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The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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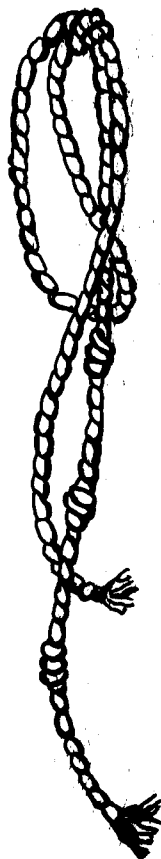
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Standard Abbreviations used in **The CORD**

for Early Franciscan Sources

I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions

BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo

CantSol: Cantic 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 the 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

Flor: 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).

Celebrating the Death of St. Francis

DANIEL P. SULMASY, O.F.M.

I

Few of us, I suspect, have ever seen anyone die; ever actually been there at someone's side as they have drawn their last breath. It is distinctly unAmerican to see people die. Most of us hope that we ourselves will die quickly, painlessly, and in our sleep, perhaps so that we can avoid thinking about death even at the moment when it happens. That is why tonight's celebration of the Transitus is so awkward for us. It somehow doesn't feel quite right to solemnly remember the death of a great man. Shouldn't we be celebrating his life and his accomplishments instead?

Yet we find ourselves here, tonight, gathered around the dying Francis in just the same way as the first Franciscans gathered around the dying Francis. Giotto, in his famous fresco of the death of St. Francis, painted first and foremost a realistic death. Giotto painted the premature death of a handsome young man who had been horribly sick for two years: a death not unlike the deaths from Hodgkins Disease or AIDS that we know today. And Giotto has painted all of us into his fresco as well. Like some of the friars Giotto painted, some of us may be sad that Francis, our Father in Christ, is no longer with us; no longer there with a clear voice and dramatic flair to inspire us when we seem lost and confused. Or, like some of the other friars in Giotto's fresco, some of us may feel drawn to kiss the bleeding hands and feet of St. Francis, stung in conscience, convicted from our own fingers down to our own toes by how little we resemble him, in our living or in our dying, and asking God to forgive us. Or perhaps some of us, clothed in magisterial red, feel compelled to investigate, to verify, to control, to stick our hands into the wounds and still not be sure, fearful of freeing our minds for the service of God's mystery. Or some of us, gathered here tonight, may be standing in the background of the fresco; perhaps here for the first time, or for the first time in a long time, drawn initially by curiosity, and now on the verge of genuine prayer. Yet all of us, tonight, if we

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can but open ourselves to the Word of God, proclaimed in the Church and in communion with the saints, might, like the lone friar at the head of the death-bed in the fresco, catch a glimpse of the soul of God's minstrel, Francis.

II

The life of the religious in the contemporary world, Daniel Berrigan once said, must be a kind of living question mark. The fact that there are sisters, friars, and monks among us ought to make all of us question our own way of being in the world. The fact that there are people in this world who profess evangelical poverty ought to make everyone else question the way they use or abuse the material goods of the world. The fact that there are people who profess evangelical chastity ought to make everyone else question the way they relate to each other, sexually or otherwise. The fact that there are people who profess evangelical obedience ought to make everyone else question from whom they are really taking orders in the conduct of their day to day living, and to wonder to whom, besides themselves, they are willing to listen.

Those of us who have professed these evangelical counsels have no cause for smugness. We must ask ourselves whether we lead lives that make these questions clear.

The death of Francis, in some respects, must strike us all as one very loud, clear, unwavering, unambiguous question. If we really understand the death of Francis, we will recognize the persistent question that insinuates itself between the fissures in our brains — erupts into our relationships: between husbands and wives; between parents and children; friends and enemies; worship and work; between our own conception and our own demise. The death of Francis is the death of a true religious — an alarming question if taken seriously. The death of Francis is a question we *need* to hear, even though we both want and do not want to hear it. We are so busy asking our own very important questions. What shall I wear? How do I look? What kind of impression did I make? Did I get the sale? Which party will be the most fun? What's the latest gossip? What decision will best advance my career? Will I need to miss my favorite TV show in order to help you?

To the extent that we organize our lives around such questions, we do so as a way both to avoid life and to ignore the reality of our own death. The death of Francis, then, comes as an awkward, disturbing question. This is not to suggest that the Gospel prescribes a morbid, psychologically sick fascination with death or some masochistic desire to suffer. Precisely the opposite, we are taught to avoid unnecessary suffering and commanded to help all those we find burdened with suffering. But what the Gospel of Jesus Christ teaches, and

what the life and death of Francis of Assisi exemplify, is that the avoidance of suffering is not the point of life; that a life lived in flight from suffering is not a life, but an illusion. The Christian death of Francis teaches us that suffering must not be avoided when the choice before us is

either to love, or to avoid love and the suffering love entails;

either to act justly, or to avoid justice and the suffering justice entails; either to embrace life, or to shun life and the suffering life entails.

These are the landmarks of Jesus Christ, the landmarks that Francis bore in his own members. They are the landmarks that dispel our lingering romantic notions about Francis as the mere congenial friend of the birds. We prefer this romantic version, of course, because we want to think that it is possible to be happy without giving of ourselves; that it is possible to love without sacrificing anything. But the birds would not have paid any more attention to Francis than they do to you or me, if they had not recognized in Francis a man who had embraced the Cross of Christ. The landmarks imprinted in the flesh of Francis are signs to remind us that there is no salvation except in that Cross, and in the overwhelming mystery of the Resurrection which is its promise.

III

Bonaventure says that Francis was a man who had reached such a state of purity "that his body was in remarkable harmony with his spirit, and his spirit with God" (*LM* 5:9). It is in this ecology of *spirit* that the Franciscan spirit of ecology truly begins. Francis was a genuinely hylomorphic man — body and spirit, deed and word. The rest of us, enlightened as we might think ourselves, often tinker with our own dualism, bracketing off the world from our faith, people from our worship, action from our contemplation. That is why we are content to pollute our world. But Francis understood himself to be a creature. He understood his link to all other creatures. He knew himself as a creature of the love of God: the wild, exuberant, free love of God. It is because he understood this so well that he could call the sun his brother, and the moon his sister. He knew keenly that bodies, all bodies, are called into being only because of the love of God. He knew the power by which human bodies can participate in the love of God. It is that power that enabled him to kiss lepers and to preach peace to sultans.

But he also knew the limits of bodies, the horizon of the material. This is the knowledge of Franciscan humility. He bore none of our contemporary delusions about being self-made, and so he called the earth his mother. He bore no delusions about being all powerful, and so called Poverty his Lady. He bore no delusions about being immortal, and so he called death his sister. He truly lived in remarkable harmony: with himself, God, other people, and all

creation. This is the harmony that supported the melody of his joyous song. Francis, the minstrel of God, directed the chorus of creation in a cosmic symphony of praise. His death marked only the beginning of the second movement.

And if you are quiet tonight, on your way home, or on your way over from the Church to Holy Name College for cookies, or just before you go to bed, if you listen carefully, you just might hear the larks sing again tonight the opening measures of that second movement, the way they did this night in 1226. They will sing to remind you that Francis has shown that it *is* possible to live a Christian life. They will ask you whether you believe enough in the grace of God to realize that you too can be a Christian. God brought St. Francis of Assisi into this world for no less noble a purpose than you.

* * *



Giotto. Death of St. Francis (detail).

THE TRANSITUS: A RITE OF INTENSIFICATION

DANIEL GRIGASSY, O.F.M.

PART I

The "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" (1963) encouraged popular devotions among Catholics and recognized their special status proper to local churches. Popular devotions are to flow from the Eucharist and lead back to it "since, in fact, the liturgy, by its very nature far surpasses any of them."¹ Prior to the promulgation of the liturgy constitution, devotions with a particularly Franciscan flavor comprised the ordinary fare of common prayer and observance for followers of Francis: praying the fourteen Stations of the Cross and the seven joyful mysteries of the Franciscan Crown; reading the Rule at Friday's midday meal; singing the "Tota Pulchra" on Saturday evenings; reciting the "Adoramus Te" before and after common prayers; praying cross-prayers with arms extended in the form of a cross, to name only a few.

Readers of the CORD will welcome this insightful article on the cherished Transitus ceremony. Fr. Daniel Grigassy's detailed study of the history of the rite reveals important aspects of the Franciscan charism which condition the way we celebrate. Readers will recall Fr. Daniel's fine article "Attending to Ritual Attitudes" which appeared in the June CORD. PART II of this present article will appear in a future issue.

