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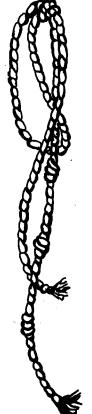
FRANCISCAN PATHWAYS

The Franciscan Institute St. Bonaventure University St. Bonaventure, NY 14778 FEBRUARY, 1993

The CORD



A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



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Volume 43, No. 2

The CORD

A Monthly Franciscan Spiritual Review

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

Subscription rates: \$15.00 a year; \$1.50 a copy. Second class postage paid at St.

Bonaventure, NY 14778, and at additional mailing office.

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

Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

I. Writings of Saint Francis

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

EnMin: Letter to a Minister EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father Form Viv: Form of Life for St. Clare

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 I, II refer to First and Second Editions.

Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221

LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God

LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours

OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix

OffPass: Office of the Passion

II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

ICel: Celano, First Life of Francis 2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis 3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles CL: Legend of Saint Clare

CP: Process of Saint Clare Fior: Little Flowers of St. Francis LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis

LP: Legend of Perugia

L3S: Legend of the Three Companions

SC: Sacrum Commercium SP: Mirror of Perfection

Omnibus: Marion A. Habig, ed., St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

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



THE REFORM OF RENEWAL: "A CRITICAL REVIEW"

REGIS J. ARMSTRONG, O.F.M. CAP.

Five years ago Benedict Joseph Groeschel and seven others dramatically broke away from their Capuchin brothers and declared their intention to establish a community of reform in the spirit of the first Capuchins. At the time, it was not clear what was behind their action. So much of what they intended to say was hidden in personality conflicts, in hurt and angry feelings, and in political maneuvering so that the central issues of their "reform" were never clearly articulated. Groeschel's latest book, The Reform of Renewal (Benedict J. Groeschel, C.F.R. The Reform of Renewal. Foreword by Bishop Sean O'Malley, O.F.M. Cap. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990, 228 pp.), is a contribution welcomed by anyone attempting to comprehend the undercurrents of the small group that has now assumed the name "Franciscan Sisters and Friars of the Renewal." The strength of the written word is what makes The Reform of Renewal so valuable. We become far more responsible for what we write and, therefore, we usually strive to become more concise and forthright in declaring our intentions and views. Thus The Reform of Renewal is more than a work of spiritual literature; it is a statement of Groeschel's 'Franciscan' philosophy and, perhaps unwittingly, that of his followers.

Originally published in the Collectanea Franciscana, this review has been reprinted so that it might be more widely read in the English-speaking world. Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., a member of the Franciscan Institute, worked for eight years with Benedict J. Groeschel, C.F.R., as Associate Director of the Office of Spiritual Development of the Archdiocese of New York.

The book is divided into ten chapters, an epilogue and a conclusion. After considering the need for reform in today's Church, the author proceeds to place the call to reform in historical and biblical contexts. The third chapter deals with the theme of initial and ongoing conversion. This is followed by four different perspectives on conversion: of the mind, of the emotions, of the body, and of the ego. It is only when the author reaches the eighth chapter that he deals specifically with the reform of religious and, in the following chapter, that of the clergy. The tenth and final chapter returns to the reform of the Church and its implications for society. In the epilogue, Groeschel "confronts" all segments of his Catholic audience -conservatives, liberals, moderates - with questions meant to stimulate their consciences in terms of reform. Finally, the book ends with a conclusion and an appendix based on the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. The Reform of Renewal contains a foreword which is written by Bishop Sean O'Malley, O.F.M. Cap., presently the Bishop of Fall River, Massachusetts, but at the time of publication, the Bishop of the Virgin Islands.

This is a disturbing book. After reading its foreword readers might come to it expecting so much more than it delivered and return to it suspicious that they had missed something. It is disturbing because it makes strong claims but provides little substance; it is frequently repetitious, meandering, and even contradictory. While Groeschel refers to a variety of theologians, e.g. Karl Rahner, Hans Urs Von Balthasar, et al., he relies upon those of the Middle Ages, e.g. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, and of the more modern era, e.g. Alphonsus Liguori, Jean-Pierre de Caussade, et al., to support much of his call for reform. Nevertheless, the reader continually wonders about the depth and scope of Groeschel's knowledge of their writings, especially in view of the contemporary issues that face the Church and, more especially, religious life.

Perhaps one of the greatest weaknesses is Groeschel's failure to define reform, renewal and refounding. He has this difficulty with defining terms in his Spiritual Passages: The Psychology of Spiritual Development in which a lack of precision causes considerable confusion regarding the relationship between the spiritual and the psychological. In this case, however, we are never quite sure of the direction in which Groeschel would take us once we have begun his journey. The terms, reform and renewal, appear interchangeably with revitalization (pp. 17-18), repentance (p. 21), conversion (pp. 46, 49ff.). Unfortunately, the author does not reflect the vast amount of literature centering on the theology of reform that finds its foundations in many of the patristic, monastic and scholastic authors whom he quotes. Gerhart Ladner, one of the most prolific authors in this field of reform theology, defines the idea of reform as "the idea of free, intentional, and ever perfectable, multiple, prolonged and ever repeated efforts by man to reassert and augment values pre-existent in the spiritualmaterial compound of the world" (G. Ladner, The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers, New York, Evanston

and London: Harper and Row, 1967, p. 35.) The definition is an important one because it provides a key to understanding many of the reform movements of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, of which the Capuchin reform was part. It becomes more important considering the judgment of Bishop Sean O'Malley, O.F.M. Cap., author of the foreword, who praises the author's initiative because it "is not an academic [topic] but rather part of a personal passion and spiritual odyssey which has led him to participate in the founding of a new community of Franciscans in the Capuchin tradition" (p. 11). In many of Groeschel's more recent tapes and writings, he has repeated the same sentiments and proclaimed quite forcefully that he and his followers are true disciples of the first Capuchin reformers.

Nonetheless, part of the genius of the first Capuchins was their insistence on looking at the form. Callisto Urbanelli, in line with Rainald Fisher, Octavian Schmucki, and other prominent historians of the period, states this quite precisely: "The Capuchin reform sets as its avowed goal a return to the original Franciscan dream" (cf. C. Urbanelli, "How the Order Sprung Up and Took Root," in The Capuchin Reform: Essays in Commemoration of its 450th Anniversary, 1528-1978, trans, Ignatius McCormick, Youngstown: Catholic Publishing Company, 1983, p. 13). When reading the literature of reform and, more specifically, of the Capuchin reform, we quickly discern a picture of reformers who continually struggled with expressing the forma vitae, the Gospel, according to the forma minorum, Francis, in the world in which they lived. Unlike other groups that attempted to reform their communities through legislation and concern for external form, the first Capuchins strove to keep the spirit of the Gospel, the spirit of Francis, as the dynamism of their lives and to express it in new ways (cf. O. van Asseldonk, "The Franciscan Significance of the Capuchin Reform in the Light of Authentic Sources of the Spirit and Life of St. Francis," in The Capuchin Reform: Essays in Commemoration of its 450th Anniversary, 1528-1978, trans, Ignatius McCormick, Youngstown: Catholic Publishing Company, 1983,pp. 59-74).

