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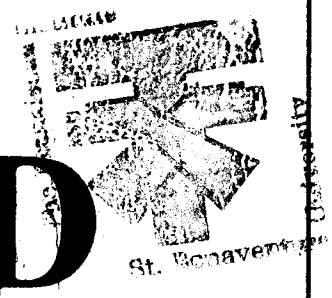
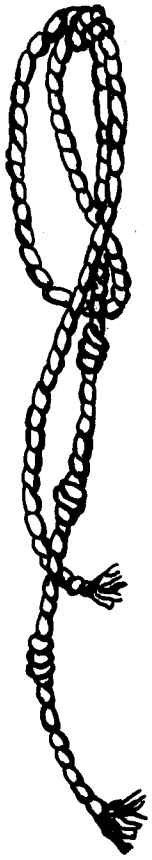


A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



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Volume 43, No. 12

The CORD

A Monthly Franciscan Spiritual Review

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The CORD (ISSN 0010-8685 USPS 563-640) is published monthly with the July and August issues combined, by the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778.
Subscription rates: $16.00 a year; $1.50 a copy. Second class postage paid at St. Bonaventure, NY 14778, and at additional mailing office.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **The CORD**, P.O.Drawer F, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778 USA.

Standard Abbreviations used in **The CORD**
for Early Franciscan Sources

I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions
BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo
CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun
EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony
EpCler: Letter to 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 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
[1]I, 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).

A Reflection

+ERIC DOYLE, O.F.M.

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God," the opening sentence of St. John's Gospel. John distinguishes between God and the Word yet both are equally God. He is preaching of the Father and the Son. And when we recall that Jesus was the carpenter of Nazareth, it comes as a little surprise to hear him called the Word. On analysis this proves to be one of the most fitting names that could have been found. It had been used by philosophers before St. John but it was always impersonal. In St. John's Gospel the Word is personal and that makes its use of it entirely unique.

The Old Testament is keenly aware of the power of God's Word. Jahweh, God's name in the Old Testament is creative and effective in his Word: "by his Word all things were made" says the Old Testament. Indeed Jahweh's Word is a presence of Jahweh himself. But even this pales before John's use. The Word for him is personally distinct from God the Father.

The Jews experienced Jahweh as a God of Dialogue: He spoke to his people and he listened to them. The first followers of Jesus, during his earthly life, realized that he was in continual dialogue with the One he called his Father. The times he spent in solitary prayer were the highpoints of the dialogue. After he had risen from the dead, his disciples understood there had been a dialogue of truth and love inside God forever and ever. God was not a lone power but an eternal dialogue and so they were able to say that Jesus was the Word made Flesh. That is a true human being dwelling in their midst. God had shared his dialogue with us.

The Word didn't leave God when he became Flesh as though a gap appeared; the Word came to us in a different form. Just as when we speak a word, it leaves us as a sound with meaning, but stays in our mind as an idea. For example if someone says the word "window", it goes forth as the sound of a

The late Eric Doyle, O.F.M., delivered a series of daily meditations over BBC Radio. We have some of these unpublished manuscripts in our possession and have chosen this particular reflection as most appropriate to the approaching Christmas feast. Father Eric enjoyed international fame as a writer, lecturer and preacher. He taught at St. Bonaventure University for several summers.

voice but it does not leave the speaker's mind. It is real and present in two quite distinct ways. In Jesus we have amongst us the truth and love of God-spoken for our sake. In Jesus God gave us his Word. With total integrity he said to us exactly what He is in Himself, Truth and Love and He remains unswervingly faithful to that Word.

Because it was a human being, Jesus of Nazareth, in whom God spoke his personal Word, that says volumes about the dignity of every human being. The Word enlightens everyone in the world and through that enlightenment each of us is made a word of God. Each person tells us something new about God. That is why it is so important to listen with attention and concern to what people say. And we have to ensure that we speak the truth in love and strive for that integrity whereby what comes from our lips is one with what we have in our heart.

* * *

A Christmas Prayer From All At The CORD For All Of You

May you find the most blessed Child
by seeking Him

with simplicity of heart,

with tranquillity of heart,

with joyfulness of heart.

St. Bonaventure, Sermon XXVII
For The Feast of the Nativity

Clare of Assisi

CIARAN MCINALLY, O.F.M., CONV.
JOSEPH WOOD, O.F.M., CONV.

During this 800th anniversary of the birth of Saint Clare, 1993, we would be remiss if we did not delve into the saint's life by using as many of the original sources as possible, even as few as they are. Many of those original sources, we may be surprised to discover, are in the form of *painted literature.*

One such original source, the medieval oil panel presented in the following pages is one of the most famous images of Saint Clare in Western art. In Italian, such a representation of a saint surrounded by several biographical episodes, would be called a *tavola*, a painting on a wooden board. And although there would be various other technical terms in different languages, when describing this particular painted panel, however, we prefer to settle on the more comprehensible word *icon*, as derived from the richness of our Eastern spiritual heritage. We use this term not only because the iconographic style of art was very popular in the West during the time of Francis and Clare, but mainly because, as we will discover, this particular painting of Clare is not merely the retelling of biographical events, but rather, it is the presentation of the life vision and spirituality of the *Poverella*, the poor lady of Assisi, in the richest expressions of Christian symbolism.

The only knowledge we have regarding the origins of this work is that it dates shortly after Clare's death (1253), sometime in the late thirteenth century. The artist is known as the *Master of Saint Clare.* That we do not have other facts about this piece of art is not a surprise. It was rather common in the Middle Ages for artists not to sign their work. Artists were not mere employees of the Church, they were highly valued craftsmen, theologians in fact, mediators of God, highly skilled teachers of the faith, presenting a depth of theology through imagination and brush. For any artist to attach his name to such an image would have sterilized its transcendent intent.

The authors of this article are members of the community at the Sacro Convento in Assisi. Brother Joseph is well known to participants in the "Franciscan Pilgrimage." His co-author is a native of Scotland.

In the lower left hand corner of this particular icon, the artist-theologian begins Clare's life with the annual reception of an olive branch from the Bishop of Assisi. It is Palm Sunday in the year 1212. Clare is a young woman of eighteen. Having heard Francis preach in the Cathedral of San Rufino, her parish church, and having heard wonderful stories of the friars' life together from her cousin, Rufino, who had recently joined the community, Clare is so moved that she also decides to leave her family and follow him.

The next scene above, the second, depicts Clare at the Porziuncola after having left her family. The Porziuncola was that small chapel in the valley below Assisi where Francis' new community had established itself two years earlier. Clare is seeking advice regarding her vocation.

In the third scene, a continuation of the same event in the Porziuncola, Clare allows her hair to be cut by Francis, the visible sign of worldly renunciation, a further deepening of her commitment.

The fourth scene in the upper left hand corner is the violent attempt by Clare's uncle, the Lord Monaldo, to return Clare to her family. We believe Clare's father had died when she was a child, probably during the many great civil up-risings in Assisi. Her uncle is claiming his right as head of the fatherless family to intervene in what he would consider the foolish vocational decision of his niece.

In the fifth episode, the scene in the upper right hand corner, the younger sister of Clare, Agnes, is depicted being attacked by the same uncle when she too runs away to join the convent. The Lord Monaldo attacks Agnes with a viciousness of which the biographies only attest as being most cruel and hateful. Mysteriously, however, the sixteen year old Agnes becomes so weighed down that she cannot be moved. And even when her uncle tries to strike her he is prevented from doing so by an invisible force, an angel of light, which frightens everyone away. This fifth panel is what is called a double scene. In the upper half of the same panel (after the departure of her uncle), we see Clare embracing her sister's hands as Agnes seeks renunciation by allowing Francis to cut her hair as well.