Readers who desire a copy of the lengthy and important endnotes, which do not appear here, are encouraged to write to

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A devotion familiar to all Franciscans which has survived the test of the last three decades is the *Transitus*. Each year on the third evening of October, we ritually remember the passing of Francis of Assisi from this life into God. In fact, the *Transitus* has become a significant and even a necessary annual event. To ritually revisit the story of Francis' passing is vital; without it something significant is missing. It specifies the living memory of Francis; it intensifies our commitment to follow Christ in the way of the poor man of Assisi. Since this rite of intensification has become an annual expectation for most friars, sisters, and seculars, a consideration of its origins and meanings seems worthwhile and timely. It is surprising that no historical study of the *Transitus* has been undertaken in the past three decades when so much ritual flux has been the order of the day. Questions begin to emerge when Franciscans with a living memory of the pre-conciliar era think critically about the *Transitus*. Who fills the roles of the various ministries in the rite? Who presides? Does it matter who presides? What does the presider wear? Does it matter what the presider wears? What do Franciscans in the assembly wear? Does it matter what they wear? Who reads the narrative text? Who cantors? What is the role of the assembly? What texts, sung or spoken, are included or not included in the rite? When is the rite celebrated? Where is the rite celebrated? How is the rite enacted? What are the gestures and postures taken by the ministry, by the assembly? What are the primary ritual objects? How do they interact with one another? Why do we even bother to enact the rite each year? In the asking of such questions, very telling meanings and values come to the fore which are tacitly operative in the rite. Non-verbals often yield more significant data in ritual analysis than the verbal elements. Ritual texts are important, but rituals are more than texts. Only within the lived context of the people who enact the rite do the ritual texts take on meanings which spill over the texts and into others forms of ritual expression. At times the non-verbals disclose more meanings than the verbals. In other words, the rite may say more than we wish to tell!

Perhaps the time has come to open the question of the *Transitus* as a significant (or insignificant) ritual moment for Franciscans. A rigorous ritual analysis of pre- and post-conciliar ritual samples would yield fascinating insights into a variety of Franciscan meanings functioning within the rite and expressed in its enactment. However, such an analysis would take us far afield. These initial steps in thematizing the *Transitus* as an object of ritual studies are best limited to the origins of the rite, its structure, and its core components. A sampling of rites from a variety of available sources which recall elements operative in pre-conciliar are exposed here in this first part of the article. The second part in a forthcoming number of *The CORD* will consider ritual samples drawn from the last three decades which show the expansion, retraction, and stabilization of the rite's form and shape. Its ritual structures remain supple

and pliable, resisting fixed forms, though recently, recurring patterns have contributed to stabilizing the rite. Commentary gathered through systematic interviews with participants generate questions which will conclude the piece.

These first steps in ritual exposition and analysis will help to open up discussion, either in the pages of this journal, in house chapters, or in informal conversations among Franciscan men and women. The present author encourages readers to enter into this study by saving liturgical aids published by your communities, by chronicling details of the rite, and even by videotaping the *Transitus* since ritual is not only written text but enacted text. The meanings and intentions which this uniquely Franciscan rite carries and annually fortifies for those who gather to remember the passing of their founder suggest important elements which need to be folded into the continuing reacclamation of Franciscan identity in this age of confusion and conflict, of refounding and reformation.

The Origins of the Rite. The *Transitus* was not an early memorial ritual enacted by first, second, or third generation Franciscans but a phenomenon emerging much later. Attempts to answer questions of the rite's origin have met with limited success and successful frustrations. More than thirty sources have been assembled for the first part of this study. They include breviaries, sacramentaries, ceremonials, rituals, devotional prayer manuals, and histories of Franciscan devotion.² Only four references specify an approximate time and place of origins; however, none offers data to justify their claims. All the sources examined attest to the same origins in France and Flanders at the beginning of the eighteenth century and not before the end of the seventeenth century. The earliest testimony is from the 1926 *Officium ac Missa de Festo S.P.N. Francisci*.³ The *Cantuale Romano-Seraphicum* of 1951⁴ repeats those dates and origins. In a more recent work, *Liturgia di S. Francesco d'Assisi* of 1963,⁵ the same time and place of origin are noted. Twenty years later in 1983, the English-speaking Conference of the Order of Friars Minor approved *Franciscans at Prayer*⁶ for use in North America. The same dates are cited without data to justify the claim.⁷ Correspondence by mail with the late Fr. Ignatius C. Brady of the Collegio S. Bonaventura in Grottaferrata and with Fr. Octavian Schmucki of the Istituto Storico Cappucini in Rome⁸ sought to establish the earliest claim of the 1926 *Officium ac Missa* on secure historical data, yet the exchange yielded no further insights into origin and dating. Since no direct access to the basis for the claim is readily available, the only choice is to proceed with the presupposition that the *Transitus* began at the start of the eighteenth century or perhaps at the end of the seventeenth century. Sheer curiosity led to an investigation of available office books, ceremonials, sacramentaries, and books of popular devotion with dates prior to the late seventeenth century, but none of these included a *Transitus* ritual or anything that remotely resembled one. Since eigh-

teenth century ritual books were almost impossible to find in accessible libraries,⁹ most of the pre-conciliar rituals reviewed as a basis for this study are composed in Latin and situated within the limits of Western Europe and North America within the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. Post-conciliar rituals were collected over a period of twenty years. The majority, though not all, are English rituals from the United States; some are French, German, Italian, and Spanish. The majority, though not all, are from the eastern section of the United States; some are from the midwest and western regions. To expose and comment on all pre- and post-conciliar rituals would demand extensive appendices which are impossible to provide within the limits of these pages. Worthwhile for our purposes will be a summary of consistent elements and patterns in a sampling of rites and some commentary on possible reasons for apparent shifts, expansions, retractions, and stabilizations of ritual form and structure.

Pre-Conciliar Rites: Their Structure and Core Components. The earliest Franciscan liturgical books available for this inquiry date from the eighteenth century, three from the early part and one from the latter. Two editions of the *Officia Propria Sanctorum* of Innocent XII, one of 1722,¹⁰ the other of 1724,¹¹ include the text for the Office of the Solemnity of St. Francis,¹² but no reference is made to the *Transitus* as such. In the same way, the same Innocent XII's *Hora Diurnae Propriae Sanctorum* of 1723,¹³ reflects no familiarity with the *Transitus*. The latter *Officia Sanctorum* of 1786¹⁴ does not include a *Transitus* ceremony. The only explicit reference to the *Transitus* to be found appears after a leap of a hundred and one years.

A small devotional book of 1887 by the Irish Franciscan Fr. Jarlath Prendergast, O.S.F., entitled *The Cord of St. Francis with Indulgences and Devotions*¹⁵ shows the bare bones of what came to be the commonly used ritual.¹⁶ This work simply includes a listing of the antiphon, "O sanctissima anima"/"O Most Holy Soul,"¹⁷ Psalm 142, "Voce mea ad Dominum clamavi"/"With a loud voice I cry to the Lord,"¹⁸ and a hymn, "Salve, sancte Pater."¹⁹ It is interesting to note that the hymn is included, at least in part, in the appendix of E. Chavin De Malan's work, *Histoire de Saint Francois d'Assise* of 1869²⁰ as the Magnificat antiphon for second Vespers on the Solemnity of Francis. The same text is cited in the *Analecta Franciscana* as part of the "Antiphonae ad Benedictus et Magnificat infra Octavam et pro Commemoratione S. Francisci"²¹ and is attributed to Thomas Capuano Cardinal S. Sabina, a contemporary of St. Francis.²² This first part of the antiphon works its way into the *Transitus* found in Prendergast's 1887 collection. Together with the second nocturn for Matins on the Solemnity of St. Francis²³ which tells of the death of the saint and which refers explicitly to "Voce mea ad Dominum clamavi," we begin to catch a glimpse of the *Transitus*, at least in seminal form.

Only six years after Prendergast suggests his three-part ritual, the French Friars Minor of the Province of St. Louis incorporate these three elements and amplify the ceremonial aspect of the rite by setting out precise directives on how the ritual is to be done. In the *Formulaire de Prières Cérémonies* of 1893,²⁴ rubrics or stage directions are offered to facilitate the movement of the rite. No specific date or time is assigned to the celebration. The opening statement in the *Formulaire* directs the community to gather at the chapel of St. Francis. When all the participants arrive, the chanters then intone the antiphon, "O sanctissima anima." Chant notation is provided for the antiphon as well as for Psalm 142. The italicized rubric prior to the psalm text contains an embellishment: "After the antiphon, Psalm 142, the 'Voce Mea,' is sung during which the organ plays..., but the last verse and the Gloria Patri must always be sung."²⁵ The last verse represents the actual moment of Francis' passing; special attention is given to it in the rite: Educ de custodia animam meam/ad confitendum nomini tuo:/me exspectant justi,/donec retribuas mihi.//Bring my soul out of prison/that I may praise your name./The just wait for me / until you reward me. The singing of this final verse of the psalm and the Gloria Patri is followed by addition: five Our Fathers, Hail Marys, and Glories are recited together while kneeling and with arms outstretched in the form of a cross.²⁶ "Cross prayers" enter into the rite as an appropriate posture to recall the symbol of the cross out of which Francis lived his entire life. All are then directed to stand and sing the hymn, "Salve, sancte Pater." Although present in Prendergast's *Transitus* but remaining unspecified, the verse and refrain at the end of the antiphon (Franciscus pauper et humilis...Hymnis coelestibus...) are directed to be sung in this French ritual by an unspecified "Officiant" or presider. Whereas the Irish version ends here, the French edition adds an oration: O God, on this day you granted the reward of blessed eternity to our blessed Father Francis; mercifully grant that we who celebrate with tender devotion the memory of his death may have the joy of sharing in his blessed reward. Through Jesus Christ Your Son our Lord....²⁷ All respond to this prayer with an "Amen." The presider then says "Dominus vobiscum" to which all respond "Et cum spiritu tuo." Similar to the closing of Vespers, the chanters sing "Benedicamus Domino" to which all respond "Deo gratias." The final rubric reads: "Then the presider blesses the people with the relic and venerates it, the organ plays and all the bells ring."²⁸ The relic of St. Francis emerges here as an important object in the rite. The blessing of the people with the relic points to the public character of the rite; the blessing was not only for the friars, but for all who gathered from the local church. A note of festivity at the end of the ritual shows itself in the playing of the organ and the ringing of the bells.²⁹

