

The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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The CORD

A Monthly Franciscan Spiritual Review

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The CORD (ISSN 0010-8685) USPS 563-640) is published monthly with the July and August issues combined, by the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778.

Subscription rates: \$15.00 a year; \$1.50 a copy. Second class postage paid at St. Bonaventure, NY 14778, and at additional mailing office.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The CORD, P.O. Drawer F, St. Bonaventure NY 14778 USA.

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

Form Viv: 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: "We are like the leaves and buds of a great tree..."

MARGARET PIRKL, O.S.F.

On July 3, 1991, creatures great and small somehow knew that they had lost a friend. Dad died that afternoon in the farm home where he and Mother had lived for more than 64 years. The struggle with cancer had finally come to an end; yet, through it all, our 96-year-old father kept a keen and clear mind, a good sense of humor and an interest in life. In particular, he was concerned about what was happening outside in the garden, in the woods, in the five-acre lawn, and in the fields he had once tilled and nurtured. Birds at the feeders delighted him, running spring water soothed him, sprouting seeds prepared for planting satisfied him, dry weather tested him, a family of deer wandering through the yard caught his full attention, baby kittens made him smile, growing crops pleased him. All of these affected him deeply, for he was intimately linked with everything of earth.

The five great burr oaks that now extend protective arms over our small family house were already magnificent trees, probably 150 years old, when Mother and Dad moved in as newlyweds in 1927. These trees were loved from the beginning and enjoyed a more special place in our life than did the others in the yard and in the woods that nearly surround the yard. Dad soon discovered that one of the five was in desperate need because it had been mistreated for years as a hitching post for horses. A gaping hole in the trunk, shoulder high or about half-way up to where the branches began, revealed rotting wood in the tree's center. According to Dad's account, removal of one decaying layer led to another layer and another.

This reflection was written by Sr. Margaret in memory of her father who died some months ago. A specialist in the area of religious responsibility for the future of the earth, Sister Margaret has contributed several articles for the CORD.

It was clear that the tree would die unless some creative action was taken immediately. Dad cleaned the heart of the oak as best he could and filled the cavity with concrete, thus sealing off the sources of damage.

Knowing now how much our father loved that tree, we are certain that he performed his task as gently and thoroughly as he could, in tune with the earth's healing power and with trust in the Divine Creative Presence that still shone forth clearly and surely from the wounded burr oak. This beautiful 200-year-old creature of God still graces the yard, along with its four companions. Examination of the trunk yields no evidence of the mending operation Dad performed; the bark has grown naturally over the scar. With a twinkle in his eye, Dad liked to tell us that anyone trying to saw through the tree will be in for a rude surprise!

Our father's special link with trees was more than a sentimental feeling; we believe it had to do with his own life journey. Although he had never read Carl Jung, he was in touch with what Jung meant when he said:

...the earthly manifestation of "God's world" began with the role of plants, as a kind of direct communication from it... Trees in particular were mysterious and seemed to me direct embodiments of the incomprehensible meaning of life.¹

It was this insight, or one close to it, that explained Dad's distress and pain at the unnecessary destruction of a healthy growing tree as well as the strength and pleasure he drew from the sight of a grove of trees, spared and nurtured in its natural state.

Our father's life, in John Muir's words, was "hitched to everything in the universe." And Dad's faith in God intermingled with his faith in the ways of the earth. Rain, snow, sunshine, wind, whether in moderation or excess, were accepted by him as part of God's providence. If they caused pain and loss, they were incorporated into the mystery of the Crucified, but they were also implicitly understood as a piece of the earth's "big picture." The dependability of natural processes deepened Dad's belief in God's faithfulness. Spring flowers, June's loveliness, ripe golden fields of grain, "fairlyland" trees covered with hoarfrost — all beautiful creatures — led Dad to wonder about how beautiful their Creator must be. Working hand in hand with the earth was for Dad linked inextricably with working hand in hand with God. Respect for life was bound to respect for the Source of Life. Gratitude for the land's bounty was gratitude to the Divine Giver of all gifts.

Our father's faith in God as Creator of all determined his way of life and thus overflowed to our entire family. It was so integral to our thought and behavior that we did not name it most of the time because we did

not recognize it. In the months since our father's death, this faith, grounded in memories of life close to the land, becomes more clear as Dad's precious legacy to us. Further, it beckons us to hold carefully the religious nature of our relationship to earth. It calls to mind some wise words from Teilhard that reflect our father's earthy understanding of life, words in which we now find Dad's invitation to meaning and to responsibility:

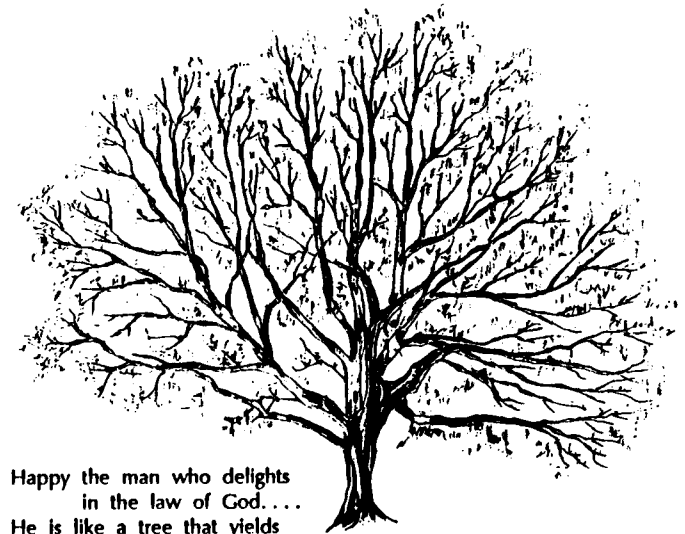
We are like the leaves and buds of a great tree on which everything appears at its proper time and place as determined by the good of the whole.²

For this invitation we thank you, Dad!

End notes

¹C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963) 67-68.

²A quote from Pierre Teilhard Chardin found on a greeting card.



Happy the man who delights
in the law of God...
He is like a tree that yields
its fruit in due season
and whose leaves never fade.

-From Psalm 1:1-3

This drawing is from a photo of the tree the late Mr. Pirkl helped in its healing back in 1927.

"Speak Lord, your servant is listening": Obedience and Prayer in Franciscan Spirituality

TIMOTHY JOHNSON, O.F.M. CONV.

Two thousand years ago, the Stoic philosopher Epicetus said: "God gave man two ears and one mouth so he would listen twice as much as speak".¹ Unfortunately, that is not always the case. . .

In the Lower Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi there is an allegorical painting of the vow of obedience found over the main altar.² This painting, which is often attributed to Giotto, depicts a friar minor bowing his head to put on the yoke of obedience. The person who offers him the yoke has a finger over his lips indicating that he should be quiet. As I'm sure you already know, the word "obedience" comes from the Latin "oboedire" which means "to listen" as well as "to obey".³ To be obedient is to listen and no one can listen unless he or she learns to be quiet. Thus, an obedient friar minor is one who disciplines himself to be quiet and listen. But to whom? Certainly to God, but also to himself and others.