The sixth scene is the miraculous event of the multiplication of loaves. It is the year 1238. Discovering that they do not have enough bread from the daily begging efforts of the friars, Clare encourages her Sisters not to worry. She then instructs them to gather all the scraps they can find and set them before her. She blesses the meager remnants which miraculously multiply by the time the baskets are placed on the refectory tables.

The seventh episode, another double scene, is the death bed of Clare 1253. The Blessed Virgin appears in the upper scene surrounded by her court of angels. She appears again in the lower scene carrying the burial shroud for the dying Clare.

The concluding panel, the eighth, in the lower right hand corner, we witness the funeral of the Abbess Clare. Pope Innocent IV is personally present surrounded by a number of bishops. He is incensing the body and formally announcing that Clare's life is an example for all.

Thus, with this initial, cursory retelling of chronological events it would seem that we have reviewed a life of sixty years with an almost inconsiderate haste. The first five episodes happen within a period of a couple of months, from March to April, 1212. The sixth episode occurs twenty-six years later, in 1238. The seventh and eighth episodes occur fifteen years after that, in 1253, within a couple of days of each other.

Needless to say, at first glance, an entire life made up of such few episodes seems quite uneventful. However, the life of a saint, as represented in *painted literature*, affords us an appreciation of another level of communication which the twentieth century may have forgotten. Beyond the level of chronology we need to step into the imaginative minds of our ancient teachers.

The painted image of Clare, which is depicted here, is a communication with the Divine, a theological window into profound simplicity. The theological art of the Middle Ages permitted an ordinary man or woman to be transformed into an Alice who could wander with wonder into fair Wonderland on their own. It was a time when theology was poetry; when theologians were not theoreticians of universities, but peasants, farmers and shop keepers; when the genius of a faithful soul united to a talented, artistic hand encouraged facile communication with mystery itself. For the people of Clare's time, brush and canvas, hammer and chisel were the doorways for the senses in a way that an "artfully" constructed academic syllogism of a few years later, could never be.

Therefore, when "reading" this icon again with a new attentiveness, we first realize that the story does not begin in the usual upper left hand corner, continuing to the right, but rather, it begins in the lower left hand corner and moves upward. This unusual movement of "reading" may allow us to recall the playful Christian concept of paradoxes, or reversals. As the world would judge, religious life, a life of sacrifice for others, is a reversal of values and vision quite incomprehensible by those so much possessed by the vanity and selfishness of external appearances. In fact, this Christian concept of reversal was made quite concrete in the Middle Ages. The invention of the soaring pointed arches of the great gothic vaulting were symbolically understood by the congregation to be the hull of a ship. The congregation felt themselves sailing toward God but in a ship that was upside down. The very word, *nave*, which we still use for the center section of any church, derives from Latin which actually means a "ship." Both of the basilicas of Francis and Clare in Assisi are in this gothic style.

The life of Saint Clare, then, as we are about to read it from the encircling eight episodes, has become a call to begin our faith journey with a new vision, even within a new dimension. Dare we say, that these eight scenes are eight doors to a new perception? But not just a new perception into the life of one woman, but into our shared Christian life of faith. To be a Christian in the world is to be a witness to a whole different way of thinking and acting. Moving upward from the lower left hand corner we ascend toward God, immersing ourselves in our own earthly Passion (scene four), which for us is our dying to self. Once embraced, peace is born as the fruit of acceptance. One descends, then, in freedom through complete consummation (scenes five through eight), to eventual physical death itself. And here too, in the paradoxical reversal of the Christian message, death is not really an end but a doorway into a deeper relationship with He from whom the original call issued.

These eight vertical episodes are also enriched by a horizontal level of meaning. The underlying theme of each chronological event is fulfilled by its complement story on the opposite side. Thus, the first episode corresponds to the eighth, the second corresponds to the seventh, and so on.

To return, then, to the first episode portrayed in the lower left hand corner, we recognize that the story does not begin with Clare's natural birth or her Baptism. Rather, it begins with her free decision to pursue a life within the Passion itself. It is Palm Sunday, the memorial of the day when Christ triumphantly entered the city of Jerusalem. The scripture lesson is the welcoming of a king paradoxically juxtaposed with his crucifixion as a criminal.

The first scene, the beginning of Clare's life, also reminds us of the unabashed Biblical infatuation with the romantic imagery of nuptials. At eighteen years of age any young woman, especially one of noble origin, as was the Lady Clare, should have been poised for an advantageous marriage. And indeed, in this opening portrayal Clare is actually shown at her own mystical marriage ceremony. The offering of the olive branch by the Bishop of Assisi on Palm Sunday is a reminder of the promises made by God to Noah after the great flood, the first covenant. (In Italy, olive branches, not palms, are always used on Palm Sunday.) The Old Testament notion of a covenant bond was a contract between two people, usually one more powerful than the other. This unequal bond teaches us of the trust which both Francis and Clare held in things uncertain, in those things which *ear has not heard and eye has not seen*. This initial

contractual bond, however, is only a stage in the marriage commitment. As the relationship with the bride, Israel, deepened, God expected greater proof of fidelity. We recall that there were several covenants made between God and his bride, Israel: the placing of the rainbow with Noah, a sign in the sky; the circumcision with Abraham, a sign on the flesh; and the offering of the Ten Commandments with Moses, a sign written in our hearts. As a royal bride, Clare's first "yes" to the proposal of marriage is accepted in silence, because Bishop Guido of Assisi is merely the vicar, the proxy, the visible representative of her Divine Royal Spouse, Christ, who echoed his silent "yes" centuries earlier as the Lamb led to slaughter. The continued proofs of love, her further sign of covenant with the Beloved, will be fulfilled in scenes three and four.

In the first horizontal complement story, the unity between episodes one and eight, we again remind ourselves of Clare's covenant of choice. Clare did not merely listen to the Passion being read on Palm Sunday, but rather, she freely chose to enter the Passion commitment with her Beloved Spouse. Although, because of her health, Clare physically suffered a great deal, her choice to enter the Passion was intended to inculcate a compassion for the world around her. She entered the cloister not to leave the world but to embrace its suffering. This is obviously depicted by the multitude of buildings making up the backdrop of all eight episodes. A life for the Beloved is a life in community and for the community.

In the second episode we find Clare intently speaking to Francis, the second official representative (next to the Bishop), of her Spouse-made-visible. In this scene, Clare is doing the talking and Francis is shown patiently listening. Clare is not depicted as a subservient listener, she is questioning the movement of her heart. Clare reminds us of the ten wise virgins of the Gospels, brides anxiously prepared to meet their groom. They were women who "waited" but they were women who also consciously prepared themselves for that unexpected hour. Clare is a woman who has taken action for her life directions.

In the second horizontal complement story, the seventh episode, we again have a double scene. The upper scene has the Virgin Mother appearing in the convent surrounded by her angels. But if we make a closer inspection, the angels of the Virgin Mother's court look very much like the nuns who are sneaking a peek at her from the left. Clare was not a woman who believed in ethereal images of the Divine. Like Francis, she personified her beliefs. Her theology of communion with God or Eucharist, was incarnated in daily communal relationships. Clare saw the Blessed Virgin in each one of her Sisters within the convent. In this way the Virgin Mother is not entering the convent as a stranger. She was there with the nuns all the time.

In this double scene, the Virgin Mary herself demonstrates that she is not a woman desirous of being venerated or gazed upon. She is portrayed in movement. She presents herself as an example. Because of Clare's illness, the Blessed Virgin moves from the upper into the lower part of the double scene to nurse Clare herself, as she would hope anyone of the other nuns would do themselves. Yet the Virgin Mary enters the scene not only as the final nurse but as the Divine Bridesmaid. Mary, the Queen of Heaven, is adorning another royal bride to meet her King in the heavenly Jerusalem. The Heavenly Bridesmaid carries a large drapery, which in the traditional language, was understood as the habit of the Order, the burial shroud transformed into the eternal wedding garment.

