The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony EpCler: Letter to Clerics 1 EpCust: Letter to Superiors 1 EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful 1 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.

LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis

LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis

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

Flor: Little Flowers of St. 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 Omwibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

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

Guest Editorial: About the Question of the Evangelization of Europe

HERBERT SCHNEIDER. O.F.M.

The question of the evangelization of Europe is not first and foremost a question as regards Europe, but a question to the Church as such.

Certainly in some ways, though not in every respect, Europe is undergoing spiritual tribulation, and this causes us to reflect on its Christian origin, shape and definition, and to affirm it in a positive manner. However, we should also see the positive beginnings, which are experienced in many Christian groupings, communities and religious orders.

Also it cannot be denied that the impulse to freedom is of Christian origin, as is the impulse towards intimacy and the integrity of the person, towards questions as regards justice and peace, towards the preservation of life and environment, and therefore we can easily consider ourselves in the lead of all these endeavors. And yet we experience a subtle distancing away from Christian values, a revaluing of the Christian task beyond the social commitment, a negation of the lifegiving power of faith.

In the analysis of our contemporary society, I notice coming from members of the Church a ready complaint about our present times, as if the cause of all would lie outside ourselves, outside the Church. This analysis is only partially correct and therefore does not find the echo as we would desire it.

I take as my premise that we must start with ourselves. Only then is the evangelization of Europe possible.

A former provincial and professor of theology, Fr. Herbert Schneider is now General Delegate for Poor Clare Nuns at the General House in Rome. Though specifically reflecting on the evangelization of Europe, the author's insights are easily applicable elsewhere.

1. The secularization of the Church herself and of her communities.

In many aspects the Church secularizes herself. She lives, of course, in secular forms that include computers, organization, administration, direction and decisions. She readily enters into all this — and by this fact contributes a strengthening towards secularization.

An analysis of enterprises, companies and other forms of society has shown that in spite of excellent organization, a community stagnates, if communication concerns itself only with the organization without an exchange of vision, that is, aims and endeavors. Therefore in pastoral care one can be perfectly organized but this will be ineffectual if the vision and the inspiration are not present.

Evangelization, however, is such a vision, and therefore cannot simply be begun on the sociological and organizational level. Evangelization is a question of our inmost convictions which need to shine forth.

If the Kingdom of God is not alive in us, moreover if we do not even think of it when we talk of evangelization, but only of methods, then we must not be surprised that our conferences and our synods will not help us further. I am not advocating fundamentalism here but a simple and natural faith in the affairs of the Lord. A friendly human face can be considered as an important aid.

2. Loss of self identity

The pluralism of the world has made Christendom unsure of itself, wondering whether it is still on the right path, particularly as other religious and ethical movements present their positive forms of lifestyles.

Even if I can appreciate that I am journeying to God along with other religions, I can still acknowledge with deep gratitude that I have found in Christ an answer for my searching. Without this attitude evangelization is not possible.

As long as a Christian or even a priest or a member of an order makes obvious an attitude that says: "Excuse me, I am a Christian", or "Excuse me, I am a priest", then the process of evangelization has been sapped of its energy. We create too many problems by superficial disagreements and forget our own depth. And people watch us and shake their heads.

There needs to be fraternal exchange and there can be different perspectives on the foundation of the one and only revelation and in conjunction with the teaching authority, but no manifest disunity, of which Christ speaks when he says: "A house divided within itself will surely fall." However many good deeds a community performs, if this community is disunited, it will disintegrate.

3. The regaining of experience and mysticism

Our expression of religion is on the one hand bound by signs, because Jesus gave us signs, such as the breaking of the bread. But in the signs he gave himself not materially but personally.

By mysticism we mean the experience of the living presence of Christ, which is given to us in sign and in the Holy Spirit. The recapturing of the mystical is a basic to evangelization. Without mysticism there would have been no evangelization of Europe.

Karl Rahner has rightly said: "The Christian of the future will be a mystic who has experienced, or he is not a Christian!" Perhaps many Christians have deep experiences in faith, but can these experiences be communicated? Who talks about them and helps people to explain them in the light of the Gospel? In a changing and dynamic world, the interior mystical stronghold constitutes a great help. In mysticism and contemplation, man gains a stance and does not consider himself defenseless before the events of the time.

If the Church lives her mysticism, she will bring about the necessary preparation for evangelization. Words about evangelization alone will not help, neither analyses of our present times, however important they are.

From mysticism, such is my experience, comes a new natural existence as a Christian. From this standpoint I have communicated with the princes of Europe, with other movements such as the Freemasons, the Society for the Protection of Animals, University clubs and Lion clubs, I have also been involved in radio transmissions and in TV programs. It works out well for I am not first and foremost a religious salesman, but a religious person from within, who has the treasure of faith to give and who lives from within in the Church as his true homeland.

4. First and foremost comes salvation and not morality

Every human being, because of the order of creation, needs morality, and the teaching of Christ has as its consequence an ethic and a morality. But first and foremost comes salvation. As much as Jesus points towards the order of creation and represents this, much more does he bring salvation, as in the case of the adulterous woman.

Far too much does the Church give the appearance, be it by design or not, of an institution for morality, and with this she forgoes her proclamation of salvation. If we really desire to grasp the mandate of evangelization and are serious in our endeavor, then we have to bring salvation into the fragile and fractured situations of life. From necessity, and defeated by sociotechnological processes, many live in destruction without wanting to be destroyed themselves. Who can bring comfort here and show the mercy of God?

How much we ourselves ignore salvation is shown by our inability to renew the sacrament of confession, while people have recourse to psychiatrists (without in any way desiring to minimize their importance). But there is a value for confession which is not a moral institution, but an encounter with the healing Lord.

5. Christ is attractive

It is tragic to discover that the Church in Europe has such an enormous lack of religious vocations. This shows the spiritual distress of the Church herself. What form shall evangelization take then?

Have we insisted upon a system of doctrinal statements, much as these are needed, and neglected the Lord himself? I wrote to Chancellor Kohl for the unification of Germany, that he himself could now help, so that Germany and Europe would become "one man in Christ", as the Apostle Paul says. The great figure, the model of the European of the future, is Christ himself.

Francis of Assisi had received and accepted Christ in his entirety into himself; in that way he became not only a European but he became a "homo novus", a truly new man of this whole world of which Europe is one part. \square



THOMAS JEFFERSON MC KENNA

Introduction

Matt Talbot was a Dublin laborer hopelessly addicted to alcohol. His conversion to a life devoted to Christ is a beautiful and inspiring story of the healing power of God. Matt was also a secular Franciscan and, as Franciscans, we share a special joy in the good fortune of our brother. Unfortunately, in our zeal and piety we have often misinterpreted Matt's Franciscan charism in a superficial and misleading light. 1

In fact, Matt's life bears little resemblance to the life of Francis. The societies in which they lived and the challenges these societies presented were radically different. Francis' Assisi was virtually a microcosm of the most recent, most exciting, and most important developments of thirteenth century Italy.² Fed by the new moneyed economy which was reconstructing the basis of wealth and power, the vital new commune was wresting her independence from the decaying feudal structure. Though she was an important pawn in the struggle between the pope and emperor, she successfully asserted herself in the regional politics of the day. She was able to hold her own in the regular and comparatively petty warfare of medieval Italy. She was a significant if not overly bright light of the century and her walls bustled with all the opportunities her world had to give.