In light of the Capuchin reform movement within the Franciscan family, Groeschel's lack of awareness of the primitive Franciscan fraternity becomes one of *The Reform of Renewal's* most salient weaknesses. Whereas Clare of Assisi is highlighted as a model of reform, the author does not provide adequate reasons for this conviction beyond noting "[her] tender love and [her] burning personal commitment and desire to follow Christ that were the essence of medieval piety" (p. 17). Yet Groeschel does not touch upon the strength of her conscious commitment to the charism of Francis, the *forma vitae* that he bequeathed to her, that prompted her to resist the pressures of popes, cardinals, and friars to compromise her vision of Gospel life. It was that awareness of and commitment to the uniqueness of Francis, reflected so strongly in her Testament, that singles her out as a reformer, not those qualities that were characteristic of

medieval piety. Groeschel's treatment of Clare, however, is a reflection of his treatment of Francis: selective and superficial. This is unfortunate for he could have advanced his position and contributed to the contemporary understanding of renewal and reform by bringing to light many of the rich insights of the Franciscan tradition.

With each page this reviewer searched for a clear declaration of Groeschel's program of reform or renewal. Was the author dissatisfied with the renewal of the Christian life, of the Church, and of the religious life that has taken place since the Second Vatican Council? Did he want to reshape or redirect our energies in other ways? If so, what were they and, once re-routed, where would they lead? Was it a reform or a renewal that he desired? Or was it simply to challenge his readers to a more serious embrace of commitment? Sadly, the answers to these questions could not be found, possibly because the questions were not clearly asked. As a result, *The Reform of Renewal* stumbles in three serious areas: the anthropological, ecclesial, and religious.

In his review of Groeschel's Spiritual Passages: The Psychology of Spiritual Development, Daniel A. Helminiak criticizes the author's use of psychology and points to this weakness as one of the principal difficulties of his approach (D.A. Helminiak, Spiritual Development: An Interdisciplinary Study, Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1987). We might say the same about The Reform of Renewal that attempts to present an Augustinian understanding of the human person but shies away from the more biblical, patristic, and, we should note. Franciscan understanding of penance as the means by which the human person is re-made in the image and likeness of God. From this perspective we more easily understand Groeschel's pessimism and preoccupation with the evils of the modern world (cf. Chapters five through seven). While we would not deny his emphasis on conversion as the first step of reform, what is disturbing is Groeschel's failure to present the vision of Francis, or that of so many Fathers of the Church, in which the human person is re-made or re-formed through the breath of the Spirit in the form of Jesus. In both Exhortations to a Life of Penance. i.e., both versions of the Letters to the Faithful, for example, while demanding a life of penance or metanoia, Francis devotes far more time to describing the results of conversion: our involvement in a Trinitarian relationship that transforms our ways of looking at reality. Bonaventure's audacious understanding of the human person, present in the Preface to his Second Book of Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, would also have furthered what Groeschel attempts to present, a theology of reform (or, even renewal) in the spirit of the Franciscans of the Capuchin tradition. But such a Franciscan approach is sadly lacking in The Reform of Renewal; so too are the optimism and joy that permeate so much of the writings of Francis, his first followers, and the first Capuchins.

From this perspective we should also note Groeschel's four levels or perspectives of conversion: of the mind, of the emotions, of the body, and of the ego. Was there any forethought, we wondered, to their manner of presentation? If so, we could not discover any rationale for this fourfold approach and, as a result, found much repetition and some important lacunae. It might have been better to adopt the categories of Bernard Lonergan who writes of conversion occurring on four levels of experience: affective, intellectual, moral, and religious (cf. (cf. B. Lonergan, Method in Theology, New York 1972, pp. 237-244; "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," in A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, New York 1985, pp. 169-183). More seriously, however, was the lack of any consideration of what Donald Gelpi describes as 'socio-political' conversion, that is, taking responsibility to reform "impersonal institutions that influence human life and experience" (cf. D. Gelpi, "Conversion: Beyond the Impasses of Individualism," in Beyond Individualism: Toward a Retrieval of Moral Discourse in America, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989; pp. 11-13; Inculturating North American Theology: An Experiment in Foundational Method, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988; pp. 1-30). To describe conversion as Groeschel does is to overlook an essential dimension of the Franciscan call to conversion. "The Lord led me to begin to do penance," Francis writes in his Testament, "when I was in sin it seemed too bitter to see lepers. But the Lord himself led me among them and I showed them a heart full of mercy and what before seemed bitter was changed into sweetness of body and soul." This spirit moved the first Capuchins to work among the plague stricken populace of Camerino and to win their first followers. It is surprising that Groeschel did not introduce this aspect into his treatment of conversion for it would have provided us insight into his vision of the complicated involvement in the movements of justice and peace that present so much tension to contemporary religious.

But this leads us to the ecclesial considerations of *The Reform of Renewal*. This is one of its more confusing aspects for it presents a pessimistic picture of what many people describe as manifestations of new life. Groeschel's descriptions of "The Conflict in the Church"- to which he returns several times - do not present any of the positive aspects of the Church's presence in today's world, e.g., in Eastern Europe, in Latin America, in raising profound questions in the Western world concerning the pursuit of justice, economic policies, and the dignity of the human person. Unfortunately, the author does not spell out his vision of the Church nor does he offer any bibliographical references that indicate his awareness of the profound ecclesiology brought about by *Lumen gentium*, (e.g., Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, Garden City: Image Books, 1978, or *The Reshaping of Catholicism: Current Challenges in the Theology of the Church*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988). It is no wonder that Groeschel

sees conflict within the Church as a negative, enervating force rather than one reflecting its intellectual growth and vitality.

A reader could only speculate about Groeschel's thoughts concerning the tenacity of Clare and the Poor Ladies of San Damiano when confronted by the conflicting vision of Popes Gregory IX and Innocent IV concerning the poverty proposed by Francis; or his view of a similar tenacity maintained by his former Capuchin confreres in defending their understanding of the Franciscan charism of fraternity against the differing interpretations of the Holy See. While *The Reform of Renewal* unabashedly maintains that personal reform is the starting point of ecclesial reform, its author does not reflect upon the tensions that exist between institutional and personal charisms or upon the structural and attitudinal changes that we might consider in light of the signs of the times. All of which highlights Groeschel's inadequate theology of the Church. Had he offered us insights into his understanding of its presence and mission in today's world, we could more easily perceive his theology of its reform. Instead, we confront a highly selective reflection on the Church that is bolstered by references to struggles of Catherine of Siena, Savanarola, and Ignatius of Loyola.

Groeschel's confused anthropology and deficient ecclesiology redound to the pessimistic analysis of religious life. Once more it is difficult to determine what the author wants in religious life; once more his confusion and repetition are evident. His quotation of a Franciscan bishop - "There are many good religious, but there is little religious life!" (p. 143) - conveys a sense of the confusion that fills this chapter. What is religious life, we might ask, if it is not the life of religious.

Groeschel's analysis of the state of religious life is particularly sad not because of his sweeping generalizations but because of his simplistic and somewhat superficial understanding of the issues that confront religious. His observations on the role of Bishops are extremely sympathetic to them while excessively critical of religious. There is no question of the bishops' efforts to understand the religious life or of their attempts to use religious for their own ends rather than to respect their charism as a means of enriching the Church. Curiously, the author underlines neglect of the apostolate in his analysis of the problems of religious life; most contemporary observers lament the frenetic pace that religious maintain and point to the lack of a serious dedication to personal, interior prayer as the salient reason for the decline in the number and enthusiasm of religious. The words of Pope Paul VI seem to be far more applicable here: "Do not forget the witness of history: faithfulness to prayer or its abandonment are the test of the vitality or decadence of the religious life" (Evangelica testificatio 42).