By laying still and allowing Mary, or any other Sister to wait on her, Clare is also reflecting a depth of insignt into the feminine psyche as understood from the many ancient and culturally diverse folkloric traditions. The woman is the long sufferer, the one who can endure pain over long periods of time. In folkloric tradition, the man goes off on an adventure, he conquers the foe and eventually wins the hand of the princess. But adventure for the male is quickly accomplished. The woman, on the other hand, waits. She waits to be rescued. She is refined in the waiting, perfected in the waiting. Religious life for the contemplative is the life of the womb, she is the tiller of the soil, the expectant mother of new birth. The contemplative nun becomes "waiting personified," or we could even say, in harmony with chivalrous Franciscan imagery, the Lady Clare has become "Lady Advent." The wait will be rewarded.

Following the above folkloric metaphors, this dying episode can be understood as the ultimate act of matrimonial legality, the consummation of the two members of the covenant. Clare is in bed, attended by many ladies, being adorned for her ultimate sacred night of sleep, union with the Beloved, But for Clare, unlike the folkloric traditions, instead of her prince entering the chamber to claim her as his own, it is another woman. The Virgin Mary appears before Clare as the representative of Christ. In fact, as stated before, Christ had always been present in the convent, personified in each Sister living together for so many years in community. The artist-theologian teaches that the Woman embodies the Son. There is no lack of Christ's presence in the midst of a convent of women.

The next two episodes which cut across the mid section of the large central figure of Clare, the third and sixth, form the basis of her life as *kerygma*, her life commitment of sharing in the cross of her Divine Spouse. These two episodes reach for each other across the enlarged central figure of Clare at the gut level. The Medievals believed, as many do today, that the mid section of a person or the *solar plexus* was where all depth of feeling originated. The mid section is also the place of the womb, the place of new birth or rebirth into new

life. In the third episode, when Clare made her commitment to God by allowing her hair to be cut, she was alone at the altar in the Porziuncola, surrounded by men, the friars, who made her life fertile through the seed of their Gospel preaching. But in the complement episode on the right, the sixth scene, we see a multiplication, not only of bread, but of Sisters. Clare has given birth to multitudes of women who also chose to follow the Beloved.

Again, the folkloric representations of feminine metaphors, as embodied in Clare, and as mentioned in episode seven, also speaks to us of the woman's cycle of sacred fertility. As with any agrarian society in any generation, the Medieval world view was based on the natural rhythms of the seasons which depended on regular patterns of human labor: tilling, planting, tending, harvesting, and regular patterns of atmospheric conditions, a balance of rain and warmth. Therefore, the Franciscan story is naturally a message of masculine-feminine complementarity. This masculine-feminine symbolism of fertility reminds the celibate that the life of the friars and Sisters is meant to be a life of continued multiplication. Celibate fruitfulness is made possible through a common life of mind and heart represented by the cord bearing the three knots tied around the waist of the enlarged central figure of Clare. For members of the Franciscan community, the wedding ring, instead of being on the finger, is around the waist, the gut, the depth of emotion and commitment, the place of fertility. The three knots on the cord representing the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, act as a constant, visible reminder of promises made to God and to each other.

In episode six, the multiplication of the loaves, we can also see that God is not far removed from our midst. God's presence is made real in the community of the Sisters around the table. The table of the altar in the Porziuncola in episode three, where Clare made her profession of vows, has now broadened into the table of sorority. Our daily nourishment is equally found at the communal table of the refectory, partaking of and eating with a God — represented in each other — who desired to become our food, our *viaticum*, our companion for the journey.

In order to understand a further unity between these two complement episodes, we must remember the Medieval artistic custom of playing with geometrical angles. Further themes were expressed by the direction in which eyes, hands or angles of buildings were pointing. The uniting geometrical gestures of these two complement episodes can first be seen by the right hand of the large central figure of Clare motioning toward the cross. This cross is easily understood as her crozier, the symbol of governance for an Abbess. In this case, however, Clare is shown not only as a shepherdess of her convent flock but she also resembles a royal personage holding a scepter. This scepter, as ornate as it is, could further remind us of a blooming lily of purity, a royal bridal bouquet.

As the consort of the Prince of Peace, Clare represents the highest ideal of royalty, a governance in charity rather than prestige. It is not through external glory by which one is honored and emulated by through interior majesty.

As an Abbess, Clare also reversed many things in the traditional understanding of hierarchical leadership (as her Divine Spouse also tried to do so many years before her). One such example of hierarchal reversal is best understood from her notion of daily service. As the superior of the convent, instead of being served, Clare chose to serve her Sisters in any way possible. In fact, her place at table in the convent of San Damiano was in front of the food passage window. It was the corner of the room rather than what had become the traditional place for the superior, the center.

Returning to the scepter-cross symbolism we note that the cross is tilted toward the sixth episode, the multiplication of bread scene, a clear recognition of a community gathered around the Eucharist. These women of the cloister are priests by their Baptism. Christ for them is not in the tabernacle alone under the form of bread and wine, but, as referred to in episode seven, within their midst in each other. When Christ told us "I am there whenever two or three are gathered in my name," he did not mean that he would not be present if someone also needed to be alone. He intended a deeper truth. We are social beings. It is good for us to be together. The spirit and power of Christ is not lacking no matter one's gender.

At this point it may be important to note, regarding this masculine-feminine complementarity, that Francis himself was probably the first founder of a female community who believed that women should govern themselves. In Chapter Eleven of his Rule for his friars (1223) he warns them against "entering the convents of nuns." This was not a cautious warning against impropriety, but rather, a clear statement of non-interference in the governing of women's communities. Another revolutionary decision for the times and a reversal of tradition.

In the fourth scene, the upper left hand corner we return to Clare's uncle Monaldo attacking her in a monastery. He is attempting to drag her away even though she seeks "right of sanctuary" by clinging to the altar, thereby placing herself under the protection of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. This episode, however, is intending a deeper understanding for the viewer. This scene is not only a struggle between a furious uncle and an idealistic niece, but what we are witnessing is an act of martyrdom. This image of martyrdom reminds us of the great spiritual men and women of the early Christian centuries who sought the arena of the desert as the proving ground for their sharing in the Passion. After Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire with the conversion of the Emperor Constantine in 315 A.D., Christians became somewhat comfortable no longer needing to prove their faith by witnessing to the ulti-

mate sacrifice. Yet, there were those, however, who still wished greater union by an intense and concentrated witness. To seek martyrdom was still considered the highest form of union with the Divine. But without civil death as the act of union, consummation with the Divine was achieved through a martyrdom-in-the-desert, a martyrdom-through-sacred-routine rather than a martyrdom of momentary ecstasy. To go into the desert, as the spiritual Mothers and Fathers believed, was to enter into warfare, to personify the cosmic drama between good and evil. This is also the reason the large central figure of Clare is robed in a cape reminiscent of the crusaders of the time. The large Jerusalem styled cross would be over the heart of the warrior. So too, in this instance, Clare is a crusader, a warrior fighting against a greater enemy, sin. But although depicted as a woman of strength, Clare is not a lone soldier. She is supported by a garrison of armored warriors, her habited Sisters in their castle-monastery. Their most powerful weapon against evil being the routine of daily prayer and good works.