The next testimony to the *Transitus* is found in the 1895 edition of the *Rituale Romano-Seraphicum*³⁰ recommended for the use of all Franciscans

throughout the world. The simplicity of the 1893 French rite begins to disappear while complexity of ceremonial builds in the 1895 Roman rite. The clear-cut and well-defined ceremony is framed by the relic of the saint and embellished reverences toward it. The first directive of this Roman ritual stylizes the progression of events which serves to fix the rite into a defined pattern.³¹ The familiar "O sanctissima anima" is then said or sung, though neither is specified. After the antiphon, Psalm 142 finds its place. The psalm's last verse recalling the saint's moment of death is highlighted with instructions for organ accompaniment.³² After the Gloria Patri, all kneel to recite "five Paters, Aves, and Gloria Patris," but there is no specification for extending the arms.³³ All stand for the antiphon, "Salve, sancte Pater." After the antiphon and before the versicle and response, all kneel "except the Celebrant" who is later specified as the Superior. Proceeding in the same way as the 1893 French rite, the oration is prayed. Then the ceremony closes with the "Benedicamus Domino" and its response, "Deo gratias." The final directive reflects three significant items: the beginning of a distinction of roles within the ritual, the continued inclusion of non-Franciscans, and the festive character of the celebration.³⁴

Four years later in the Belgian Province of St. Joseph, the Friars Minor set out a ritual for the memorial of the passing of Francis in their *Usuale* of 1899.³⁵ Even more detail is offered here in the directives for the celebration. Although no chant notation is provided for the antiphon, psalm, or hymn, there is an increase in the number of directives which points to continuing growth in the ritualization of the Transitus. One only has to look at the progression from the 1887 Irish rite to this 1899 Belgian rite to see the proliferation of detailed instructions and heightened ritualization. It is significant that the verb "celebrate" shows itself here for the first time.³⁶ Modifying adverbs confirm that the ritual was celebrated "festively and solemnly." All candles on the altar are lit; the organ is playing. The "Superior" carries the relic of St. Francis in a procession with a vested deacon and sub deacon preceded by two acolytes, readers, and cantors. The ministry proceeds to the altar where the relic is enthroned. The "Sacerdos/Priest" then incenses the relic "ac duplici ductu." Detailed directions are given locating the standing positions of thurifers, cantors, and readers. Then the "O sanctissima anima" is intoned.³⁷ Next, Psalm 142 is sung "in the fifth tone," a further specification in this ritual. No embellishment of the "Educ de custodia" is mentioned although an organ interlude is suggested to enhance the solemnity of the text.³⁸ After the psalm's conclusion with the Gloria Patri, all are directed to extend their arms and quietly pray five Paters, Aves, and Gloria Patris. When the "superior" is ready, the organ gives the tone to the cantors and readers for the intonation of the "Salve, sancte Pater." Then all kneel except the "celebrants" who sings the verse, "Franciscus pauper et humilis..." All respond with "Hymnis coelestibus..." after which the

celebrant sings the oration. Then the cantors and the readers, not the celebrant or superior, sing the "Benedicamus Domino" to which all respond "Deo gratias." No musical notation is provided for those parts, so familiarity with their melodies may be presumed.

What is striking about this entire Belgian rite is the complexification of ceremonial and heightened ritualization. The ritual was certainly on its way to becoming a solemnized devotional practice for Franciscans and for the people who regularly prayed with them. Consider the following instruction: "After this, the Superior, or a priest wearing a white cope, blesses the people with the relic of our Holy Father Saint Francis, and meanwhile the organ plays and the bells ring from the intonation of the first antiphon until the Benedicamus Domino inclusively."³⁹ The question of presidency emerges here. Was it the Superior, the copped priest, or the copped priest-Superior who presided? Whether this was an issue at all is difficult to determine from the text. This directive also explicitly cites that the tower bells ring throughout most of the rite from the first antiphon, that is, "O sanctissima anima," to the final "Benedicamus Domino." The next directive clearly suggests that the Transitus was not an intramural devotion but open to all in the local church. It also clearly notes a definite ordering of the assembly wherein the friars were first to venerate the relic while the faithful followed.⁴⁰ The ritual action of kissing the relic and a silent recessional without organ or bells is evident here. A final directive notes for the first time that Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament follows the rite, thus associating the commemoration of the saint's death with Eucharistic devotion.⁴¹

The *Proprium Sanctorum*⁴² contains a commemoration of the death of Francis which includes all the familiar elements, although with minimal directives. Before the text of the opening antiphon, "O sanctissima anima," and the chant notation provided for it, a brief instruction is given.⁴³ The "O sanctissima anima" is followed immediately by the text of Psalm 142 without instruction preceding the text and without musical notation. The suggestion for organ accompaniment and the directive for singing the "Educ de custodia" has vanished. After the psalm text, the italics simply read: "After the Gloria Patri...all kneel and recite five Paters, Aves, and Gloria Patris, and then the 'Salve, sancte Pater' is sung."⁴⁴ The text of the oration is followed by the "Benedicamus Domino." The closing comment once again reflects the vested celebrant's role, the inclusion of the people in the ceremony, the simple blessing with, but not the kissing of, the relic, and the sounding of the organ and bells.⁴⁵

Only five years after the *Proprium Sanctorum*, the *Caeremoniale Romano-Seraphicum* of 1908⁴⁶ includes not even an allusion to the Transitus. However, it does find its way into the *Rituale Romano-Seraphicum* of 1910.⁴⁷ Like the earlier *Rituale* of 1895,⁴⁸ chant notation is not suggested for the anti-

phons, psalm, hymn, or responses. Unlike the *Rituale* of 1895, parenthetical instructions regarding incensations and positions of ministry are fully incorporated into the directives. The presider changes from a "Sacerdos" to a "Celebrant" throughout, and the cantors intone the antiphon.⁴⁹ A simple instruction is given for the singing of Psalm 142. Accenting the psalm's last verse is once again encouraged and, after the Gloria Patri, the "O sanctissima anima" antiphon is repeated. Then all kneel to recite five Paters, Aves, and Gloria Patris. Whether these were said aloud or silently, as cross prayers or not, cannot be determined from the instruction.⁵⁰ Next all stand and the cantors begin the hymn, "Salve, sancte Pater." Then all kneel and two cantors sing: V. "Franciscus pauper et humilis..." R. "Hymnis coelestibus..." Whether one cantor sang the verse and the other responded, or both sang the verse and the assembly responded, cannot be known from the text. The "Celebrant" stands and prays the oration and closes with the "Benedicamus Domino." The final comment testifies to the celebrant's incensation of the relic and his blessing of the people with it. The friars are the first to kiss the relic; the people follow. Finally, more explicitly than ever, the statement appears: "...meanwhile the organ and the bells sound festively."⁵¹

The exact text of the 1910 *Rituale* is contained in the *Manuale Precum*,⁵² a devotional prayer book compiled in 1915 for the North American Province of the Most Holy Name of Jesus. One suspects that other provinces throughout the English-speaking world and beyond must have been using the same rite. The same text appears in the 1915 Capuchin *Rituale Romano-Seraphicum*⁵³ while the rubrics are significantly amplified to include minute detail of word, movement, and gesture. A formula for individual blessings with the relic is also provided.⁵⁴

Essentially similar and consistent with the texts contained in both the *Rituale* of 1895 and of 1910 but with some significant additions, the *Cantuale Romano-Seraphicum* of 1922⁵⁵ includes those elements which by this time have come to be regarded as essential to the ritual: the "O sanctissima anima," Psalm 142, the five Paters, Aves, and Glorias, the "Salve, sancte Pater," the oration, the closing "Benedicamus Domino," the incensation of the relic, and the blessing with it. The chant notation for the "O sanctissima anima" and the "Salve, sancte Pater" are significantly different from other texts which include musical notation.⁵⁶ Psalm 142 offers the same psalm tone here as in previous rituals while the notation for the "Benedicamus Domino" and its response is extremely florid. An extraordinary and significant addition in the 1922 *Cantuale* is its recommendation to sing an unspecified song in the vernacular to accompany the religious and laity's veneration of the relic. Meanwhile, the organ and bells are to sound festively.⁵⁷

A small devotional prayer book for members of the Third Order of St. Francis entitled *The Tertiaries Companion*⁵⁸ was published in 1923 and in-

cluded no reference to the Transitus. In 1926, the work of an American Franciscan historian, Fr. Francis Borgia Steck, O.F.M., was published as *Glories of the Franciscan Order*.⁵⁹ It included a brief history of the Order, devotions popularized by the Order, and the Order's contribution to culture, society, mission countries, and education. In its second chapter, "The Order and Catholic Devotions," the Transitus is absent.⁶⁰ Thus, in the year of the septcentenary of Francis' death, a ritual recalling his passing was not considered significant enough to be included in such a collection. The annual devotion was not on a par with other daily, weekly, or monthly devotions.