While many of us are struggling to understand the tensions between the sacred and the secular, between corporate commitments and individual creativ-

ity, between the dehumanizing lack of justice and peace and the attempts to bring about the kingdom of God, it is difficult to know where Groeschel stands. This reader could not but wonder at his individualistic view of religious life and conversion. Has he ever lived an intense community life, devoid of those pre-Vatican II structures, that is shaped by the day-to-day rubbing of elbows or by a wide range of understandings of theology? Has he ever been a superior who has had to deal with those suffering from personality disorders or chemical dependency? Has he ever been responsible for a formation program in which there are divergent points of view?

After reading *The Reform of Renewal* a few times, this reviewer began to admire its author for his courage in being so convinced. Popular, charismatic preacher that he is, the enthusiasm for reform that fills his latest endeavor will no doubt touch many people who are searching for direction and stability in this turbulent time. Yet this only enhanced the uncomfortable feelings that troubled this reviewer initially. We live in such an age of transition that it is difficult to express age-old values in new and pluriform ways. Perhaps what is most disturbing about *The Reform of Renewal* is the undercurrent of anti-intellectualism that pervades it. For all the references the reader finds to Augustine, Francis, or Clare, to Rahner, Brown, or Schnackenburg, the reader might wonder how much Groeschel has struggled with their thought and the application of that thought in today's world. Does he read his sources too much through the prism of his own concerns so that we are left with unnuanced generalizations and contradictions?

In conclusion, we wish to return to Daniel A. Helminiak's assessment of Groeschel's Spiritual Passages: The Psychology of Spiritual Development. Helminiak's conclusion of this earlier work is very apropos for The Reform of Renewal. "Overall," Helminiak states, "this book is oblivious to the central issues in contemporary theological circles: history and hermeneutics. Indeed, because of its outdated and uncritical position and despite its solid wisdom at many points, this book may even be unintentionally harmful to the spiritually inexperienced, 'those who seek,' to whom it is addressed" (Ibid., p. 8). Nevertheless, it is good that Benedict J. Groeschel has expressed his thoughts on paper. We are now in a better position to reflect upon and discuss objectively and leisurely many of those issues that prompted him to take such a rash, dramatic step and to create another sad division in a Church that needs more than ever to exemplify the unity for which Christ prayed.

The Integrity of St. Francis

CONRAD HARKINS, O.F.M.

Coming to the Catholic Worker to speak of St. Francis of Assisi on the occasion of his feast, I am moved to speak on those aspects of his life so close to the charism of the movement: of compassion, of poverty, of peace, and of the land. But while I will mention all of these, I would like to speak first of that wellspring which gave life and nourishment to all the others. For all these are externals, the fruits by which the interior of the human person are known. The wellspring could go by the name of holiness, or wholeness — I prefer to call it integrity.

My old Webster's Collegiate in a bright new blue cover, but whose yellowing pages reveal its age, defines integrity: "the state or quality of being complete, undivided, or unbroken, entirety." Before his conversion, people would never have used that word to describe the merchant's son who squandered his money with the largess of a noble, delighted in bazaar dress, extravagant banquets and the "weird" behavior of an undisciplined youth, who set out one day in quest of knighthood and returned the next disillusioned. And after his conversion there were many others who doubted the integrity if not the sanity of a man who wanted to establish a religious order without property, without money, and whose members would have nothing but a single patched tunic, a cord to hold it together, and a pair of breeches.

There was an unsettled period of about four years before Francis's conversion. A bloody battle, a year's imprisonment, a long illness, a convalescence with time for some soul-searching, aspirations to the chivalric order of knighthood, which to an idealist like Francis seemed a noble way indeed to serve the

Fr. Conrad delivered this talk at the Catholic Worker of New York on October 2, 1992. Regarded as a leading authority on Franciscanism, he has lectured and written extensively in this area. Besides his teaching duties at the Franciscan Institute, he has served for several years as editor of Franciscan Studies.

Lord. A temptation to vainglory said his stern biographer, Thomas of Celano. But he dreamed of his father's house usually filled with bails of cloth transformed into a palace filled with armor, and heard a voice say all this was for him and his companions. He set off for Apulia, journeyed only twenty miles when he received a "corrective vision." "Francis, who can do more for you, the Lord or the Servant." "The Lord, Lord." "Then go back to Assisi and you will be told what to do." And Francis went home and he withdrew from the family business and from the carousals of his friends, he sought out the caves and ravines and deserted ruined churches where he prayed over and over, "Most high, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my mind, grant me right faith, certain hope, perfect charity, perception and comprehension, Lord, that I may carry out Your holy and true command."

Seeking that command, seeking to know what he must do, he discovered he was asking the wrong question. Thomas of Celano says that one day as he prayed it seemed to him that God said to him in spirit, "Despise yourself, if you want to know Me." Francis might have said, "If You want to know me... I want to know what You want me to do, but you are asking me if I want to know You. Before Francis would discover what God wanted him to do, he would discover God.

And that is what I understand by the integrity of St. Francis. He encountered the reality of God. His discovery of God made him whole. Because God is, all Francis is a gift of God. He has come forth from God, he is held in existence by God, he will return to God. One might say that he is complete because he knows he is incomplete. Francis, however, does not simply know this, for Satan also knows this and rebels against it. Francis does not simply accept and endure this, as any believing Christian might do. Francis accepts and embraces this. He glories in the glory of God. This is to say, that Francis falls in love with God, and cries out, as Bernard of Quintavalle, one of his early companions heard him pray over and over again, "My God and my All." Using the language of romantic love, he declares to his friends, "I shall take a more noble and more beautiful spouse than you have ever seen; she will surpass all others in beauty and will excel all others in wisdom." (1 Cel 7). The exuberance of St Francis the Mystic in his discovery of the loveliness of God could hardly be contained in words. In the great Prayer and Thanksgiving inserted into his Earlier Rule, he exults: "Let nothing hinder us, nothing separate us, or nothing come between us... Wherever we are in every place at every hour at every time of day, everyday and continually let us believe truly and humbly and keep in our heart and love, honor, adore, serve, praise and bless glorify and exalt magnify and give thanks to the most high and supreme eternal God Trinity and Unity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Creator of all, Savior of all who believe in Him and hope in Him and love Him. Who is without beginning and without end, unchangeable, invisible, indescribable, ineffable, incomprehensible, unfathomable, blessed, worthy of praise, glorious exalted on high, sublime, most high, gentle, lovable, delectable and totally desirable above all else forever." St. Francis fell in love with God. He had come to know God, and now he could hear what the Lord was calling him to do. Francis's integrity showed itself in love, but how did this love reveal itself.

Human compassion is not a mark of St. Francis's conversion. It was part of the exquisite sensitivity of soul that was part of his nature as he came forth from the creating hand of God, or perhaps a lingering remnant of baptismal innocence. St. Bonaventure is the only biographer to say it was there from the beginning: "God implanted in the heart of the youthful Francis a certain openhanded compassion for the poor," which grew "from his infancy." Perhaps it was strengthened by the code of chivalry which he seems to have emulated more than his noble companions. But Francis discovery of God transformed human compassion into divine compassion. As every Christian knew, to serve the poor was to serve Christ. When the streets and piazzas before the churches were filled as today with the poor it was difficult to turn a totally deaf ear to the words of the Gospel "I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed Me, naked and you clothed Me. I was ill and you comforted Me, in prison and you came to visit Me." When the bell of the leper sounded in the valley, it was difficult not to hear the words of Isaiah which were read in the Church every Holy Week: "Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted."