Francis, as a powerful and successful merchant's son, was thrust into the leadership circles of this world. Before his conversion he enjoyed much of the wealth, power, glory and ambition which our world still holds too dear.

The author is a recent graduate of the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University and is affiliated with the Secular Franciscan Order. In this article he gives us penetrating insight into the unusual nature of Matt Talbot's franciscan commitment. Mr. McKenna lives in Delaware where he works as a professional musician.

Matt's Dublin was located on the forgotten fringe of a vast if crumbling empire. Early twentieth century Ireland was a powerless nation often exploited by an oppressive overlord. She suffered from extreme poverty and her turmoil was intensified by the upheavals of war, depression and labor unrest. These factors conspired to push the downtrodden into desperate action. Ireland rose in rebellion in the strike of 1913, the uprising of 1916 and the Anglo-Irish war of 1919-1921. The causes of unrest, the struggle for freedom and the cost of victory were in no way comparable to the situations of Francis' Assisi. These modern conflicts were of a scale and a nature beyond anything possible in the thirteenth century. Moreover, Ireland paid a much higher price for fewer gains than did Assisi. Ireland's lingering intellectual and economic decline serve as testament to the cost of her victory.

Matt, though not destitute, was born into the poor depths of this sad and troubled world. He enjoyed little of what our world values.

The challenges which their respective societies presented to these men were, therefore, entirely different. Francis was an important merchant's son and a leader of the wealthy Assisian youth. Though we can not conclude to what degree Francis practiced decadence or the exact nature of his sins, his failings seem to be a general love of comfort and a longing for worldly glory. All were sins of a wealthy and powerful world.

Francis' conversion was marked by the events of war, pilgrimage, visions, periods of prayer, the challenge of meeting a leper, public trial and family separation. In a six year process Francis slowly renounced all the so-called benefits of wealth, power and social status.

Matt's life was centered about one specific and destructive practice. Alcohol was his one master. Beginning at the early age of twelve, he increased his dependency on alcohol until his late twenties. Alcohol intensified this poor man's poverty. In spite of making a comparatively good wage, he found himself in perpetual debt. He even sold his boots and shirt so that he could buy alcohol.

Matt's conversion was marked by a single incident. He was penniless and his companions did not offer to buy him a drink. Previously unaffected by the efforts of others to help him, he realized the emptiness of his life in one crushing experience. He returned home to take a pledge of abstinence for several difficult trial periods and then as a lifelong commitment. Matt began to turn to God to help him overcome his addiction. Soon Matt thirsted for the sweetness of the presence of God as ardently as he once thirsted for alcohol.

Matt's Spiritual Formation

Matt entered the Third Order of St. Francis at the Franciscan Church in Merchants' Quay, Dublin, on October 12, 1890. He made profession on October 18, 1891 taking the name Francis Joseph. He attended the meetings and communal liturgies with remarkable dedication. He observed the regulations of the Leonine Rule and recited the prayers of the Order. He possessed a leaflet of Franciscan prayers and a Franciscan manual, the latter heavily used. He was buried in the Franciscan habit.

If this were our only evidence of Matt's spiritual life, we could conclude that he was distinctively formed as a Franciscan. However, Matt practiced a more varied spirituality.

He was an active member of a vast number of lay organizations. At the Jesuit church he belonged to four such groups: the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception, the Arch-Confraternity of Bona Mors, the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart and the Apostleship of Prayer. Other organizations to which he belonged, local and foreign, included: an Association attached to the Vincentian Fathers, the Perpetual Lamp Association of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the Confraternity of La Salette, the Confraternity of the living Rosary, St. Patrick's Roman Legion, the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, the Confraternity of St. Michael the Archangel, St. Joseph's Union, an orphanage support association, the Crusade for the Preservation of the Holy Shrines in Palestine and two Confraternities of the Agonizing.

Though only a few of these required as great a commitment as did the Third Order of St. Francis, it is obvious that the Third Order was not the central community in Matt's life. The Order did not meet most of Matt's spiritual needs. Matt was called to a life of intense spirituality that no single lay organization of his day could provide. Matt's practices of prayer and abstinence went far beyond the demands of the Rule. Furthermore, Matt's spiritual advisors were either Jesuit or secular clergy. His extensive reading list and library confirm that there was no peculiarly Franciscan stamp upon his education or spiritual reading. There is, therefore, no evidence that formal instruction in the Franciscan charism was a dominant factor in Matt's spiritual development.

However, a true follower of Francis is not one who worships the man, but one who lives his spirit. The living of this spirit need not be a formal or even a conscious act. And so it was with Matt. Because he did not consciously walk any particular spiritual path toward Christ, he did not realize that he reformed his life in a Franciscan manner. This makes Matt's Franciscan charism all the more valid.

Matt unconsciously lived his life in a Franciscan manner exhibiting most of the characteristic elements of the Franciscan charism.

The rules of the Franciscan family clearly state that the life of the Franciscan is to live the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The essence of Franciscan spirituality is not any distinctive aspect of Christianity, but rather the total living of the total gospel.³

The primary manifestation of this life in the gospel is a life of love of God and of others. This love is expressed in a life balanced between both prayer and apostolic activity. It is also a Christocentric life. The Franciscan lives a poor, humble obedient and penitent life in imitation of the poor, humble, obedient and suffering Christ. The Franciscan is devoted to the humanity of Christ as marked by his nativity, his Passion, and his continuing presence in the Eucharist. Full of joyful enthusiasm, the Franciscan is both a preacher of the good news and a herald of peace. The Franciscan life is shared in various levels of community where God's creatures practice love for one another and for their Creator. It is a life of dedication to the scriptures, devotion to Mary, learning in service to God and to others and fidelity to the church.

No Franciscan's life has manifested every element of the gospel. But because he reformed his life according to the model of the gospel, Matt unconsciously lived his life in a Franciscan manner exhibiting most of the characteristic elements of the Franciscan charism.

A life of Prayer

Matt's life in the gospel was primarily realized as a life of prayer and liturgical devotion. Prayer consumed Matt. He prayed all the day, devoting all his free time and even the natural pauses in work assignments at the lumber yard to prayer. Once he was so absorbed in prayer that he lost track of the time and was locked in the workyard after dark. He prayed a large number of offices and litanies to Christ, Mary and many saints. He was also devoted to saying the rosary, the dolor beads, the beads of the Immaculate Conception, of the Holy Spirit, of St. Michael and of the Sacred Heart. But Matt's practice of prayer was not confined to verbal formulas. He was also reputed to be a master of mental prayer, often

absorbed in a state of ecstacy. During his illness in the final years of his life a less demanding work schedule enabled him to spend even more time at prayer.

Matt's devotion to the sacrifice of the Mass is particularly impressive. He began to visit churches to avoid the temptation of frequenting the pubs. Soon, he was visiting different churches at least three times each day, for Mass in the morning and midday and for an eucharistic visit in the evening. On Sundays, however, his dedication was truly remarkable. Beginning in the early morning, he traveled from one church to another, attending as many masses as was possible. One Sunday in particular, that of August 22, 1915, he attended twenty one masses. In fact he died while hurrying from one Mass to another.