In this fourth episode, the nun immediately behind the center of the altar is looking away from the violent scene between Monaldo and Clare. She looks away, not really because she is disturbed by what is happening at the present moment but because she is leading our vision across the painting into the fifth scene, the upper right hand corner, the sharing of the Passion between two blood sisters. The two scenes are actually one. If we look closely, the eyes of the enlarged central figure of Clare also unites these two complement episodes. The left eye of Clare is looking at episode five, the"martyrdom" of Agnes, whereas the other eye, her right, is looking at us, a constant reminder to keep our attention on the suffering of others as followers of Christ.

This fifth complement scene is the second time the pride of Lord Monaldo has been wounded. It is not too difficult to presume that this uncle, although saying that he is looking after the family of his deceased brother, is in fact looking after his own interests. He is upset that these two nieces refuse to accept advantageous marriages thereby adding no new land, power or prestige to the family. Although appearing like a warrior, he shows himself interiorly weak by attacking a defenseless girl with a cohort of armed men. For the viewer, Lord Monaldo has become the personification of evil, the devil himself, in cosmic battle with these new age martyrs-of-the-desert/cloister. These two complement episodes are also tragic expressions of familial misunderstanding. Those who are closest to us are the ones who hurt us the most. Fortunately, in the case of Clare and Agnes, their personal victories eventually strengthen their own mother, the Lady Ortolana, to enter the community with them. In the case of Clare, the family bond is preserved and elevated.

These eight short *individual* episodes in the life of Saint Clare remind us that our lives too are lived in "moments" only, special moments which fulfill our *fundamental option*, that personal choice of values which carry us through every daily event of every year of our own lives.

The over all message of this icon of Saint Clare is also embodied in the eight episodes *as a whole*. Knowing that the genius of the Church as a teaching institution never composed a painted instruction in a haphazard fashion, allows us one last holistic approach regarding the reason for the specific enumeration of episodes.

Returning to the roots of our faith, the great act of salvation for the Hebrew people was their being freed from slavery in Egypt. As a slave people, the Hebrews were a disconnected community. Without at least one day free from maintenance labor, without a regular routine of rest, there could be no culture, no development of music, art, literature, laws, philosophy. Once freed and living in their own land the leaders of the Twelve Tribes chose the number seven as the basic unit of time dividing the cycle of work and rest in God's creation. The people of Biblical times knew that such a division was practically intended as a day of rest for themselves more so than for an all powerful God. It was the sacred day of rest which bound together the former nomadic tribes through their communal creations.

In what would appear as six sets of seven diamond shaped jewels encircling the frame of the icon, we are again reminded of the bride being adorned for fulfillment in a future union of promise. Joachim of Fiore, an Abbot of the thirteenth century, prophesied the coming of an "age of new heavens and a new earth." Even in their own day, Francis and Clare were considered fulfillments of the prophecy. We can then understand that the six set of seven encircling jewels were intended to lead us from the Old Law into the fulfillment of the New Testament promises. Because Christ rose from the dead on the day after the seventh day, the traditional Hebrew day of rest, the Sabbath, Christians came to call the commemoration of the Resurrection, *the eighth day,* the fulfillment of being freed from the slavery of sin. Thus, if seven was a perfect ordering of society for the Old Testament, with the advent of the Christian era we go one number further. In the new age a perfect ordering of sacred time would be eight. Major feast days in the Christian Church are celebrated in an *octave,* eight days of festivities. Thus, surrounded by eight episodes, the central figure of Clare is also completely immersed in the eighth day, the Day of the Lord. Her whole life, from episode one, where she receives the marriage proposal from the Bishop of Assisi, to episode eight, where the Bishop of Rome confirms her commitment, Clare's is depicted as a perfect witness of Spousal fidelity.

In this 800th anniversary year of the birth of Saint Clare — the often forgotten Franciscan complement — we pray that the Church may be renewed by

the rediscovery of her life vision and commitment. May her heavenly glory radiate for the Pilgrim Church in our own expectant resurrections.

* * *

For Genesis House: The Last Christmas Retreat

Once you were home to a bishop, rambling house
Set back from the seminary, now a center
For alcoholics, as you're meant to be
After the dozen years under the kind
And holy counseling of friends of Christ.
You've been the rest of pilgrims, where they've found
A place of origins, of new beginnings,
An oasis. That season nears its end.

Still, come October, they will fade as usual,
Your yellow leafage harvested by wind,
After the winter, flowers will shine again,
Wild carrot, interspersed with snowy daisies.
The woodpeckers in scarlet caps will drill
Above white scarves of dogwood and with June
From the Poustinia's green solitude
A ghost will watch the James' silver flow.

But this is future. Till December dies,
A Christmas joy will flicker as before,
The chunks of wood hum in the Franklin stove,
Peace rises from green and tawny coffee mugs;
The random pillows knitted out of love
Will bloom against the neutral davenports;
The glass-topped table gleam, as Eucharist
Makes of each day a quiet jubilee.

Your former guests, on deserts, out at sea,
Will think of you on New Year's, you of them.
"Whatever is begotten, born or dies. . ."
So much for time. Now, for eternity!

Bernetta Quinn, O.S.F.

The Transitus: A Rite of Intensification:

PART II

DANIEL GRIGASSY, O.F.M.

Each Transitus ritual considered in the first part of this article[1] displays consistent elements: the antiphon, "O sanctissima anima"; the psalm, "Voce mea"; the hymn, "Salve, sancte Pater"; and a blessing with the relic of St. Francis. These items constitute key ritual units within a progressive structure. However, more often than not, the movements, postures, and gestures which serve as transitions connecting these units were left to the custom of local churches. In the days prior to Vatican II with talk of liturgical reform flying high in ecclesial circles, the ritual was recrafted. It was only a matter of time before an increase in ritual texts yielded a more didactic rite. The practice of ritually proclaiming narrative texts and enacting select portions of those texts tended to become the norm and still governs current practice.

After the promulgation of the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" in 1963 and the "Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life" in 1965, we Franciscans stumbled through the adolescence of liturgical experimentation. At the same time we wrestled with the council's admonition to return to the original inspiration, the peculiar spirit and mission of the founder.[2] One way to rediscover the original spirit of Francis was to return to foundational texts, the original sources of his life, his conversion, his prayer, and his mission. As the popularity of observing uniquely Franciscan devotions waned in the post-conciliar years, many thought there was no better way to sustain and intensify Franciscan identity than to fold into the Transitus elements of the abandoned devotions along with bits and pieces of other characteristically Franciscan prayers. Herein lies the core issue for the concern of the second part of this article. Was the simple rite of Transitus able to bear the weight of post-conciliar expectations? Have we sacrificed a variety of ritual opportunities to specify and intensify our identities as Franciscans by collapsing parts of former ritual forms into one event while running the risk of evacuating texts, objects, gestures, and movements of their ritual power? After almost three decades of experi-

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Part One of this article appeared in the October CORD. We are grateful to the readers of this periodical who informed us of their appreciation of Father Daniel Grigassy's presentation. His contribution to our understanding of the significance of the Transitus for our Franciscan spirituality deserves the gratitude and admiration of all. Part III of his in-depth study will appear in a future issue.

mentation, are Franciscans maturing liturgically in such a way that they discretely razor out ritual fat so that the essential core of Francis' way of dying may transform our way of living-unto-death?

In an effort to stimulate dialogue among Franciscans regarding these important questions, the following pages first survey samples of rites used during the conciliar and post-conciliar years, and then examine responses to some questions posed to participant-observers in one Transitus ritual. General concluding remarks seek not to set an agenda for the future of the rite but rather to pitch the important of ritual expression in our ongoing Franciscan maturing as we constitute ourselves in reality as what we claim to be in ritual and symbol.

Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Rituals: A Sampling of Rites.