In the *Officium ac Missa de Festo S.P.N. Francisci* of 1926,⁶¹ a Transitus ceremony is set out with little instruction. By this time the chant notation offered throughout the rite would have been familiar since it is the same as that contained in the *Proprium Sanctorum* of 1903.⁶² The instructional details regarding positions, incensations, and ordering of the assembly have vanished.⁶³ Without introduction or directions, the rite presents a familiar psalm tone for Psalm 142. The antiphon is repeated and then all kneel to pray the five Paters, Aves, and Glorias. No directive regarding cross prayers is given. All stand and sing the hymn, "Salve, sancte Pater" and kneel to sing the versical and response. The text of the oration, which more often than not has been provided, is not given here, although familiarity with it seems presupposed. Before the "Benedicamus Domino," the italics simply read "Intoned after the oration."⁶⁴ There follows no reference to relic, people, organ, or bells. Perhaps there was either a silent exit or the final ritual action was left to local custom and discretion.

Another small devotional prayer book compiled in 1926 for the Dutch Province, *Promptuarium Seraphicum*,⁶⁵ reflects a verbatim copy of the *Rituale Romano-Seraphicum* of 1910. The same appears in its 1936 edition⁶⁶ and its 1948 edition.⁶⁷ The more complex directives appear in the earlier edition while the later two razor down the rubrics to terse phrases.⁶⁸ The *Caeremoniale Romano-Seraphicum* of 1927⁶⁹ includes no reference to the Transitus.

Of great significance is the Spanish prayer book, "*Vamos tras él...*," published in 1929.⁷⁰ It contains a simple Transitus, not in Latin but only in the vernacular. Three familiar elements make up the rite. The antiphon, "Oh, alma santísima," is followed simply by the versicle, "Francisco, pobre y humilde, entra rico en el cielo," and the response, "Con celestiales himnos es honrado," without the entire text of the hymn, "Salve, sancte Pater." The familiar oration concludes the ritual. These three components are prefaced with a suggestion to include other prayers and litanies which are found within the same devotional book. This points to the fluidity and unfixed character of the rite in Spain and in other Spanish-speaking countries which used this prayer book.

The *Manuale Chori* or *Manual of Prayers* of the Capuchin Province of St. Joseph in the United States⁷¹ includes "In Transitu S.P.N. Francisci (die 4 Octobris)" which is a copy of the rite from the *Rituale Romano-Seraphicum* of 1910 with embellished Latin directives and a brief English introduction which specifies the logistics of the rite.⁷² A curious addition concludes that introduction: "After the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament the relic is offered to the Friars and the faithful for veneration."⁷³ This practice of Benediction is reminiscent of the 1899 Belgian rite. However, it appears as only a suggestion in the Belgian rite⁷⁴ whereas it is clearly a directive and even presupposed in this 1933 North American rite.

The 1934 edition of the *Manuale Precum*⁷⁵ for the North American Holy Name Province of Friars Minor contains the same ritual as its 1915 edition which was a reproduction of the rite in the 1910 *Rituale*. Likewise, the 1953 edition of the same prayer book for the North American St. John the Baptist Province of Friars Minor replicates that rite.⁷⁶ Another Tertiary's prayer book of 1941, *Blessed Saint Francis: A Distinctive Tertiary Prayer Book*,⁷⁷ includes essentially the 1910 *Rituale* with an English translation. Unlike the early Tertiary's devotional book of 1923⁷⁸ which did not contain the Transitus, the 1941 prayer book values the ritual as part of the Secular Franciscans' spirituality. The 1942 publication of the *Franciscan Supplement to the Daily Missal* by St. Anthony Guild Press⁷⁹ shows no sign of the Transitus. However, it includes proper prayers for the Mass on October 3 to commemorate "The Transference of the Body of St. Clare."⁸⁰ The *Missale Romano-Seraphicum* of the same year⁸¹ makes no mention of the Transitus. The unique contribution of this missal is the Vigil Mass for October 3 with proper prayer in honor of St. Francis. It is curious that none of its elements resemble the Transitus or make allusions to the saint's passing.

In 1943 the *Piccolo Cerimoniale Romano-Seraphico* II⁸² simply refers to a part of the Transitus under the heading "Alla benedizione colle Reliquie" without further specification of the rite itself. An aside in smaller print than the comment on the blessing with the relic testifies to the time of celebration (on the evening of the third of October), the place where it takes place (at the shrine or chapel of St. Francis), and the singing of Psalm 142. It is here, for the first time, that mention is made of individual candles carried by each of the friars.⁸³ Whether candles were carried by other participants is not mentioned; it may be presumed that only the friars held them.

*The Tertiary Ritual for Special Occasions*⁸⁴

The Capuchin *Caeremoniale Romano-Seraphicum* of 1944⁸⁵ witnesses to a highly liturgized rite with extensive specified detail regarding vesture, move-

ment, and procedure. No musical notation is offered. The "Sacerdos" with the ministers make the proper reverence upon entry, and then all kneel. The text of the "O sanctissima anima" and Psalm 142 are given. The final verse of the psalm, "Educ de custodia," appears in capital letters to heighten that moment when Francis experienced his transitus. After the psalm's Gloria Patri, the antiphon is repeated. All kneel and recite five Paters, Aves, and Glorias. No mention is made of the arms' position during these prayers. All then stand and sing the "Salve, sancte Pater" after which all kneel once again while two cantors sing the versicle and response followed by the celebrant's oration.⁸⁶

The closing rite in this 1944 Capuchin *Caeremoniale* is of special significance. Although the ritual was open to all in the local church, the ordering of the assembly is clearly specified, that is, during the veneration of the relic, the friars go to the altar and the faithful go to the communion rail or to the chapel or side altar. During the veneration the priest makes an intercessory prayer in prescribed words over each person,⁸⁷ the same formula as the 1915 Capuchin *Rituale*.⁸⁸ When all have venerated the saint's relic, the priest, carrying the relic of the saint, returns to the sacristy with the ministers.⁸⁹

The third edition of the *Cantuale Romano-Seraphicum* of 1951⁹⁰ follows the main lines of the ritual with familiar chant tones and possible alternations for all sung parts of the Transitus: the "O sanctissima anima," Psalm 142, the "Salve, sancte Pater," and the concluding versicles and responses. The few directives, though considerably simplified, are consistent with the previous rituals. No mention of the relic is made other than its incensation at the beginning of the ceremony.

Though not as detailed as the 1944 Capuchin *Caeremoniale*, the Franciscan *Rituale Romano-Seraphicum* of 1955⁹¹ offers some specifics in its rather lengthy introductory and concluding remarks. Regarding the time of the ceremony itself, an explicit distinction is made for the first time between the Vigil of the Solemnity and the Solemnity itself.⁹² The friars are then instructed to gather at the shrine or altar of St. Francis with candles lit.⁹³ Recall the aside in the *Piccolo Cerimoniale Romano-Seraphico* of 1943 regarding the friars carrying lit candles. That directive finds its way into this 1955 *Rituale*. The friars are to come together "candelos ardentis gestantes." The "celebrant" dressed in a white cope imposes incense in the thurible and blesses it in the customary way. After a profound bow of the head, he then incenses the relic of Francis "duplici ductu cum duplici ictu." All stand around Francis' altar and the cantors begin the antiphon, "O sanctissima anima," followed immediately by the intonation of Psalm 142.⁹⁴

After the Gloria Patri, the antiphon is repeated and the candles extinguished. Five Paters, Aves, and Glorias are then recited. The standing assembly sings

the "Salve, sancte Pater." All kneel while two cantors sing the versicle and response. Then the celebrant stands to sing the oration. After the cantors chant the closing versicles and response, the celebrant again imposes incense and blesses it, makes a profound bow, stands, incenses the relic "duplici ductu cum duplici ictu" and blesses the people with it. The friars and then the people venerate it with a kiss.