Deeply devoted to Mary, Matt prayed to her often and slept with a statue of the virgin and the Christ child. Through Mary, God answered Matt's prayers for guidance in the major decisions of his life such as marriage. He claimed that he was devoted to her even while he was drinking and attributed his conversion to her intercession. The mortification of wearing chains in her honor can be traced to his reading of the popular book **True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin** by Grignon de Montfort.

Devotion to the saints provided him with consolation and inspiration. He identified particularly with the saints who had been great sinners. He had a vast knowledge of the Jesuit saints and showed particular devotion to St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa of Avilla, and St. Magdalene de Pazzi.

Matt's Christocentrism is clearly evident in his devotion to the Eucharist. His regular evening visits to the church were in honor of the Eucharist. He was also deeply given to weekly Communion, the most frequent reception considered proper in his day. His reverent deportment and his practice of changing from soiled work clothes to cleaner garments revealed his respect for the real presence. In his first hospital stay at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital in the summer of 1923, he spent as much time as possible before the Blessed Sacrament. During his final hospital stay he took Communion as often as it was offered, but out of humility never requested the sacrament. After his mother died in 1915 he was deeply hurt, but he was not lonely; "how can anyone be lonely," he said, "with our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament?"

His sacramental devotion was also evident in his practice of weekly confession, a natural component of a penitential life devoted to the Eucharist.

The Passion of Christ played an important part in his prayer life. A crucifix was one of the few possessions in his room. Coming home, he knelt and kissed the crucifix. His books on the crucifix and the Passion show signs of much use.

A Life of Ministry to Others

In his ministry to others, Matt preached the gospel in both word and deed. Grieving over peoples' lack of love for God, his conversations always focused on the topics of the saints and religion. He also gave informal instruction to children concerning the saints as role models. His admonishments were primarily aimed against the use of foul language, a practice which he detested. He checked the use of foul language with gentle warnings, but when his temper was aroused he would boldly produce a crucifix and exclaim: "Look, boys, see who you are insulting!" In time, his example alone was enough.⁵

In zeal he sometimes brought others with him to sermons or to visits with priests. Through the grace of God he once brought a man back to the sacraments who had been gone for thirty years.

However, Matt preached the gospel best by way of example, a most Franciscan practice. He was a model laborer, a diligent worker, well respected and dependable. In no way did Matt seek worldly praise, yet his spiritual advisors, fellow workers and the wider public respected him for his obvious dedication to God. They never derided him for his faith nor regarded him as a fanatic. He remained a humble and common man whose life was devoid of striking incidents. Instead he struck the world about him "as a light happens to a dark room." Once, while in the hospital, he mentioned to a nurse that it is not enough to thank the doctors and nurses, one must also thank God the great healer. She was so moved by his example that she instructed her other patients to do the same.

A Life of Poverty of Self

Matt's life of poverty in imitation of the poor and humble Christ began with poverty of self. Like Francis, he attributed his conversion to God alone. In humility he did not change his outward appearance after his conversion, except that he no longer drank and maintained a higher level of personal cleanliness out of sacramental devotion.

His devotion to humble, private prayer distanced himself from others. No one knew him intimately. Few knew the total extent of his prayer life save his mother and Dr. Hickey, a spiritual advisor and friend. He tried to avoid all notice, never speaking of his good deeds and walking with his eyes cast downward. He took pains to hide his mortifications from the world. When dining with others, he gave up his fasts and abstinence. Like Francis, he ate what was set before him even if such a full meal disagreed with him. He removed his chains prior to his entrance into the hospital. They were discovered only after his death. Like Francis who hid his

intimate embraces with the Lord from the public, Matt also sought to conceal his prayer life. He was to be found in the back of the church, embarrassed when caught praying.

He rarely stood up for his rights as a human person, but offered up all offense. When struck by a large pole at work and when denied a pay increase given to his co-workers, he remained silent.

Out of humility he offered all credit to God for his gift of prayer and his intellectual achievements. He gave credit to the Holy Spirit and to the intercessions of Mary for his ability to understand the meaning of the advanced works he read.

His humility was not superficial or self-deprecatory. He never spoke ill of himself. The only record of harsh self criticism was his honest admittance of the intemperance of his youth.

In his relationship with his superiors at work, Matt was respectful but blunt. He hated falsity and never curried favor. He refused orders which were against his conscience and allowed no one to interfere with his devotions to God.

A Life of Material Poverty

Matt's life of material poverty was not entirely voluntary. He and his family shared in the poverty of his society. But his conversion only increased this level of material poverty.

Throughout his entire life he gave away a considerable sum of money, keeping for himself only enough to survive. In order to avoid the temptation of buying alcohol, he never carried money with him except when taking it to give away to the needy. During the labor crises of 1913 Matt gave away much of his strike pay. The little that he received he gave to struggling families. He also readily lent money, but, when the time for repayment came, he would generally forgive the debt. He generously donated to many charitable organizations until his illness reduced his income to a scant minimum. His last donation was to the Maynooth Mission in China, his favorite charity, in December of 1924.

His appearance and lifestyle were also poor, but in no way dirty. He never bought clothing for himself and was always poorly dressed in gifts of old and oversized clothes. He never asked for these gifts and, out of a love for poverty, he actually gave away a suite of new clothes he had received. He initially denied bonus pay at work, until convinced to take it as a gift, not as a right. He promptly gave it away. His room was sparse but tidy. There were no luxuries. Other than a stool and a small bed, he had only a few devotional items: small holy pictures, a crucifix and a holy water font.

A Life of Penance

In his life of penance, Matt practiced mortification as an expression of contrition for his sins. Disturbing his sleep, he woke every morning from 2 a.m. until 4 a.m. to pray. He almost always prayed on his knees whether he was at home or at a church.

As we have already seen, Matt wore chains beneath his clothing in honor of Mary. He wore the chains regularly, even while he slept. Over a period of years they caused Matt's shoulders to sloop and they wore indentations into the skin. Out of humility he hid the practice from the public. After he died it was discovered that he wore chains around his waist, a leg and an arm. They were buried with him in honor of his sanctity.

Instead of a mattress and bed linens, Matt slept on a board covered with a thin sheet and used a block of wood for a pillow. He practiced this mortification so regularly that his face grew numb and his hearing became impaired.

From the beginning of his conversion Matt practiced abstinence and fasting. He ate on his knees and far outpaced the regulations of the Leonine Rule for the Third Order. For breakfasts and lunch, a slice of plain bread with tea and/or cocoa was his standard fare. Meat was a rarity at any time and completely absent for nine months of the year. Only his illness, itself intensified by his mortifications, caused permanent but slight mitigation of these extensive practices.

The Herald of Peace

Matt was a herald of peace in his dedication to social justice. Boldly, he freely spoke his mind and did not hesitate to tell his superiors about fairness. When the governor of the Irish Free State was appointed, Matt commented "isn't it a terrible thing to have that man up there in the Park with 10,000 a year, and poor people starving."

More often, however, Matt was a passive sower of justice. Detached from the world, he took no interest in politics, the propaganda of the news media or public opinion. But his did not mean that he was not interested in his country's struggles for freedom.

