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Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions

BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo

CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun

EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony

EpCler: Letter to Clerics¹

EpCust: Letter to Superiors¹

EpFid: Letter to All the 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 Joy

¹I, 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

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).

REFLECTION:

On War and Peace. The Story of a New Creation

HERMANN SCHALÜCK, O.F.M.

And God saw how human beings throughout the earth, from East and West, from North and South, without distinction of race, religion or sex, began to weave close bonds of friendship. Nations chose their best men and women and sent them to that famous glass palace on the island of Manhattan which is open to all the nations on the earth. There they began to listen to one another, to learn from each other's history, to understand each other and to elaborate common projects.

And God said: "It is good that it be so". And this was the first day of a new era.

And God saw how the soldiers of peace separated armies of the nations still at war; how disagreements were healed by prudence and negotiations, rather than by arms; how the leaders of the nations began to listen to the voice of their people and how all jointly began to prefer the good of the whole universe and the peace of a united world to private and national interests.

And God said: "It is good that it be so." And this was the second day of the new planet.

And God saw how human beings began to love and protect creation rather than exploit it, the air and the ozone layer, water in rivers and oceans, the earth and all that lives and germinates. And God also saw

The CORD is privileged again to share with its readers a reflection of Fr. Hermann Schalück. We are grateful to him for the insights he gives us coming from his remarkable experiences as a member of the General Administration of the Order of Friars Minor.

that human beings no longer dominated or exploited one another but, seeing themselves as children of one Father, treated each other as equals.

And God said: "It is good that it be so." And this was the third day of the era of new thinking.

And God saw how human beings throughout the earth began to search out and eliminate the causes of hunger, sickness, ignorances, suffering and debasing poverty; how they began to share in common that which belongs to all; how, in view of the common good and of life at world level, they began to see the positive aspects and the points of convergence of all races and religions.

And God said: "It is good that it be so." And this was the fourth day of the new creation.

And God saw how, with an admirable sense of responsibility and without the thirst for power, human beings began to utilize the natural resources which had been entrusted to them, particularly combustible material taken from the earth and atomic energy; how their conscience was always alert and prompted them to consider whether all the new projects were in accordance with service of God and of humanity and especially of the poor; how they abandoned arrogance for sensitivity, greed for unselfishness, egoistic individualism and nationalism for the spirit of a new and lasting solidarity.

And God said: "It is good that it be so." And that was the fifth day of a more human world.

And God saw how human beings of all the continents set about dismantling and destroying their rocket launching ramps, their arsenals of bombs and munitions, their chemical and biological arms of destruction as well as their spy satellites and detection systems; how they disbanded their armies and, consequently, initiated in all their schools and education systems a pedagogy of peace so evident and logical that conflicts could be solved by peaceful means.

And God said: "It is good that it be so." And it was the sixth day of a new heaven.

And God saw how human beings finally began to recognize him as the God in love with life; how they considered the struggle for peace, justice and the integrity of our wounded creation of true worship of the living God; how, each time that one of their ideologies failed, on proposing a new constitution they would write: "Let us never lose sight of the one God, because he is the beginning and the center of a just and human world. And as human beings, alive and free, peaceful and without arms, let us be signs of his healing presence in history."

And God said: "Now all is well." It was the seventh day of the creation of the universe which, for the future, belonged completely both to a new humanity and to the one God of all mankind. □

The Role of the Imagination in Franciscan Discernment

RAMONA MILLER, O.S.F.

Leo was the beneficiary of the extant letter written by St. Francis assuring him that whatever he would choose to do it would have Francis' blessing: "In whatever way it seems best to you to please the Lord God and to follow His footprints and His poverty...."¹ Franciscans discerning ministry choices, community living situations, educational improvements, choices in relationships or faced with dilemmas of conscience are often bewildered by what exactly is their next step in "his footprints." Our imagination has the potential for supplanting "bewilderment" with hope and confidence in choosing direction(s) for our lives. The role of the imagination in Franciscan discernment will be reflected upon in this article in a fourfold manner: 1) the imagination, 2) discernment, 3) Francis' self-image in discernment and 4) a process for Franciscan discernment.

Imagination

Perhaps the first stumbling block in recognizing the importance of the imagination is overcoming the childhood prejudice against its positive role because of the response given to us when we expressed fears like fear of the dark night; "it's just your imagination." According to the contemporary author, Kathleen Fischer, the Age of Enlightenment is to blame for putting aside the use of the imagination in order to place all trust in reason for leading us to truth.² In recent years the scientific world

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has been discovering that we have more than one center in our brain that directs our actions. Jean Houston has developed an exercise for "awakening the brain" to stimulate the fuller use of our reason and imaginative powers.³ Her work is indicative of a larger effort at recovering the loss of the power of imagination to assist us along with reason on the mythic journey toward oneness. It is the imagination that bridges the inner core of a person — the mystery that is a share in the divinity — with the outer reality, the sharing in the life of creation sometimes referred to as "the world." The Christian imagination is fueled by unlimited source of energy, the spirit of the Lord. "We are only earthenware jars" holding the overwhelming power that comes from God (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7). Francis' terminology was not that of an inanimate object, a jar, but rather the term "spouse" of an intimate relationship: "We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined by the Holy Spirit to Our Lord Jesus Christ."⁴ Intimate relationships are the desire of every human heart so Francis' terminology has universal appeal and holds the promise that our souls joined by the Holy Spirit to Jesus contain the unlimited source of Life that is the life shared with Jesus.

It has been the psychologist, Jung, who has found a way of helping people make contact with their depths by active imagination so that by paying attention to images from dreams, fantasies and reflection they can come to channel their energies more directly toward wholistic living. The imagination deepens one's connectedness with the Mystery at the center of human life and in so doing empowers the person to journey toward full achievement which is complete identification with Jesus Christ, the exemplar of a mature human person. St. Paul's description of this state of being is being able to say: "I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). Attaining maximum human potential requires vivid images that will act as a motor-drive producing physical conditions through released emotions and external acts to fulfill the desired goal. Nothing is achieved without first imagining it.

Scripture offers images for Christian identity and even more so for Franciscans who profess to live the form of life of the holy gospel following Jesus Christ after the example of St. Francis. It is of utmost importance that we discover the biblical images that evoke a positive affective response if we are to "move along" on our spiritual journey. Perhaps the pre-discernment process work is to re-image God. When Celie of *The Color Purple* re-imagined God "freeing herself of the image of God as those who have oppressed her, white and males, she is able to acquire some respect for herself, and it is only by growing in a sense of self that she is able to be open to a God who is full of promise for the future."⁵ Is our image of God one that evokes an affective response? Vivid images that evoke affective responses are guiding symbols in the discernment process.

Jesus' imagination was fully operative when after proclaiming the Scripture in the Nazareth synagogue he affectively proclaimed "This text is being fulfilled today" (cf. Luke 4:167-21). He so identified with Isaiah's words that he became the very person described: the one sent to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to give sight to the blind.... We first need to have an affective link with the image before we live it out. Franciscan women would perhaps find it easier to relate to female biblical images evoking their combinatory imagination. Kathleen Fischer has provided suggestions in *Women at the Well* such as the Samaritan woman at the well who becomes a disciple when she put her jar down and hurried back to tell the people... (cf. Jn. 4:28). Another woman preacher is Mary at the tomb who is commissioned by the Lord to "go find the brothers and tell them" (cf. Jn. 20:17). Modern day women disciples will have a healthier spirituality when they can focus the imagination more clearly on self-images that participate in bringing about the reign of God that is "the human situation in which the love and justice and mercy of God will control all relationships and govern all human affairs."⁶ Perhaps this dearth of female images that engage the combinatory imagination is why Clare of Assisi is becoming so important to all Franciscan women today, not only the Poor Clares. Clare represents a response to God's initiative to leave secularistic goals for counter-cultural living solely for the honor and glory of God. Our cultural addiction to materialism is in sharp contrast to this noble woman whose spiritual power in poverty withstood invading armies. One wonders what image empowered her when she made the sign of the cross on the sick. Did Clare image herself as the disciple that Mark describes would lay hands on the sick and they would be healed (cf. Mark 16:18)?