The popular 1961 *Tertiary's Companion*⁹⁵ makes no mention of the *Transitus*. However, unlike the 1942 St. Anthony's Guild *Franciscan Supplement*⁹⁶ which gives no hint of familiarity with the *Transitus*, the *Franciscan Supplement* to Dom Gaspar Lefebvre's *St. Andrew Daily Missal*, both the 1958 and the 1961 editions, include the familiar ceremony of the *Transitus* with the Latin text and its English translation.⁹⁷ The introductory remarks move away from the usual functional and procedural directives and more toward an historical contextualization and didactic instruction which fulfills the primary purpose of informing the assembly of what is to come. The time for the ceremony is fixed on the evening of October 3; the Johannine gospel is mentioned in the opening remarks; the sacrificial character of Francis' death is alluded to; the singing of the "Voce mea" and the saint's expiration is retained as the climactic moment.⁹⁸ The rite begins with the singing of Psalm 142; the "O sanctissima anima" follows only once after the psalm, unlike the previous practice of repeating it before and after the psalm. The five Paters, Aves, and Glorias are prayed while kneeling. This is followed with the singing of the "Salve, sancte Pater." Although the posture during the chanting of this antiphon is not made explicit, one presumes the assembly stood because the assembly is instructed to kneel before the antiphon's versicle and response which follows. The oration and the concluding versicles and responses close the ritual. The relic-action frames the rite and a sense of festivity returns. Closing instructions are put plainly and simply without ritual detail: "The celebrant now blesses the people with the relic which is afterwards venerated while the organ plays and the bells are rung."⁹⁹

Concluding Remarks.

The earliest available *Transitus* rituals reflect one of two tendencies: the citing of texts ("O sanctissima anima," Psalm 142, and "Salve, sancte Pater") without rubrical instructions or the citing of these same texts with detailed rubrical instructions, or with rubrics which seem detailed but remain vague in significant areas such as designated ministerial roles, changing body postures, and the ordering of the assembly. The building up of local custom evidently complexified an originally simple ritual of psalm singing and relic veneration. Simplicity turned to pluriformity. It was only a matter of time before a need for uniformity arose to fix texts and rubrics so that all Franciscans might observe

the same ritual word and action on the night before their founder's solemnity. Yet in the midst of this drive toward uniformity of expression, one must read through the vagueness of the rubrical instructions. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the early architects of the rite acknowledged consistent elements of the rite. They retained a familiar ritual structure. At the same time, they allowed freedom of interpretation and accommodation of local customs already in place.

To some readers, the exposition and analysis thus far may seem a painstaking and tedious exercise in delineating trivial ritual details. Nonetheless, important ritual patterns configure up to and including the era of the Second Vatican Council. The best way to address the issue of initial ritual development is to pose the question: What were the elements of the rite without which the *Transitus* would no longer be the *Transitus*? The data gathered from the sampling of available pre-conciliar rites helps us claim six consistent elements essential to the proper enactment of the rite: 1) the antiphon, "O sanctissima anima"; 2) Psalm 142, the "Voce mea"; 3) the hymn, "Salve, sancte Pater" with its versicle and response; 4) the closing oration; 5) the blessing with and the veneration of the relic of St. Francis; and 6) the presence of non-Franciscans. Only a few of these elements survive as essential in post-conciliar rites. The data also discloses that Franciscans tended to stabilize their ritual books, but in no way were intent on rigidifying ritual praxis. To cite a few examples: some rites testify to excessive rubrics while others give little if any instruction on the enactment of the rite; the use of candles is specified in some rites but not in others; Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is recommended and even presumed in some rites while not included in others. What is important for our study is to admit of clear variations in approach while acknowledging definite ritual patterns which developed and somewhat stabilized as the Church approached the threshold of the Second Vatican Council.

For many Franciscans of more mature years, the very mention of the "O sanctissima anima," the "Voce mea," and the "Salve, sancte Pater" trigger melodies and movements which evoke memories of what once constituted a significant part of Franciscan identity, that once-a-year-day when we sang those beautiful chants and honored that relic as a manifestation of the abiding personal presence of Francis of Assisi among us. The present author remembers the profound effect one ritual gesture had on him as a high-school boy in the minor seminary. Before venerating the relic, all the friars unfastened their sandal straps, approached the relic barefoot while genuflecting three times before kneeling to kiss it. This ritual movement does not show itself explicitly in any of the rituals reviewed here. Thus it serves as a good example of ways in which local custom often became the unwritten norm as well as the annual expectation for the proper celebration of the rite. One would not think of not doing it this way!

When meanings change, rituals shift to create forms carrying a new world of meaning for a new generation of Franciscans.

But, of course, time changes meanings. When meanings change, rituals shift to create forms carrying a new world of meaning for a new generation of Franciscans. Before part two of this article reaches the light of day in a future issue of the *Cord*, most of the readers of this first part will have already celebrated their own community's annual commemoration of the passing of Francis. If the reader has not yet celebrated the Transitus, or if its recent celebration is still fresh in the reader's mind and heart, entertain the following questions in your own thought and prayer as a way to prepare for the reading of this article's second part: 1) What were your expectations of the Transitus this year?; 2) What helped you pray? What left you uncomfortable, uneasy?; 3) What do you think the rite is trying to say about Franciscans? about St. Francis?; 4) How is it that people come together every year to do this?; and 5) Did you feel like an observer or a participant in the rite?

To close this first part of the essay, an insight from the cultural anthropologist, Joseph Campbell, may motivate and mobilize our study and move our concerns forward. He reviews the key qualities of the life of the hero by looking to the critical moment of the hero's departure: "The last act in the biography of the hero is that of the death or departure. Here the whole sense of the life is epitomized. Needless to say, the hero would be no hero if death held for him any terror; the first condition is reconciliation with the grave."¹⁰⁰ The last act in the life of Francis tells of his final moments. Once reconciled with the grave, he embraces Sister Death and passes from life into Life. In the annual ritualization of his passing, his death story is retold. In the act of his dying, his entire life is summed up; its meaning for our Franciscan lives is intensified for another year of Christian living. His followers ritually revisit the story of the charismatic founder and specify its final moment. We intensify the memory of the ways his life initially inspired our own, however long ago. Once again we find new reasons to remain faithful to the same gospel task of conformity to Christ. Does our current use of the rite, however *avant garde* or traditional it may be, help us acknowledge these realities and accomplish these ends?¹⁰¹

The Death of St. Francis

Some would never have asked Brother Fire to be kind,
But would have watched the flame hypnotically afraid
To become the pyre consuming all they ever became:
Nor would they have apologized for Brother Ass's pain
Or sympathized with such intolerable suffering.

It is hard to contemplate this death as an offering
When the gun and bomb, and laser-sighted pin-point
Death screams that everything is freedom and peace.

Dear God, such emptiness, such hurt, such blood:
But what then — to hide under the hood of despair
Or be the love-pyre with the tortured dream intact?
I do not know, but some today let escape the scream
Hideous and primeval, mouth drawn, teeth stained red
Eyes blank and dead and condemn such a brute God.

What then Little man, what then and what more for brothers

And sisters shaking laser — mailed fists, rattling

The computerized sabers, congratulating precisioned
Impersonal death of sanded deserts where humanity is scorched
As the barren, brittle death dust on which the fight and die.

What then Little man and what more as birds gather

And sad faced friends sing good-bye with cracking hearts?
Your light departs as swiftly as yourself — but you had birds
With crested hoods and wings more naturally computerized
Than twisted heaps of metal and blackened mass of stones
That was both your bed and tomb. What more then, Francis,
With Christ's wounds still bleeding on this stigmatized
World and gaping holes in hands, hearts and races and places
Not even mapped: all this and nothing more?

Séamus Mulholland, O.F.M.

“This Dark Mystery:” The Franciscan Vocation of Saint Clare of Assisi

DR. WILLIAM C. ZEHRINGER

“She was the princess of the poor, the duchess of the humble, the mistress of the chaste, the abbess of the penitent . . . Her very life was for others a school of instruction and doctrine.”¹ That timeless tribute, drawn from the **Document of Canonization** of Saint Clare of Assisi (ca. 1194-1253), encapsulates in an admirable way the quality of the Franciscan vocation that was the guiding star of her long and uniquely edifying life.

The very existence of that vocation to evangelical poverty, the strongest and most fruitful offshoot of the saint’s inspired friendship with Francis, gives reason to affirm that the religious aspirations of women found an honored place in the medieval world.