He was deeply involved in the labor crises which erupted in the strike of 1913. Because he believed himself unable to judge the situation, Matt sought the church's teachings on the subject. He concluded that "no one had the right to starve the poor into submission." Though he personally did not feel maltreated, he supported the workers.⁸

Matt was a full member of the labor union and remained in good standing with them all his life. But neither God nor the union called him to action. This inactivity in the strike must not be interpreted as non-support. It was his commitment to poverty, rather than his non-support for the cause, that kept him from collecting his strike pay. Though he did not picket, it has been pointed out that no worker his age was asked to picket. He neither crossed the picket line nor sought favor from the management.

Instead he offered effective passive support. He helped primarily through prayer, spending his free time during the strike with God. He brought financial aid to other families who were suffering. When he did talk of the situation, it was without any bitterness or violence. The other workers respected his approach.

The years of war and then revolution also affected him deeply, but less directly than the labor struggle. Here, again, he remained a-political. He continued his normal activities during World War I, the uprising and the revolution. As before, he prayed as an informed son of the church rather than as one swayed by public sentiment. His deep sense of concern is evident in that he gathered the names of many of the dead, praying for the fallen not merely in general, but in particular.

Joyful Enthusiasm

Matt did not embrace a gloomy faith, but a joyous one. He expressed his joy through everything that he did. He was cheerful, pleasant and well liked, given to laughter and good stories. He possessed a loud singing voice which he often used, even in prayer.

This joy is evident in his relationships with others. Though strict with himself, he was frank, but kind and gentle with others, doing them favors whenever he could. He was fond of his family, in spite of the alcoholism which affected many of them. He was particularly devoted to his mother. She became his only human confidant after his conversion. His words and deeds of edification were always done with impassioned enthusiasm and peaceful joy.

A Life of Learning in Service to God and Others

Matt's dedication to learning had one purpose: to increase his devotion to God. Matt explained that "in prayer we speak to God, in spiritual readings and sermons, God speaks to us." He believed that reading illumined him and raised him to God's presence.

Like so many in his society, Matt was poorly educated. Though he went to school until he was twelve, he was not attentive to his studies and his attendance was poor. However, he had a good memory. He was shrewd,

clearheaded and possessed a strong desire to increase his faith through study. In spite of his rudimentary education, his zeal for God inspired him in the pursuit of knowledge.

His intellectual accomplishments were extraordinary. The Bible was by far his favorite work. He became well versed in Scripture, which he avidly read and meditated on. He also read a great deal on a wide variety of spiritual and devotional themes and memorized the biographical dates of many saints. He left twenty six scraps of paper on which he had written reflections and insights. They are reported to reveal a deep understanding of the spiritual life.

Matt's response to the upheavels of labor unrest, war and revolution revealed his fidelity to the church. Unswerved by public propaganda, Matt sought the opinion of the church. However, he did not adopt these views blindly, but after much research, consideration and prayer. He held on to these views even when they were considered unpopular.

His fidelity to the church was also an act of patriotism. In Matt's Dublin the Catholic church was under formidable assault from her Protestant overlord; proselytization was rampant. The church was also under attack as a promoter of Irish culture. In an effort to destroy Irish nationalism, anything associated with the Irish cultural identity was officially debased. But the Catholic church as a whole was undergoing a revival in these years. More importantly, the oppressed found strength in their Catholic heritage and remained faithful to the church even when she took an unpopular stand.

Conclusion

Matt was a true, albeit unconscious, imitator of Francis and a participant in the Franciscan charism. Because Matt embraced a life in the gospel, he embraced the Franciscan life and expressed this gospel life in a characteristically Franciscan manner. Indeed, there is no important characteristic of Matt's life in the gospel which was not Franciscan, nor, with the exception of dedication to community, was there an important characteristic of the Franciscan life in the gospel which he failed to adopt. Even if he was unaware of his heritage, Matt was a true son of his seraphic father Francis.

Endnotes

¹The three most noteworthy sources for the life and spirituality of Matt Talbot are the early pamphlet by Sir Joseph Aloysius Glynn, the full biography by Glynn and the most recent biography by Mary Purcell.

The remainder of the sources are all heavily dependent on these and fall into various categories. There are several translations of these three sources which, for the most part, are adequate. There are many works which offer no new insights nor relevant evidence. Many of these are short pamphlets of which the best is "The Dubliner" which appeared in the **Anthonian** in 1972. There are also many biographies and works on his spirituality that are of questionable scholarship. These are either fanciful, superficial, or filled with prejudicial distortion and misinter-pretation of the evidence.

²Paul V. Riley, "Francis' Assisi: It's Political and Social History, 1175-1225," Franciscan Studies 34 (1974): 393.

³Cyprian J. Lynch, Encyclopedia Dictionary of Religion (Philadelphia: 1978) 2:1395-6.

⁴Mary Purcell, Matt Talbot and His Times (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977) 188.

⁵Purcell 178.

⁶Purcell viii.

⁷Purcell 177.

⁸Purcell 173.

⁹Purcell 111.

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familiar with nails and crossbeams He is hammered to a tree

Sister Mary Thomas Eulberg, O.S.F.

VERONICA WIPES JESUS' FACE

My sight is a haze Through the pain in my head. But I feel the calming cloth Touch my face its warmth. Its smoothness somehow seems Ridiculous amid all this. Returning my daze-stare A woman Looking at me. Clutching the cloth Holding my sweated pain. In the caverns of my breaking heart I feel Her pity. Her compassion.

My face Is already bleeding again, Spittle mixing with Sweat.

The thorns dig deep Into my forehead flesh. The wiping of my face Another brief moment Of peace, Of rest, Of ease.

My sight is a haze
Through the rain in my head;
But in that pain,
In that agony
People are not afraid
To reach out to me.

Séamus Mulholland, O.F.M.

Evangelization: Making Known the Mystery of Christ¹

CHARLES V. FINNEGAN, O.F.M.

There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed... The Church, constantly gripped by the desire to evangelize, has but one preoccupation: whom to send to proclaim the mystery of Jesus? In what way is this mystery to be proclaimed? How can one ensure that it will resound and reach all those who should hear it?²

The second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar magisterium speak frequently of "the mystery of Christ," "the Mystery of God," the "Mystery of Salvation," the "Mystery of the Incarnate Word," the "Paschal Mystery."

What is the meaning of the word "mystery" in the conciliar texts? The question is of some importance since modern languages often describe "mystery" as something that is impossible to understand or even something that makes no sense ("the whole matter is a mystery to me"), or something fictional as in "mystery story." Some synonyms for "mystery" given in the Random House Thesaurus are: puzzle, problem, secret, riddle, conundrum, enigma, obscurity.

The conciliar texts themselves never say what they mean by "mystery." However, an official relatio, given to the bishops by a conciliar commission in 1964, defines the word thus: "As many recognize today, the word 'mystery' does not mean only something unknowable or abstruse, but a divine reality, transcendent and salvific, that in some way is revealed and

In this particular presentation on the New Evangelization Father Charles explores the rich biblical and theological meanings of the Mystery of Christ. A prayerful and reflective reading of this article will provide Franciscans with a solid appreciation of the call to evangelization.

made visible. This word is entirely biblical ("omnino biblicum") and is very apt to describe the church." Opening the second session of the Council in 1963, Paul VI spoke of the Church as "a mystery, that is a reality impregnated by a divine presence."