In the days and months preceding chapter we have tried to live obediently by trying to quiet ourselves and listen in prayer so that we could somehow hear how we are to live out our calling as friars minor. Our obedience has been to ourselves as we have listened to the desires of our hearts, to others as they voiced their hopes and fears, and to God whose Spirit

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moves mysteriously within and around us. I pray we have listened well, for as a result of the many decisions that will be made during this chapter period, numerous friars all over the world will receive obediences calling them to listen and respond to the will of God by living out their vocation as friars with particular responsibilities within particular communities. Some obediences will be received with great joy and relief while others, no doubt, will provoke their fair share of anguish and suffering. I pray we have been truly obedient in prayer, for the ramifications of our decisions will have a far reaching effect on our friars as well as their families, friends, and the people to whom they minister.

Our call to obedience, which is expressed in prayerful listening, does not end with the beginning of chapter. We are reminded in various ways throughout these days together that we are to go beyond the limited horizons of our own wants and needs, preferences and wishes, to once again listen to God. Yet, before we turn our ear to God, and to others for that matter, we must learn to once again listen to ourselves in honest prayer. That is to say, we need to be obedient to ourselves so we can discover our deepest desires.⁴ They are a fundamental element in the process of discernment. To refuse to stop and listen to ourselves, as well as to others and then to God, is the height of absurdity. It is to remain deaf to ourselves, to others, and to God. In fact the word "absurd" comes from the Latin "surdus" which means "deaf".⁵

We begin to be obedient to ourselves by listening to ourselves. This is the first or primary school of prayer. If we do not learn our lesson well at this stage we will never learn to listen to God. This is especially true for Franciscans since we have traditionally placed a great amount of emphasis on interior experiences as criteria for spiritual discernment.⁶ We can be tempted to look all over outside of ourselves but not within where the Word of God dwells and speaks to us within the uniqueness of our experience. Retreats, spiritual exercises, days of recollection — or, for that matter, spiritual conferences during chapter — are important to the degree that they foster our desire to turn inward and listen.

The idea of turning within in order to learn how to pray is hardly new. In fact, it is a constant in many religious traditions. The Islamic tradition also speaks of the need to turn inward — even though we may be drawn to look outside of ourselves instead of within in our search for God. There is the famous Islamic story of the Master who looked for his key outside in the town square even though he had lost it inside his house. When asked why he was looking outside he responded by saying that there was more light outside than inside!⁷ Our own Christian tradition speaks time and time again of the inward journey. Christ himself reminds us in the Gospel that we need to enter into the solitude of our own rooms and pray in secret to the Father (Mt. 6:6). The word "room" can be interpreted

literally or symbolically. We of course need to find a quiet and tranquil place if we truly intend to learn how to pray. Our hearts are, however, the most secret room in which we can retire to learn how to pray. Many of the accounts of the Desert Fathers and Mothers speak to us of the importance of developing our inner life as a privileged way of leading to the discovery of the presence of God.⁸

Our own Franciscan tradition stresses the link between turning inward in the search for self-knowledge and in the encounter with God in prayer. As Bonaventure writes in his work *On the Perfection of Life*:

Oh my God, from whence [comes] such blindness in a religious? Behold the reason is evident. Listen: because the mind of the person, distracted by *cares*, does not enter into itself through the *memory*; because darkened by *images* it does not return to itself through *intelligence*; because attracted by *illicit desires*, it never turns back to itself through the *desire* of internal sweetness and spiritual happiness, lingering therefore completely in these sense objects, it is unable to enter into itself as the image of God. And so, completely miserable, it is ignorant of itself and does not know its very self. Therefore, after all these things have been disregarded, acquire the memory and knowledge of yourself. Blessed Bernard use to pray for this saying 'May God give to me to know nothing other than that I may know my very self.'⁹

The knowledge of self, regardless if it be painful or joyful, depressing or exhilarating, is seen as the point of departure for all true prayer. Without it, there can be no true encounter with God. The link between self-knowledge in prayer and knowledge of God in prayer is conveyed in John of Capistran's admonition concerning prayer in the novitiate. He writes: "One hour of mental prayer is to be instituted for the novices so they may learn to know themselves and thus arrive at the knowledge of God".¹⁰

The encounter with self and God in solitude can often delude us because it is much different than we expected or hoped for since the first person we meet in prayer is ourselves and not God. This encounter can be frightening as we begin to listen to the chorus of voices within ourselves. We can be afraid of what we will find or where we will end up if we continue to listen honestly to ourselves. Francis himself, as Celano relates, was tempted to avoid the solitude of prayer lest he end up in worst shape than he was:

But while he frequented hidden places as more suitable to prayer, the devil tried to drive him away by an evil suggestion. He put into his mind a certain woman who was monstrously hunchbacked, an inhabitant of the city, and who was a hideous sight to all. He threatened to make him like her if he did not leave off what he had begun. But *strengthened in the Lord*, he rejoiced to hear a reply of salvation and

grace: 'Francis,' God said to him in spirit, 'what you have loved carnally and vainly you should now exchange for spiritual things, and taking the *bitter for the sweet*, despise yourself, if you wish to acknowledge me; for you will have a taste for what I speak of even if the order is reversed'. Immediately he was compelled to obey the divine command and was led to actual experience.¹¹

In the midst of our attentive solitude we can hear the confusing echo of numerous, contradictory sentiments such as jealousy and thankfulness, hate and love, laziness and zeal, passion and apathy, egoism and humility, stress and peace, sadness and joy. We may feel at times the desire to do great things for the Lord — things that we may or may not ever do. The reality and intensity of some of our sentiments can cause us to be uneasy with ourselves and to believe that they really do not belong to us — they must be the result of others and their clearly negative influence on our lives. We are tempted to believe that they come from somewhere "out there" like the hunchbacked woman who was outside the cave waiting for Francis.

Or, when we finally do recognize the broad range and intensity of our feelings, we can be tempted to ignore or suppress them with the hope that they will simply disappear in time. All we need to do — or so we think — is to try to concentrate on God. Sometimes the experience of these sentiments can be so strong that we are tempted to run away from prayer. It is precisely in these moments that we need to practice obedience to ourselves by remaining still and listening to the chorus of voices with us. If we decide to bolt by refusing to listen to the voices within, we will never pray and God will not take us seriously. To quote Cyprian, the great African doctor who wrote a commentary on the Our Father: "How can you ask God to listen to you when you are not even willing to listen to yourself"?¹²

To listen to ourselves leads to an authentic expression of prayer in which we can confess who we are before God. God readily responds to prayer which is authentic and sincere. Honest, authentic prayer is an experience of liberation because it flows from the radical acceptance of self — we do not have to hide from ourselves anymore. This point is brought home in the story of the drunkard's prayer. I would like to use this story, whose origin at the moment escapes me, because it conveys well the power of honest and authentic prayer. According to this story, a drunkard came into town and all the bars were closed. Finally he found one that was about to close. He asked the bartender as he was closing up the bar why all the bars were closed. He responded that the town priest had died and everyone had gone to his funeral. Overcome with despair because of his inability to get a drink, the drunkard fell to his knees and prayed that the priest might be brought back to life: "Dear God, I really wish you'd bring the priest back to life because I'm going to die if I don't get a drink"! Sud-

denly the priest appeared alive and well and the bartender, obviously stunned, asked how it was that he came back to life. The priest responded that God answered the prayer of the drunkard because it was the first honest prayer that he had heard in a long time!