But the life-long struggle which Saint Clare of Assisi was forced to undertake, in order to win approval for the type of order that she wished to establish, is reason enough to qualify that judgment. As the great Viennese medievalist, Friedrich Heer, pointed out, “The Middle Ages had conspicuously failed to solve the problem of women’s place in society; it was left as a heavy mortgage on the future.”²

A gifted, sensitive child, Chiara (“light”) was born, a decade after Francesco di Bernardone, into one of the great, noble families of Assisi, a town set in the midst of the lovely Umbrian landscape. There, to borrow words of Horace, “Continui montes, ni dissociantur opaca / valle, sed ut veniens dextrum latus adspiciat sol.” (“A chain of mountains, with a vale divide, that opens to the sun on either side.”)³ But Assisi, with its proud and turbulent history, was a community riven by conflict, between those with newly acquired wealth and the old

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aristocracy, and between rich and poor. Perhaps Clare’s “untiring defense of the charism of poverty,” which Fathers Armstrong and Brady termed “her great contribution to the Franciscan tradition,” was born in her great soul as she witnessed, early in life, those extremes of insensate greed and stark misery so evident in medieval society.⁴ In any event, her young life was marked by many visitations of grace, and an ardent desire to give herself over to the service of Christ’s poor. The means to the achievement of that holy calling were close at hand.

The blessed friendships of Francis and Clare seems to be one of those fateful conjunctions that testify to the movement of Providence in the spiritual history of the race: One calls to mind Saints Augustine and Monica, Benedict and Scholastica, John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, Francis de Sales and Jeanne de Chantal. Of Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi, those two heralds of Divine Mercy, Paul Sabatier wrote: “But sometimes—more often than we think—there are souls so pure, so little earthly, that on their first meeting they enter the most holy place.”⁵

In Giovanni di Paolo’s splendid painting, “Francis accepts Clare into His Religious Community,” the artist has immortalized the precise moment of Clare’s entry into the Franciscan Order.⁶ There is a vivid contrast between the cloister and church viewed to the left of the picture, and the diminutive novice, her hair shortened, as she kneels before the altar and crucifix in a bare cell. She is already garbed in the Franciscan habit, while Francis and two companions hold items of her former clothing. And Francis himself is most heartily welcoming Clare into the (as yet) small company of servants of Lady Poverty.

From this and other examples of early Franciscan iconography, including the portrait of Saint Clare that emerges from the **Fioretti**, one may readily see the superlative value that the Poverello placed on her myriad contributions to the spiritual life of the Order.⁷ But to what sort of religious vocation was he leading her? What needs of the time and of his society did his unrelenting genius discern?

One of the most remarkable insights of the saint was his ability to judge, correctly, that a band of begging friars, praising God and ministering to the stricken poor in the lost corners of the world, could show his society the way out of the pride, selfishness and despair that were tearing at its very foundations.

Indeed it was so. For it was in those very Italian cities that have been made immortal by Francis’s sojourns in and around them, that there first began to emerge, in his century, “the capitalist rational economy” that Octavio Paz has so brilliantly dissected: “At the same time that gold disappears from the dress of men and women and from altars and palaces, it becomes the invisible blood of mercantile society and circulates, odorless and colorless, in every country.”⁸

And so, the divine calling to which Saint Francis directed not only Clare but also his first companions, had everything to do with opposing the headlong foolishness and largesse of all Lovers of the Living God to the spirit of calculation and profit that was to so seam the face of the modern world. And so they did, with singular panache and inspired song, down the roads of Europe and far beyond them.

What is the key to the unrivaled success and astonishing influence of the first generation of Franciscans, something which is unique in the annals of religious history? How did they carry the many fruits of their personal conversions forward with such gusto, that they came very close to completely renewing the spiritual life of their professedly Christian society? Perhaps the source of their sleepless fervor was none other than what Evelyn Underhill signified, quite perceptively, when she remarked on "the peculiar concentration on the passion which unites all the Franciscan mystics."⁹ And that very imitation of the Crucified Lord would become, for Francis and those who followed him, the only doctrine they needed in order to bring the Love of God to the men and women of their time and place.

The early Franciscans, whose very vocations to prayer and evangelical poverty were a direct result of their founder's intuitions into the spiritual malaise of individuals, and his vision of a just human society, had uncanny insights into the psychology of acquisitiveness and its certain cure. But among the host of luminous Franciscan mystics, few had the sagacity of the founder of the Poor Clares, who most confidently affirmed, in one of her letters to Blessed Agnes of Prague, that "Contempt of the world has pleased you more than (its) honors, poverty more than earthly riches."¹⁰

What Saint Clare is setting out here is, of course, the story of her friend's conversion, the unmistakable signs of which are Agnes's unselfish spirit and the spiritualizing of her suffering, the blessed consequence of that inner conversion that should (but often does not) precede all attempts to preach salvation to an unrepentant humanity.

What salutary lessons might not have been garnered, from the devotion to the Cross of Franciscan saints such as Clare of Assisi, by the architects of modern revolutions. For their sorrowful careers of fanaticism showed, time and again, a tragic descent from youthful idealism to a brutal and naked will to power. Could that have come about, with so much bitter grief for the world, because, in the words of Hans Urs von Balthasar, they wanted to "live and rise again without dying"? "But Christ's love," he adds, "wishes to die, in order that, through death, it may rise again beyond death in God's form."¹¹

Franciscan mystics such as Clare were acutely aware of the trials to the flesh and spirit that were part of that call to holiness. In order to give examples

of apostolic life to their fellow-Christians, they resolved to imitate Christ even (and especially) to the point of sharing the pains of his Passion, and giving over all that they owned. And thus they lived, both before the world and in their hearts, the self-denial and fathomless charity that they preached in and out of season.

It may be that only poets of the first rank ever approach the mystery of such joining of souls to the oceanic Love of God. Jacopone da Todi wrote, in a meditation on the stigmata: "I have no words for this dark mystery; / How can I understand or explain / the superabundance of riches, / the disproportionate love of a heart on fire?"¹²

Very soon, Clare gathered other women around her, forming communities that chose "to live according to the perfection of the Holy Gospel."¹³ One of that august band of holy women who were also foundresses, the saint was soon to encounter very serious opposition to the type of life, including the absence of all ownership of property, that she sought for herself and her sisters. And, while she was forced to compromise and accept the directives issued for her order by Roman authority, she never ceased working for the embodiment of her ideal of radical and heroic poverty.

This was no trivial dispute. For Clare saw a growing threat to the pristine, initial vision of Francis that first brought the saint and his followers together, what John Holland Smith called "the simple quest for perfection of the early days."¹⁴ In her commitment to the purity of the saint's original inspiration, Clare demonstrated profound insight into the very *raison d'être* of that Company of Friars who had gone forth to change the world. But Cardinal Hugolino, who tried to establish a canonical structure for her order, may be credited with seeing that, without a set of firm and binding rules, inspiration may one day dwindle and die out, like a river in a desert.¹⁵ G.K. Chesterton aptly summed up the pertinacious pursuit by Saint Clare of her true vocation, when he noted that "She did most truly, in the modern jargon, live her own life."¹⁶

That life which, as has been seen, was the inspiration for the heroic sacrifices of the many other valiant women who followed her example, was above all a school of interior prayer, of holy living and holy dying. And Clare's incomparable Imitation of Christ, in her thoughts and her actions, is still enabling countless souls to open themselves to the movements of Divine Grace. In our own century, Sister Mary of the Holy Trinity placed in her notes a beautiful summation of the quest for eternal life: "You, my Poor Clares, work through interior acts, God alone sees them. That is the truest action; it is that which is, and which lasts through eternity."¹⁷

That life which, as has been seen, was the inspiration for the heroic sacrifices of the many other valiant women who followed her example, was above all a school of interior prayer, of holy living and holy dying.

Those words of the Poor Clare of Jerusalem are an excellent starting point for an examination of Saint Clare of Assisi's exemplary journey into the heart of the Mystery of Divine Love. What is most striking is Sister Mary's assertion that "interior acts" are "the truest action." When one calls to mind the manifold deeds of supernatural charity that grace the luminous pages of Franciscan history, from the Poverello's embracing of lepers, to the missions undertaken by the Order at the present time, it would seem, at first glance, that those who wear the habit of Francis are preeminent examples of Kipling's "sons of Martha." But the happily preserved writings of Clare and other Franciscan saints show that contemplation and interior prayer have always occupied the first place in their roster of sacred works.

From the pellucid fountain of Franciscan spirituality in the thirteenth century came, for example, Bonaventure's beautiful mingling of speculative philosophy and theology of prayer. The Seraphic Doctor could well have had the interior life of Francis and Clare in mind when he wrote:

"Sec, therefore, how close the soul is to God, and how, in their operations, the memory leads to eternity, the understanding to truth and the power of choice to the highest good."¹⁸

The spiritual theology of the Franciscan tradition is nowhere better shown forth than in that passage from *The Soul's Journey into God*. The faculties of human reason are there described in their perfected state. It is precisely the person whose soul has arrived at such a blessed juncture, and who has glimpsed for a moment "the dim battlements of eternity," who can most assuredly carry on the work of Christ's Church in a cold and unfeeling world.