"Mystery" in the Scriptures

The Hebrew Scriptures use the word infrequently: twice in regard to the mystery cults (Wisdom 14:15,23) and several times to mean secret (Sirach 22:22; 27:16,17,21; 2 Macabees 13:21). The "secret of the King" (Tobias 12:7; Judith 2:2) is the king's plan, a meaning that St. Paul will attach to the word. They "mysteries of God" (Wisdom 2:2) are God's saving plans, the same meaning attached to "mystery" in the New Testament often.⁵

In the New Testament the word mysterion occurs in the Synoptic Gospels in Mt 13:11; Mk 4:11 and Lk 8:10 where Jesus speaks of "the mystery of the kingdom" which is revealed only to the disciples. It is the Pauline corpus that makes most frequent use of "mysterion" and in these writings the word means:

- 1. God's plan (Eph 1:9)
- 2. hidden from the ages (Eph 3:9; Rom 16:25; Col 1:26)
- 3. finally realized and brought to fulfillment (Rom 16:25; Eph 3:8ff; Col 1:26);
- 4. and consists in making us holy in Christ (Eph 1:4,9).

The "Mystery" is the nucleus of God's plan calling Jews and Gentiles to form one body of Christ (Eph chapters 1-3; Col 3:1; 4:3)

At the very center of the "mystery" is Christ Himself: He is the "mystery of holiness" (1 Tim 3:16), "The mystery is Christ among you," says Col 1:27. In 4:3 of the same letter the apostle asks for prayers "asking God to show us opportunities to proclaim the mystery of Christ" — might we not make that prayer our own? As St. Augustine comments: "The only mystery God has is Christ, and those who died in Adam need to be given life by Him." ⁶

In Paul the word mysterion, often translated into latin as "sacramentum," never means a sacred rite as it would come to mean often in a later tradition.

"Mystery" In the Patristic tradition

Among early Christian writers the word "mystery" or "sacrament" did not have the precise meaning it would be given in the 13th century, when under the influence of Peter Lombard (followed by Thomas Aguinas)

the word would be used to designate the liturgical rites that Trent would define as the "seven sacraments, no more and no less." St. Justin Martyr (†c. 165) considers all the facts "of the flesh of Christ" to be sacraments: His birth, for example, and His death on the cross. Among the Greek Fathers, especially Origen, Christ Himself, the Church, Scripture, Baptism, Eucharist, and other liturgical rites are all called sacraments. Origen gives us an understanding of his notion of "mystery" when he explains why Christ is a "mystery;" "one thing was seen, but something else was understood. His flesh was seen, He was believed to be God." In this understanding, the mysteries both reveal and conceal. What they reveal can be seen by all; what they conceal can be perceived only with the eyes of faith. 8

St. Augustine considers sacraments to be "everything done by the Church in time" ("quidquid in Ecclesia agitur temporaliter"). In his writings he lists as sacraments: the mysteries of faith, the figures of the Old Testament, the bible, baptism, confirmation, eucharist, the creed, the Lord's prayer, exorcisms, fasts, the ceremonies and prayers of the Mass, the washing of feet, the feast of Easter.

To sum up: the human, visible reality of the mysteries is there for all to see; God's presence in the mysteries, and God's power at work can be perceived only by those to whom the gift of faith is given and accepted. Thus, all can see the visible structure of the church, but only people of faith believe that the church is the body of Christ, filled by God's Holy Spirit with the life of the Risen Christ. All can see water being poured in baptism; only the faithful believe that the baptized are "born from above." Anyone can see the bread and wine used at Eucharist; only people of faith believe that the Eucharist perpetuates the mystery of the cross, and the bread and wine are truly the body and blood of the living Christ.

The Mysteries: Saving Power at Work in Us

The mysteries, however, are not given us by God only to be believed; they are sources of divine power. All the events of Christ's life are "for us and for our salvation." If we are being saved, we are being saved by these mysteries, and no one is saved independently of them.

The events of Christ's life, death and resurrection give a whole new meaning to human existence. Very succintly, but also very splendidly, the fourth Sunday preface expresses the transforming power of Christ's mysteries:

By his birth we are reborn. In his suffering we are freed from sin. By his rising from the dead we rise to everlasting life. In his return to you in glory we enter into your heavenly kingdom.

From earliest times the catholic tradition has emphasized the power of Christ's mysteries. St. Ignatius Martyr (†c. 107) calls Christ the "bodily and spiritual doctor." Christ acts through His human nature, including His body (sarx), as well as through His divine nature (pneuma) and heals both our spirit (to which He communicates the Holy Spirit) as well as our bodies which He will raise. ¹⁰

As he contemplates the mystery of the Incarnation, St. Gregory Nazianzen exclaims:

This is why God became human: to raise up our flesh, to re-create humankind, so that all of us might become one in Christ who perfectly became in us everything that he is in himself. We are to be so formed and molded by him that we are recognized as belonging to his one family. If only we could be what we hope to be by the great kindness of our God! He asks so little and gives to such, in this life and in the next.

He who enriches us is made poor; he takes on the poverty of my flesh that I may gain the riches of his divinity. He who is full is made empty that I may share in his fullness.

After contemplating the power of the Lord's Incarnation, Gregory exclaims in astonishment:

What is this wealth of goodness? What is this new mystery surrounding me? I am both small and great, lowly and exalted, mortal and immortal, earthly and heavenly. I am to become a coheir with Christ, a son of God, and indeed God Himself. (sic!) 11

As he contemplates the same mystery of the Incarnation, Augustine too is awestruck:

God became human so that human beings might become God. (sic!) The Lord of angels became human today so that humans could eat the bread of angels. Humankind sinned and became guilty; God is born a man to free humankind from their guilt. Humankind fell, and God descended; humans fell miserably, and God descended mercifully; humankind fell through pride, God descended with his grace My brothers and sisters, what miracles! What prodigies! God is born. I tell you again: for your sake, God became human. You would have perished, had he not come. Ask if this were merited; ask for its reason, for its justification, and see whether you will find any other answer but sheer grace. ¹²

We can sum up the power of this mystery: The Eternal Word of God, The Father's perfect self-expression, becomes what we are, to make us what He is. That is truly something to be awestruck about!