Oh but the transition from a sensitivity to the poor to true compassion was so difficult. He could not even look in the direction of the leprosarium from a distance of two miles without holding his nose. If a leper received an alms from Francis of Assisi it was through an intermediary. In those painful days of his conversion he saw himself for the first time: the pampered son of a rich merchant who liked to think about God and serving God but lived surrounded with attention, never ate anything he didn't like, dressed like a lord, and entertained like a prince. What would bring those Gospel texts from his ears to his heart. His biographers say that one day as he prayed he realized that the words of Christ were addressed to him: "If you want to be a follower of Mine, take up your cross and follow Me." What happened then, he relates himself: "While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body." On this occasion, the biographers tell us, Francis not only gave an alms, he embraced and kissed the leper. Bonaventure says the leper disappeared. It is all a mystical interpenetration of the divine and the human. The leper is Christ and by his kissing of the leper Francis is transformed into Christ. He has become the leper. It is Christ who serves the leper; it is Christ who is served in the leper. For the Christian who understands this, human compassion is impossible, all compassion is divine. Dorothy Day understood this.

He has come forth from God, he is held in existence by God, he will return to God. One might say that he is complete because he knows he is incomplete.

The author of the Legend of the Three Companions spoke well of the change in Francis: "His whole heart was entirely bent of seeing, hearing, and attending to the poor, and he gave them generous alms in the name of God." We do not speak of St. Francis's service of the poor but of his compassion, his accepting, affirming, loving, co-suffering with the poor. He could no longer be satisfied with meeting, encountering, aiding, healing the poor — he identified with the poor. Once he would change clothes with a poor beggar and beg with beggars at the portal of St. Peter's. It was the closest he could come to entering under the skin of the poor. Of course, Francis envisioned that the brothers who joined him, those who said "We want to be with you and to do what you do; tell us what to do." And so he told them in their Rule: "And they must rejoice when they live among people (considered) of little worth and who are looked down upon, among the poor and the powerless, the sick and the lepers, and the beggars by the wayside."

There is a story about the compassion of Francis I would like to share. At Collestrada, a place not far from Assisi was a hospital where friars once cared for lepers. Among the lepers was one who caused the friars many problems, so many that they became convinced he must be possessed. They bore his complaints, his insults, even his blows, but his blasphemies were so great that they became convinced it was better to leave him alone than to approach him and provoke him all the more. Such was the situation when St. Francis came to visit, so the whole matter was put before him. First he approached him and wished him peace. That brought an explosion: "Peace, how can I have any peace with this suffering and the stench of this disease, and those idiot brothers of yours who do nothing but cause me grief." Exhortations to patience being of no avail Francis asked if he could serve him. The man finally asked Francis to bathe him, because

he said he could not stand his own stench. And so Francis had a tub of warm water with herbs prepared, undressed the man, and began to wash him with his hands as another friar poured the water. It is said that as Francis washed the man, the leprosy was healed. I'm not sure. He died two weeks later. But there was a greater miracle. As Francis began to wash the man, the man's eyes filled up, and from deep within him came great sobs, as all the bitterness which was shut up within him found release. What a great gift of healing the Lord has given to all of us in the ability to show compassion.

There is another story concerning Francis's compassion which I love to tell. It happened at the hermitage of Monte Casale high in the mountains of Tuscany. Some highwaymen used to come to the friars begging, and the friars became scrupulous about feeding them lest by doing so they cooperate in their crimes. When Francis came, they asked what to do. What do you do? Well, get some wine and some good bread and put a table cloth down on the ground, and invite the robbers to a picnic, and serve them with humility and good humor. And when they have eaten, ask them for the love of God not to strike or harm anyone from whom they rob. Another day, invite them again, and this time in addition to the wine and the bread, give them eggs and cheese. And then ask them why they stay there enduring such hardships of cold and hunger in the wilderness, causing so much suffering, and bringing so much evil upon themselves." Well of course, some of these robbers became friars and other penitents. What greater sermon is there than compassion. Indeed, is this not an example of "the gentle personalism of traditional Catholicism," of which Peter Maurin spoke?

It is possible, of course, for compassion, even divinely motivated compassion, to be abused. I read the other night a brief paragraph entitled "How Long?" from the Worker of December, 1947. A priest had called asking if some of the men at the House of Hospitality were not "unworthy and using you." "And we replied that they probably were if there is such a person as an unworthy case. However we don't feel competent to decide who is unworthy and who is not. Another one of those things we prefer to leave up to God. We were concerned with the present need and taking care of that." The possibility of the abuse of charity is not an invention of the twentieth century, but St. Francis would not tolerate the rash judgments against the poor that are as common today as ever. Not every medieval poor man seeking alms in the vestibule of old St. Peter's in Rome was an honorable man. Francis once heard a friar challenging a poor man by saying, "See here, perhaps you are only pretending to be poor." "Who cures a poor man, injures the poor Christ whom he represents," said Francis as he sent him to apologize.

Refusing to give an alms was nearly impossible for Francis. From the earliest days of his conversion he resolved never to refuse an alms requested for the love of God. Not only did the poor man represent Christ, but the very manner in which he requested the alms tore at Francis's heartstrings. "An alms for the love of God, an alms for the love of God," the poor man chanted in that age of faith. In this age without much faith, we tend to hear those words as some kind of curse: "For the love of God, give me an alms," or at best, "Because of the love of God in your heart, give me an alms." But Francis was a merchant's son and he understood them differently. "An alms for the love of God" meant "Give me an alms and in return I will give you the love of God," that is "The reward of giving an alms is the ability to love God." What a noble exchange. For this paltry alms. I will receive the love of God in my heart, and with that love I can purchase heaven. To refuse to give an alms is to put no value on the love of God. St. Bonaventure says it so beautifully: "He used to say that to offer the love of God in exchange for an alms was a noble prodigality and that those who valued it less than money were most foolish, because the incalculable price of divine love alone was sufficient to purchase the kingdom of heaven. And he used to say that greatly should the love be loved of him who loved us so greatly." (Leg. Major, 9.1).

Until now we have been speaking of Francis's integrity, his discovery of God, manifesting itself in compassion for the poor. But that is not the only dimension of the poverty of Francis. He did not only serve the poor, he became so poor that history knows him as the **poverello**. At the time of his conversion, according to Thomas of Celano, Francis "was striving with his whole heart to become poor." He could not find the poverty he was seeking within established forms of religious life: "He looked in vain in those around him for that real poverty which he desired above all earthly things and in which he wanted to live and die." (L3C 10).

But why this desire to be poor? It is certainly true that Francis saw what avarice had done to his own father: the preoccupation with money, usury, dishonesty, violence, arrogance, blindness of spiritual values. It would be his mother who would break his chains, set him free and make him truly "Francesco." But the deepest reason lay in his discovery of God, his falling in love with God. If what he was to do for God was become a poor man, he could bring himself to do that only when he discovered the beauty of God. Once he grasped the riches of God, he could put no value upon a pile of coins or a tract of land. When one is in love, all but the beloved pale into insignificance. His written prayers are filled with this thought: "Lord God, all good. You are Good, all Good, supreme Good, Lord God, living and true. You are love, You are wisdom. You are Humility, You are endurance. You are rest, You are peace. You are joy and gladness. You are justice and moderation. You are all our riches, and You suffice for us." (Praises of God).