Francis, who had the rare gift of discernment of spirits, paid the loftiest tribute of which he was capable to Clare and her sisters, recognizing their arduous pursuit of sanctity and their practice of the virtues attendant upon the service of Holy Poverty. "By divine inspiration," he told them, "you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the most high King, the heavenly Father, and have taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse."¹⁹

The authenticated writings of Clare of Assisi do not include the kinds of mystical treatises that have allowed a grateful posterity to trace the workings of

Divine Grace in the lives of Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich, or Catherine of Siena. There is, from her hand, no record of the soul's journey that may be placed beside Hildegard's *Scivias*, Catherine's *Dialogue*, or Julian's *Showings*. And yet, there are imperishable works that bear witness to the Love that took her to the land of Eternal Bliss, even in this life. Her Letters, Rule, and Testament, full of seasoned wisdom, are like stars lighting the way to perfection; or at least that has been so for those who have made the effort to follow Clare of Assisi's bracing spiritual counsels. For one may find in her writings a wholly convincing portrait of a soul in the state of grace, "a heart on fire," that can only have emerged from one who had herself been raised to the heights of contemplation.

One can only surmise about the depth of mystical experience that gave that great Franciscan woman the supreme confidence to say, in her *Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges*:

"O dearest one, look up to heaven, which calls us on, and take up the Cross and follow Christ Who has gone on before us: for through Him we shall enter into His glory after many and diverse tribulations."²⁰

The fact of Clare's imparting such dulcet teaching in her correspondence more than testifies to the way in which she viewed her Franciscan vocation. She was aware that the manifold gifts of the Spirit, showered upon her since her youth, were not meant for her delight alone. Even the highest benediction of her life, the happy conversion that marked her soul forever, heralded a call to "behave in the pattern of Christ," and gather like-minded disciples around her.²¹

From Clare's exhortations to ascetic virtue and holy charity, a composite picture may be viewed, of what might be termed the man or woman who has been formed and guided by Franciscan ideals. How may such disciples of the Poverello and the Foundress of the Poor Clares be recognized, if not by the peace and joy of their countenances, and their compassion for created nature and humankind?²²

Now it is certainly true that those identifiably Franciscan qualities are the fruits of heroic self-denial, of a person's valiant attempt "to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour," in the words of Henry David Thoreau.²³ Yet no-one should be less likely than the Franciscan to allow the pains of that slow spiritual process, wherein a recalcitrant will is moved from the love of comfort to the embrace of heroic poverty, to be shown before the world.²⁴

It may well be wondered how that idea of self-effacement might comport with Clare's admonition to Agnes of Prague to make herself "contemptible in the world for Him"²⁵ Once again, it must be remembered that it was the unparal-

leed mission of the early Franciscans to set their practices of self-denial over against nascent ideologies of wealth and power that were already producing a foul harvest of hatred between classes, and would one day lead to woeful strife among nations.

For what may be termed the exemplary Franciscan virtues of Holy Poverty and Holy Charity were not only models of the way to personal sanctity. The spiritual theology that went to form their communities was also available to the society at large, as is well attested by the saint's successful interdiction of conflicts between Italian city-states.

Another marked quality that flows out of the Franciscan way of looking at life and the universe is the composure and gentleness that are the true signs of its presence. From Clare's admonitions and her uplifting remarks to her sisters and companions, it is possible to see the way in which the followers of the Poor Man of Assisi have left their mark on all subsequent explorations of the way to inner peace.

In one of her *Sermons*, Clare's younger temporary, St. Umilta of Faenza, declared that "Whoever wishes to listen well to divine speech must enclose himself in great silence."²⁶ This, too, is a quality of Franciscan spirituality. Francis often fled to wild and solitary wastes, in order to lose himself wholly in prayer. That most congenial of saints knew the value of solitude, as did Clare, if only to undertake that periodic examination of motive and conscience that must be part of the regimen of all who preach the Gospel.

Finally, there emerges from Clare's instructions an arresting idea of the nature of obedience "through love, not duty," surely a positive rebuke to a demonic authority that seeks to crush, not heal.

One finds in Clare's life and her writings a continual set of petitions to her Dear Lord, for the grace to love Him all the more. And thus the great woman and mystic of Assisi must be counted a part of that company of saints throughout the ages, who have assuaged their hearts' deepest longing by immersing themselves in the Infinite Love of God.

End notes

¹ Quoted in Murray Bodo, *Clare: A Light in the Garden* (Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1979) 33.

² *The Medieval World: Europe, 1100-1350*, trans. Janet Sondheimer (New York: A Mentor Book — The New American Library, 1961) 323.

³ "Epistulae 16," *Satires and Epistles*, ed., with Introduction and Notes, by Edward P. Morris (1939; Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968) 98.

The translation is taken from *The Complete Works of Horace*, ed., with an Introduction, by Casper J. Kraemer, Jr. (1936; New York: A Modern Library Book — Random House, Inc., 1963) 346.

⁴ This quotation from Clare of Assisi and all others that follow are taken from *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. and Introduction Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap. and Ignatius C. Brady, O.F.M., with a Preface by John Vaughn, O.F.M., *The Classics of Western Spirituality: A Library of the Great Spiritual Masters*, Kevin A. Lynch, C.S.P., President and Publisher (New York: the Paulist Press, 1982) 177, hereafter referred to as Armstrong and Brady.

⁵ *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, trans. Louise Seymour Houghton (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894) 148.

⁶ The reproduction of the original painting in the Gallery of the State Museum, Berlin, is in *Saint Francis of Assisi*, photographs by Dennis Stock and text by Lawrence Cunningham (1981; San Francisco: A Scala Book — Harper and Row Publishers, 1989) 51.

⁷ "So he called Brother Masseo and said to him: 'Dear Brother, go to Sister Clare and tell her on my behalf to pray devoutly to God, with one of her purer and more spiritual companions, that he may design to show me what is best: either that I preach sometimes or that I devote myself only to prayers.'"

"How God revealed to St. Clare and Brother Silvester that St. Francis should go and preach," *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, trans. Raphael Brown, 1st complete edition (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Image Books — Doubleday, 1958) 74.

⁸ *Conjunctions and Disjunctions*, trans. Helen Lane (1982; New York: Arcade Publishing — Little, Brown and Company, 1990) 22.

There is still much power in Leo Tolstoy's' biting candid vignette, revealing the exploitation that inheres in the innocent comforts of daily life:

"We are all brothers, but every morning I must have a cigar, a sweetmeat, an ice, and such things, which my brothers and sisters have been wasting their health in manufacturing, and I enjoy these things and demand them. . . . We are all brothers, but I will not give the poor the benefit of my educational, medical, or literary labors except for money."

"Contradiction Between Our Life and Our Christian Conscience," *The Kingdom of God is Within You: Christianity Not as a Mystic Religion but as a New Theory of Life*, trans. Constance Garnett (1895; Lincoln, Nebraska and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1984) 119.

⁹ *The Mystics of the Church* (New York: A Schocken Paperback — Schocken Books, 1964) 93.

¹⁰ Armstrong and Brady 192.

¹¹ *Love Alone*, trans. & ed. Alexander Dru (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969) 112.

¹² "Laud 61, 'St. Francis and the Seven Visions of the Cross,'" *The Lauds*, trans. Serge Hughes, *The Classics of Western Spirituality: A Library of the Great Spiritual Masters*, Kevin A. Lynch, C.S.P., President and Publisher (New York: The Paulist Press, 1982) 189.

¹³ "The Form of Life Given to Saint Clare and Her Sisters." Armstrong and Brady 45.

¹⁴ *Francis of Assisi* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972) 114.

¹⁵ There is a startling parallel between the divergent perceptions of Saint Clare and Cardinal Hugolino and the distinction between principles and rules that was outlined by Richard Vernon over a decade ago:

"The life of a community is drawn from the paradigm or principle which guides it without instructing it, while doctrines or rules are instructions which the community formulates for itself in drawing upon its central inspiration."

"Politics as Metaphor: Cardinal Newman and Professor Kuhn," *The Review of Politics* 41 (1979); rpt. in *Paradigms and Revolutions: Appraisals and Applications of Thomas Kuhn's Philosophy of Science*, ed. Gary Gutting (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980) 251.

¹⁶ *St. Francis of Assisi*, 1st ed. (1924; New York: Doubleday Image books — Doubleday, 1957) 112.

¹⁷ *The Spiritual Legacy of Sister Mary of the Holy Trinity, Poor Clare of Jerusalem (1901-1942)*, ed. Rev. Silvere van den Broek, O.F.M., trans. from the French (1950; Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, 1981) 171.

¹⁸ *The Soul's Journey into God — The Tree of Life — The Life of St. Francis*, trans. & Introduction Ewert Cousins, with a Preface by Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., the Classics of Western Spirituality (New York and Toronto: The Paulist Press, 1978) 84.

¹⁹ "The Rule of Saint Clare," Armstrong and Brady 218.

²⁰ Armstrong and Brady 208.

²¹ Caroline Walker Bynum, "Did the Twelfth-Century Discover the Individual?" *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, publications of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, UCLA 16, 1st ed. (1982; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) 90.