Liturgy: Making the Mysteries Present

All the mysteries of the life of Christ happened in a determined time and place. In a real sense, they are unrepeated and unrepeatable. But in a real sense too, the liturgy makes these mysteries present to us so that we can experience their saving power. Thus, when we celebrate the solemnity of Christmas, Jesus is not born again as a baby, but as we celebrate His birth with faith, we experience the saving power of that event: "but his birth we are reborn"

In the Apostolic Letter "Mysterii Paschalis," Paul VI wrote:

Thus as we celebrate the "sacrament of the birth of Christ" it is right and proper for us to pray that "through him who is like us outwardly, we may be changed inwardly." 14

In a very forceful statement Pius XII wrote in "Mediator Dei":

The liturgical year is not a cold and lifeless representation of past events. It is not a simple and bare record of a former age. It is rather Christ Himself ["Annus liturgicus ipse Christus est" (!)]. He is ever living in His Church and these mysteries are ever present and active not in a vague and uncertain way. 15

The second Vatican Council expanded on this teaching:

In the course of the year the church unfolds the whole mystery of Christ from the incarnation and nativity to the Ascension, to Pentecost and the expectation of the blessed hope of the Lord's return. Thus recalling the mysteries of redemption, she opens up to the faithful the riches of the Lord's powers and merits, so that these are in some way made present for all time; the faithful lay hold of them and are filled with saving grace. ¹⁶

This text explains what the council means by "the whole mystery of Christ" — everything from His first coming to His return in glory, when He will bring His saving work to a glorious fulfillment: "we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Very importantly, the mystery of Christ includes His Easter gift of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Conciliar Teaching

The second Vatican council rediscovered the rich biblical and patristic theme, mystery, and speaks of it in some 60 texts. To cite some examples: Christ reveals "the mystery of the Father." ¹⁷ In exercising their duty of teaching, bishops are to "propound the whole mystery of Christ." ¹⁸ God opens the door for missionaries "to proclaim the mystery of Christ." ¹⁹ The laity draw their unity and solidarity "from the mystery of Christ." ²⁰ Missionaries are sent to "make known confidently the mystery of Christ." ²¹

The OFM General Constitutions (art. 100) followed the lead of the council in directing preachers "to proclaim faithfully the mystery of Christ in its entirety."

It is essential for priests to "penetrate ever more deeply through prayer into the mystery of Christ." ²² God's saving plan is quite simply "the mystery of Christ." ²³ The function of sacred theology is to "scrutinize in the light of faith all truth stored up in the mystery of Christ." ²⁴ Ecclesiastical studies are to be revised "to unfold ever increasingly to the minds of seminarians the mystery of Christ." ²⁵

The OFM General Constitutions (art. 100) followed the lead of the council in directing preachers "to proclaim faithfully the mystery of Christ in its entirety."

The Paschal Mystery

Conciliar teaching attaches special importance to "the Paschal Mystery" — the Liturgy constitution alone speaks of it nine times. ²⁶ In his letter on mission Pope John Paul II writes: "the council affirmed the centrality of the Paschal Mystery." This emphasis was evident very early in the Council to the delight of many. Among them was Canada's Cardinal Leger, who said in the aula: "Never since the first centuries of the Church has the Paschal Mystery been held in so much honor." ²⁷

The liturgy constitution describes the paschal mystery in a few words found in the 7th century Gelasian sacramentary, and often repeated in liturgical books ever since: "dying he destroyed our death; rising he restored our life." ²⁸

The Paschal mystery (or Easter mystery) celebrates the Lord's death and resurrection as one inseparable whole. The New Testament too consistently presents Jesus' death and resurrection as two inseparable parts of the one saving mystery.²⁹

One of the first great controversies to trouble the church, at the end of the second century, was precisely about the Easter celebration.

The church in Asia, emphasizing the Lord's death, celebrated Easter on the 14th of Nisan. The Roman church, wishing to emphasize the Lord's resurrection, celebrated Easter on the following Sunday. Both were in

perfect agreement: Easter celebrates both Jesus' death and resurrection. It was only a question of emphasis. (There was no special liturgical commemoration of the Lord's death on Good Friday until the fourth century.) Easter was the one celebration of the indivisible Paschal Mystery.

Of all the mysteries of Christ, the paschal mystery is principal. This mystery is celebrated every year with the greatest solemnity during the Easter triduum, and throughout the Easter season which is a 50-day Feast "like one great Sunday," said St. Athanasius. The season of Lent ends and the Easter triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's supper on Holy Thursday. (For this reason the Good Friday fast is not called a lenten fast, but an Easter fast! ³⁰)

In emphasizing the absolute centrality of the paschal mystery, the liturgy takes its lead from the New Testament. Jesus Himself refers to his passover as his "hour" — the hour of His greatest work.³¹ The apostle Paul says emphatically:

If Christ has not been raised from the dead our preaching is worthless, and your faith is in vain... If Christ has not been raised from the dead you are still in your sins. And worse yet, all who have died in Christ have perished.

Paul then solemnly proclaims the very heart of the Good News: "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead." ³² At the very core of the Christian gospel is the triumph of life: Christ died, but now truly lives, and because He lives, we too shall live.

Living the Paschal Mystery

In 1 Cor 5:7, Paul writes: "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed." We have no passover other than Christ; His passover is our passover.

The Risen Christ draws us into the Paschal Mystery of His death and resurrection principally in baptism and the eucharist:

By Baptism human beings are grafted into the paschal mystery of Christ; they die with him, are buried with him, and rise with him.³³

The Eucharist is the principal celebration of the paschal mystery, the great "memorial of Christ's death and resurrection," a living memorial that brings those saving events in a mystical but real way into the present. We are then caught up in those events and experience their saving power. When we celebrate the Eucharist, "the victory and triumph of Christ's death are again made present" taught the Council of Trent, a teaching repeated by Vatican II. 34 Christ's victory is made present so that it might be our victory also, the victory of "the whole Christ." The Church prays in the Palm Sunday preface: "By his dying he has destroyed our sins. By his rising he has raised us up to holiness of life."

As Christ has drawn us into His own passover, so too does He share His own consecration with us:

The Lord Jesus "whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world" (Jn 10:36) makes his whole Mystical Body sharer in the anointing of the Spirit wherewith he had been anointed, for in that body all the faithful are made a holy and kingly priesthood. 35

Thus, in the body of Christ that is the church, there is only one consecration — the consecration that belongs to Christ by right, is ours by grace. In the body of Christ, the head does not have one consecration and the members another. He and we together share the same consecration by a stupendous gift, the anointing of the same Spirit. "You are properly called 'Christs,'" said St. Cyril of Jerusalem to the newly baptized, "by receiving the mark [antitypos] of the Holy Spirit. You were given the anointing, and this is the Holy Spirit," the Risen Lord's Easter gift. The teaching of St. Basil the Great may seem downright astonishing: "Through the Spirit we acquire a likeness to God; indeed we attain what is beyond our most sublime aspirations — we become God." (sic!) 35 It is as if the early Christian teachers felt they had to use hyperbole to express the awesomeness of the Paschal Mystery and its transforming power. As we contemplate this mystery, we too can share in St. Augustine's feelings of sheer wonder: "Let us be grateful and give thanks, we have been made not only Christians but Christ. Be amazed, rejoice! We have been made Christ." 36

All Christian morality flows from the fact that we have died with Christ and have been raised up with him: "Since you have been raised up in company with Christ, you must look for the things that are in heaven... You have died, and now the life you live is hidden with Christ in God." The Christian on earth lives in a hidden way the identical life the glorified Christ lives in heaven, and this will be made manifest when the Lord returns: "When Christ is revealed — and he is your life — you too will be revealed in all your glory with him." As we, open to the grace of continual conversion, move away from the reign of sin and death to share more fully the life of the Risen Christ, the victory of the Paschal Mystery is going on in our lives, until the day comes when we, transformed by the Lord's mysteries throughout our lives, are called into the new creation. We are indeed an Easter people.