Several years after his conversion, Francis's poverty took on a new aspect. He had at first thought his call to "rebuild the church" was a summons simply to the life of a hermit or penitent. After two years he came to realize it was a call to preach. Now his life underwent a further change. He had since his conversion been attracted by the poverty of Christ, the poverty he found in the poor. Now he discovered the poverty lived by Christ and the apostolic band of preachers who took nothing for their journey, not money, not lunch box, not suitcase, but relied as beggars on the good will of those who listened. This life he embraced with all his heart, and it was this life which attracted those men who became his "friars minor" or little brothers. He wrote them a Rule of life, which the Pope confirmed for them, and which required that they sell all their property and give it to the poor, that they own nothing, that they receive no money, and in the earliest days, "that they take nothing for their journey." What Francis and the Pope did not foresee in 1209 was that six years later a great ecumenical Council would establish a new program for the Church in which preaching would be linked to education and the priesthood. How could the Friars Minor own nothing, eschew money, beg their sustenance, and at the same time operate schools for the education of their preaching clergy. The history of the Friars Minor is indeed the history of a community's struggle to do just that.

But it is another point that I want to make here. It is not correct to think that Francis envisioned a society in which there was no private property. Indeed not. The very existence of a band of mendicants presumed the existence of a populace from which to beg. Jesus and the Apostles according to the Gospel of St. Luke were supported by a band of women "who were assisting them out of their means" (8.3). Francis and the friars had their supporters also, for while the poverello was humble, he had some powerful friends and admirers. Not everyone dined at the house of Cardinal Hugolino dei Segni, or of Cardinal Leone de Brancaleone, or of Orlando Count of Chiusi in Casentino, or of the Lady Jacoba dei Settesoli. It is true that friars worked among the lepers; it is also true that friars worked on the lands and in the houses of wealthy. Francis told them that in working among the people they must not exercise the office of chamberlain, or chancellor, or mayordomo. These offices were not found among the poor of Assisi, but among the rich.

We have some of the exhortations of St. Francis to the penitents, those Christians who made a public commitment to live an intense Christian life in the world, the germ from which grew his Third Order, the Secular Franciscan Order as it is known today. There is nothing in this literature concerning renunciation of property. In an early document, Francis's advice is simply to love God, love your neighbor, receive the sacraments, control your passions, and bring forth fruits worthy of penance. A later document, his famous "Letter to the Faithful,"

exhorts Christians not to the abandonment of property but to almsgiving. He writes: "People lose everything they leave behind in this world; but they carry with them the rewards of charity and the alms which they gave, for which they will have a reward and a suitable remuneration from the Lord." Peter Maurin said it much more simply, "Christ says: 'the dollar you have is the dollar you give to the poor'" (p.10).

The difference between having property to give in alms and not having property was the difference between "being in the world," the "secular" vocation and "leaving the world" as Friars were supposed to do. Of course, religious communities before Francis wrestled with the relative merits of a life of property and of poverty. In a famous allegory, religious argue with Lady Poverty: "It is good to continue in works of piety and to have time to bring forth good fruits, to contribute to those who are in want, to give something to the poor." Lady Poverty says only, "I do not deny that what you have said is good, but consider your own vocation." The vocation of the friar minor was to be a living witness, a prophet testifying by his life, that human beings find fulfillment in God, not in property; that the goods of this world must satisfy the needs of all, regardless of the rights of ownership. For this witness they deserved support. "There is a contract between the world and the brothers; the brothers must give the world a good example, the world must provide for their needs. When they break faith and withdraw their good example, the world will withdraw its hand in a just censure." (2 Cel 70).

Was Francis a revolutionary? He certainly set the world of his day on fire with a rekindled charity for God and man. But it is I believe a mistake to think that he envisioned a society in which there would be no private property. In his day governments did not feed the poor; wealthy Christians fed the poor. If there were no wealthy Christians, the world would perish. He could not envision systemic changes in society: the possibility of educating the masses, of eradicating leprosy, of a system of public welfare, of the elimination of poverty itself. These would await new ages, new possibilities, new insights into the demands of justice and the challenge of the Gospel, a new poverello or a new poverella, before the realization of those "new heavens and a new earth" where, according to his promise, the justice of God will reside (2 Pt. 3.13).

And what is said in regard to Francis the poverello, must, I believe, be said of Francis the man of peace. Once he accepted his "creatureliness" then all men and women became his brothers and sisters. It became impossible to think of peace with God without thinking also of peace in this world.

In the days of St. Francis the army of Assisi clashed with army of Perugia, papal armies fought imperial armies, Christian crusaders fought Saracen host, robbers murdered in the countryside, kith and kin clashed in the cities, and the

vendetta was a social institution. Violence was as much a part of thirteenthcentury Italy as it is twentieth-century America. Into the highways and byways of this violent world came at first Francis and then his brothers with a greeting of peace, a salutation as radical in 1216 as in 1966. So prevalent a theme was it in early Franciscan preaching that Thomas of Celano, Francis's first biographer, refers to the work of the early friars as a "mission of peace." St. Bonaventure relates, "At the beginning and end of every one sermon he announced peace; in every greeting he wished for peace; in every prayer he sighed for ecstatic peace." An eyewitness to his preaching at Bologna on August 15, 1222 wrote: "Throughout his discourse he spoke of the duty of putting an end to hatreds and of arranging a new treaty of peace. He was wearing a ragged habit; his whole person seemed insignificant; he did not have an attractive face. But God conferred so much power on his words that they brought back peace in many a seignorial family torn apart until then by old, cruel, and furious hatreds even to the point of assassinations" (Thomas of Spalato, Historia Salonitarum, in Omnibus, pp. 1602-02).

Francis truly tried to remove the causes of war and violence. He would have ended the Crusade by converting the Sultan of Egypt had the sultan proved more cooperative. On one occasion when a scandalous quarrel divided the bishop and the mayor of Assisi, he lamented to his friars that no one could be found who would intervene to establish peace and concord between them. Grievously ill himself, he sent his friars to the piazza to sing before prelate and podestá the Canticle of Brother Sun. He had added a final verse: "All praise be Yours, my Lord, through those who grant pardon for love of You; through those who endure sickness and trial. Happy those who endure in peace, for by You, Most High, they will be crowned." It was a simple but successful ploy perpetrated by a peacemaker who knew his beatitudes. While peace is a blessing, it is the peacemaker who is called "blessed" by the Lord.

Yet St. Francis was not an absolute pacifist. The standing army of his day were the very knights among whom he had once hoped to be numbered, and he never lost his admiration for them. He had friends among the knights, and on more than one occasion he accepted their protection. An ideological pacifist would hardly have called his followers, the "knights of the Round Table," and have exhorted them: "The Emperor Charles, Roland, and Oliver, all paladins and valiant knights who were mighty in battle, pursued the infidels even to death, sparing neither toil nor fatigue, and gained a memorable victory for themselves; and in the end they died as martyrs fighting for the faith of Christ." (LP 72). He wept for the Spanish knights who because of their impetuosity died in such numbers at the Battle of Damietta. He regretted the battle, not because he

objected to the Crusade, but because it was fought on the Commemoration of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, which the Saracens observed by mutilating the bodies of the fallen Crusaders.