²² Max Scheler could have been describing the first Franciscans when he wrote that "Love 'toward' God must always include . . . love of humanity even love of all creatures with God — an *amare mundum in deo*."

"Love and Knowledge," *On Feeling, Knowing, and Valuing: Selected Writings*, by Max Scheler, Part Two: Knowledge and Social Life, ed., with an Introduction, by Harold J. Bershady, the Heritage of Sociology, ed. Donald N. Levine (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) 158.

²³ "Where I Lived and What I Lived For," *Walden, in Walden and Other Writings*, ed., with an Introduction, by Brooks Atkinson, Modern Library College Editions (1937; New York: Modern Library — Random House, Inc., 1950) 81.

²⁴ "For the poorer the house or cell, the more was he (Francis) pleased to live therein." *The Mirror of Perfection*, quoted in *A Sourcebook of Medieval History*, ed. Frederic A. Ogg (New York: American Book Company, 1907) 369.

²⁵ "The Second Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague," Armstrong and Brady 197.

²⁶ "Sermons," trans. Richard J. Pioli, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, ed. Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 247.

Book Reviews

Journey to the Light: Spirituality as We Mature, edited by Ann Finch. New Rochelle: New City Press, 1993. 144pp, inc. index of authors. Paper.

Reviewed by Sr. Frances Ann Thom, O.S.F., Pastoral Minister at St. Mary's Church in Baldwinsville, N.Y. Sister Frances, a member of the Editorial Board of the *CORD*, received an MA in Franciscan Studies at the Franciscan Institute.

"How can one get bored in life if the City of God is there to be built up? How can one suffer from desolation if one can live in communion with God? How can one feel oneself alone if in solitude above all one can converse with God? The Word demands silence." This is an excerpt from this book written by Iginio Giordini who lived from 1894-1980. This is just a sample of the uplifting and soul searching quotations the author has taken from well-known writers as well as from the lesser-known writers and thinkers in the hope that these will act as catalysts to jog one's mind and heart.

The author considers this book to be a companion on the journey; or should it be that many companions on the journey are speaking through this book. Finch has divided the book into five parts which take the reader from the journey as pilgrims who encounter hindrances but reach the end by means of spiritual food. The author acknowledges that there is nothing new contained here but perhaps by these selected writings she may aid, challenge, encourage others on the way.

As the author herself says of her work, "...simply pick up the book and dip into it" (p. 12). Opening at random or selecting by section and/or theme is a prayerful approach

to the wisdom contained in this almost pocket edition. The size of the book is convenient for any purse or briefcase and it is, indeed, a very inspiring companion.

BOOKS CELEBRATING OUR SISTER, CLARE

The First Franciscan Woman by Margaret Carney OSF

The long awaited publication of Sister Margaret Carney's doctoral thesis of 1988 from the *Institute of Franciscan Spirituality* of the *Pontifical Athenaeum Antonianum*, Rome, Italy arrived from the printer just in time for the *Clarefest*, June 3-6, 1993 at LaCrosse, WI. The thesis title is "The Rule of St. Clare and the Feminine Incarnation of Franciscan Evangelical Life." One chapter of this material was published in its original form in *Greyfriars Review* 3 (1989) under the title, "Francis and Clare: A Critical Examination of the Sources." In August 1989, Margaret presented a summary of her study at the Annual Federation Conference (AFC) in Louisville, KY. At that time, Margaret reflected: "Why have I chosen the Rule of St. Clare for such close scrutiny? Our own experience of the years of revising the *Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular* had much to tell us in answer to these questions. What we came to understand in those crucial years was that the Rule is a document that preserves and guarantees the genetic inheritance of the family. It must enshrine non-negotiables by which we understand, articulate and incarnate a charism. A Rule is not only a summary of personal insight and inspiration, but it stands as a normative foundation that will give rise to graced structures passing from generation to generation of a religious family. It is of critical importance to assess what is selected

and what is negated when a rule text is written. In Clare's case, these decisions were being made after a lifetime of experience. She was choosing that which was essential for the future life of her Franciscan sisters."

Introducing the book, *The First Franciscan Woman*, Margaret writes, "The unfolding of this work is offered as a step in a new conversation in the Franciscan family. Clearly, the time has come to grasp the meaning of Clare and the entire feminine dimension or the Franciscan evangelical life. Everywhere as Franciscans gather, whether for academic convocations, centennial celebrations, or the events by which we continue to nourish our individual lives, the question of Clare, her sisters, and their role in our formation rises to meet us. After decades of incredibly rich discoveries of materials and methods for reclaiming the reality of Francis of Assisi, we are embarking upon the recovery of the "anima" of our charismatic roots."

"I hand this exploration over to all who choose to share it with only one reservation. It is most important that we regard this as the first step in a journey that stretches out before us and which, for the moment holds "horizons that fade forever and forever when we move" (Tennyson's *Ulysses*). We need many other studies, hypotheses, and intuitive searchings. We must establish Clare in her rightful place as a threshold figure among medieval women of spirit. She was the first woman to write a Rule sanctioned with pontifical approval. She dared to synthesize the evangelical ideals of Francis, the new forms of urban female religiosity and the best wisdom of the monastic tradition to create a new and enduring Order in the Church. She testified to Francis not only by the humility of her faithfulness, but by the authority of her leadership and formative ministry. She stands

before us today still serving as *instruction and a lesson to others who learned the rule of living in this book of life (Rev 21:27) [Bull of Canonization, 101].*" Let us read this book.

Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study by Ingrid Peterson OSF

The foundation for Clare's life was established by her birth in a feudal society as a woman of the aristocracy. Born in 1193, her formation clearly began before Francis received oral approval of his Rule in 1209. It is incorrect to assume that nothing of significance happened in Clare's life until Francis' way of life was established. There is something to be said about her years before Francis. In 1212, when Clare consecrated herself to God before Francis, she was around eighteen years of age. Clare had been formed by her mother in a household of women who prayed together and gave alms and food to the poor and hungry of Assisi. The biographical material in this study is primarily based on Clare's writings and on what the people who knew Clare said about her in the events burned in their memories. The Poor Ladies who lived with Clare at San Damiano, some more than forty years, and others who knew her as a child in Assisi, recount their experience as evidence about Clare's sanctity. This is what the examiners asked them to relate in their testimonies about Saint Clare: her life, conversion, manner of life, and miracles. Their stories, recorded by a court reporter, are the earliest biographical material about Clare. To this date, four extant Letters written to Agnes of Prague provide autobiographical insight into Clare's spirituality.

The stories on which this biography is based were given as testimonial about how a life of sanctity was lived in the thirteenth century. We need neither agree with nor imitate such a perception of holiness. The

witnesses gave their reports because they believed they provided evidence that Clare was a saint. The evidence is their expression of what constituted sanctity and what gave meaning to their lives. More important, their stories reveal how they believed Clare of Assisi kept God as the hidden center of her life.

At this time in Franciscan studies, the historical facts are too meager to construct a reliable book-length biography of Clare. Because recent scholarship has begun to uncover the history of women of all times, much new information is available about cultures removed from our experience. The studies about medieval women broaden our background to understand what has been documented about the life of Clare. While Chapter One gives a brief narration of Clare's entire story, the remaining chapters tell the story behind the story. They present the primary evidence given by the witnesses at the proceedings for Saint Clare's canonization, without the interpretation of a

masculine hagiographer, placed against the context of the world of a medieval woman. Both books are now available from *Franciscan Press*, Quincy, IL 62301.

In the Footsteps of Saint Clare: The Sacred Places of Clare of Assisi by Ramona Miller, OSF

This book is a guide to the spirituality of Saint Clare of Assisi at the places where she lived and where her body lies. Each chapter gives Clare's life-experience at the place, the historical background, reflections, and suggestions for reading. Her courageous exit from her noble home to a life of poverty at San Damiano has a timeless message for Franciscans and for those who yearn, consciously or unconsciously, to discover God. Communing with Clare in the places where she lived in the thirteenth century opens us to a deeper understanding of her inner life. Order from *The Franciscan Institute*, Saint Bonaventure, NY 14778.

* * *

The Same Place

My brace of blackbirds have returned,
Taken up abode in the garden woodbine.

In May she keeps the frail eggs warm;
He serenades her night, noon and morn.

I can't imagine what makes blackbirds tick; not
Being in love, ask myself what does this prove?

Let there be no minor hurricanes this year,
Nothing to spoil the work of this romance.

The fruit of all this love tossed on the lawn,
Ending up a cat's breakfast? Perish the thought

IAIN DUGGAN O.F.M.

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Ingrid Peterson, O.S.F.

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Thomas Hartle, OFM; Celeste Crine, OSF;
Andrea Likovich, OSF

Jan. 28-30 FRANCIS AND CLARE
Carol Czyzewski, FSSJ

Feb. 25-27 FRANCIS AND THE JOURNEY TO GLORY
Joseph Doino, OFM

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