Liturgia di S. Francesco d'Assisi was published the same year the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" was promulgated.[3] A Transitus is included in the collection which is simply a reproduction of the Latin ritual in the 1910 **Rituale** with an Italian translation. An inter-page Latin-Italian ritual suggests that it was celebrated in Latin with the vernacular available to enhance the active participation of all the faithful. Lack of clarity regarding the time of the rite still shows itself. The ceremony took place either on the evening before the actual solemnity or on the evening of the solemnity itself.[4]

The first printed post-conciliar rite available for this study is a small pamphlet compiled and edited by Luciano Canonici entitled **Celebrazioni della "Parola di Dio"** with the subtitle added in the fourth edition, **Nello Spirito del Vaticano II**.[5] Although the booklet itself does not give a date of publication, the **Bibliographica Franciscana** assigns it the date 1965.[6] The rite is entirely in Italian with no Latin counterpart. The definite date of October third is assigned to the ceremony, "pomeriggio 3 ottobre." Roles are well-defined: Sacerdote, Lettore, Assemblea, Commentatore. All traditional and familiar elements in the rite are retained. The "O sanctissima anima," Psalm 142, the "Salve, sancte Pater," and the priest's final oration are all present. However, they do not stand on their own, unrelated to one another. They are threaded together with commentary from Francis' biographers. These texts are read by the Sacerdote, Lettore, and the Commentatore. Two scriptural readings are incorporated into the ceremony: the consoling words of 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18 and John 13:1-15 as cited in the biographies of Francis. Therefore, biblical and non-biblical sources are incorporated into the ritual action. These additions effect the liturgical flow of the ceremony and give it a new spin. The mode of expression has become clearly educative and informative. From the text of this

earliest available post-conciliar rite, no hints of relic, incensations, cross prayers, or Eucharistic devotions are suggested.

During the time immediately after the council, our attention was distracted because of the slow but steady publication of revised rites in the new ritual books coming from the liturgical consilium in Rome. While most communities at that time mimeographed or dittoed revised Transitus rituals for their own use, few were formally published. A commemoration of Francis' passing was contained in a devotional prayer book for the use of Third Order members entitled **New Ritual for Public Functions**[7] which set out the familiar movement within the pre-counciliar rite but with few functional directives and several didactic additions. At first glance the rite appears weighty, verbose, and cognitive. The time of the celebration remains undetermined. "On the eve of October 4 (or on the feast itself or the Sunday within the octave) the fraternity gathers."[8] However, the vesture, the relic-action, the candle-action, and the choreography are all clearly specified. "Francis died about sunset on Saturday, October 3, 1226. He recited the 141st Psalm (sic), and at the closing words, 'Lead my soul out of prison that I may give praise to your name,' his blessed soul passed from earth to Heaven. This event is solemnly recalled every year in the churches of the Franciscan Order and where fraternities of the Third Order are established... This observance can serve as the close of a novena or triduum in honor of St. Francis. A relic of St. Francis is placed on the altar for public veneration. Some members of the fraternity may accompany the priest, holding lighted candles, and form a semi-circle in front of the altar. The priest, vested in surplice and white stole and cope, first incenses the relic of St. Francis."[9]

The introductory comments from the 1961 St. Andrew's **Franciscan Supplement**[10] find their way into the opening text of the rite in Fonck's **New Ritual**. An account of Francis' death from the **Vita Prima** of Thomas of Celano[11] is then read. The lector or lectors are not specified. The rather lengthy reading is followed by the singing or recitation of the antiphon, "O most holy soul." The directives continue: "The priest or chanters then sing or recite Psalm 141 (sic) alternately with the choir or with the people." After the closing of the psalm, the antiphon is repeated and the candles extinguished. The kneeling assembly prays in silence for a moment and then recites five Our Fathers, Hail Marys, and Glorys "in honor of the five wounds of our father St. Francis."[13] It is difficult to determine whether this addition is an attempt at establishing a new symbolic relationship between the five prayers and the five wounds, or whether it is simply making explicit for a forgetful community what was always presumed in the early days of its practice.

The priest or chanter then intones the "Hail, holy Father." All genuflect and the chanters sing or say: "Poor and humble Francis enters Heaven laden with riches." The priest then stands and sings the oration. The response to the

verse, "Franciscus pauper et humilis," that is, "Hymnis coelestibus," has been dropped. After the oration the priest continues with "The Lord be with you" and the appropriate response is returned. The chanters then intone: "Let us bless the Lord." All respond, "Thanks be to God." The incensation of the saint's relic is suggested followed by the blessing of the people with it. With or without a relic, the words of the blessing of St. Francis from the Book of Numbers (6:24-26) are offered as appropriate for the final blessing.[14]

The most extensive and exhaustive post-conciliar attempt in English to set out the Transitus is found in **Franciscans at Prayer**, an adaptation of the **Rituale Romano-Seraphicum Ordinis Fratrum Minorum** (1955) for use by English-speaking friars who desired a book of devotional prayers which fostered traditional piety while remaining faithful to the spirit of the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council. The Committee for Franciscan Liturgical Research prepared the collection. The English-Speaking Conference of the Order of Friars Minor approved it for use in North America, and the Franciscan Publishers in Pulaski, Wisconsin, published it in 1983. The rite bears the title, "The Memorial of the Passing of St. Francis, The Transitus (October 3)."[15] Those who assembled the rite were obviously aware of its history and development. For the first time in an approved liturgical book, boundaries are set for what had become a free-wheeling rite. However, the boundaries or limits are not rigid or unbending. By way of suggesting a "Model Rite" with ample option (nn. 259-266), the members of the Franciscan Committee for Liturgical Research retained the value of adaptation to the needs and customs of local communities. They succeed in recapturing the spirit of earlier rites while bringing a new sense of balance, coherence, and aesthetics to what had previously appeared to be a random selection of ritual units spun together with no apparent root metaphor. Life, death, resurrection, and mission come to the fore as the focus and thrust of the rite.

An introduction establishes the origin of the rite "at least since the eighteenth or perhaps seventeenth century" without grounding that claim, consistent with earlier testimonies of the same. The rite pivots around four moments: 1) The antiphon, "O sanctissima anima"; 2) Psalm 142; 3) The antiphon, "Salve, sancte Pater"; and 4) Prayer. The goal of the rite is specified: "The **Transitus** is an attempt to celebrate our Franciscan identity by rooting ourselves both in the scriptures and the historical foundations of our brotherhood" (N. 257). The narrative texts taken from the biographies of Thomas of Celano, St. Bonaventure, and the so-called **Legend of Perugia** yield ritual units which do not replace but add to the original rite: "1) the death of Francis in the context of praise: the singing of the **Canticle of Brother Sun**; 2) a motif of leave-taking: Francis has that part of the thirteenth chapter of John's gospel where Jesus washes the

apostles' feet (vv. 1-17) read to him; bread is shared; 3) the singing of Psalm 142; and 4) the exhortation and blessing of the brothers" (n. 258).

The Model Rite presents these four elements enhanced by the use of light, candles, bread, and incense. First, the rubric of the Introductory Rite (n. 259) states that "the friars may hold lighted candles." It also suggests the singing of the antiphon, "Salve, Sancte Pater," and offers two musical renditions, one in both Latin and English (n. 267) and the other only in English (n.268). Another attempt to connect the rite with original ritual objects shows itself in the mention of the saint's relic placed on the altar and reverenced with incense and song. The rubric then reads: "The minister invites all to pray in these or similar words: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. — Amen. The Lord give you peace and good. — Amen." The sign of the cross provides an appropriate opening for any form of public prayer; the greeting is appropriately Franciscan recalling Francis' salutation, "Pace e bene." Who the "minister" is, what the "minister" wears, who the "minister" is with, or how the "minister" gets from point A to point B is not specified but left to the imagination of the local community.