Every society has had its enthusiasts, and perhaps the Franciscans have had their own in extolling the glories of St. Francis. The growth of the Kingdom of God is like the working of leaven and the development of the mustard seed. The growth of one season follows upon that of past. If Francis of Assisi moved people to become peacemakers, it would take Dorothy Day and The Catholic Worker to write: "we are opposed to the use of force as a means of settling personal, national, or international disputes." When growth seems slow we console ourselves with the thought that "in the Lord's eyes, one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years are as a day." And when we are tempted to become complacent, we remind ourselves that we are not only to look for the coming of the day of God but to try to hasten it!

Not only men and women but all the creatures of God are our brothers and sisters. It was a simple insight of St. Francis, but what a great insight Lynn White had when he realized the implications of St. Francis's world-view for our age. I still remember the bulldozers burying barrels on the lot behind our house. If it was under the ground, it was gone and no longer a problem. We hardly asked what "it" was and surely had no consideration for what "it" would do to Mother Earth whose womb was so violated. Francis taught the world not to dominate nature but to reverence and respect it.

Only when Francis rediscovered himself as a creature of God did he rediscover the beauty of nature. In the sickness that came upon him after his release from prison "the beauty of the fields, the pleasantness of the vineyards, and whatever else was beautiful to look upon, could stir in him no delight" (1 Cel 3). But when he realized that all creatures bear in some degree a likeness to their creator, it gave him a new joy to look upon the sun, to behold the moon, and to gaze upon the stars. Whether as prayer said aloud or as exhortation to passersby, he preached to a flock of birds in the meadow and field of flowers in the vale, inviting them to praise the Lord for His goodness to them. He exhorted fields of corn and vineyards, stones, and springs, and forests, earth and fire, earth and wind to praise the Lord:

"All praise be yours, my Lord, through all that you have made And first my lord Brother Sun, Who brings the day; and light you give to us through him.

How beautiful is he, how radiant in all his splendor! Of you, Most High he bears the likeness.

All praise be yours my Lord, through Sister Moon and Stars' In the heavens you have made them bright And precious and fair.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air, And fair and stormy, all the weather's moods, By which you cherish all that you have made.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Water, So useful, lowly, precious and pure.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
Through whom you brighten up the night
How beautiful is he, how joyful! Full of power and strength.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Earth our mother, Who feeds us in her sovereignty and produces Various fruits with colored flowers and herbs...

Praise and bless my Lord, and give Him thanks, And serve Him with great humility.

"Among the famous saints who loved nature as a marvelous gift of God to the human race, Saint Francis of Assisi is justly numbered. He had a remarkable sensitivity for all the works of the Creator, and he sang that very beautiful Canticle of the Creatures in which he gave the Omnipotent and Good Lord due praise, glory, honor, and all blessing for our most powerful Brother Sun, Sister Moon, and the stars of heaven." So wrote Pope John Paul II on November 29, 1979 as he proclaimed St. Francis the celestial patron of ecologists.

These aspects of St. Francis's life and character: his compassion for the suffering, his undying desire for the dereliction of poverty, his passion for peace, his brotherhood with all creation were deeply rooted in his love for God. His daily commitment was grounded in the integrity of his life, the completeness he possessed in being completed by God, the wholeness he possessed in realizing that he was possessed by God. It is this strong religious conviction which we must sustain if we would realize the implications of the Gospel for our own age.

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Clare and Conflict

SR. MADGE KARECKI, S.S.J.-T.O.S.F.

Conflict is a part of each of our lives. We cannot flee from it. Handling it well is a matter of understanding and evaluating the issue which has caused the conflict, and of acquiring the necessary skills for dealing with the dynamics at work in conflict situations. When I look at the life of Clare it seems that there were three areas in her life where Clare had to deal with conflict. They are three different, but similar areas and her approach in each gives us an indication of how Clare dealt with conflict.

Conflict with her Family

We know that Clare's family was part of the nobility of Assisi. Her father came from a long line of knights. Indeed the Offreducio family, including Clare's father, Favarone, were known for their support against the burgeoning movement of the merchant class to wrest away power from the nobility.

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Around 1198 Clare's immediate family had to flee Assisi for Perugia. They stayed with Monaldo, Favarone's brother, for protection during this time of struggle for the independence of the commune. The family remained in Perugia until about 1205-1206. The merchants had succeeded in gaining control of the commune. Thus they set up an economic and political system to benefit themselves. The oppressed had now become the oppressors.

Into this context God raised up Francis to give a prophetic witness to another style of life, a life based on the Gospel. Much to the dismay of the Offreducio family, Rufino, had become attracted to Francis and his other followers. Though history leaves us no record, it seems entirely possible that Rufino shared his experience and his aspirations with his cousin, Clare.

With interest Clare must have listened to the preaching of the young man clad in poor clothing and radiating a kind of joy which captivated her. Francis, for his part, we are told by Clare's sister Beatrice, sought out Clare. Francis had heard of her reputation as someone who was sensitive to the poor and receptive to his understanding of Gospel living. Her own heart was set on fire by all that they shared and with equal passion she longed to follow the poor Christ. In her Testament she wrote that through the words of Francis her heart was enlightened and she was called to conversion.

This call led to the first area of conflict in Clare's life. The conflict with her family and the values they represented. As sometimes happens, a call can bring us into tension and conflict with those we love. We find that we grow in a way different to their expectations of us. This was the case with Clare.

All of us are familiar with the story of how Clare joined Francis on the night of Palm Sunday, 1212. She left her family home secretly and by night with only her friend and confidante, Pacifica, the sister of Bona Guelfuccio, as a companion. The next day her angry relatives came to the Benedictine monastery of San Paolo. They tried to carry her away and were only convinced of the seriousness of her resolve when she bared her head and showed her shorn hair. This is more than a scene out of a medieval adventure story. Using imagery common to the medieval world, Clare's biographers used this symbolic act as a way to show how she dealt with the conflict with her family.

What can we observe? First, Clare was decisive. She acted upon her convictions. Secondly, she took responsibility for her actions, even in the face of opposition. Thirdly, she handled the conflict with her parents in a way they understood: she used no long arguments, but one convincing action. By showing her family her shorn head she revealed to them the conviction which was behind her action. In medieval times the tonsure was a sign of dedication and

Conflict with Hierarchy

Clare and the community at San Damiano were given the Benedictine Rule, later Hugolino gave them his own Rule, and still later they were given the Rule of Innocent IV. We know that Clare and the community accepted these forms of legislation and took them seriously, but also pursued the path of dialogue in the face of the conflict which arose from each of these rules.

The essence of the conflict lay in three areas of life: poverty, the relationship between those in authority and the community members and enclosure. In these three areas the legislation differed from what Clare was inspired to live by the example of Francis and the Form of Life he gave to the community.

The other rules allowed for communal ownership. This militated against the kind of poverty that made dependence on God real. Clare had experienced the wealth of the Benedictine monasteries first hand and found it stifling. She would have no part of it. The rules given to the Poor Ladies did not emphasize the role of the community in decision-making. The abbess was given a place of honor. Clare believed in the power of the Holy Spirit working in each member. She understood authority in terms of service.

All of the previous rules envisaged strict enclosure. Clare saw enclosure as essential to the contemplative life, but she adopted a common sense approach toward going out.

In the face of conflict with the hierarchy Clare obeyed and also acted. Her request for the Privilege of Poverty was a creative way of dealing with the conflict. It assured Clare that the community would have the freedom to be poor. In terms of the role of authority and enclosure Clare took as her life-long work creating a different way, another understanding. She did not denounce nor did she disobey. She and the sisters fulfilled the law and went beyond it.