As previously mentioned, the process of listening to ourselves inherent to authentic prayer can be a confusing and painful experience. It is to enter into the hurricane of conflicting and disturbing emotions. Yet, not to enter into the hurricane is to remain in the false security of those who find themselves in the eye of the hurricane. We remain oblivious to the true force of the storm that surrounds us. This is dangerous because in a moment's notice we can be swept away by the raging force of our emotions. We should also remember that it is dangerous to enter into the hurricane because it means to engage in spiritual combat. To engage in spiritual combat is to enter into the desert, so to speak, where demons dwell. Like Christ, each one of us is called to enter into the desert with him. As Bonaventure writes in *The Tree of Life*:

Come then, disciple of Christ, search into the secrets of solitude with your pious teacher, so that having become a companion of wild beasts, you may become an imitator and sharer of the hidden silence, the devout prayer, the day long fasting and the three encounters with the cunning enemy. And so you will learn to have recourse to that [teacher] in every crisis of temptation because *we do not have a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tried in all things as we are, except sin.*¹³

In fact, as the desert temptations depicted in the Gospel reveal, Christ practiced obedience as he listened to himself in the desert. There he was assailed by many of the temptations common to humanity. He did not turn and run. This point was brought out well in the, albeit controversial, movie *The Last Temptation of Christ*. In one very powerful scene from this film Christ sat down in the middle of the desert and drew a line around himself in the sand. Throughout the night he wrestled with any number of demons. He did not leave the circle even in the midst of great temptations. Instead of fleeing, he responded with the Word of God which he heard in solitude. We find Christ doing the same thing in the Garden of Gethsemane before his death. Instead of running he listened to his heart and expressed his anguish in the presence of the Father. In the midst of his prayer he also listened to the will of the Father and responded with an obedience unto death.

In the life of Francis of Assisi we find a man who had the courage to be obedient to himself and God by listening to himself and God. In the *Prayer before the Crucifix* we see that fear did not keep him from admitting that he was in darkness, that his faith was deficient, his hope shaky

and his love weak. He readily conceded that he was unable to carry out the will of God without grace:

Most high, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me, Lord, a correct faith, a certain hope, a perfect charity, sense and knowledge, so that I may carry out Your holy and true command.¹⁴

The prayers of St. Francis reveal a man who was so free that he did not have the need nor desire to hide himself from God. His manner of prayer suggests this very same freedom:

But when he prayed in the woods and solitary places, he would fill the woods with his sighs, water the places with his tears, strike his breast with his hand; and discovering there a secret hiding place, he would often speak with his Lord in words. There he would give answer to his judge; there he would offer his petitions to his father; there he would talk to his friend; there he would rejoice with the bridegroom.¹⁵

Francis became a living prayer because he became transparent to himself, others and God. The false images of self and God which often function as seemingly insurmountable barricades for some in their search for God did not keep him from listening to and accepting himself in God's presence. When he could obediently affirm the truth of himself, he could accept the true God with a devoted obedience of mind and heart. This truth did not come without a steep price as Francis' wrestling with demons in prayer so clearly attest. As he struggled, his prayer became a way of life; or better said, his manner of living was transformed into prayer. As a result, he became a living, continual prayer offered in the presence of God. The power of his prayer did not escape the eyes of those around him who approached him so that they might learn from him how to walk the path of true prayer. Ultimately Francis' obedient prayer brought him to the heights of Mount La Verna where, in the midst of contemplation, he was transformed in the image of the very same Word to whom he had listened with such attentiveness.

... the ascent to God begins when we descend into our humanity by listening to and accepting ourselves before God.

Bonaventure reflected theologically on Francis' experience and taught that true prayer is born in the experience of ourselves as we are before God; that is, as crippled mendicants completely dependent on his love for our continued existence.¹⁶ For Bonaventure, we are, spiritually speaking, already like the hunchback woman Francis feared. To affirm that we are

hunchbacked, bent over and crippled, was for Bonaventure the simple admission of the reality of sin and its effect in our lives. The human condition, as described in *The Journey of the Soul into God*, appears in a seemingly negative light. Such language should not startle us today as we often hear talk in psychological circles of the dark, shadow side of humanity and the necessity of rediscovering and reaffirming the reality of sin. However bleak the situation of humanity before God may seem to those who read Bonaventure, it is crucial to remember that he views the human condition through the perspective of the gift of salvation offered in Christ Jesus:

According to the original state of Creation, the human person was created fit for the quiet of contemplation, and thus *God placed him in the paradise of pleasures* (Gen. 2:15). But turning away from the true light to a changeable good, he and all who were to follow, were through his own fault bent over by original sin which infected human nature in two ways; that is the mind with *ignorance* and the flesh with *concupiscence*. And so it is that the human person, *blinded and bent over*, sits in darkness and does not see the light of heaven unless grace with justice come to aid against *concupiscence* and unless knowledge with wisdom come to aid against *ignorance*. All this is done through Jesus Christ, *whom God made for us wisdom, justice, sanctification and redemption*.¹⁷

In the Bonaventurian view of things, the incarnate Word, out of obedience to the Father, descended into the stark poverty of the human condition so that he might lead us out of the bondage of sin back into the freedom of God's Kingdom. We, who were already poor by nature of the fact that we are creatures, are in need of the divine intervention of the Most High because sin has rendered us anxious mendicants. As Bonaventure says, we have made ourselves poor through our decision to chose temporal, transitory goods instead of the eternal, everlasting good which is God himself. Consequently we are never really at rest. Instead of looking to God as the source of truth, our intellectual powers look elsewhere and are plunged into ignorance, misery and doubt. Instead of conforming our will to God as the highest good through love, we settle for lesser goods and lesser loves which leave us unsatisfied. Our choice to look elsewhere for truth and to focus our desires on transitory goods of the earth both blinds us and pulls us, so to speak, toward the ground and leaves us bent over like a hunchback. Bent over and blinded by sin, we are like the beggar Bartimeus of Luke's Gospel seated at the gate of Jericho. We call out to the Saviour to heal us and join our prayer to Bartimeus': "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me". Just as the crowd around Jesus both helped and hindered Bartimeus as he called out for mercy, so too does the world around us both draw us closer to the Lord and lead us away from him.

Just as Jesus had Bartimeus lifted up and brought to him, so too are we lifted up and brought to Christ through grace and healed of our spiritual blindness. In the same way, just as Jesus reached out and raised up the son of the widow of Naim from his death bed, Christ extends his hand to raise us from the dead back to life. As a result, we are no longer condemned to a life of selfish, and ultimately deadly, pursuits which would turn us back toward ourselves and leave us perpetually bent over. Set free from the insistent pull of concupiscence and illuminated by the light of grace, we can stand straight once again and contemplate the glory of God reflected so brilliantly in the face of Christ. His intervention into human history allows us to once again stand before God as the free sons of the Most High God. Certainly the price of our liberation is high: the death of the Father's only begotten Son. Yet, the death of Christ becomes a paradigm for our own contemplative journey: in death he goes before us and calls us to follow in his footsteps along the path he has opened back to the Father.