Discernment

Discernment may be more properly identified as the virtue of prudence at work in making judgments about proposed choices in life. Christian discernment is being conscious while making decisions of being God's children. St. Paul outlines what consciousness is operative in discernment: "You must try to be like him. Your life must be controlled by love just as Christ loved us and gave his life for us as a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice that pleases God" (Eph. 5:1-2). At various stages of life the concerns for discernment will vary according to one's roles and responsibilities. Bonaventure gave guidance to ministers that discernment was the "foresighted consideration of things to be done."⁷ Generally speaking a discernment moment is not about making a list of things to be done but rather choosing the direction of one's life for increased authenticity as one of God's children striving to be like Christ. In discernment we evaluate

certain forms of conduct and imagined choices against our self-understanding and basic values.⁸ The goal of discernment is to free us from falsehoods so that becoming more conscious of our intentions and guiding symbols we will be more free. This freedom is the freedom of the spirit which "produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness..." (Gal. 5:22).

The role of the imagination here in discernment is to keep us conscious of our guiding symbol(s). The discerning person will reflect upon their image of who they believe they are becoming in the eyes of God and identify feelings associated with different choices being considered in the discernment process. Are these feelings of increased freedom prompting gleeful shouts of grateful joy of God? (cf. Romans 8:15-17). This increased freedom as children of an All-loving Parent (God) is an ongoing process. Like Francis in prayer we ask "Lord, who are you and who am I?" for continually assessing who we are becoming.

Francis' Self-Image in Discernment

Franciscan discernment presupposes a desire to make a conscious choice in life's journey to follow Jesus Christ after the example of St. Francis. In Francis' conversion process he prayed: "O great and glorious God and my Lord Jesus Christ, enlighten, I beseech thee, the darkness of my mind. Give me a right faith, a certain hope, and a perfect charity. Grant that I may know thee, Lord, in order that I may always and in all things act according to thy most holy and perfect will."⁹ This prayer contains the kernel of effectively uncovering the hidden purpose for which we are created. First, there is the humble acknowledgement that God has the loving power to cast out the darkness of the mind and to bring to consciousness the direction of one's life. Happiness in life comes from being authentically one's self which is manifesting the full potential that God so intended in creating us. Secondly, there is the expressed desire to do whatever would be pleasing to God "according to thy most holy and perfect will."

Francis' discernment begins when "the humble *servant* of God, filled with *agonizing doubt* as well as a *spirit of detachment* and obedience, turns to *trusted friends* in the Lord to seek the road that leads to *peace*."⁷ [Emphases are mine.] The specific situation that is the reference story for "Francis, a humble servant of God, in agonizing doubt,..." is #16 Story in the *Fioretti* which tells how Francis sent a messenger to his two trusted friends, Clare and Sylvester, asking them to prayerfully consider what God's will was for him and to send back a response.¹¹

Let us reflect further about Francis' self image as a humble servant of God. We know Francis identified himself as "servant" from his writings and he used "servant" in his *Admonitions* to describe the spirituality of the friars.¹² Recalling Francis' pre-conversion stage of life we can speculate

on his memories of servant when he was the aspiring knight with servants. His transformation in grace was such that he became a servant who was "lesser" than even the outcast lepers. Francis' life was turned around by a vision on his way to Apulia when he heard a voice ask, "Who can do more for you, a lord or a servant...?"¹³ Francis' natural response was to seek that lord who would "do more" for him.

Francis' conversion was directed by the word of God and he came to revere the Gospel because it was the Gospel that directed his way of life. It is the Gospel that gave Francis his understanding of "servant" as we can recognize in his writings, particularly the 1221 Rule: "Let the ministers and servants remember what the Lord says: I have not come to be served, but to serve" (Mt. 20:28).¹⁴ And in the same Rule, Chapter V, we read: "The rulers of the peoples have power over them, and their leaders rule over them (Mt. 20:25); it shall not be like this among the brothers (cf. Mt. 20:26a). And whoever among them wishes to become the greater should be their minister (cf. Mt. 20:26b) and servant. And whoever is the greater among them should become like the lesser (cf. Lk. 22:26)."

Francis has appropriated for himself Jesus' use of the name "servant." Jesus could proclaim in that Nazareth synagogue "this day the text is being fulfilled" because his own imagination connected his true inner self with the Word of God He has just proclaimed. Francis lived with an eschatological consciousness that each day "the kingdom of God is at hand" (cf. Mk. 1:15) and his guiding symbol of being servant of the Lord meant that for him each and every moment was a birthing of the reign of God that would be visibly obvious by the love shared with others and indeed with all of creation. Francis' poverty was a necessity for the quality of servant he aspired to be. The interior poverty stripped Francis of any false notions that he was the originator of the good he would do "in service." Francis imaged himself as the "footwasher" whose manner of relating to others would announce and indeed bring about God's love, mercy and salvation.¹⁵

Evaristo Acosta Maestre in his study "The Discernment of Spirits According to St. Francis of Assisi"¹⁶ identifies that the qualities of Francis as servant who is able to discern the will of God are: interior poverty, humility, and minority. These qualities disposed Francis, the discerning person, to become childlike in imaging himself as a recipient of all good that is from God. In this image the discerning person is not fortifying themselves for a burdensome task that is "God's will" but rather enthusiastically looking for the increased way of participating in God's love being outpoured in the present time.

The servant as an eschatological person recognizes God's outpouring of goodness in each and every moment and desires to die to their own

egoism in order to be interiorly poor so as to more fully participate as a partner in God's goodness being shared. Now we can better understand the freedom of Francis in his advice to Leo because Francis and Leo have been bonded as brothers in their desire to live the form of life they sought approval for from Pope Innocent III, i. e. to live according to the form of the Holy Gospel. "In whatever way it seems best to you..." is advice being given to a companion who is already sharing in the mission of Jesus by living the Beatitudes. What is the best way to serve, i.e. to participate in the announcing and the co-creating of the reign of God?

Process for Discernment

Having considered the potential power of our imagination to bring to our mind the guiding symbols for our expression of loving response to God's call and having reviewed Francis' own example of discernment, I now propose a five step process for making the best creative decision within a given set of circumstances: 1) Clarify one's guiding symbols, 2) Identify the "doubt" and proposed change, 3) Compare the possible choices with one's guiding symbol and be attentive to accompanying feelings, 4) Share with trusted friends and 5) Seek confirmation.

First, clarify the images that are one's guiding symbols for every day activity. Earlier I mentioned Celie of *Color Purple* as an example of someone who needed to shift her image of God before she could become free and able to discern how to develop her full potential. Persons who have not given this much thought may find it helpful to spend some time in solitude pondering, "Lord, who are you and who am I?". A helpful suggestion to take into prayer is the Rule that we profess. Brothers and sisters of the Third Order regular have had an opportunity to refocus their images with the interiorization processes of the 1982 Rule these recent years. Each person must spend time with the Rule and the Gospel to name their own guiding symbol that resonates so deeply within them that they no longer can separate the reality of the symbol from their own self-image. This was the case for Francis whose answer to "Who am I?" is "servant of the Lord."