Secondly, without mention of an opening or gathering prayer, a composite text is offered which tells the story of Francis' passing from Celano's **First** and **Second Life** and of Bonaventure's **Major Life**. The rubric suggests a single reader for the entire text (n. 260). Alternative texts are given, one from Celano's **Second Life** followed directly by another paragraph from Bonaventure's **Major Life** (n. 269), the other from the encyclical letter of Brother Elias (n. 270).

Thirdly, an unspecified "minister" proclaims John 13:1-17. Options are suggested as a response: a homily, a time of silent prayer, or a personal witness to the continuing influence of St. Francis. The person who preaches or gives witness remains unspecified. Fourthly, all sing Psalm 142. The antiphon, "O sanctissima anima," may be used. The familiar chant melody with Latin and English texts is offered (n. 271) along with current composition of antiphon and psalm (n. 272). After the psalm's final verse (Bring me out of prison. . .) and before the doxology (Glory to the Father. . .), the rubric reads: "The candles may be extinguished." Fifthly, intercessory prayers follow (n. 263) and alternative texts are given (n. 273). The Our Father closes the intercessory prayers and leads to the final oration. Two options are given (nn. 264 and 274). Neither resembles the Latin text which consistently appeared in pre-conciliar rites. No doubt they are original? English compositions. Sixthly and finally, the Concluding Rite begins with the usual greeting of "The Lord be with you" and its response. The invitation to "Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing" is followed by the familiar words of blessing from the Book of Numbers divided into a three-fold prayer with "Amen" responses after each entry, and concluded with the usual Trinitarian form of blessing. The dismissal, "Let us go in peace,"

invites the response, "Thanks be to God." The final rubric suggests the singing of the Canticle of Brother Sun or another appropriate hymn. The text provided for the Canticle (n. 929) is the familiar seven-versed hymn, "All Creatures of Our God and King." A sign of peace is suggested as an appropriate conclusion to the rite (n. 266). The Transitus in **Franciscans at Prayer** is significant because boundaries were set for the first time in the post-conciliar rite. While those boundaries or limits were intended to remain pliable and supple, English-speaking Franciscans have been moving freely within them.

A novel and creative approach in restructuring the Transitus was devised by the friars minor of the Cologne province in Germany. Number 146 in **Gebete der Gemeinschaft** is entitled "Vesper und Transitus. Elements of the Transitus are woven through the ritual structure of vespers. After a silent entrance procession of the assembly and a greeting, presumably by the presider who remains unspecified, two hymn texts are given with musical notation. The psalmody is framed with familiar antiphons. Psalm 112 is followed by Psalm 147:12-20 which could be interchanged with a musical version of the Beatitudes. A short reading from an unidentified biographical source prefaces the singing of Psalm 142 which constitutes the third psalm of vespers. Then another short reading (Romans 8:10-11) follows. Its appended responsory is reminiscent of the exchange: "Franciscus pauper et humilis"/"Hymnis coelestibus" of the former Latin ritual. Another reading follows introducing the singing of the Canticle of Brother Sun. The first text of the narrative tells of Francis' passing; a period of silence follows. Then all stand for the Magnificat. Intercessory prayers, the Our Father, and an oration close the vespers service. Mention is made of the use of the Blessing of St. Francis and the possible inclusion of the blessing with the saint's relic.

No doubt, other rites of Transitus in a variety of languages have been published since the council and are regarded with a certain degree of official ritual status. The only published post-Vatican II rituals available for this study which bear the weight of ritual authority are Canonici's "Transito di San Francesco, "Fonck's "Transitus" in his **New Ritual**, and "The Memorial of the Passing of St. Francis, The Transitus" (October 3) in **Franciscans at Prayer**, and "Vesper und Transitus" in **Gebete der Gemeinschaft**. Ten unofficial and nonauthoritative Transitus ceremonies available at the time of gathering data for this study were collected from various Franciscan communities in North America. The flow of each ritual reflects the creativity and imagination of the ritual architects. To add texture to our study, an inspection of these unofficial and homespun rites is necessary.

Few of those elements considered essential to the rite in pre-conciliar days survive. More often than not, the "O sanctissima anima" antiphon is lost or

presented as an option; the five Our Fathers, hail Marys, and Glorys are dropped; the "Salve, sancte Pater" and the use of relic as symbol disappear and then reappear later as an option. The focus of attention is not so much on one object or action, but more on the word proclaimed and received. Since an exposition and analysis of each of the ten rites would be impossible, a summary of various tendencies and trends which show themselves consistently in post-conciliar rites will be presented here as well as some peculiar inconsistencies which were tried once or twice and then abandoned.

Key ritual elements will be examined under the following eleven headings: 1) Presider; 2) Introductory Rite; 3) Narrative of the Saint's Death; 4) Distribution of Bread; 5) Reading of John 13:1-17; 6) Singing of Psalm 142; 7) Addition of Popular Franciscan Prayers and Hymns; 8) Homily or Reflection; 9) Reading of Excerpts from the Rule or Testament of St. Francis; 10) Blessing by the Presider/Guardian; and 11) Closing Rite.

1) **Presider**. In most rites the Guardian, in all cases a priest, presides. In one instance, the Vicar, neither a priest nor a deacon, presides.

2) **Introductory Rite.** This part of the rite is comprised of various elements: assembling, a procession including some but not all, the bearing of candles by certain individuals or by all, movement from one place to another, a song, a prayer. The form of introduction imitates that of Mass. In one instance the crossbearer, after the presider's greeting, leads the entire community of religious and laity from the courtyard to the church; all carry small lit white candles. The Guardian carrying a larger white candle follows the assembly while all sing the christocentric chant, "Jesus is Lord." After placing the candle on the altar, he returns to the presider's chair.

At this juncture it must be noted that the liturgical aid provided for each participant is not always a dependable source for ritual analysis. The actual enactment and experience of the rite often tells another story. This writer was present for a Transitus at which the Provincial Minister presided. A procession of several friars began from the church lobby down the main aisle into a congested and dimly lit church. Although not explicitly specified, all the friars minor carried lit candles while the faithful in the pews stood in darkness. Two by two the friars processed down the aisle, bowed to the altar, and moved into the reserved front pews. Covering this movement was the friars' chanting the "Tota Pulchra Es, Maria" which dramatically marked their entry into the darkened church gradually rinsed with the light they bore. However beautiful the chant may have been, one must raise the question of the appropriateness of singing a Marian hymn to initiate the ritual action of the Transitus. How does the singing of this particular hymn at this particular point in the rite help draw in lines of attention and participation? The desire of those who prepared the rite needs to be questioned. Of course, no malice or manipulation motivated them to choose this piece of chant. However, what affect did it have in the

performance of the entrance rite? — to chill the faithful to the bone because of the friars' apparent austerity or to ingratiate them in the eyes of those who gathered? This transitional moment in the rite, moving from one place to another, an apparently innocent and insignificant moment, communicates a storehouse of value and meaning established at the onset of the rite. Here is a good example of a fading Franciscan custom, namely, the singing of the "Tota Pulchra," folded into the Transitus solely because "some of us miss doing it and it's a piece all the friars know, so why not do it tonight as we process in?" Its inappropriateness is apparent; its role in the rite need reevaluation.