To return to the Father in contemplation along the path marked out by the Son is to accompany the apostles James, Peter, and John as they ascend Mount Tabor with Christ. To those who are at all familiar with Bonaventure's predilection for the number three and his work *The Triple Way*, it should not be surprising at all to see that there are three ways back to the Father. Each apostle represents in his own fashion one particular manner of following Christ:

...the *three ways of ascending* to the peak of contemplation are understood by means of these three people. For instance, in one manner the ascent is made by the way of *splendor*, and Augustine teaches this way of ascending, and it is represented here by Peter. The ascent is made in another manner by means of the way of *sorrow and lamentation*, and this [way is pointed out] here in Jacob, and this manner is common to all who pray. [The ascent is made] in the third manner by means of the way of *love*, Dionysius teaches this [way], and it is represented here by John...¹⁸

According to Jerome, the name Peter in Hebrew means "the one who knows". "Evidently Peter is given this title because he knew that Christ was the Messiah and acknowledged that reality when asked by the Lord: "Who do you say that I am." Bonaventure thus understands Peter as a symbol of all those who come to know God through intellectual investigation. This way is the Augustinian "way of splendor" whereby the contemplative rises into the mystery of God through reflection on the traces of the Trinity revealed in the splendor of created reality. The first six chapters of *The Journey of the Soul into God* represent this theological approach known as positive or kataphatic theology. The apostle John, for his part, represents those contemplatives who are drawn upward into the

mystery of God through the power of divine grace. This interpretation is based on Jerome's statement that John in Hebrew means "the one in whom graces resides." From a theological perspective, the way of John is that outlined in the negative or apophatic theology of the Pseudo-Dionysius and found in the seventh chapter of *The Journey of the Soul into God*. The apostle James, or Jacob, is a figure symbolic of all people who seek out God in penance and the struggle of prayer for his name in Hebrew means "the wrestler" or "the one who struggles."

In his *Major Life of St. Francis*, Bonaventure considers Francis to be a Jacob figure who wrestles with his own demons in the darkness of the night. He sees Francis as a new Jacob as he struggles to hear and incarnate the Word of God which had been spoken to him in the cave outside of Assisi, in the deserted chapel of San Damiano, in the fraternity of friars, in the community of the Church and in the splendors of Creation. In the process of his struggle which is proper to conversion, Francis suffers the same fate as Jacob who was wounded by the mysterious angel in the night. Like Jacob, he comes away crippled from his encounter with the Seraph. The brand marks of the Seraph reveal Francis to be a living witness to the transforming power of the Most High. As a result of his transformation, he, like Jacob before him, receives a new name. Bonaventure points out that Francis is no longer simply Jacob but Jacob-Israel for according to Jerome the name "Israel" means "the one who sees God." In his spiritual transformation through struggle, Francis becomes a model for all of us who would be obedient to our true selves, honestly embrace own unique poverty and become molded into the image of the living Word of God.

Our poverty, which we also recognize as we listen to ourselves in the solitude of our hearts, leads us to wisdom. We do not have to be ashamed of ourselves. All of our thoughts and feelings, dreams and fantasies, express our state as creatures. Since we are totally dependent on God, we do not have to be afraid of giving ourselves over to him with confidence. Our failures, errors and sins are one dimension of our poverty along with our joys, successes and good deeds. We need not tremble in fear as we recognize that image of the hunchbacked cripple within us. Why? Because the cripple acknowledged and embraced is molded like molten wax by the searing power of the Seraph into the image of Christ. This reality indicates to us the radical, revolutionary nature of Franciscan prayer: the ascent to God begins when we descend into our humanity by listening to and accepting ourselves before God. In this light we can affirm that the ascent to heaven comes through a descent to earth. The ascent to the spiritual world begins with a descent into the material world. This is the struggle of Jacob which lead to the contemplative experience of Israel and was revealed by God to Francis on Mount La Verna.

Let us then descend into the solitude of our hearts where we can listen to ourselves and as we do so, listen to the Spirit of the Lord who prays unceasingly within us. . .

End notes

¹Quoted in Diane Ackerman, *A Natural History of the Senses* (New York: Random House, 1990) 191.

²A reproduction of the fresco of obedience is found in Paschal Magro, *The Tomb of Saint Francis* (Assisi: Casa Editrice Francescana, 1982) 55. On this fresco and the others on poverty and chastity found in the lower basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, see: Franco Tardioli, *Dante Alighieri Francescano* (Roma: Editrice Nouvi Autori, 1983) 92-98.

³See: "Oboedio" in Charton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975) 1239.

⁴On prayer and desire, see: Ann and Barry Ulanov, *Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982) 13-25. Several insights from this book have been instrumental in the conception of this conference.

⁵See: "Surdus" in Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, 1817 and Ackerman, *A Natural History of the Senses*, 175.

⁶Johann Auer, *Die Entwicklung der Gnadenlehre in der Hochscholastik. Das Wesen der Gnade* (Freiburg: Herder, 1942) 347.

⁷Leo Buscaglia, *Living, Loving, and Learning*, ed. Steven Short (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982) 192.

⁸Roberta C. Bondi, *To Pray and to Love: Conversations on Prayer with the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) 75-95.

⁹*Perf vitae*, c. 1, n. 6 (VIII, 109b). All translations from the works of Bonaventure and others are mine unless otherwise noted.

¹⁰The latin text is quoted in Ignatius Brady, "The History of Mental Prayer in the Order of Friars Minor," *Franciscan Studies* 11 (1951): 334, n. 71.

¹¹*2 Cel*, 9 in Marion A. Habig, ed., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of Sources for the life of St. Francis* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973) 369.

¹²*Tertulliano-Cipriano-Agostino: II Padre nostro*, trans. Luigi Vicario, ed. Vittorio Grossi (Roma: Borla, 1980) 117.

¹³*Lig vit*, fr. 3, n. 10 (VIII, 73b).

¹⁴*OrCruc* in *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. and intro. Ignatius Brady and Regis Armstrong (New York: Paulist Press, 1982) 103.

¹⁵*2 Cel*, 95 in *Omnibus*, 440.

¹⁶Timothy Johnson, *Iste Pauper Clamavit: Saint Bonaventure's Mendicant Theology of Prayer* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 1990). The remainder of the conference is based primarily on the research found in this thesis.

¹⁷*Itin*, c. 1, n. 7 (V, 297b-298a).

¹⁸*Comm Lc*, c. 9, n. 49 (VII, 232a).

Rerum Novarum, The Collapse of Marxism, and Francis of Assisi

DR. ANTHONY MURPHY

Introduction

Today we celebrate both the Eve of Francis Day, the day of the Transitus, as well as the centenary of Leo XIII's seminal encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, or as it is sometimes translated: *The Conditions of the Workingman*. Although this papal letter establishes Catholic social policy concerning the rights and duties of capital and labor, develops a critique of totalitarian socialism, argues for the right of private property, develops a doctrine of a minimum fair wage, charges the state with a special obligation to protect the poor, and develops a natural rights defense of trade unionism, I wish to argue that at the heart of the message is a radical Christian vision of social peace as the reconciliation of heretofore antagonistic classes. Finally I wish to suggest that a return to the Gospel message, as called for by Leo XIII one hundred years ago, represents a viable social alternative in today's world, following the collapse of Marxism, to the excesses of either unrestrained capitalism or violent nationalism. The pope's ideals regarding peace and fraternity, we shall see, are central to the vision of Francis of Assisi.

The Marxist Doctrine of Class Warfare

At the very center of the Marxist critique of capitalist economies is the doctrine of class warfare; it is this doctrine that the encyclical wishes to meet head on. To cite the letter directly:

The great mistake that is made in the matter now under consideration, is to possess oneself of the idea that class is naturally hostile to

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class; that rich and poor are intended by nature to live at war with one another.¹

To be sure the letter recognizes class struggle, it is a fact of history. Whereas Marxist doctrine holds not only that such class warfare is the driving engine of history, it is inevitable; it must necessarily continue until all classes other than the working class are eliminated.