Second, name the "doubt" that is in consideration in this discernment process and the possible response(s). What is the source of the call to make a change in one's life? By this we mean that we identify what is happening that gives indication that change is necessary in one's life. A call from superiors? from the community? from the Lord in prayer? or from increased consciousness of the world? Since the close of the Second Vatican Council all Christians are faced with new responsibilities to live out the teachings of the council Fathers inspired by the Holy Spirit that all the joys and sorrows of others are the joys and sorrows of the church.

Franciscans are a special group of disciples because, like Francis, their cloister is the world. Their perception of their social, political, economic and religious environments will evoke images of ways to respond so that the reign of God is increased in this world. Discerning persons will become more sensitized to the images in society that corrupt human progress from achieving God's purpose and will discover their imagination directing them to become "prophetic image-crafters" who discover the means for bringing about an illumination for action to change complex social problems.¹⁷ Like Francis who experienced an agonizing doubt about what his ministry should be, the discerning Franciscan is often faced with making choices that are between two goods. In this stage of the discernment process the Franciscan identifies "doubt" about the adequacy of their present response to God and names the possible choices that can be made.

The third stage for discernment is to compare the possible choices with one's personal guiding symbol. The imagination can be very helpful here in allowing one to image the proposed choices and compare the accompanying feelings about a given choice with the guiding symbol in their life. If imaging a given choice evokes feelings of less freedom or of restraint on ministering God's love and mercy according to personal talents then this needs to be given serious reconsideration. A choice for following in the footsteps of Jesus in the example of Francis would not put one in conflict with their basic values, but instead would increase one's capacity for having and sharing the fruits of the Spirit.

The discerning person will feel a surge of energy and insight that empowers them to further involvement in bringing about the reign of God when the choice for the "next step" on life's journey is coming from the dwelling place within. New insights about one's relationship with God do not necessarily require a change in ministry. Sometimes one receives further illumination of the meaning of life in order to be buoyed up along the way of the faith journey. An olive wood statue of a Jewish girl carrying a water jug on her head reminds me of such an insightful moment in my retreat experience in Nazareth. This young woman — Mary — in doing the ordinary household tasks made it possible in her ordinariness for the Word of God to become a human being and to live with us. Co-creating with God is as ordinary as fetching the water for the household and as extraordinary as channeling redeeming grace in the process.

Uncomfortable feelings of anticipated suffering that would be a consequence of a choice for extending God's reign are not to be confused with the feelings of restraint and oppression that some choices would result in. An example might be that a person feels called to leave a professional job to serve the street people in an inner city soup kitchen context. The suffering anticipated in leaving a secure position to risk living and working in an "unsafe" neighborhood may be such that imagining this casts doubts

on its authenticity as a call from God. However, if the discerning person resonates in an affective manner with their guiding symbol in the choice to serve the poor then the anticipated sufferings are minimized by the confidence that this call is from God who will always be present with us and who can only love us.

A contrasting example is a woman who has great hopes for what she could accomplish in a new position but feels the tension within herself that she would not be respected for being a woman in that role and fears the oppression would limit her effective ministry. Such imaging should not be quickly dismissed but rather shared with trusted friends for further discernment.

The fourth part of a discernment process is to take the reflections of the process thus far and share with trusted friends. These friends might be a local community council or Leadership Team or a circle of intimate friends that are concerned for each other's spiritual welfare while together advancing the reign of God. Such trusted friends through "discourse" will provide for illumination on the decision-making process. The scriptures offer us promise about the importance of speaking the truth to one another: "By speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ" (cf. Eph. 43:15).

The trusted friends within my own congregation are the Leadership Team that has recently promulgated "Criteria for Ministry" outlining five values to guide our discernment: 1) Our ministry acknowledges our primary relationship to one another in this Franciscan congregation, 2) Our ministry is rooted in the mission of Jesus, 3) Our ministry provides opportunity to respond to the call to justice and peace, 4) Our ministry enables the empowerment of people and 5) Our ministry challenges us to acknowledge our personal and congregational gifts and limitations.¹⁸ Conversing with these trusted friends would clarify the nature of any choice I would make and its relatedness with the common criteria of the congregation.

Fifth, we seek confirmation of the discerned choice. Brother Leo had gone to Francis to talk over his choicemaking and after their conversation Francis wrote "do whatever seems best." The Franciscan recognizes that the exterior manifestation for placing oneself ready to do God's will is to share one's discernment process with the recognized authority of the faith community and to wait for confirmation.

The internal confirmation of the rightness of a choice is the increased joy a person has in imaging the carrying out of the decision. This joy is rooted in the awareness that all good comes from God and that the Franciscan is a co-creator with God for the extension of the reign of God. The virtues of interior poverty, humility and minority that Franciscans reveal in their lives demonstrate the belief taught by Francis that we can claim

nothing for ourselves since all good is from God. We are ministers of the good that is from God. Francis wrote that "a servant of the Lord may be recognized as possessing the spirit of the Lord in this way: if the flesh does not pride itself when the Lord performs some good through him..." (Admonition XII).¹⁹



The role of the imagination in Franciscan discernment is that of an effective facilitator. The imagination brings forth from the dwelling place of God within us guiding symbol(s) that allow us to image the projected future. This guiding symbol empowers us to evaluate proposed choices in comparison with our deepest aspirations and to make a decision for a

direction in our life that will increase our freedom as children of God. Witnessing this freedom by lives that are recognizably "alive in the spirit" will bear fruit for the reign of God.

Endnotes

¹Regis Armstrong and Ignatius Brady, trans. *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982) 48.

²Kathleen Fischer, "The Imagination in Spirituality," *Way* 66 (Autumn 1989): 96.

³Jean Houston, *The Possible Human* (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, 1982) 60-77.

⁴Armstrong & Brady, 63.

⁵Carolyn Osiek, "Images of God: Breaking Boundaries," *Spirituality Today* 4 (Winter, 1988): 335.

⁶Sandra Schneiders, "God is More Than Two Men and a Bird," *U.S. Catholic* May (1990): 23.

⁷Bonaventure, *The Works of Bonaventure*, Vol. III (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1966) 171.

⁸For a fuller discussion of the interrelatedness of the imagination, discernment and the political scene, see William C. Spohn, S.J. "Discerning the Politics of the Imagination." *New Theology Review* 1 (1988): 5-19.

⁹Ignatius Brady, O.F.M. *The Prayers of St. Francis* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1987).

¹⁰Cf. Anthony M. Carozzo, "Francis of Assisi at the Crossroads: Elements of a Franciscan Process of Discernment," *Review for Religious* 41/4 (1982): 551-556.

¹¹*English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972) 1334 - 1335.

¹²Armstrong & Brady, 31. See footnote #8 for a fuller explanation of "servant."

¹³*Omnibus*, 366.

¹⁴Armstrong & Brady, 112-114.

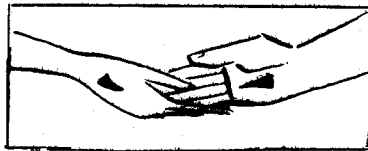
¹⁵Cf. Sandra Schneider's interpretation "The Foot Washing (Jn. 13:1-20): An Experiment in Hermeneutics." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1981): 76:92.

¹⁶Evaristo Acosta Maestre, O.F.M. Cap. "The Discernment of Spirits According to St. Francis of Assisi." *Greyfriars Review* 2 (1988): 49-76.

¹⁷Cf. Spohn, 17.