The Franciscan Tradition

As St. Francis contemplates the mystery of Christ, and especially the Eucharistic mystery, he too is overcome with awe:

Let the whole human race tremble, the whole world shake and the heavens exult when Christ, the Son of the living God is present on the altar in the hands of a priest. O admirable heights and sublime lowliness!

Without the shadow of doubt, Francis excels even among the Saints for his singular and deep love of the Crucified Christ and his reverence for the mystery of the Cross. The depths of Francis' devotion is itself "a hidden mystery," as 2 Cel (n.203) says:

Who can explain or even understand how Francis wanted nothing except to glory in the Lord's cross? Only he can understand it who has experienced it. Our words are incapable of expressing such marvels. Let silence speak where words are useless.

St. Francis' mystical experience before the Crucifix of San Damiano was surely a turning point in his life. In her Testament St. Clare considers that experience to be the definitive moment of Francis' conversion: kneeling before the Crucifix in prayer "he felt the decisive impulse to leave the world completely."

Francis composed the "Office of the Passion" which could also be called the "Office of the Paschal Mystery" since Part I is to be used during the Easter Triduum and Part II during the Easter season.

When Francis and his early followers had no liturgical books and were thus impeded from praying the canonical hours, "day and night they turned over the book of the cross of Christ, which they always had in view, encouraged by the example and word of their most loving father, who frequently preached to them with inexpressible sweetness the glories of the cross of Christ." 38 Similarly, when Francis' first followers asked him to teach them to pray, he taught them the "Our Father" and the prayer: "We adore you, most holy Lord Jesus Christ... because by your holy cross you redeemed the world." 38a

The Stigmata, that most singular of privileges, marked Francis' body with conformity to the Crucified Christ, a conformity that had already taken place in the depths of his soul. "The Father of mercies imprinted on his body the glorious mysteries of the Cross." ³⁹

It comes as no surprise then to hear that when Francis came to die he wanted to celebrate his death as a passover, and asked that the words of John's gospel be read, beginning with "Before the day of Passover arrived." His soul took flight "when all the mysteries of Christ had been fulfilled in him." Totally transformed by the powerful mysteries of Christ which he contemplated and celebrated with such devotion, there was nothing left for Francis in this world. He was perfectly ready for the fulfillment that is found only in the new creation.

In his prayer Francis speaks of the mercy of God who chose Francis' family "to fulfill the mystery of your gospel." At the center of the gospel is the paschal mystery. Therefore, "on a certain Easter Sunday," when Francis was staying with some brothers in a hermitage, he encouraged them "to celebrate continually in poverty of spirit the Lord's passover, that is the passage from this life to that which is eternal." Living "in the desert of this world as pilgrims and strangers" Francis wanted his brothers to think of themselves as "true Israelites." ⁴² Israel's passover was a "pale reflection of what was to come; the reality is Christ." ⁴³ The great passover, the only passover which saves the whole world is Christ's. Those who are drawn into His passover and celebrate it in faith are the "true Israelites."

It comes as no surprise to learn that St. Clare, who considered herself to be St. Francis' "little plant," shared his devotion to the mystery of Christ. If Clare emphasized so much the ever so necessary contemplative dimension of Franciscan life, it was so that she and her Sisters could "withdraw from all disturbance and cling only to the depth of the mystery of God." She herself was "inflamed with love for the mystery of the cross" and encouraged Ermentrude of Bruges to "meditate tirelessly on the mystery of the cross." 44

Like Francis and Clare we too are called to believe the Mystery of Christ, to contemplate it, to celebrate it, to be transformed by it, and to live and die immersed in it. Consider all this with a sense of wonder, and see if you can find any other explanation for this marvel "except sheer grace!"

Endnotes

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<sup>11</sup>Cf. his Sermons in the Office of Readings: Tues., 1st wk. of Advent and Fri., 31st wk in ordinary time.
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¹⁸Christus Dominus 12

¹⁹AG 13

²⁰AG 21

²¹ AG 24

²²PO 14

²³PO 22

²⁴Dei Verbum 24

²⁵OT 14

²⁸SC 5

²⁹Cf. 1 Pt 3:18; 2 Cor 15:4 and 13:4; I Tim 3:16

¹Ad gentes (AG) 24.

²Evangelii Nuntiandi (EN) 22

³Cf. Bonaventura Kloppenburg in his "A Eclesiologia do Vaticano II," p. 21
⁴ibid.

⁵Cf. "Mystery" in Dictionary of the Bible by John L. McKenzie S.J.

⁶Ep. 187,34

⁷Comm. in ep. ad Rom. 4:2

⁸This patristic teaching was very influential at Vatican II. The church is called a "mystery" in the title of chapter I of Lumen Gentium (LG) and in nos. 5,39,44,63; in nos. 2 and 20 of Unitatis Redintegratio (UR); in nos. 9 and 16 of Optatam Totius (OT); in n. 16 of AG; in nos. 2 and 40 of Gaudium et Spes (GS), and in n. 4 of Nostra Aetate (NA)

⁹Enner. in Ps. 146,8

¹⁰Cf. C. Vagaggini OSB in Ephemerides Liturgicae, 1964, p. 234.

¹²Cf. his Sermons in the Office of Readings, Sat. after 2 Jan. and 24 Dec.

¹³Leo the Great, Sermo XXVII in Nativ. D. ni

¹⁴Roman Missal, Prayer, Baptism of the Lord.

¹⁵n. 165

¹⁶Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC) 102

¹⁷LG 3

²⁶ articles 5, 6 (twice), 61, 81, 104, 106, 107, 109.

²⁷ "Numquam a primis saeculis Ecclesiae, Mysterium Paschale tanta in gloria repositum est." (23 Oct. 1962)

³⁰Cf. "Norms Governing Liturgical Calendars" Tit. II,I,20

³¹Cf. Jn 12:23 and 17:1. On the meanings of "hour" in the gospel of John, cf. Raymond Brown, "The Gospel According To John," vol. I, p. 517.

³²1 Cor 15:14ff

³³SC 6. The scriptural references given for this teaching are Rom 6:4; Eph 2:6; Col 3:1; 2 Tim 2:11

³⁴SC 6, n.19

³⁵ Cf. Office of Readings, Tues. 7th wk. of Easter

³⁶In Ioan. tract. 21:8 (Quoted by Paul VI in Ecclesiam Suam).

³⁷Col 3:1ff

³⁸LM IV, 3

³⁸a 1Cel 45; L3S 37; T5

³⁹LMin I,1

⁴⁰2Cel 217; LM XIV,6 and LMin VII, 5.

⁴¹ 2Cel 156

⁴² LM VII,9

⁴³Col 2:17

⁴⁴Cf. The Legend of St. Clare nos. 36 and 32 and Clare's letter to Ermentrude.

JUDAS' LAST REFLECTION

Perhaps the rope is not as rough As it was made out to be And his words at the last Extended even to me.

And should I have gone to him, Looked him in the eye, the touch Of his poor cheek still On my teared lips

And asked him to forbear With my weakness? To look Him face-to-face and see Too much love, for me, too much.

Ah Jesus, my friend, how much I loved you. How much I loved you And would dearly love to kiss You once again to ease the pain And erase my other kiss that etches itself into my neck twisted and tortur

Itself into my neck twisted and tortured With every inch of tightened strain Throughout this fateful rope.

Séamus Mulholland, O.F.M.