Foreseeing the inevitable social upheavals that are bound to follow on the heels of such a doctrine, Leo XIII speaks in 1891 of an imminent crisis fostered by the spirit of revolution:

The elements of a conflict are unmistakable. We perceive them in the growth of industry and the marvelous discoveries of science; in the changed relations of employers and workmen; in the enormous fortunes of individuals and the poverty of the masses.²

Indeed, the plight of the poor is singled out repeatedly for special consideration. It is significant to note that for Leo XIII, one of the chief factors responsible for the woes of the poor is the passing of the medieval guild and the repudiation of the Church as an effective spokesman for the poor.

But all agree, and there can be no question whatever, that some remedy must be found, and quickly found, for the misery and wretchedness which press so heavily at this moment on the large majority of the very poor. For the ancient workingmen's guilds were destroyed in the last century, and no other organization took their place. Public institutions and the laws have repudiated the ancient religion.³

One might ask what relevance these remarks have for the modern world? One hundred years after *Rerum Novarum*, has not the socialist experiment come and, within this year, failed? What ideology is going to replace Marxism in the East? If the experts are correct, Marxist ideology will be replaced by various form of violent nationalism and other form of human exploitation. The plight of the workingman will soon be desperate, if it isn't already in the collapsed Eastern block. Is not the line between North and South, between the first and the third world, a line that distinguishes rich from poor? Even if we look to our own land, at the plight of the inner cities, is it not obvious that Leo XIII's description of human misery still holds true?⁴ Similarly, Leo XIII's justly notable dictum still holds: "There is nothing more useful than to look at the world as it really is."⁵

Leo XIII's rejection of the inevitability of class warfare is complete:

So irrational and so false is this view, that the exact contrary is the truth. Just as the symmetry of the human body is the result of the disposition of the members of the body, so in a State it is ordained by nature that these two classes should exist in harmony and agreement, and should, as it were, fit into one another, so as to maintain the equilibrium of the body politic. Each requires the other; capital cannot do without labor, nor labor without capital.⁶

Underpinning this commitment to equilibrium is an uncompromising affirmation of the equal dignity of each person, a spiritual equality. The remedy for radical social inequality, as it turns out, is none other than a universal return to the Gospel message (I prefer, in the year 1991 of the common era, to speak of a return to the Hebrew-Christian message) affirming the radical equality and dignity of all men and women:

But, if Christian precepts prevail, the two classes will not only be united in the bonds of friendship, but also in those of brotherly love. For they will understand and feel that all men are children of the common father, that is, of God.⁷

Now we have reached the core of the letter, — the sufficient condition for overcoming class warfare is a return to the Common Scriptures. In a short introduction to the encyclical, Etienne Gilson highlights what he takes to be Leo XIII's view of the fundamental error of the modern world, the very source of the conflict between classes:

Practically all the positions rejected by Pope Leo XIII are so many varieties of one and the same error, namely, the refusal to recognize the existence of God, of a supernatural order, and of the duty we have to submit to it.⁸

By way of summary it may be said that the letter presents two reasons for the distress of the masses and the consequent class warfare after the industrial revolution: 1) the destruction of the guilds without their replacement by new associations based on Christian principles, and 2) the repudiation of the Church as a common home for both capital and labor.⁹

Return to a Modified Guild

I have decided to look closely at Leo XIII's understanding of the guild and the possible role it might play in overcoming social conflict. The last of four sections of the letter deals with "Workman's Associations" and what are interestingly referred to as "societies of mutual aid."¹⁰ Since for Leo XIII it was the loss of the guilds that was in great part responsible for rendering the workingman powerless, it is reasonable to believe that the reintroduction of the Christian guild, modified to meet the new circumstances of the industrial, or even post-industrial world, will remedy the modern distress. *Rerum Novarum* has often been called the Workingman's Charter and is seen as giving its blessing to the Labor movement, which it has, but we must be careful not to misrepresent Leo XIII's intentions, making a distinction, as he does, between true and false labor associations. It becomes clear in reading *Rerum Novarum* that Leo XIII is not speaking of unions as we know them but of an association that is radically different. For this reason I prefer to contrast modern unions from what I prefer to call "Christian Industrial Guilds."

In a discussion of Workmen's Organizations Leo XIII remarks:

The most important of all are Workmen's Associations; for these vir-

tually include all the rest. History attests what excellent results were affected by the artificer's guilds of a former day. . . . Such association should be adapted to the requirements of the age in which we live.¹¹

The reason for the coming together of workmen is simply that there is strength in numbers. Quoting *Proverbs* 18:19 "A brother that is helped by his brother is like a strong city." Such associations might be called brotherhoods or fraternal organizations. They are strictly private associations formed for "the private advantage of the associates."¹²

The fraternity was to be a model of peaceful reconciliation of social antagonisms.

At this point Leo XIII offers a natural rights argument for the existence of such associations; "they cannot," he argues, "be prohibited by the State absolutely and as such." The argument is to the point:

If it (the State) forbids its citizens to form association, it contradicts the very principle of its own existence; for both they and it exist in virtue of the same principle, viz., the natural propensity of man to live in society.¹³

In a discussion of what are referred to as "false labor societies," we are told that they are:

in the hands of invisible leaders, and are managed on principles far from compatible with Christianity and the public well-being; and that they do their best to get into their hands the whole field of labor and to force workmen either to join them or starve.¹⁴

In short, the modern Christian Industrial Guild cannot be so large as to be either alienating to the individual workers, or of such a size as to have the power of monopoly. In addition it must be a voluntary organization, beyond all compulsion. Most importantly, it must be either guided by, or at least compatible with, Christian principles and with an eye to the common good. A whole host of questions concerning practicality arise at this point. Is there to be one union for Catholics and other Christians, another for Jews, and another still for the unbeliever? Minimally it appears that all that is called for is that the association be not incompatible with Christian principles. At the time of the writing of this letter, the words "compatible with Christian principles" were code words for non-Marxist. It was always thought advisable that in the U.S., Catholics should join neutral-secular unions on the condition that they also join a Catholic Association where they could have the necessary training in Catholic social principles.¹⁵

The aim of these associations is not only to empower the workingman but more importantly,

to infuse the spirit of justice into the mutual relations of employers and employed; to keep before the eyes of both classes the precepts of duty and the laws of the Gospel. For it is the Gospel which, by inculcating self-restraint, keeps men within the bounds of moderation, and tends to **establish harmony among the divergent interests and various classes** which compose the State.¹⁶

Reconciliation of both classes comes about as a result of a joint commitment to the Gospel message. The role of the Catholic association was to proclaim that message to workers. Understood in this context, one of the primary aims of association is education, — the radical transformation of the consciousness of the Christian worker. A working class aware of its own dignity and of the precepts of Justice would be a formidable force for social change.