Clare's own rule, her life project, reflects her mind and the experience of the community in these three areas of conflict. In this conflict with the hierarchy Clare, again, was decisive. She acted and a new kind of monastic community was born. Clare persevered and with utter conviction articulated her own Rule

which was faithful to her unique charism in the Church. At the root of this area of conflict is again the issue of her vocation. Here again we see the same pattern: decisiveness, responsible handling of the conflict in a way that is appropriate to the situation. Clare worked through the channels of the Church structure patiently, steadily and with confidence.

Conflict with the Friars

We know that hardly had Francis been laid in his tomb when the friars wanted to nullify the binding force of his Testament. Some of the friars could not take the kind of lifestyle Francis and the first followers taught them. The poverty and minority did not fit into the picture they had for the future of the community.

The friars sought to sever the connection between themselves and the Poor Ladies. Some authors speculate that perhaps the friars felt guilty about how they were living and could not bear to see the fidelity of the Poor Ladies.

Clare again acted in the face of this conflict. She faced the issue head on. She insisted on poverty - that is why she is called the most faithful follower of Francis. Clare said "No thank-you" to the material help the friars offered unless they would give them spiritual in-put. She forced them to come to terms with the essentials of Franciscan life. Clare would not compromise on essentials: poverty, spiritual growth and the relationships which existed among the brothers and sisters. No doubt this situation prompted her to quote the Form of Life in her *Rule*:

Because by divine inspiration you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the Most High King, the heavenly Father, and have taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse, choosing to live according to the perfection of the holy Gospel, I resolve and promise for myself and for my brothers always to have that same loving care and solicitude for you as I have for them.

Clare also quoted verbatim the section with regard to poverty:

I, little brother Francis, wish to follow the life and poverty of our most high Lord Jesus Christ and of His holy mother and to persevere in this until the end; and I ask and counsel you, my ladies to live always in the most holy life and poverty. And keep most careful watch that you never depart from this by reason of the teaching or advice of anyone.

Both of these texts are applicable and both are at the heart of the conflict which Clare had with the friars. Clare knew that the charism which she and

Francis shared was at stake. She could not let it die. Though she could not stem the tide which eventually overtook the friars, she acted creatively and faithfully by living the charism to the full in her own life. This too, was an issue tied to her very vocation.

The pattern again emerges: reflection, decisive action and honest confrontation of all that was an obstacle to fidelity to the charism.

reflection, decisive action and honest confrontation of all that was an obstacle to fidelity to the charism.

Conclusion

All of the areas of major conflict in Clare's life revolved around the issue of vocation. In her Testament Clare, quoting Paul to the Corinthians, exhorted her sisters with the words "Know your vocation" (1 Cor 1:26). She realized through her own experience the intimate connection that exists between understanding one's vocation, growing in that vocation, and persevering until the end despite opposition.

Without a clear understanding of one's vocation, grace dissipates, life becomes superficial. One gets lost in the unimportant and insignificant and one can be tempted to compromise the foundational values of the charism.

The areas of life in which Clare experienced conflict were not trivial or about nonessentials, but were all related to the charism. Clare resolved these conflicts with strength and courage. She could not change the opinions and convictions of others, but she could live in fidelity and that she did with the rare virtues of perseverance and love.



Beneath the Turmoil

There in the stillness and peace, you speak more profoundly than in a million praises

You do not shout with a loud voice. You whisper.
But that whisper celebrates more than a
chorus of voices.

You do not make your presence known with loud announcement, but with simple and silent arrival.

Your love, Lord, does not demand, but enables and encourages.

You do not force, but remain steady and safe.

Lord Jesus, the stillness and quiet are not empty. They are full of Your peace. The peace is full of Your gentle Spirit.

Your quiet oh Lord, is full of music, full of song. Most of all, Jesus, the precious silence is full of Your love.

j m ryan

A PSALM OF CLARE'S PRAYERFULNESS

My soul is aflame with the light of your love, my God. Within your presence my spirit is absorbed into the bliss of eternal sunlight.

In peaceful silence my soul is aflame.
You whisper your love to me.
You fill my moments with tender knowing,
My heart overflows with the secrets of your gifts
and I am filled beyond infinite imaginings.

To rest in your shadow is my soul's delight.

To proclaim your love is my heart's only desire.

My soul is aflame with the light for your love. With my whole being I meet you, my God, face to face, whom I love.

In quiet silence I am transformed in wonder, adoration and praise.

My soul is aflame with your love. Immersed in tranquil contemplation you set my heart ablaze with the radiant light of your tenderness.

My soul is aflame.

I live in your love.

I rest in your faithfulness.

You kindle my flame my beloved, my all, my light, my lover, my God.

My soul is aflame with the light of your love, my God. Within your presence my spirit is absorbed into the bliss of eternal sunlight

Sr. Marion Zeltmann, P.C.P.A.

How Our Fraternity Received New Evangelical Impulses Through the Intercession of Saint Anthony of Padua

HERMANN SCHALÜCK, O. F. M.

About the time of the Paschal Solemnity in the year 1992, the Universal Minister, after much travel on many pilgrimages by water, on land, and in the air, withdrew to a hermitage in the hills in order to do penance, to "apply himself to the contemplative dimension" and there to meditate on the signs in the history of our fraternity of life, death, and resurrection. And behold, it suddenly became clear to him that after being elected Minister General the previous year on the Feast of the blessed Brother Anthony of Padua, he had in fact encountered this universal Saint in the most wonderful way during the first months of his service. Some of these encounters are here set forth quite simply for the edification of others.

1. On the very first day of his service as Minister General, Brother Hermann received from Brother Anthony, the Minister of the Province of the Holy Name in New York, the sad news that armed robbers had - on the feast of the Wonderworker of all days - stolen several thousand dollars from the cash-box of the shrine of St. Anthony in 31st Street, money which was destined for feeding daily many hundreds of poor people. Thereupon the indignation among the citizens and their feelings of sympathy with the robbed friars were so great, that in an action of solidarity spurred on by the Governor of the State himself, they collected in one week a sum of money twice as great as that which had been taken from the friars. The ministers and servants in faraway San Diego upon hearing of this, wondered and asked themselves what such a sign might mean for the sexennium just begun, for example for the "fund-raising project" that they had just determined upon.

This unique account by the General Minister of the Order of Friars Minor gives us further insight into the marvelous wisdom which guides his life and his travels.

He spoke of how from the "memoria" of the past there must constantly grow a new "prophetia", for, as in the holy Eucharist, from the dynamic memory of the past there grows the certainty of a new life in the future. The minister concluded with these words: "We can summon the courage to be at least little prophets, that is to say 'minor prophets.' And that means for a University which bears the name of Anthony, to face the questions of today, the new questions concerning the life of man and of the cosmos; to place the human being before the Sabbath, not only to recognize and study the truth but to do it; not to mistake the penultimate questions for the ultimate ones; to connect together in our lives divine service and service of the poor; to make possible a multiplicity of voices in the concert of theology and spirituality. For, "he concluded, "a vital multiplicity is the best guarantee for any lasting unity."

3. As the new liturgical year began, there was great indignation and confusion throughout Italy and among all those who hold a special devotion to Saint Anthony, also in the Curia in Rome on the Gelsomino hill, because one of his most precious relics, a piece of the bone that hand which had worked so much good and blessed so many people, was stolen by shameless robbers from the Basilica in Padua. Tireless were the investigations of the Carabinieri, countless the prayers and the intercessions of the faithful.