¹⁸"Criteria for Ministry" is available from the Director for Communications, Assisi Heights, Box 4900, Rochester, MN 55903.

¹⁹Armstrong & Brady, 31.



Chastity, Poverty and Worship

A Homily of Bonaventure's on Inner Cleanliness

GREGORY SHANAHAN, O.F.M.

This sermon for the Third Sunday after Epiphany¹ is of special interest not only because it is one of several in which the Seraphic Doctor develops the axiom, *Each action of Christ is an introduction for us*, but because it links poverty with chastity and highlights the connection between inner cleanliness and worship. First, we glimpse that christian idea of following the Master that dawned afresh in the dynamism initiated by St. Francis' following the *vestigia* of Christ and his realizing the Lord's 'aromatic' words.² Also, in the scheme of things chastity, far from being merely 'the customary other vow,' is viewed as a form and expression of the evangelic life's poverty base; not alone of poverty's negative aspects (dispossession and singleness) but of its positive aspects too (*heirs and kings*, and dowry for espousal with the spirit). Moreover, both chastity and poverty are here twinned, and they merge with the humility of adoration, and form the predispositions for a worship which truly acknowledges the 'one mastery' of Christ and adores God in singlemindedness (*Who are You ... and what am I?*).

A superficial reading of this sermon might show it to be totally concerned with purgation, repeatedly mentioning greed, arrogance, and 'sins of the flesh' and urging their avoidance. A closer examination, however, reveals a portrayal of Christ as Healer of humankind and a spelling out of the conditions for approaching Him in worship. If it was preached, in one form or another, 'by Brother Bonaventure to the Friars of Lyons,'³ it is unlikely that it was simply a sermon against sins of impurity, pride and avarice, aimed at that immediate audience. Subtler lines were drawn by

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Bonaventure when he was called on to 'set the seed of the word which preaching is.'⁴ The text before him postulated the treatment of uncleanness; to do so thoroughly, theologically, was to deal with the message of Scripture and of the liturgy of the day. The groundwork of *purgation*, in any case, never leaves off serving the *illumination* that comes with an evangelic imitation of Christ or the *perfection* which is achieved in mystical union with God. The word of God, moreover, even when preached to a special audience, is for the people of God and is proclaimed 'to the whole of creation.' And these men, to whom he spoke, were themselves breaking the bread of the word and engaged in a healing ministry in places where the leprosy of sin afflicted people; they were aware of being sent forth, above all, to 'bring good news to the poor' and to 'heal the brokenhearted.'⁵ The sermon presents, therefore, an aspect of the biblical-moral theology of sin and of the biblical theology of worship as leading to perfect spiritual healing.

Just at the point where one thinks the great preacher is straying from his theme one sees the original text analysis reappear. He is like a honey-bee, assiduously extracting every fragment of meaning from the flower of his texts, to share them with all who hear.

The sermons of Bonaventure, even if we today were to regard many of them as time-bound from a strictly homiletic standpoint, are important in another perspective.⁶ They are undoubtedly the product of *lectio divina* and thus offer a lead in the performance of that venerable exercise, the analysis of a biblical text, during which 'the mind is in the heart.' They can help us to derive enormous profit from meditatively entering into the core of a word or phrase ('given us through Christ and written through the power of the Holy Spirit'),⁷ provided we enter with humility and faith and 'bending the knees of our heart.'⁸

THE SERMON

[Theme] *Behold, a leper came and knelt before him, saying: Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.* Matthew 8:2.

[Introductory call for prayer]

[Protheme] *The children begged for bread, and there was no one to give them any,* Lamentations 4:4.

Humankind, in the pitiable condition brought upon it by its first sin, is forever lamenting its threefold misfortune. Its retreat from the height of grandeur made it weak and powerless in action; its retreat from the height of bounty⁹ meant it could make no progress, due to want and destitution; its retreat from the height of compassion left it a heart cruel

and hard. And that second quotation, which we have taken from the lamentations of Jeremiah, tells us about these three misfortunes: powerlessness and weakness in *efficiency* with the first word, children, those frail and defenceless ones; indigence and need in *proficiency* in the next phrase, *begged for bread*, for every petition presupposes a lack and a need in the petitioner; hardheartedness and inhumanity in *affectivity* with the words, *and there was no one to give them any*.

We therefore, wishing to present some useful ideas to the congregation here, must first direct our minds to that Source from which mercy originally springs, asking It to keep the work we are to get through from being weak and poorly by lending it vigor; to keep the development of the ideas from being deficient and slack by giving it wide scope; to remove from our heart what is inhuman and hard by directing our feelings aright. Thus fortified for the work in hand, given the freedom to press ahead and the guidance our heart needs, we should be able to give a sermon that will redound to the praise and glory of His blessed name and to the consolation of our souls. Amen.

[Sermon] *Behold, a leper came and knelt before him, saying: Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.*

Since 'each action of Christ is an instruction for us,'¹⁰ today's healing of an external leprosy — a disfigurement of bodily splendor — is teaching that points out internal leprosy — a spoiling of spiritual beauty. And so, for our instruction the text uses the metaphor of leprosy cured by God, to describe a sinner's condition, first disfiguring his soul as long as he is in a state of committed sin — when it says, *Behold, a leper came*; then involving his soul in an act of due subjection — when it says, *and knelt before him, saying*; and, thirdly, lifting up his soul to a prayer of desire — when it says of his discerning and humble entreaty, *Lord, if you will, you can make me clean*. For the man brought much discernment to bear on his entreaty. He did not say, *Come down*, or *Come*, as if the Lord's presence could be missing from any place; nor did he say, *Say the word*, as if His power were tied to uttering words. What he said was: *If you will*; he knew what the Psalm says: *The Lord does whatever he wills* (113, 11).

The first thing, then, to be noted in that text is the condition of the sinner in the state of sin which he has committed, a sin that disfigures the soul: *Behold, a leper*. And *leper* is a word that well bespeaks the sinner. Leprosy is a disease that renders the one who has contracted it similar to that which produces it, deforms the body's natural beauty, and makes one live separately from everyone else. Sin, especially when it increases, has these three effects on the soul. In the first case, the sin of

pride and ambition renders the soul similar to the maliciousness that engenders it; secondly, the sin of lust and fornication defaces the soul's natural beauty; thirdly, the sin of avarice and hoarding segregates the soul from where the community lives, that is, from paradise. Hence, hatred is the response to be made to the sin of pride, on account of the maliciousness which it resembles. Abhorrence is the answer to the sin of lust, on account of the corruption it brings on. And one must run away from the sin of avarice, on account of its causing separation from God.

In the first place the sin of pride and ambition acts like leprosy in rendering the soul similar to the maliciousness that engenders it. In this sense read 3 Chronicles, chapter 26 [16.19]: *When he was strong he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was false to the Lord his God, and what follows: Leprosy broke out on his forehead, in the presence of the priests in the house of the Lord.* This was Uzziah, a man of proud and haughty heart, destined for the *destruction* of eternal death since he was *false to almighty God*, he copied every manner of diabolical depravity. And so, just as in the highest heaven there appeared on the spiritual forehead of the devil the marks of pride in the presence of the angels that stood up to him, so *in the house of the Lord there broke out leprosy on the forehead of Uzziah, the imitator of ancestral maliciousness, as the sign of his pride; for puffed up he was and corrupt in soul in the presence of the priests who stood up to him.*

In the second place the sin of lust and fornication acts like leprosy in defacing the natural beauty of the soul. In this sense read Leviticus, chapter 13 [45.46]: *He shall cry, 'Unclean, unclean'... as long as he has the disease.* And well ought one infected with the vice of lust cry, *'unclean, unclean,'* because he has become so dirtied and contaminated from impure desires, uncontrolled movements of passion and illicit acts, that he is much more abominable in the sight of the angelic spirits than a leper would be to the eyes of healthy human beings. *Nor will the gracefulness of the Holy Spirit ever dwell in a body enslaved to the sin of lust.* We should surely strive to acquire, above everything else, this beauty attached to purity and chastity, for thereby we are exciting the Holy Spirit to a love and desire of us. So, we should make every effort to rid ourselves of inordinate desires and impure thoughts. Just as when in the body a major build-up of rotten fluids produces a scab, a fester, and sometimes a leprosy, destroying the body's purity; so do uncontrolled attachments, unclean thoughts and corrupt motions of the flesh produce the scab of incontinence and the leprosy of lust and take away the purity of chastity and modesty. And it is thus that the body becomes a stinking dwelling for the Devil, not the dwelling of the Holy Spirit.