The empowerment of the worker should be accompanied by a social policy that encourages as many people as possible to become owners. "The law, therefore, should favor ownership (contrary to Marx) and its policy should be to induce as many people as possible to become owners."¹⁷ Again we are told that:

If working people can be encouraged to look forward to obtaining a share in the land, the result will be that the gulf between vast wealth and deep poverty will be bridged over, and **the two orders will be brought nearer together.**¹⁸

For Leo XIII, the way to overcome inequality is not the abolishment of private property, as the socialists would have it, but rather the adoption of a policy that encourages universal ownership.¹⁹

The distinction between the modern trade union and the Christian industrial guild becomes clear when we examine the features of the modern guild. The heart of the updated guild is its educational function, — it is the equivalent of the moral educator of the working class. The following features are significant: 1) "It must pay special and chief attention to piety and morality, and that their social discipline must be directed throughout by these considerations." Otherwise they become indistinguishable from organizations that pay no attention to religious considerations at all.²⁰ 2) It must "look first and before all to God; let religious instruction have therein a foremost place, each one being carefully taught what is his duty to God, what he is to believe, what he is to hope for, and how he is to work out his salvation."²¹ It must urge upon all men of every class the Gospel message of justice, universal brotherhood, peace, and reconciliation. In short, it is the chief tool not only of empowerment but also for the Christian formation of the worker, for his education in Christian social principles.

Peace and the Ideal of the Christian Fraternity

At the heart of Leo XIII's message is a Christian vision of social peace as the reconciliation of heretofore antagonistic forces or classes. Not surprisingly such a vision is central to the life of Francis of Assisi. Since this is Francis week, it is fitting that I conclude with a reflection on Francis's vision of the relation between peace and brotherhood. In an intriguing remark in a recent work on the foundation of the Franciscan brotherhood, Theophile Desbonnets stresses the centrality of peace to the early vision of Francis, Desbonnets remarks:

The first aim of the Franciscan brotherhood was to establish a bond of charity among persons of very different origins, gathered around a program of religious life that was identical for them all. Thus the first Franciscans provided the image of a small cell where society is reconciled. Antagonisms, including legitimate ones, were overcome as a prefiguring of the heavenly society. They achieved **peace** among themselves, the ideal state in the mind of medieval people.²²

Here, I argue, we have many of the elements of Leo XIII's Christian Guild: small voluntary brotherhoods of disparate people and classes brought together and reconciled in the bond of Christian charity. Such cells were to be the vehicle of a larger social transformation, serving as images of a transformed social order. The fraternity was to be a model of peaceful reconciliation of social antagonisms. One might argue that such brotherhoods are themselves modeled on the experience of the primitive Church as described in the *Act of the Apostles*. The only difference being that Christian Guilds would be limited associations of workingmen in pursuit of their economic advantage.

Whatever the case, it is clear that for Francis's chief interpreter, St. Bonaventure, peace was the highest good. In the Prologue to the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure makes it perfectly clear, uttering his request in his initial prayer, that the greatest good in human life, that toward which all humans must direct their efforts if they wish to find ultimate happiness, is Peace. Indeed the word "peace" is uttered some 12 times in the first paragraph of the Prologue and 17 times in the entire Prologue.

For a clear statement of Francis's proclamation of peace it would be helpful to turn to the *Legenda*. There Bonaventure writes of Francis:

Under divine inspiration the man of God now began to strive after Gospel perfection and invite others to penance. In all his preaching, he proclaimed peace, saying: "May the Lord give you peace" (Matt, 10:12; Luke 10:5), as the greeting to the people at the beginning of his sermon. As he later testified, he had learned this greeting in a revelation from the Lord. Hence, according to the words of a prophet and inspired by the spirit of the prophets, he proclaimed peace, preached salvation and by his salutary warnings united in a bond of true peace

many who had previously been in opposition to Christ and far from salvation.²³

Bonaventure's source for this passage is found in the *First Life of Celano*; there Celano writes:

In all his preaching, before he proposed the word of God to those gathered about, he first prayed for peace for them, saying: "The Lord give you peace." He always most devoutly announced peace to men and women, to all he met and overtook. For this reason many who had hated peace and had hated also salvation embraced peace, through the cooperation of the Lord, with all their heart and were made children of peace and seekers after eternal salvation.²⁴

Rerum Novarum as a Radical Document

If I am correct, *Rerum Novarum*, is far more radical than one might first expect. The denial of the inevitability of class warfare, the commitment to the Gospel message, the stress on the reconciliation of all classes through the development of Christian Industrial Guilds and the consequent empowerment and education of the workingman, is nothing other than a program for the recommitment of the West to the Gospel values of Peace and Justice. That this is the case is stated clearly:

If, then, society is to be cured now, in no other way can it be cured but by a return to Christian life and Christian Institutions. When a society is perishing, the true advice to give to those who would restore it is to recall it to the principles from which it sprang. For the purpose and perfection of an association is to aim at and to attain that for which it was formed; and its operation should be put in motion and inspired by the end and object which originally gave it its being. So that to fall away from its primal constitution is disease; to go back to it is recovery.²⁵

Today, the collapse of Marxism is being touted as a victory for the free market, a vindication of the capitalist system. Are we to believe that the only viable visions for the future are exhausted by capitalism and nationalism? *Rerum Novarum*, rooted as it is in a Hebraic-Christian tradition stretching from *Isaiah* and *Amos* to Francis and the *Catholic Worker*, in our day, may indeed offer the West a non violent alternative, at this crucial juncture in human history, to unbridled capitalism and nationalism. Perhaps we are faced with the same decision in 1991 as in 1891.

Endnotes

¹ *Rerum Novarum*, (15) collected in Joseph Husslein, S.J., *Social Wellsprings* (Milwaukee, 1940), p. 177.

² *Ibid.*, (1), p. 167.

³ *Ibid.*, (2), p. 168.

⁴ The September report of the U.S. Department of Commerce released 9/26/91 has shown a startling increase in American poverty; over 33.6 million Americans, 13.5% of our population (*one person out of seven*), now live in poverty. This is an increase of 22% since 1973, a period in which 11.1% of the population or one out of nine people were living in poverty. Currently there are more poor in the U.S. than there are people in Canada. Surely much of this increase is due to the current recession but, beyond that, the ever widening gulf between rich and poor over the last decade has been well documented. Reported in the *Buffalo News*, 9/27/91.

⁵ *Ibid.*, (14), p. 177.

⁶ *Ibid.*, (15), p. 177.

⁷ *Ibid.*, (21), p. 182.

⁸ Etienne Gilson, *The Church Speaks to the Modern World* (N.Y., 1954), p. 7.

⁹ *Rerum*, p. 168, note 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, (36) - (45), pp. 195-204. The very mention of "mutual aid societies" cannot help but bring to mind the utopian socialist tradition.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, (36), pp. 195-6. It is curious to note that these societies may be associations of workmen alone or "of workmen and employers together."

¹² *Ibid.*, (37), p. 197.

¹³ *Ibid.*, (38), p. 197.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, (40), p. 198.

¹⁵ See *Rerum*, (42), p. 201 note 36.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, (41), p. 199.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, (35), p. 194.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Certainly, for Leo XIII, inequalities are a part of nature but their economic effects, the distress they cause for the poor, can be greatly reduced. All notions of producing a social order that is totally equal are not only utopian but also unnatural and dangerous.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, (42), p. 200.

²¹ *Ibid.*, (42), p. 201.

²² Theophile Desbonnets, *From Intuition to Institution: The Franciscans* (Chicago, 1988), pp. 19-20.

²³ St. Bonaventure, *The Life of Francis*, Ewert Cousins, *Bonaventure* (New York, 1978), p. 200. See also Is. 52:7.

