result in certain sections is a barrage of data and dates which might put off or confuse the general reader. For example, we learn much more than we need to about the intricacies of the various sixteenth and seventeenth century reform movements within the Observance (pp. 63-70). It might have been a more interesting use of this space to explain the com-

mon motivating spirit of these various groups, state a few essential facts about each of them, and then focus in on one for a more extended treatment. This method would have provided an opportunity to develop the Franciscan missionary efforts during the colonial period a bit more, an important facet of the friars' history, especially in the Americas. The same tactic could have been used to give a richer appreciation of the contribution of the Third Order Regular (pp. 93-103); instead of being confronted with a welter of founders and congregations, none of which we really get to know, one or the other could have been singled out to illustrate in greater depth the ideals and mission shared by many of the communities founded during this period, the others being reduced to simple mention.

But these reservations are minor; William Short has produced here a remarkably careful and insightful book. His love for Francis, Clare, and the rest of us is obvious, and the result is catching. There is really no better introduction to the Franciscan world.

Come Home! Reclaiming Spirituality and Community as Gay Men and Lesbians. By Chris Glaser. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990, 216 pp. Paper, \$10.95.

Reviewed by Br. Anthony LoGalbo, O.F.M., Assistant Librarian at the Franciscan Institute and Associate Editor of The Cord.

Chris Glaser states in the Introduction that this book is "for all persons outside and within the church, as well as the many standing on the church's threshold. It is written for gays and lesbians, as well as others seeking to be-

nefit from gay spirituality and ministry (p. xiv)."

The book is divided into five parts: 1. Welcoming God's acceptance; 2. Receiving our inheritance; 3. Discerning our call; 4. Making our witness; and 5. Declaring our vision. Within this framework, Glaser develops a spirituality incorporating various fundamental elements. As a foundation he highlights the importance of an adequate understanding of the Bible's broadest themes, e.g. God's redemption in Jesus Christ, choosing life, loving God and neighbor, the community of faith, etc. He examines the need to nurture the "mustard seeds of faith" not in some ideal world, but the one available in the midst of everyday experience. The author also considers a disciplined prayer life as a prerequisite for growing intimacy with God. To this, he adds such practices as the cultivation of a sense of wonder and gratitude about life, the need for spiritual advisors, spiritual reading and contemplation of the cross.

Although the tone of the book is more conciliatory than polemical, the author chides the institutional church for offering little sanctuary for homosexual orientation and expression. Glaser writes:

Many Christians hold the view that homosexuality is an issue wounding the church causing brokenness. What they fail to see is that homophobia and heterosexism are what is truly wounding the church, and that the church in turn, is wounding its gay family members and neighbors and encouraging society to do so (p. 185).

To those who may be gay or lesbian, Glaser makes an impassioned plea to recognize and value their spirituality as

well as their sexuality. His advice to those in the broader Christian community is not to ignore the spiritual aspirations of their fellow Christians who are gay and lesbian; for there is something to be learned from their unique spiritual gifts and insights.

This book breaks no new ground in the area of gay spirituality. It fits within the mainstream among similar works by such authors as John Fortunato, Richard Woods, John McNeill, Brian McNaught, Scanzoni and Mollenkatt, et al. For this reviewer, its value resides in the arresting manner of Glaser's presentation. The author writes in a clear, straightforward style. The narrative blending of personal reflections and life stories flows easily and is very readable. This is not to say that his message is a tranquil and calming one; what Glaser writes challenges and provokes thought. One may not agree with some of the things he writes, yet he is convincing and persuasive in his approach. It is a consequence of his first hand experience of ministering to gay and lesbian people. For almost twelve years, Glaser was Director of the Lazarus Project, a ministry of reconciliation between the church and the gay community at West Hollywood Presbyterian Church in California. It is also due in no small part to his own struggle to live what he preaches. This was introduced in seminal form in his earlier work, *Uncommon Calling: a Gay Man's Struggle to Serve the Church*.

This later book is suitable for its intended audience and also for those who are considering approaches to ministry to the alienated.

Next Year

Next year, Lord,
if it be your will
that Christmas time
is mine again,
spare me that grotesquery
of incipient insanity
when most of us,
bent on a binge to spend,
do damage greater
than if we put an end
to Christmas Day.

Christmas is not
a time to give of gift,
that curse of superstitious
fear begun by
three astrologers
who more than likely never were.

Certainly this season
is no reason
to give for the sake
of giving, a living
hypocrisy when what we do
does foully reek of soul
diminishment.

O let us pray
to banish this necessity
to join a
frenzy of fools
leading nowhere,
whose goal is that
of buying more
and more and more
until barns lean
obscene in excess store.

In God's sense, then,
let us dispense
of madness and pain,
learning the truth of Christmas gain,
to see in one another
this infant Babe on whom
we lavish the priceless gifts of
faith, hope,
and above all,
love.

April Oursler Armstrong

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