... it links poverty with chastity and highlights the connection between inner cleanliness and worship.

Thirdly, the sin of avarice and hoarding acts like leprosy in secluding the soul from the home of the paradise community. In this sense read 4 Kings [= 2 Kings], chapter 5 [27]: *The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to you, and to your descendants for ever. So he went out from his presence a leper.* It is because the fire of avarice incites Gehazi, and any greedy person, to accept material goods that *the leprosy of Naaman* (a name which means 'disturbing' or 'excitement') is said to *cleave to him* and also to anyone copying his example. Moreover, as a leper is expelled from where healthy people dwell as a community, so the greedy one, who chooses to live in the ground with the mole and fixes his covetous eyes on the earth, deprives himself of a habitation in the fellowship of holy people. So it is that the *leper* is said to have gone *out from the presence of Elisha*, that is, from the company of any holy man whose dwelling and whose *home is in heaven* where he longs for the company of the angels.

The next thing said is: *he knelt before him.* He displays here the subjection he owes, since by thus adoring he is expressing the worship of *latria*, which is rendered to God.¹¹ He was rendering to Christ the worship of divine *latria*, or *adoring* Him, firstly in respect of His creating power with awe and reverence in a humbled heart; secondly, in respect of His guiding wisdom with an expression of noble homage of his lips; thirdly, in respect of His redeeming and glorifying clemency by showing a genial love in the way he acted. It is thus on account of these three properties that to God alone and to none other is due the worship of *latria*.

First, then, *he knelt before him* to respect His creating power with a humble heart of awe and reverence. *I bow down before your holy temple, filled with awe,* says the Psalm [5, 8]. Now, nobody can adore God perfectly unless he has the greatest possible reverence for the divine Majesty. Who can fix the gaze of his mind's eye upon the greatest possible good in the Lords greatness and His severity of judgment; when he is not fixed upon his own smallness? Here, then we must learn to dread and be astonished at the excellence in the power which Christ possesses, if we wish to excite the beauty of wisdom to a love and a desire of us. For *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom* [Prov. 1:7], a beginning that prepares and beautifies the lips of heart and mouth for the kiss of divine wisdom.¹²

Secondly, *he knelt before him* with an expression of noble homage on

his lips, to respect a guiding wisdom. As the Psalm [137,1] says: *In the presence of the angels I will sing psalms to you, I will adore before your holy temple.* One sings psalms to God in the presence of the angels — and not to be seen by mortals — when one sings not for empty praise for the sake of temporal profits, but solely to praise and glorify the Creator with a pure and right intention. *I will adore before your holy temple.* The *holy temple* of God is a body clean and spotless, in which the soul adores God and gives thanks to His name. Its doors are the five senses, which are to be guarded with all care, lest death, the companion of fetid sin, enter by them. No king can stomach a wine drawn from a dirty cask, through an aperture whose outside only has been burnished; neither has Christ any taste for prayer or praise which proceeds from an unclean heart, through lips that are devout merely on the surface.

Thirdly, *he knelt before him*, showing, in the way he acted, a love that was genial, to respect a clemency in Him that is redeeming and glorifying. Of the Wise Men in the second chapter of Matthew [10-11] it is said: *They, when they saw the star, were glad beyond measure; and so, going into the dwelling, they found the child there, with his mother Mary, and fell down to worship him; and, opening their store of treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.* You see there what the wise men had as they rendered their worship of *latria*; they had the fervor that goes with love and friendship. They did not *sell* anything, from some greedy motive; they spontaneously *offered* gifts to the little child as a sign of their love and friendship, not as signs of apprehension or of expiation. For this is the charity, the love, without which no good gift is accepted approvingly. It is the charity that gives one a jovial disposition over one's own good fortune; that is why it is said: *They were glad beyond measure.* It also makes one harmoniously disposed towards one's neighbor; hence: *going into the dwelling.* Again, it makes one generous with what one has to give; hence: *opening their store of treasures, they offered him gifts*, as a sign of the interior faith they were expressing.

Next comes that prayer of entreaty spoken with discernment: *Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.* That leper was, in fact, so discerning about the request for the cleansing of his *body*, as to set the pattern for any other person, infected with *spiritual* leprosy, to go and ask for the sanctification of his own soul, in the way he himself did. So, whoever is infected with some leprous defilement like that must, depending on the form of the disease, wisely ask for the specific remedy. A proud person, then, should ask to be cleansed of the tumor of pride by means of a filial and reverential love; a lustful person of the stink of lust by means of the gracefulness, the fragrance, of chastity and purity; a greedy person of the fiery flush of avarice by means of the balm of spiritual gladness.¹³ Thus, the soul that is directed away from the Father through the tumor of pride,

from the Son through the stink of lust, from the Holy Spirit through the fiery flush of greed, will be set on course towards the Father by means of a reverential fear one finds in sons, towards the Son by means of the dazzling whiteness or the fragrance of chastity and blamelessness, towards the Holy Spirit by means of the balm of spiritual gladness.¹⁴

In the first place, therefore, we are cleansed of pride's tumor with the reverential fear one finds in sons. Hence we read in Second Corinthians, chapter seven [1]: *Let us purge ourselves clean from every defilement of flesh and of spirit, achieving the work of our sanctification in the fear of God.* Just as the foul smell of lust is a defilement of the body, so is the tumor of pride a defilement of the spirit. Bodily sin is mentioned first, then spiritual sin. The God who cleanses the body of lustful defilement by the love that is in chastity and purity is not happy till He also cleanses the spirit of pride's defilement by the love that is in filial reverence. It is for this the Apostle says: *Let us purge ourselves clean from every defilement of flesh and of spirit.* But we shall never be able to complete the sanctification of our lives, unless fear of the Lord is at the forefront of our effort to improve, unless it also accompanies this and follows it up. *He who is lacking in fear will not be made righteous,*¹⁵ which is why the passage above continues: *achieving the work of our sanctification in the fear of the Lord.*

Next, we are purged of the stink of lust with the gracefulness of chastity and purity. We read in Chapter Two [21-22] of the Second Letter to Timothy: If anyone purifies himself from what is ignoble, then he will be a vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to his Lord, ready for any good work. So shun youthful passions. Whoever, then, *purifies himself* from these lustful defilements through the compunction of contrition and penance *will be a vessel for noble use* on account of the beauty given him by celestial grace, chastity and purity. *And useful to his Lord, ready for any work* that satisfies the divine will. A soiled and unpurified vessel gives no pleasure to Christ the most noble of kings; nor is it welcome in the work of the ministry. *Shun youthful passions*; he did not say, 'Stand up to them,' but 'Shun them.' The voice of lust is better overcome by getting away from it altogether than by standing up to it.