Another rite testifies to the Guardian holding a large brown candle symbolizing St. Francis. The presider follows the friars, each carrying a small lit white candle, into an almost dark church. Psalm 23 ("The Lord is My Shepherd") is intoned as the friars enter and the Guardian places the large brown candle on the altar. The entrance rite ends here when the Guardian and friars are seated. Then the narration begins after a brief silence. In yet another sample, only the ministry bear lit candles as they process into the chapel while the organ plays softly in the background. The Guardian carries a large candle whose color is not specified, and places it on the altar. When the ministry is seated, the Guardian offers a greeting and a prayer which defines the assembly's purpose and locates their attention. Then all sing the Gaelic hymn, "Spirit Seeking Light and Beauty" from the **Pius X Hymnal**. Though this selection is more appropriate than a Marian hymn, one wonders why it was chosen. Perhaps it was for no other reason than one or more on the planning team liked it and had not heard it sung in assembly for quite some time.

More recent rites reflect an interesting shift in the introductory rite. No longer is there a procession or song. The presider enters silently and alone. He carries a candle signifying Francis and, after placing it, not on the altar, but on a small table or in a candle holder, he spontaneously greets those assembled and calls them to attentive listening. At that point the introductory rite ends and the narration begins.

3) **Narrative of the Saint's Death**. The most significant shift from the pre- to post-conciliar rite is this addition of narration which resembles the passion narratives of Holy Week. The presider is given the part of St. Francis, and one or two other readers tell of the actual events in the words of the saint's early biographers. The narration provides a context for almost all the elements operative in the rite. The narrator recreates the scene of Francis' final moments in the words of Thomas of Celano and St. Bonaventure. Most rituals available implement this technique. In addition to the actual storytelling itself, a narrative style spills over into the opening and closing orations. Familiar metaphors

from the narrative texts or from the words of Francis exhorting his brothers to conversion are echoed in the orations which the presider prays aloud. In a sense these prayers retain a narrative character insofar as his is the voice of Francis urging the brothers along the way.

Some rites testify to the narrative threaded through the entire rite and creating its context; others do not. In all instances, the actual text was not provided. Therein lies an implicit urge to listen and be attentive not only to the spoken word but also to silence, action, and rest.

4) **Distribution of Bread**. Since the death accounts record Francis' distributing bread to the brothers, those responsible for designing a contemporary Transitus simply decided to enact the scene. The Guardian blesses pita bread or home-baked table bread with a suggested prayer or a dialogic prayer between himself and the assembly, or simply with a silent gesture. In some rites the bread is passed throughout the assembly for immediate consumption; in others it is administered by designated people at preassigned points to which the assembly processed. The singing of "Peace, My Friends" accompanies the bread-action in one rite; a simple organ solo covers the action of distribution in another. One rite situates the "Breaking of Bread" both during the singing of Psalm 142 and the reading of John 13 thus deflating the significance of the saint's moment of exspiration at the final verse of the psalm which in earlier rites has been held in such high relief. In some rites the distribution of bread is eliminated most likely due to exceptionally large crowds. One rite couples the distribution of bread with the sign of peace. The bread is not passed around, but all are invited to come forward while singing a eucharistic hymn to receive a piece of the blessed bread from designated ministers. When all return to their places, a sign of peace is exchanged.

5) **Reading of John 13:1-17**. This Johannine text, cited in the biographers' farewell discourses of Francis, is incorporated into the ritual as a scriptural basis for the call to service. The **mandatum** was Jesus' prophetic word-action alerting the apostles to discipleship, service, and mission. The text grasped Francis and embodied his brand of Christianity. The actual proclamation of the text works its way into most of the rituals, but one must be cautious about arriving at absolute conclusions based on the evidence of these locally tailored rites. In other words, the gospel text may have been read; it may not have been read. Since its proclamation has been popular and customary for close to twenty years, it is legitimate to suspect strongly that the gospel story of Jesus' washing of his apostles' feet was read even in rituals where it is not cited explicitly.

6) **Singing of Psalm 142**. The survival of this traditional element in the rite is significant. In most instances the tension of the rite reaches a resolution at the closing of the psalm. It is regarded the climactic moment in the rite. The

release of ritual tension is accompanied in some rites by the symbolic extinguishing of candles at the last verse of the psalm, "Lead me forth from prison. . .," whereas in other instances the narrator continues after the final verse of the psalm with a summary comment from his text: "And all these events being accomplished in him, Francis was finally set free and absorbed into the presence of the Lord where he rests now and for all ages." Only then is a directive to extinguish the candles given parenthetically in the leaflet or simply by way of imitating the presider's action.

One booklet actually introduces the text of the psalm with "The Transitus," thus closely associating the moment of passage with the praying of the psalm. Before the final verse ("Lead me forth from prison. . ."), a directive interrupts the text of the psalm: At this point, the Guardian extinguishes his candle and lights the pascal candle, the symbol of the risen Lord, as a sign of Francis passing to everlasting life." Then a few moments of silent meditation is recommended to follow that ritual action.

In a similar way, another rite highlights the climactic passing of St. Francis under a separate heading. Immediately after the notation for the refrain of Psalm 142 which reads "Solemn Commemoration of Francis' Death," the directive clarifies the solemnity of the moment: "At the conclusion of the psalm, only the candle representing Francis will be extinguished. Please kneel for a moment of silent prayer." The following year's rite at the same location shifts the candles' symbolic interpretation with this instruction: "At the conclusion of the psalm, the celebrant extinguishes the candle symbolizing Francis. **Our candles remain lit** symbolizing the spirit which Francis has imparted to the world." Another rite positions the psalm at a peculiar point in the narrative. For a long while after the death-psalm is sung, Francis does a fair amount of living. This placement flattens out any sense of climax or resolution in the rite. No blowing out of candles accompanies the psalm. Again, a brief silence follows.

In sum, Psalm 142 is the one element which has survived the flow of additions and recensions in the rite. The psalm and candle symbolism are intimately connected so much so that the bearing of candles, the time for lighting them and extinguishing them, is somewhat presupposed by the ritual architects. Of late, however, some confusion has arisen regarding the place of candles in the rite, their symbolic referent, and the significance of the flame's extinction. The purpose and function of the lit candle remains unclear.

7) **Addition of Popular Franciscan Prayers and Hymns**. Now and then, popular Franciscan prayers appear in these post-conciliar rites. The "Canticle of Brother Sun," the "Peace Prayer of St. Francis," the "Te Deum," the "Tota

Pulchra," and the "Blessing of St. Francis" show up inconsistently in some form. None of these prayers appeared in pre-conciliar rites.

First, the Canticle emerges in various forms. One ritual cites it during the "Imposition of Hands" which probably reflects the style of the Guardian's blessing. The Canticle, sung by cantors, forms an audial backdrop to the assembly's movement to the Guardian for the blessing. Who is included or excluded in the blessing is not specified. One presumes that all present, Franciscans and non-Franciscans, received the Guardian's blessing. The "Canticle of the Sun" shows itself in some rites not in the actual words of Francis' poem but in the traditional hymn, "All Creatures of our God and King." The "Peace Prayer of St. Francis" popularly attributed to him is prayed in sung or spoken form in a few early rituals. The "Te Deum" appears in a single ritual. The "Blessing of St. Francis" from the Book of Numbers shows itself in various forms. It is sung as background to the ritual action of the Guardian's blessing or the presider speaks out the blessing after the distribution of bread and the rite of peace. Franciscan devotional prayers make their way in and out of post-conciliar rites.

8) **Homily or Reflection**. Some rites testify to a homily after the reading of the death account; others refer to it as a reflection. The distinction in terms does not appear to indicate that a friar-priest preached a homily and a non-clerical friar offered a reflection. Where there is no homily or reflection, the architects of the rite most likely perceived the rite as self-explanatory and dispensed with extended commentary on it.