How the Minister of the Fraternity Began His Service in Rome

HERMANN SCHALÜCK, O.F.M.

1.

After the Minister of the whole Fraternity had returned from the Pacific to the Mediterranean coast, shortly before the feast of the Blessed Bonaventura, he hurried to visit the Roman Curia of the Lord Pope and some of the prelates in it, in order in the name of all the brothers to bring them the greeting of peace, and to promise reverence and collaboration for the good of the Church and the Kingdom of God. At the same time he asked that he together with his counsellors and secretaries might be admitted into the presence of the Lord Pope himself as soon as he came back from one of his numerous missionary journeys. Then in the Curia of the Friars Minor — thus is it named — on the Gelsomino hill in Rome he began his novitiate, so as to understand better and by small steps the true nature of the commission which the Lord had given him through the Pentecost Chapter.

2.

To begin with, he asked all the brothers who had remained on the Gelsomino during the Chapter their counsel about how he could best perform his service for the good of the Fraternity and who else could help him in this. Because above all things they desired to live faithfully in accordance with the Rule and the Constitutions and to have a Guardian,

In this captivating report, Fr. Hermann Schalück, the new Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, describes in his inimitable style some of the activities of his first few months in office. The stories have a special appeal to our franciscan sensibilities and communicate an energizing force that easily stirs our franciscan hearts.

a certain Brother Aloysius, who up to then had been on the shepherds' field in Bethlehem and initiated pilgrims and young brothers into the mystery of the Incarnation, was named as Guardian. There followed him several other fellow workers from various other Provinces. The new Definitorium met together for several weeks in spite of the great heat and dryness of Latium in summer, in order to make a beginning of drawing up their own "Six-Year Plan". These brothers tried to perform their manifold task with great creativity but also with sober foresight. On a particularly hot day the Minister encouraged them all with these words: "Let us plan with great foresight. Like Noah, who began his building work before it began to rain." And they spoke of how important it was, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of evangelization in the Americas to understand the ideals of the young and the tears of the poor; in opposition to the inflation of words and the culture of noise to live out a culture of stillness, of contemplation and of listening, and so to give a name to the rose; to develop an ability to understand the secret message of music and of the other arts, even if it was only the message of the wooden violin of our Father and Brother Francis; and to invite all the brothers to compose new melodies, rythms and dances.

3

Then came the feast of the Porziuncola, and the Minister of the Fraternity hurried to make his first visit (second only to a simple visit to the bare desert of Nevada) to Assisi in Umbria. There, before the little chapel, he preached penance to the people who had hurried to gather from all the directions of heaven and at the same time proclaimed the forgiveness and liberation which can come from God alone. He spoke of how the poor and crucified Jesus is to be found in our impoverished and crucified fellow human being. The important thing is to fight with a reconciled heart for the Kingdom of God, faithful to the commission of the Lord to Brother Francis to build up the house of faith, of fraternity, of the Church and of creation. He reminded them of the patrimony which comes to us from the past, but at the same time with no less urgency of the obligations which come to us from the future, and called to support him in this the words of a great and wise man from the East: "Indifference and lack of interest towards the poor are the primary forms of violence." (Gandhi). But he also quoted a theologian with a more Western orientation, according to whom the important thing is not to give alms, but rather to bring about justice. Then he joined with them all to be eech the Lord for his Fraternity, that it should prove capable of casting out from its own ranks and communities not only the demons who are dumb, but also those who talk too much, so that all may preach more by deeds than by words.

On the evening of the same day there gathered in front of the Porziuncola a large crowd of young people, some two thousand of them, from the whole of Italy and some neighbouring countries as well. They had been travelluing on foot to Assisi for a whole week in order to pray for the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of pilgrimage and the spirit of prophecy, for their own lives and for the Church's journey, and to obtain the blessing of the Minister General. Standing on a wooden podium, the latter began by giving a brief account of the Pentecost Chapter and recounted how Diego of Alcala, that blessed brother who had not received holy Orders, was able to "inspire afresh a world grown old and tired" (Bull of Canonization). The Minister praised the young people for the example of their pilgrimage, given also to his Brothers, "many of whom want to return to nature, but few of them want to do it on foot." And then he spoke of the hope he cherished, that one day he might be able to send many of them on their way to Vladivostok, Novosibirsk, Alma Ata, to Albania and Samoa, Easter Island and Fiji, and to Xian and Jinan-fu in distant China. Yes, it might become necessary to send a new mission of brothers even to Germany, as in the times of Brother Francis. For, and here the Minister cited a saying from distant Rwanda, "What moves the heart will also set in motion the feet." Thereupon he imparted to them all the blessing. And a young man from Umbria, for whom a certain Brother John from that Province begged a special blessing from the Universal Minister, thus strengthened immediately began his period of probation in the friary at Monteluco, where he still is today.

5.

A short time thereafter — it was long before the first rainfalls of autumn — the Minister undertook a few further short journeys, which were to prepare him better for his service to the whole Order. First, he went for a Chapter of Mats to San Severino in the Marches. In this place a great poet and song-writer had once become a member of the Order as Brother Pacificus (LegM 4). In this place, too, Brother Francis had once caught sight of a little white sheep in the midst of a great many goats and gently compared it to the Lord Jesus among the Scribes and Pharisees. The Poor Clares of San Severino had later taken it into their care and from its wool made a warm habit for him (I Cel 77-78). And it had to happen just here in San Severino that the Minister Universalis noticed that he had forgotten his capuche. A certain Brother Aurelius lent him another, because he had two, and since then he holds the one worn by the Minister in great veneration. It was at this Chapter of Mats that the Minister announced

his intention of calling together in the near future a meeting of all the Brothers who are poets, singers, painters, sculptors, tightrope-walkers and artists of any kind. All of them, he said, should help the Fraternity to recognize with eyes and hearts purified you mission old and ever new which comes from contemplating and listening.

6.

On the way home they called on the Poor Clares, so that together with them they might be mindful of the living heritage which Francis and Clare left to the Church. The Sisters made a promise to the Minister who is the present successor of Saint Francis that they would make him a habit with capuche. And as he travelled back home to his Curia on the Gelsomino, the Brother Minister prayed fervently that he and all his counsellors and secretaries might be made worthy of carrying out their service in such a manner that its truth shine forth increasingly not only as a hard diamond but also as a tender blossom and a gentle accord. And the Lord Pope received the Minister and the Definitorium sooner than they could have expected, and imparted on them and on all that they had resolved to do his fatherly blessing.

Ad laudem Christi. Amen.



PALM SUNDAY

I smelled the colour on Palm Sunday And felt
The fine splendour of imported cloth bought
From his misunderstanding father. I looked
Down and saw the ground come to meet me,
Swayed as some drunken lout who hoped to be
Found in good health and happiness. But, I stayed
To find my own Palm Sunday and entered through
An unused side-door that became my narrow gate.

Séamus Mulholland, O.F.M.

FRANCISCAN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

in

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION and DIRECTED RETREATS

20th Session: March 18 — June 19, 1993 (Deadline: Dec. 15, 1992)

A ministerial and experiential program born out of the conviction that our Franciscan charism enables us to bring a distinctive Franciscan approach to our spiritual direction, retreats, and helping ministries.

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