Lastly, the fiery flush of greed in us is cleansed by means of the balm of spiritual gladness.¹⁶ On this we read in the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel [25]: *I shall pour clean water over you and you will be cleansed; I shall cleanse you of all your defilement and all your idols.* The thought of wealth in different shapes and forms seethes in the brain of the avaricious person; he is ablaze with earthy fantasies; by day he gets no respite from the useless things that divide his attention, nor by night from all manner of planning. So the Lord says: *I shall pour over you*, who are sunk down

to the level of the earthy, *clean water*, which is the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that you will be refreshed after the heat of the fires of greed. A taste of this will have such soothing effect on the soul it refreshes, the soul on fire with earthy hankerings, that all this fierce earth-clinging appetite will seem so silly: *and you will be cleansed of all your defilement and all our idols*. The sin of covetousness is called total wickedness, since *the love of money is the root of all evils* [I Tim. 6:10]; it nevertheless also goes by the name of *idols*, because, according to the Apostle, *covetousness makes one an idolater* [cf. Eph. 5:5]. And touching this the Lord, in the eleventh chapter of Luke [41], was giving extremely good advice, when he said: *But give alms out of the store you have, and at once all that is yours becomes clean*.

Concluding prayer] Let us therefore ask the Lord & c.

Endnotes

¹J. G. Bougerol, *Sermones Dominicales* (Grottaferrata, 1977) 192-198; *Opera omnia* IX, 183 - 186.

²Cf. *Letter to the faithful* (2nd version), 2.

³See rubric to the sermon's outline (*schema*) in IX, 1896. The sermon was probably preached Jan. 25, 1265 — J. F. Quinn, "Chronology of St. Bonaventure's Sermons", *AFH* 67 (1974) 170.181; Bougerol, *Sermones*, 27 — and revised at Paris as a model sermon 1267 - 1268 (Bougerol, *Sermones*, 29).

⁴*Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, VI, 90b.

⁵Cf. Prologue to *Commentary on Luke*, VII, 3-4.

⁶See **THE CORD** 1987, Nov. 302-312; Dec. 334-342; 1989, Mar. 71-81.

⁷*Commentary on Luke*, prologue, VII, 3b.

⁸*Breviloquium* prologue, V, 202a; cf. *The Works of Bonaventure. II The Breviloquium* (Tr. J. de Vinck, Paterson, 1963) 4.

⁹Literally, 'goodness' (*bonitas*). The old-fashioned word 'bounty' has the sense of resource supplying a want and therefore suits the context better.

¹⁰This is followed in the *Opera omnia* edition (IX, 183b) by: *as the blessed Augustine says*. Aug., in *On the True Religion* (c. 16, n. 32). wrote: 'All His life on earth was a training in human conduct,' &, in *Treatises on John* (15, n. 2): 'In every single thing he did as a human being, He proffered an example to those who would believe in him.' Elsewhere B. attributes the dictum to St. Gregory (in whose *Homilies* appears the gist of it). The proximate source would appear to be Alexander of Hales, who had used the statement in his *Disputed Questions & Glosses*, carried it into the Paris O.F.M. School, where it harmonized with Franciscan Exemplarism. Alexander's more immediate source was possibly Peter Lombard, who wrote: 'Christ's prayer is instruction for the faithful, as His every act is a lesson for the christian' (*Gloss on Ps. 85*); 'His every action is an instruction for believers' (*Gloss on Heb. 5:7*).

B. Himself emphasises a distinction between instruction & imitability: All Christ's actions are 'instruction' while *not all* are for 'imitation' (miracles & c.); *IV Sent.*, d. 3, pt. 2, a. 3, q. 1, ad 3 (IV, 84).

¹¹For 'knelt before,' the Vulgate has 'adored,' the general scriptural word for 'reverenced' or 'bowed down before,' which, in the Church, acquired the restricted meaning of worship of the divine. *Latria* (*latreia*) is the technical term for the service or worship (exclusively) of God: SB, *III Sent.* (III, 199-221); (cf. *dulia* designating the veneration of saints — 'the honor or reverence due and rendered to a rational creature' — III, 220, & *hyperdulia* the special veneration of the Blessed Virgin — III, 206).

¹²Here the language is *nuptial*. Wisdom, for Bonaventure, is the ideal of the human search for ultimate peace. In its highest form, wisdom is knowledge of God by experience, mystical union with God, which is knowledge by *tasting*.

¹³In the *schema* of this sermon (IX, 186b) the specific cure for avarice is given as 'the attainment of spiritual opulence,' *adeptionem*, substituted for *dulcorem*, and *spiritualis opulentiae* for *spiritualis laetitiae*.

¹⁴This note of return to a proper relationship with the Persons of the Trinity is redolent of St. Francis' trinitarian 'collect' with which the *Letter to the Entire order* concludes; there the grace of being 'inwardly cleansed' is given priority — see R. J. Armstrong, I.C. Brady, *Francis and Clare. The Complete Works* (1982) 61.

¹⁵A literal translation of the Vulgate reading of *Eccli* 1:28.

¹⁶See note 13.



Our Lady in the Writings of St. Francis

SÉAMUS MULHOLLAND, O.F.M.

It may be said at the beginning of this essay that Francis wrote little about our Lady, but paucity of writings does not mean paucity of insight or devotion or love. Both Celano and Bonaventure attest to the profound love he had for her¹ and Bonaventure sees a central role of our Lady in the conversion of Francis when he writes about Francis' discovery of the Gospel life at the Portiuncula:

He prayed to her who had conceived the Word full of grace and truth.²

This essay does not intend to trace the historical development of Medieval Marian Piety;³ but it suffices to say that Francis made a significant contribution to both its spirit and content, and in many respects surpasses it.

Francis was no theologian in the sense that he wrote a *summa* of theology, nor did he write any great treatises. But he was nevertheless a theologian in the wider sense that many of his writings contain profound and perceptive theological insights into the mystery of God.⁴ At the same time while admitting to this, it must be admitted that the theological insights of Francis are secondary to the initial experience of the God he is attempting to write about. In many instances while he does write about his experience of God, the words simply fail to convey adequately the reality of what he has experienced — which is, of course, the essence of mysticism.⁵

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The experience of God for Francis was always a gift of prayer: but even here the word 'prayer' fails to adequately describe the import and deeper meaning of what it was he experienced as an inexpressible and ineffable mystery of his life. Francis' prayer is firmly rooted in scripture and liturgy⁶ and the visual imagery these evoked is further enriched by his own tendency towards the dramatic.⁷ The same is true of his devotion to our Lady: grounded in scripture, actualized in the liturgy and expressed in the way only poetry and mysticism can do as the "salutation to the Blessed Virgin" shows (AB p. 149-1509).

It is not anachronistic to say that Francis' vision of our Lady as it comes through his writings is quite in harmony with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council⁸ for Francis' vision of our Lady has two dimensions each one inextricably bound up with the other: Ecclesial and maternal. As with the Fathers of the church, the very fact of its scriptural and liturgical base gives the 'mariology' of Francis a surprisingly modern character.⁹ We may firmly locate Francis within the church of his time, to do anything else *would be* anachronistic and unfair. But it is fair to say that his writings on our Lady avoid much of the more excessive aspects of medieval Marian piety because for Francis the ultimate source for any of our Lady's graces or gifts is the Trinity. This is expressed in the context of our Lady's Divine Motherhood, which is Christocentric in Francis' devotion and writings.¹⁰

While this is true, the Christological dimension is not the only one, for Francis realizes intuitively the Trinitarian source and it is this which forms the basis of his own devotion to, veneration and love of our Lady; but in Francis' case its *experiential* context is the Divine Motherhood. Celano writes

To the Mother of Jesus he bore an ineffable love because she made the Lord of Majesty our brother (2 Cel 198)

And Francis himself grasped the reality of the significance of the Trinity in our Lady:

Chosen by the most Holy Father in heaven consecrated by Him with His most beloved Son and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. (AB p. 149)

This same dimension of our Lady's divine Motherhood is found in the antiphon for the "Office of the Passion (AB p. 82) where Francis writes:

You are the daughter and handmaid of the Most High King and Father of Heaven; you are the Mother of our Most Holy Lord Jesus Christ; you are the Spouse of the Holy Spirit.