Recall that the Transitus rituals which appear during and soon after the council tended to be instructive. With the passage of time, the Transitus often becomes less didactic and more evocative and affective. However, the necessary inclusion of a homily or reflection within most post-conciliar rites may suggest that the rite without a homiletic element may no longer speak for itself. Or the paucity of opportunities to reflect on our unfolding identity may prompt and even necessitate a homily or reflection on the night before the solemnity to prime the pump for celebration. On the other hand, there are rites which testify to no homily or reflection at all. It is indeed curious to speculate on motivation for including or excluding a homily or reflection.

9) **Excerpts from the Rule or Testament of St. Francis**. The reading of the entire Testament of St. Francis is noted in several rites while select readings from the Rule are included in only a few. The Testament of St. Francis, a final letter from Francis to his friars appended to the Rule to safeguard it from the tamperings of loose interpreters and an impassioned plea to safeguard his desires, appears in early post-conciliar rites and then curiously fades from use.

10) **The Blessing by the Presider/Guardian**. The narrative portrays Francis inviting each friar for a final blessing. The reenactment of this moment has become significant in current rites. One rite calls it the "Imposition of

Hands." Another calls it the "Blessing of the Brothers" in which the Guardian embraces each friar or signs the cross over the friar's head or on his forehead. The practice of individual blessings for all present, whether Franciscans or non-Franciscans, fades in some rites. More recently it has been revived. For those who prepare the rites, important questions have become "Who blesses?" and "Who is blessed?" Answers to these questions uncover unspoken assumptions concerning ritual relationships. Current rites show the Guardian joined by representative members of local Franciscan communities of men and women extending a blessing to all who approach them. Imposition of hands often replaces the cruciform blessing; words or silence accompany the blessing. Other current rites replace individual blessings with a communal sign of peace after the bread rite. Some others witness to the Guardian's final blessing of all present in the words of the Blessing of St. Francis from the Book of Numbers.

11) **Closing Rite**. The final action varies significantly. One rite maintains a rather somber ending with the Guardian praying the "Prayer of the Companions" attributed to St. Francis. The recessional is silent, dark, and austere. Other ceremonies end in a festive tone with songs of celebration and praise including a variety of musical styles from "Brother Sun and Sister Moon," the title song from Franco Zeffirelli's film, to the traditional "Blessed Francis, Holy Father" or "All Creatures of our God and King," to name only a few.

These eleven elements disclose dominant trends within the rite throughout the last three decades. The only point of continuity which recent rituals share with the pre-conciliar rituals is Psalm 142, the most primitive unit in the rite. All other elements in the reformed rites show a clear discontinuity with those prior to the Second Vatican Council. The post-conciliar rites give witness to the testing of various components within the rite, the retention of some successful elements, and the abandonment of those with little promise. Franciscans continue to wrestle with the Transitus; the Transitus continues to wrestle with Franciscans.

Endnotes: Part II

[1] **Cord** 43 (1993), 261-274.

[2] **Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents**, gen. ed., Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Co., 1981), 612, n. 2b.

[3] Testi latini liturgici; versione di Fausta Casolini, T.O.F. (Santuario della Verna, Arezzo: Edizioni "La Verna," 1963).

[4] The heading of the rite states: "Die 3 (vel 4) octobris, circa solis occasum" while the rest of the ritual continues in familiar progressions. See **Liturgia di S. Francesco d'Assisi**, 152-157.

[5] (Rome: Edizioni "Fiamma Nova," 4th ed., [1965]), 7-11.

[6] See **Bibliographia Franciscana** 13 (1964-1973): 207.

[7] Benet A. Fonck, O.F.M., ed. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), 75-79.

[8] Ibid., 75.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Gasper Lefebvre, O.S.B., ed. (Bruges: Liturgical Publications, 1961), 242.

[11] Fonck, **New Ritual**, 75-77.

[12] Ibid., 77.

[13] Ibid., 78.

[14] Ibid., 95.

[15] See **Franciscan at Prayer**, nn. 257-274.

[16] (Cologne: ***, 198*), 103-113.

* * *

Book Reviews

Escape From God. By Dean Turner, Pasadena, Ca: Hope Publishing House, 1991. 268 Pp. $17.95 (Cloth)

Reviewed by Francis Berna, O.F.M., assistant professor of theology, St. Bonaventure University.

Dean Turner's text can evoke a full spectrum of emotions. His main thesis can excite; the details of scholarship frustrate and depress. The text offers a very readable overview of popular positions in modern philosophy, psychology and theology. As an overview it serves well as an introduction to the issues. It would be mistaken to take Turner's conclusions as a final position.

The overriding criticism of modern culture proposed by Turner is that modern thought encourages escape from responsibility. This is the part of the text which excites. One cannot deny that contemporary culture encourages a focus on one's personal happiness without seriously considering a greater common good. Should disappointment or failure come the culture encourages one to blame society, one's family, the system or just the way that life is. About the only choice one has is which escape to choose.

Spotting the failures of the contemporary mindset Dr. Turner calls the believing Christian to take responsibility for one's life. Facing a culture often intoxicated with immediate pleasure Turner finds the power to accept authentic responsibility for one's life in the message of Jesus. The acceptance of this responsibility demands sacrifice and suffering, unpopular themes in the modern world. Though an unpopular position Turner correctly sees that there is no other choice.

Excitement can be had in Turner's chapter "On Life's Primordial Conditions." He writes, "Philosophers and Psychologists often come up with wrong answers because they don't ask the right questions. Likewise, we arrive at superficial and simplistic ideas because we ask the kind of questions that will afford us the comfort of careless answers" (p. 45). He notes how easy it is to settle for simplistic answers. The fundamental question ignored by modern philosophy and psychology is the question of God. Turner develops the theme "God is Care." Here is the fundamental truth of life's primordial condition.

To develop this theme Turner proposes that caring is made possible by five things: (1) need, (2) risk, (3) freedom, (4) challenge, and (5) responsibility (p. 47). With this list one has the key to the book's thesis and its development. The God of Jesus is the God of longing, a God longing to care. Whitehead and Hartshorne are the philosopher theologians who ground the thesis.

For identifying the shape of the present crisis of culture the author is to be praised. For bringing the insight of Process Thought to bear on the crisis, and for doing so in an understandable way, the author is to be praised. But, there are glaring difficulties.

Most annoying, in this reviewer's opinion, is the cavalier way in which Dr. Turner dismissed major World Religions, the questions of agnosticism and atheism, existentialism, New Age thought and Christendom. Certainly there are negative dimensions to each of these positions which can evoke a shirking of human responsibility. But, one can also find very responsible, authentic people who live their lives in the context of the positions so quickly rejected by the author.

Frustration builds as one moves through the text. In the final chapter "On Gautama Buddha and Jesus" the reader finds Turner railing against the Japanese and communists. One has to wonder about his agenda.

Suspicion about Turner's agenda can arise much earlier. The chapter "On Hinduism, Islam and Confucianism" offers nothing more than a superficial dismissal of these great religions. Turner contends that because Allah is not the Christian God of care, Muslims are invited to abandon responsibility for their acts. He argues that they avoid any serious conversion of character. His critiques of Hinduism and Confucianism are superficial. In the author's later consideration of Judaism he fails to develop the rich heritage of beliefs in modern Judaism. His line of thought senses a stronger connection to the despair of Sartre than the heroic faith of biblical Judaism.

When one checks the endnotes one sees that Turner relies almost exclusively on secondary sources. And, these secondary sources are not the best in the field. One suspects, however, that they fit Turner's agenda.

One could argue that Turner intends to offer an introduction and an overview. However, even an introduction in contemporary religious studies must show the possibility of dialogue. For Turner there seems to be no possibility of dialogue, no reasonable position other than his basic Christian conviction. A text with conviction has value, but ultimately its true value would seem to rest on another good. Can the text enable people of conviction to live with genuine care in a world of people with different convictions?

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