²⁴ Thomas of Celano, *St. Francis of Assisi* (Chicago, 1962), p. 24.

²⁵ *Rerum*, (22), p. 183.

Yokels at the King's Banquet: Bonaventure on Receiving the Eucharist Worthily

HARRY AVELING, T.S.S.F.

This is the third of five sermons preached by St. Bonaventure on the Eucharist on various Maundy Thursday occasions. It is undated and because of its "incomplete" nature (having a theme text but no second "protheme") may be the earliest of them all.

The sermon deals with the way the Christian should receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which all Catholics had been encouraged to do at Easter by the IV Lateran Council in 1215. Bonaventure speaks to his listeners on matters of philosophy (the sacrament as "sign") and theology (there is a brief, and not altogether clear, digression on the Atonement, which follows Anselm's thought on the topic). But his major aim is practical: the sacrament requires deep self-examination beforehand, our whole hearted response to the love and glory of God at the time of communion, and our deepest thanksgiving afterwards. Bonaventure makes a thorough use of scripture, as well as of fable (the yokel at the banquet) and of his listener's own experience of the delights of feasting.

One of the most important features of the banquet is the characteristically medieval generosity of the host. He serves us with fine food which is, stunningly, Himself: His gift of Himself to us, for our redemption to the full humanity for which we were created. Those who abuse this gift — whether through professional calculation, over-familiarity, or simple

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indifference — receive "beans and lentils" instead of nourishment, strength and eternal life. They eat physically, as Bonaventure argues in other sermons given on this same day, but not spiritually. They are condemned by their own actions. The sermon, in fact, ends on this sombre note, with a serious warning from Isaiah. What we are not given, but know to have existed as an essential part of the medieval "university" sermon, are the final words of hope: "Let us pray. . .", that we may be made worthy of the promises of God.

The sermon in its original Latin is to be found in Volume IX of the Collected Works, *Opera Omnia*, pages 253 to 255.

Sermon III

"The bread I give is my flesh. It is for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

These words express the mystery of the sacrament. Today our most holy mother, the Church, recalls the institution of that sacrament. The text describes that institution in three ways. The first part, "*The bread I give*", describes an extrinsic sign, which is available to the senses. The second part, "*is my flesh*", deals with the intrinsic content of the sacrament, which is not available to the senses. And the third part, "*It is for the life of the world*", tells us of the obvious and beneficial effects of the sacrament. The appearance stimulates the senses. The invisible existence dumbfounds our intellect. But most of all, the marvelous effects of the sacrament deeply stirs our most profound emotions.

Christ promises to give his disciples bread in this text. The promise is fulfilled in the Last Supper. Matthew 26:26 tells us that: "*As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it to his disciples*". And the first epistle to the Corinthians, 11:23-24, says: "*The Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread and gave thanks, broke it, and said: 'Take this and eat it'*", (The Lord also turned a small amount of bread into a large amount; we dealt with that in the Gospel for the Fourth Sunday in Lent.)

This bread is to be "*taken*" in a particular way. Firstly, we must be sincere within ourselves, Paul writes, again in 1 Corinthians 11: "*Let a man examine himself, and then eat of the bread and drink of the cup in the light of that examination. For he who eats and drinks eats and drinks a judgement upon himself*" (verses 28-29). There are a number of aspects to this judgement:

(i) There are physical consequences. Unworthiness brings illness and even death upon so. Paul continues: "*So many among you are sick and feeble, and many have passed away*" (v. 30).

(ii) There is the danger of losing our spiritual benefits. Habakkuk 2:8 states: "*They will plunder you because of the blood of a man*" — that man being, of course, Christ.

(iii) The soul becomes blind, foul and polluted. Lamentations 4:14 states: "*the blind walked in the streets, polluted with blood*" — the blood of Christ, which we receive in the sacrament.

(iv) Finally, those who receive the sacrament unworthily will be accused more severely and condemned more harshly in the Last Judgement. The blood of Christ itself will indict them. Christ will cry out against insincere preachers and those who merely make a living from His body and blood: "*On earth, do not cover my blood,*" just as Job did (16:18). They are the most unworthy of persons. Pope Gregory has written: "He who dares to violate the inviolable Sacrament of the body of the Lord, as Judas did, also betrays the Son of Man." What a terrible thing it is to celebrate and take communion in such an unworthy manner! And they do it not just once, but time and time again. When we realize the severity of the punishment that will be meted out to those who have committed a single act of sexual misconduct, a single act of arrogance, greed or envy, can we even begin to imagine what awaits those who betray Christ so often?

So we must purify ourselves inwardly if we are to receive such a precious thing, such comfort, the whole treasure of heaven, the absolute glory of the Angels, the Lord of the ages, the judge of the living and the dead. To Paul's text in Corinthians we can add Isaiah 52:11: "*purify yourselves, you who shall bear the vessels of the Lord.*"

Secondly, there should also be a spiritual response in the person who receives the body and blood of Christ. There is a story about a country yokel who was invited to dine with a prince. Instead of dining lavishly, he filled his belly with beans and lentils. Those who are fascinated by the things of this world are like that yokel. 1 Corinthians 10:21 tells us that: "*You cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the table of demons as well.*" You think you deal well when you are offered the choicest cuts at a banquet. Here we are offered three noble courses, all on the one plate. There is the sweetest meat: Christ said, "*My flesh is food for you*" (John 6:55). There is His soul, which is even sweeter and nobler. As John states: "*It is the spirit which gives life.*" And there is His godlike nature, which is the sweetest of all. "*How abundant is the extent of your sweetness, Oh Lord,*" sings the Psalmist (31:19). The book of Wisdom says: "*You gave your people bread from heaven, containing every sweetness and such delight*" (16:20). Why is this bread so marvelous? Christ was the One whom "*the angels desired to see*" (1 Peter 1:12). Looking is good, but tasting is

A person who gives you the things which belong to him shows you love. But the person who gives you himself, gives you the greatest love of all.

*in a certain way Christ's glory is already here,
although it is hidden within this Eucharist.*

And Christ did indeed give himself. He gave himself as a sacrifice of reconciliation. Psalms tells us that God does not desire "*sacrifices and offerings*" (40:6), as provided by the Mosaic law, because these things give Him no pleasure. Rather, the coming of Christ was promised as a far greater offering: "*Behold, I come*", says Psalm 50:3. Through the offering made by Christ, His most beloved Son, God the Father receives "*the sacrifice of justice*" (Psalm 51:19).

He also gave Himself as the price paid for our redemption. 1 Peter 1:18-19 reminds us: "*You have not been redeemed by perishable gold and silver but by the precious blood of Christ, who is like the purest of lambs.*" In Revelation 5:9, too, we read: "*You have redeemed us for God through Your blood.*" By this means, humanity was taken back from Satan, who had laid claim to the human race. Not that God had to pay the devil anything to liberate humanity. The price was offered to God Himself, whose Majesty had been offended by sin. Once human dignity had been restored, the devil was plundered of that which he had so unjustly seized.

And, again, Christ gave Himself in the form of a food which serves to restore our health. Because Adam ate forbidden food, he brought death on himself and his descendants. Christ is also food, but life-giving food.