Here the profundity of Francis' mysticism comes through for he uses a term for our Lady which had not appeared in any of the litanies he would have known, and much of his prayers on our Lady are litanic in structure. The term is "Spouse of the Holy Spirit." Francis was the first to use this title¹¹ and here he reveals an astounding and remarkable theological precision. The uniqueness our Lady enjoys [Mother of Jesus] with respect to all other creatures is set down in the same Trinitarian terms. Christ is in the middle position between Father and Holy Spirit [although there is no implication of any kind of subordinationism] and it is this fact that she is mother of the Son of God which elicits our love for her.

So she is not the "Spouse" understood in the sense of "wife"; rather she is the daughter because she is God's perfect handmaid in that he accomplishes his will most perfectly in her *let it be*. Her *fiat* brings to completion the work of God in creation with its highest perfection — the Incarnate Son. So our Lady is at once handmaid and mother because she is the Spouse of the Holy Spirit. Francis has summed up in one phrase what it would take many later mariologists (particularly the Scotists) tomes and volumes to discuss under headings belonging to the complexities of Trinitarian theology in virtue of her being predestined to be the Mother of God.¹²

But this is not all, for the ecclesial dimension is also prevalent here in the term Spouse of the Holy Spirit. Francis writes in the "Letter to the Faithful":

A person is the bride of Christ when his faithful soul is united with Christ by the Holy Spirit. (AB p. 62 n. 5).

In her Divine Motherhood Mary is an image of the church and Francis grasping the essence of this mystically writes of how we as members of the church become "divine mothers":

And we are mothers of him when we enthrone him in our hearts and souls by love with a pure and sincere conscience and give him birth by doing good (AB p. 62 n. 8).

This image of our Lady as archetypal image of the Church is even more explicit in "The Salutation of the blessed Virgin Mary" when he says of her:

You are Virgin made Church.

This is certainly beyond its time¹³ and while images of our Lady and the church are linked together in Medieval Marian devotion they are not as striking or explicit as this.

But this is not mere piety on the part of St. Francis. By linking both *Spouse of the Holy Spirit* and *Virgin made Church* with what he says concerning our bringing Christ to be in our hearts, Francis is speaking

... Francis' vision of our Lady as it comes through his writings is quite in harmony with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council...

of the Divine Motherhood which is actualized mystically in the hearts and souls of all the faithful. So what was realized in the Divine Motherhood of our Lady in existential terms: the making of *the Lord of Majesty our Brother*, is to be actualized in mystical, though no less existential and real terms in the hearts of all believers, who constitute the Body of Christ, the Church; and most especially in the hearts and lives of the Friars.

Again this close relationship between our Lady's Motherhood and the Church can be seen in some of the titles which Francis uses of her, particularly in the "Salutation of the Blessed Virgin":

Hail, His Palace
Hail, His Tabernacle
Hail, His Home,
Hail, His Robe.¹⁴

These nouns which Francis uses are also Biblical images and types for the Church which are attested to in the Fathers of the Church. They can be seen not only as metaphors or symbols, but as extensions of the insight which lies behind *Virgin made Church*, for we ourselves become Church when we incarnate the exhortation of Francis in the "Letter to the faithful."

Francis considered himself illiterate and uneducated but the depth of his insights is remarkable. In his writings on our Lady he has intuitively grasped, as only a mystic could, the whole economy of Salvation and the Incarnational process by keeping firmly in the forefront of his heart both mystically and experientially the essence and context of our Lady as Mother of Christ.

Francis understands affectively rather than cognitively that our Lady is CHOSEN without any merit on her part: she is CONSECRATED i. e. made holy by the fact that she is the Mother of the Son Incarnate [it may not be grasping at theological straws here to see an unspoken acceptance in his heart of the Immaculate Conception]. But this can only take place within the context of the causal modalities of the Trinity: she is chosen BY the Father, consecrated WITH the Son and comforted IN the

Holy Spirit. This expression of love and veneration can only come from an experience of that same Trinity in mystical prayer and not theological study.¹⁵

In this respect the question of the "centeredness," not only of his devotion to our Lady, but also of his spiritual life, i.e. whether Trinitarian or Christocentric, is an irrelevancy. The writings of Francis attest to his experience of the Three-in-Oneness that is God, yet he saw and grasped, as much as the early Fathers, the dynamic inter/intra-relatedness of each Person of the Trinity as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The question, I feel, misses the point about the nature of Francis' prayer: God is for Francis all at once Most High Almighty Father, Saving Son who is brother, and Comforting Holy Spirit — the finest example of which in Francis' writings is the "Praises of God." Francis also sees the significance of our Lady in other areas, most especially when he speaks about Poverty:

So in all the poor he read the Son of the Poor Lady, bearing naked in his heart Him whom she bore naked in her hands (2 Cel 83) ... whenever you see a poor man, brother, a mirror of the Lord and of His Poor Mother is set before you (2 Cel 85).

So Francis' love of our Lady formed one whole with reverence and love for the poor Christ. While Francis sought literally to observe the poverty of Christ and his Mother, it must be remembered that the underlying idea of this spiritual poverty is the Poor of Yahweh, the Anawim. The poverty of the Anawim is perceptive and open to the Holy Spirit of God and it recognizes that all goodness and grace come from Him. Material poverty, therefore, is the sacrament of total dependence on God. This is most perfectly expressed in the Magnificat where our Lady is the link between the Old and the New Testaments because she personified in herself the openness of all those who wait on God. Without such openness material poverty is unbearable and meaningless.

For Francis, our Lady personified this Gospel life of poverty for her material poverty was its sign:

I, little Brother Francis, wish to live according to the life and poverty of Our Most High Lord Jesus Christ and his Most Holy Mother and to persevere in this to the end. (AB p. 46).

And it was fitting that he should do this in the Church dedicated to Mary of the Angels, where he had prayed to our Lady at the beginning of his pursuit of the Gospel life.

Endnotes

¹The references in Celano and Bonaventure are numerous.

²Bonaventure, LM 3, 1; cf. also "Introduction" to *Francis and Clare*. The Complete Works. Ed. and trans. by R. Armstrong, OFM Cap. and Ignatius C. Brady, OFM, pp. 16-17.

³cf. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. IX, p. 335 ff.

⁴See Eric Doyle, OFM, "St. Francis and Theology" in *The CORD*, January, 1982, p. 19.

⁵See Happold, F.C., *Mysticism: A Study and Anthology*. London, 1984. Chapters 7 and 12.

⁶Cf. Peter Fehlner, OFM Conv., "Our Lady and St. Francis" in *The CORD*, May 1982, pp. 142-148; also D. Scotto, TOR, "St. Francis and the Spirit of the Liturgy" in *The CORD*, January, 1982, pp. 13-15.

⁷See my article, "St. Francis as Poet and Dramatist" in *The CORD*, April, 1990.