As the forces of order finally found the precious relic in a wonderful way on a green lawn in Latium, the Minister Universalis experienced another sign of the care and protection which the Doctor Mirabilis had clearly wanted to bestow upon him ever since his election on 13th June 1991: a "General" of the Carabinieri, clearly ignorant of the wonderful multiplicity within the Franciscan family, immediately confided as a great secret to the Minister General the happy news of the recovered relic. He offered to bring it immediately and solemnly to the Gelsomino hill. The Minister first thanked the gentleman, praised the protectors of public order, but declined to receive the relic, because it belonged traditionally to other brothers of the same Francis. It was then in fact solemnly returned to Padua in the Venice region.

All the same, some brothers cannot quite rid themselves of the feeling that perhaps Saint Anthony himself had the desire to come into the Curia of the Friars Minor in Rome on the Gelsomino in order to bring a special blessing upon all who dwell therein.

4. In the first weeks of the new calendar year the Minister set out on a journey into the far country of Brazil in order to visit the brothers there and with them give thanks on the occasion of the five hundredth anniversary of the evangelization of their continent while at the same time undertaking an examination of conscience. On the way there he was forced, "for technical reasons" he was told, to wait one day - a Tuesday - in Lisbon in a manner quite unforeseen and unplanned before he could continue his journey on the wings of the wind. So he begged hospitality and a simple lodging for the night of Brother Mario, the Minister of the Province which is in Lusitania. Both were granted him. Brother Mario showed him the historic friary of Varatojo which is dedicated to Saint Anthony, and above all the friary of Saint Anthony is Lisbon, which is built on the spot where the Saint was born. After he prayed there in the grotto, he gave to many of the brothers and sisters of the Franciscan family an address, based on a passage from the sermons of the great preacher:

"Whoever is Guardian and Minister of others must be distinguished by a pure life and by knowledge of the holy Scriptures. He must be able to express himself well, clearly and with conviction. He must be zealous in prayer and show a sympathetic understanding in his relations with others, for he must some day give a reckoning for those who have been entrusted to him. In everything he must have the golden gift of mildness and gentleness. He should be the father and the mother of all." (Sermones)

With the great teachers of his fraternity in mind, he quoted also a saying of William Faulkner, who wrote, "The past is never dead. It is not even past." He ended by wishing all of them after the example of Saint Anthony of Lisbon "a clear head, a merry heart, a humble disposition". Thereupon he continued his journey.

5. Having reached the land under the Southern Cross, he realized that in Recife he had entered the territory of a Province dedicated to the Saint of Lisbon and Padua. The minister who greeted him likewise bore the name Antônio. In Olinda, where the young brothers are introduced to Franciscan life and into sacred theology, the Minister spoke with the assembled friars about the "priorities of Franciscan studies." He encouraged all of them to serve an evangelization which speaks of hunger for bread and hunger for God at the same time, neither separating them nor confusing them. He mentioned that St. Anthony himself had

had an "integral understanding of mission," because in his theology, which was expressly praised by Brother Francis (Letter to Anthony), the bread of Scriptures and of the Eucharist may not be separated from the bread of the hungry and of the poor, for both of them are the expression of God's single love and the sacrament of his "preferential option for mankind."

He pointed out that according to both the ancient and the modern Masters of the Fraternity it is of no importance to amass a great deal of knowledge. The wise man is rather the one who is able to apply his knowledge for the benefit of others and to the service of the world. Finally he told them what he had discovered in Portugal about the pedagogical method of St. Anthony. A novice had left the fraternity in which Anthony was teaching. It seemed that life according to the Gospel was too onerous for him. Secretly he took with him a valuable Book of Psalms which was of great importance for the fraternity. Brother Anthony himself had with his own hand written in it his precious annotations. So they all prayed fervently to the Lord led by the Saint, and their prayer was heard. Not only did the former novice contributely bring back the book. He also asked to be re-admitted to obedience and became for the many years of the rest of his life an exemplary friar minor.

By way of Fortaleza, where he visited a certain Cardinal Aloysius who many years before had been a professor at the Roman Antonianum, the Minister Universalis arrived at S. Luiz do Maranhão, where the brothers from Portugal had from 1624 to 1706 already had a "Custody of St. Anthony". In this place also a certain Brother Antônio Vieira (1608-1697), who it must be said was a member of the Order of the Society of Jesus, preached against the avarice of some of the colonizers and the immorality of the slave-traders and so showed himself to be a precursor of an authentic theology of liberation. This great missionary positioned himself on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean and preached to the fishes, because hard-hearted men would not listen to him. This is similar to what we read about the blessed Anthony at Rimini on the Adriatic (Fioretti, ch. 60).

In the year 1952 missionaries had come from the Saxonia Province to continue these Gospel traditions and to implant the Franciscan life here once more. Since that time so many young brothers had been admitted to obedience from the "basic communities," that a new Vice-Province could be erected. On the Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord the Minister read out the relative Roman decree. And on the evening of that same day a young man of that country made profession of his final vows into the hands of the Brother from Rome as a sign that a new branch had begun to grow on the trunk of the world-wide Brotherhood. And the name of this young friar was Antônio Pacheco.

- 6. In the weeks which followed, the Minister again came across his patron saint in the friary of S. Antônio in Belo Horizonte, where before a large gathering of sisters and brothers he spoke about the "Priorities of Evangelization Today;" in São Paulo, where he spoke with a certain Brother Leonardo about the student years they shared together in the Province of St. Anthony in Bayaria and about the obligation they shared in the name of the Church and of the Fraternity to live the spirit of the Saint also in new forms, particularly among the poor; in San Francisco in California, where every day in the name of Brother Anthony the hungry are fed, the naked are clothed, the sick are healed, the suffering are consoled, in their thousands; in Bologna in Emilia Romagna, where a certain Brother Ernesto, founder of the social centre called "Antonianum", celebrated his Golden Jubilee of priesthood; in Laç in cold Albania, where with the help of this same Brother Ernesto, of the Antonianum of Bologna, as well as with the support and help even of the Moslems of Albania, a sanctuary of St. Anthony is being re-built which the former holders of power had shamelessly destroyed. For all these encounters and moments of illumination he thanked the Lord.
- 7. Thereafter Brother Hermannus resolved to betake himself once more to Brazil for the first anniversary of his election as Minister General, and this on the occasion of the "United Nations" conference on ecology and cosmic survival. On the Praça Mahathma Gandhi, in front of our friary Santo Antônio in Rio de Janeiro, it was his desire to pray and fast together with innumerable sisters and brothers from the whole Franciscan family.

Moreover he wanted to join with many people of good will in calling on the universal Saint, the Wonder-worker, the Finder of lost objects of value and the Creator of new perspectives, Anthony of Lisbon-Padua-Rio-Rome, so that at his intercession the millions of poor might at last be given human dignity and bread; the powerful of this world might make peace with one another and with the martyred world; the many children forced to live on open streets and squares might find a new home; to all those who are in need might be given a new vision of a just world order; and, finally, the Franciscan family might ever more clearly take up the ministry and diakonia of peace-making as the necessary consequence of its faith in the Risen Lord, preaching it after the example of Francis and Anthony more by deeds than by words.

Ad laudem Christi, Amen.

Haec omnia vidit, audivit et fideliter conscripsit Frater Arminius Romanus, a secretis Ministri Generalis, in eremitorio Sancti Antonii

a Montepaolo, die Dominicae in Albis, A.D. 1992

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