I regret to say that there are some persons who do not find this divine food to their taste. There are three reasons for this:

(i) Some people are overwhelmed by their senses. Those who are sick often have no interest in food or any enjoyment in eating, no matter how good the food might be. The psalm says: "*Their soul abominated all food and they came close to the doors of death*" (107:18). Job 33:20 tells us: "*his life loathes bread and those foods which he once found so desirable.*"

(ii) Again, the senses can be ruined through excess, as happens when one eats too much. Proverbs 27:7 states: "*A full spirit will even trample on honeycomb and accept the bitter rather than the sweet.*" And 1 Corinthians 11:20 warns: "*When you come together as a group, it is not for the purpose of eating the Lord's Supper. . .*" Bernard of Clairvaux states that: "*Divine consolation is precious, but it is not given to those who seek other delights*"

(iii) Finally the senses can be rather weak. Those who are weakened by hunger, or oppressed by want, never seem to be able to taste anything. "My eyes became weak because of my deprivation", says Psalm 88:9. 1 Samuel 3:2-3 tells us about Eli "who could not see", even though "the lamp of God had not been extinguished."

The person whose senses have been spoiled cannot receive the body of Christ in any decent way. Solid food is only for the healthy, for those who through long and "regular exercise, have trained their senses to enjoy the good", as we find in Hebrews 5:14.

Thirdly, once we have taken this bread, we should make an act of thanksgiving before we leave the church. So the psalmist tells us: "The poor will eat and be satisfied, and shall praise the Lord" (22:26). We praise God for the many benefits which this bread bestows upon us. It has the power to give us life. In fact, without this bread, no one can have any life at all. John 6, verses 48 and 58, say: "I am the bread of life . . . he who eats this bread will live forever." It has the power to destroy our sins. As Innocent III wrote in his work *On the Wonderful Sacrament of the Altar*. "The Eucharist, when properly received, frees us from evil and confirms us in the good; it removes venial sins and helps us guard against mortal sins." And it also has the power to make us glorious. "Man ate the bread of angels", says Psalm 78:25. "I will be satisfied when your glory appears". Psalm 17:15 — in a certain way Christ's glory is already here, although it is hidden within this Eucharist. "I will give you a kingdom", Christ states in Luke 22:29-30, "just as my Father gave Me a kingdom, and you shall eat and drink with Me at My table in the kingdom."

Woe to those who neglect this table. They will not sing; they will cry in misery. The servants of God will rejoice, they will be cast into utter despair. As Isaiah 65:13-14 says:

Behold, my servants will eat and you will be hungry!
Behold, my servants will drink and you will be thirsty!
Behold, my servants will rejoice and you will be confounded!
Behold my servants will feel exultant and sing for joy,
but you shall howl because of your misery.

☆ ☆ ☆

RIVERS

Each river
is as love
streaming
from above,
winding,
past peaks
and vales,
peaceful,
like a dove.

Each river is enraged
following the storm,
as moonbeams of happiness
engage a blissful morn.

Each river
has a season,
changin'
in the sun
and raindrops from heaven;
a river's never done.

Each river has its places
where all the folk commune,
for playin'
and singin'
rhythms to
the ripple of
nature's tune.

Fr. Roger L. Katz

Book Reviews

Mother Teresa: Her Life and Her Works.

By Lush Gjergji, Brooklyn, NY: New City Press: 1991. 144 pages, \$8.95.

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

Lush Gjergji is editor of the Albanian magazine, *Drita*. He recognizes that many articles and books have been written about Mother Teresa of Calcutta, but, as a fellow countryman (Mother Teresa was born in Albania), he thinks that not enough has been written about Mother Teresa's family background and her early years. He writes: "I wanted to know what influence her childhood has on what she is today" (page 7). Gjergji writes about the years before Mother Teresa followed her calling to the religious life, about the early years of Agnes Bojaxhiu and her family in Skopje in Albania. He feels that Mother Teresa's missionary life was strongly influenced by her family background and her early life in Skopje.

Agnes was one of three children (two girls and a boy) born of Kole and Drana Bojaxhiu. Kole ran a business and Drana raised the children. They were a well-to-do family and often entertained guests in their home. Agnes grew up with an interest in music and in studies. She was sociable with her school companions and early in her life she was interested in religious studies and practices. The author quotes from a conver-

sation he had with Agnes' brother Lazzaro: "As long as father lived, our house was a center of political fervor. After his death, we lived more on faith. Mother and the girls were untiring in organizing and carrying out religious activities" (page 21).

Agnes became very active in her parish church, especially with the choir. The author cites an event that had a tremendous influence on the young girl. As a high school student, Agnes heard a visiting missionary from India say "Everyone has his road to follow, and follow it he must." From that point in her life, Agnes was interested in a missionary vocation (page 22).

The family made annual visits to the Shrine of Our Lady of Letnice, occasions when Agnes felt especially called to the religious life. At the age of eighteen, Agnes wrote to the Sisters of Loretto, who had missions in India, and was accepted into the Congregation. She left Skopje in September 1928 to enter the religious life.

The Sisters of Loretto are an Irish missionary congregation with headquarters outside of Dublin. Agnes and her fellow Albanian, Betika Kajnc, went to the motherhouse of the Congregation. At the Motherhouse the two young women received the religious habit and their religious names: Agnes became Sister Maria Teresa of the Child Jesus and Betika became Sister Mary Magdalene. On December 1, 1928, the two new religious, accompanied by two older sisters, set sail for India.

The long voyage brought them eventually to Darjeeling where the two young women began their novitiate on May 23, 1929. During her two-years' novitiate Teresa worked in a hospital run by the Sisters. After novitiate, she went to a teachers' college where she obtained her teacher's certificate and then began her teaching career, a profession she dreamed of as a little girl (page 32).

While she was very happy as a teacher, she taught in two different locations. Walking between the two schools gave her an opportunity to observe the poverty of the people of the city of Calcutta. Little by little, she began to feel a calling to a different kind of ministry. In July of 1946, Teresa felt that God spoke to her directly to live and work among the poor. After some time her religious supervisor in Dublin and the archbishop of Calcutta allowed her to leave the convent of the Sisters of Loretto and to begin a new group of Sisters who adopted the Indian dress of a sari in the place of a religious habit. At first Mother Teresa went among the

very poor by herself — accompanied by a former student or by a young person who wanted to help her. It was three years before the first member of the Missionaries of Charity joined Mother Teresa. Gradually the numbers increased. The basic principle of the Sisters is "love for God and for one's neighbor: being ever ready to serve the suffering, the most needy, the poorest of the poor" (page 51).

The author traces the development of the Missionary Sisters of Charity and of the Missionary Brothers of Charity showing how the numbers increased and spread over the world. He enumerates the many honors and awards Mother Teresa has received (Chapter 8) and emphasizes that her early years in Skopje and her family experience prepared her for her selfless giving of her life to the love of God and neighbor. This reviewer has been edified by the presentation of Mother Teresa's life and works and recommends this book to all readers who applaud a life of love and generous giving of self.



CHOCOLATED CONES

Tiny fingers
toy
chocolated cones,
making riverlets
across sun-flecked
faces,
punctuating the
savoring smiles;
and,
leaving drippings
for reaching
the tiny feet
of barefoot summer.

Fr. Roger L. Katz

SPARROWED BRANCHES

Sparrowed branches
spar the wind rhyme,
spewing crystal gnomes
upon the ground,
dazzling the morn
with its chimneys
puffing wind curls,
incensing
the chilly dawn
filled with
sparrows' song.

Fr. Roger L. Katz

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