⁸Doyle, op. cit., p. 18.

⁹ibid., 18-19; Armstrong/Brady write: "Francis' view suggests the Mother of God as the model of his spiritual growth, and in his devotion to her the Poverello seems to have intuited the teaching of the Second Vatican Council" (*Francis and Clare*, p. 16).

¹⁰See E. Doyle, D. McElrath, "St. Francis of Assisi and the Christocentric Character of Franciscan Life and Doctrine" in *Franciscan Christology*, St. Bonaventure, N.Y., pp. 8-9.

¹¹W. Lampen, "De S. P. Francisci Cultu Angelorum et Sanctorum" in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, Vol. 20 (1927) pp. 1 ff.

¹²Fehlner, op. cit., p. 144.

¹³See Armstrong/Brady, p. 149, esp. fn. 2.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 159; also "Introduction", p. 16.

¹⁵Ibid., "Letter to Anthony," p. 79; also "The Later Rule," Ch. 5. n. 2, p. 140.



A Universal Canticle

Microscopic and cellular beings,
Bless the Lord.
Invertebrates and vertebrates,
Especially honey bees and hoot-owls,
Sing a new song to the Lord.
Planets and constellations,
Praise the Lord in all your splendor.
Astronauts, cosmonauts, aquanauts,
Exalt Him above all forever.
Ruralists, suburbanites, city-dwellers,
With thanksgiving, glorify the Lord.

All nations, bless the Lord.
Landscapers and manicurists,
In your perfection, bless the Lord.
Cartographers and truckdrivers,
Bless the Lord.
Equestrians and pedestrians,
Enjoy the Lord.
Mountain climbers and spelunkers,
In all your explorations, praise the Lord.
Maitre d's and hash-slingers,
Be gracious to the Lord.

Cloistered and boisterous,
Call to the Lord,
Fruits of the field,
Glory in the Lord.
Carriers of the cross of Christ,
Be strong for the Lord.
Architects, engineers, draftsmen,
Build for the Lord.
Miracle workers and mechanics,
Heal for the Lord.
Prophets and Evangelists,
Laud the Lord.

Linguists and lexicologists,
Extol the Lord.
Word processors and computer analysts,
Invoke the Lord.
Cyclists and marathon runners,
Exert yourself for the Lord.
Ecologists, biologists, zoologists,
Praise the Lord in all His majesty.
Grape pickers and wine makers,
Toil for the Lord.
Seculars and non-seculars,
Keep faith in the Lord.
Activists, dissenters, and risk-takers,
Suffer for the Lord.
Lovers of God,
Lovers of angels,
Lovers,
Sing praise and poetry to the Lord.

We praise You, O Holy One, in all efforts
and undertakings constantly thanking
you for the GIFTS of life and faith.

Joan Schlueter, S.F.O.

Book Reviews

The Faith Community, One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic. By Rev. Edward K. Braxton. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press. Pp. 196. Paper, \$7.95.

Reviewed by Fr. Stephen Lynch, Guardian of the Friary Community and a campus minister at Siena College.

Rev. Edward K. Braxton presents an engaging periscope of the American Catholic church and how it reflects the worldwide community of faith. **The Faith Community** brings together a series of lectures in which an African-American priest, starting from a mainline Catholic perspective as the point of departure, lucidly explores the implications of the four marks of the church: one, holy, Catholic and apostolic.

Citing transformation in Christ as the heart of the spiritual journey, Fr. Braxton cogently argues that the church can not be truly Christian nor truly Catholic until it more fully integrates the truth and goodness of minority people, their cultural diversity, their racial and ethnic traditions. Inculturation and inclusivity are bedrock for an authentic faith community.

In this chapter "African Americans and the Church," Fr. Braxton lucidly moves from the general to the specific, arguing that true catholicity must be more inclusive of the black Catholic experience as representative of what it means to be truly catholic, i.e. inclusive of all human beings. Using historical documents in an informative and chal-

lenging way, Fr. Braxton then connects the specific crisis of Catholic African-Americans in the US to the analogous general crisis of all minorities, especially Hispanics, Asians and women. His positive message points out that one can be specifically an African-American Catholic and at the same time be authentically Roman Catholic. Ethnic expressions of catholicism in no way diminish one's Roman Catholicism because unity does not necessarily mean uniformity.

The chapter on "Ministry and the University" challenges the church to reach the souls of the students, faculty and staff of the educational community. But Fr. Braxton leaves more questions than answers on how to make this ideal a reality. Institutional goals of diversity and affirmative action complicate the ministry of religious and ethical value formation by even the most competent spiritual guides and companions.

In his chapter "Pluralism and the Church," Fr. Braxton makes complex theology understandable and shows how change is a force to be contended with in both science and religion. He sees change in the church in terms of paradigm shifts.

Citing Thomas S. Kuhn's book **The Structure of Scientific Revolutions**, Fr. Braxton explains the church in transition by looking at the concept of the *paradigm* in the scientific, natural order to see how the idea of paradigm works in the theological order. Just as there are periodic shifts in the basic scientific world view or paradigm, so periodic

shifts occur in the basic theological world view. By showing what is going on in the scientific community, namely the shifting of paradigms, he is legitimizing what is going on in the theological domain. Just as there are changeless elements in a changing world, so, while the basic faith of Christianity is immutable, doctrinal explanations may change. The reality of change explains the development of the faith experience and is essential to the process of conversion. He cites three paradigmatic shifts in church theology: the Augustinian paradigm, the Thomistic paradigm, and the Vatican II paradigm. He points out that the Thomistic paradigm is an historical benchmark that is changing. Failure to mention the Council of Trent's role in the shifting of the theological paradigm, leaves this chapter somewhat incomplete. All in all, Fr. Braxton combines an articulate, scholarly tone with a very readable style as he takes you through the combat zone of unchangeable truth colliding with a changeable world reality.

Without being paternalistic or ultra pedantic, Fr. Braxton wants you to feel comfortable on your faith journey.

* * *

Does God Hear Us? Reflections on Christian Prayer Today. By Andre Seve, S. S. New York: New City Press, 1990. Pp. 109. Paper, \$7.95.

Reviewed by Father Daniel Hurley, O.F.M., National Chaplain of the St. Bonaventure University Alumni Association, Instructor in English and Campus Minister of the University.

What an interesting book! Every believer prays to God and almost every believer sometimes wonders if God hears the prayers that are prayed. In a short book of just over one hundred pages, Father Andre Seve, a French Assumptionist priest, presents encouraging words of support.

In the first of five chapters, the author recognizes that the old style of praying, using memorized formulas, is on the wane, and new types of spontaneous prayer are on the increase (page 7). The writer lists a variety of types of prayer, from Sunday Mass and the Rosary to oriental styles of prayer and pilgrimages. He points out some positive and some negative benefits of each type.

In the second chapter, the writer reminds the reader of the way that Jesus prayed and the way Jesus teaches us to pray — as a Son prays to his Father (page 27). Jesus' prayer and his teaching about prayer serve as a model and a foundation for our prayers. In his third chapter, Father Seve emphasizes that union with God is the most essential foundation as well as the ultimate goal of all prayers (page 56).

In claiming, in the fourth chapter, that all prayer should be apostolic, the author means that prayer should not be selfish or self-centered (page 69). The author concludes his treatise on prayer by explaining struggles prayers often experience (chapter five).

Does God Hear Us? is a great little book. The reader can learn a lot about the nature of prayer and the kinds of prayer and the problems of praying. This reviewer recommends this book to all believers in God. It will help all of us in our prayer life.

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