OCTOBER, 1994

The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

ARTICLES



FRANCIS OF ASSISI: PERSON OF	
GRACED IMAGINATION	261

Giles A. Schinelli, T.O.R.

CONTEMPLATION AND CONFRONTATION......267

Marie Beha, O.S.C. Eric Lindbloom, O.F.M., Cap.

HOW FRANCIS PRAYED273

Claude Jarmak, O.F.M., Conv.

FEATURES

NEW FIORETTI: CONCERNING THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR OF SAINT CLARE IN AFRICA......257

Hermann Schalück, O.F.M.

Murray Bodo, O.F.M.

POETRY:

TO JOB	266
Clare McDonnell, O.S.F.	
THE CLOTH MERCHANT'S TALE	280

OK REVIEWS 282

Volume 44, No. 10

The CORD

A Monthly Franciscan Spiritual Review

Acting Editor: Fr. Robert M. Stewart, O.F.M. Associate Editors: Fr. Julian A. Davies, O.F.M. Bro. Anthony LoGalbo, O.F.M.

Editorial Board: Fr. Regis Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap.; Fr. Michael Blastic, O.F.M. Conv.; onna Marie F. Kaminsky, S.F.O.; Sr. Madge Karecki, S.S.J.-T.O.S.F.; Fr. Thomas Murtagh, O.F.M.; Fr. Dominic F. Scotto, T.O.R.; Fr. Gregory Shanahan, O.F.M.; Sr. rances Ann Thom, O.S.F.; The Staff of the Franciscan Institute, Bro. F. Edward oughlin, O.F.M., Director. Cover Design by Sister Kay Francis Berger, O.S.F.

the CORD (ISSN 0010-8685 USPS 563-640) is published monthly with the July and ugust issues combined, by the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University, St. onaventure, NY 14778. ubscription rates: \$16.00 a year; \$1.50 a copy. Second class postage paid at St.

onaventure, NY 14778, and at additional mailing office.
OSTMASTER: Send address changes to The CORD, P.O.Drawer F, St. Bonaventure, IY 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

LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God LaudHor: Praises at all the Hours OffPass: Office of the Passion OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix RegB: Rule of 1223 RegNB: Rule of 1221 RegEr: Rule for Hermits SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues Test: Testament of St. Francis UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy ¹I. II refer to First and Second Editions.

Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221

II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis 2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis 3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles CL: Legend of Saint Clare CP: Process of Saint Clare

Fior: Little Flowers of St. Francis

Form Viv: Form of Life for St. Clare

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).

New Fioretti Concerning The Beginning of the Year of Saint Clare in Africa

HERMANN SCHALÜCK, O.F.M.

"The peace at the hearth of your hut outweighs the enmity of the entire world"

In the month of August 1993, as the Order of the Lesser Brothers was commemorating the first ten years of its new "Africa Project" and also when 800 years had passed since the birth of Saint Clare, Brother Hermann once more left his jasmine-scented hill in Rome and, having sought the consent of the other Ministers General and of the Mother Abbess of the Proto-Monastery of Saint Clare to spend the feast of Saint Clare in Africa, set out with Brother Peter for Kenya and Uganda.

In Nairobi all the Brothers of the Vice-Province of Saint Francis were awaiting their arrival, in order to recount to them something of their experiences, needs and hopes. The young Brothers of you continent said to him, "Do not come bringing a full pitcher. Come rather with an empty calabash. We will show you how to fill it." And as he saw the numerous young brothers of all tribes and nations who wanted to join the Order in these days, he was reminded of the saying of Scripture, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garment and saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'" (Zech. 8:23). Brother Ayele from Kenya sat one evening with Brother Hermann from Rome on a straw mat and drank tea with him. He said, "You are sitting with me on the same level. In Africa that is usually not so. Our chiefs are accustomed to sit higher than the ordinary people. I love my people, but I am also happy to be your younger Brother who sits with you on the same level." Brother Hermann spoke to them as they were all assembled about the oneness of Africa with the world-wide Brotherhood, and what in his opinion evangelization means: "to build a ship does not mean to weave the sails, to cast the nails, to shape the wood as a carpenter, to read the heavenly signs, but rather to waken in all those who intend to sail in her the longing for the open sea" (Exupéry). Only by a longing for God in contemplation, he added, can the Brotherhood and the whole Franciscan Family initiate a new evangelization. Brother Expositus from Tanzania called out to him a proverb from the tribe of the Xeruba, "The peace at the hearth of your hut outweighs the enmity of the entire world." This gave the Minister the occasion to say in reply that indeed in the Order of the Lesser Brothers it is not a matter of writing ever new learned manifestos urging inculturation or contemplation, or directing lengthy appeals for peace to the whole world. More important is it to begin with oneself using quite small steps: to close doors quietly, to remember the name of a Brother or Sister, to avoid treading a flower needlessly underfoot, to learn respectful silence and at the same time to speak foreign languages, to show mercy and at the same time to be able to accept it, to know how to plant both rice and roses. During the liturgy at the conclusion of the African Chapter of Mats he thanked all in the name of the world-wide Brotherhood for the implantation of the Order in East Africa and Madagascar. He blessed everyone, white or black, young or old, in the name of Francis and Clare, with the words:

"May the Lord bless your work.

May your rice-fields and banana-groves always bear rich fruit.

May the meat and the milk of your zebus nourish the poor.

May your doors and your hearts always stand open.

May your voices and your drums ever praise and glorify the Lord."

* * * *

Thereafter the Minister continued his journey. He sailed across Lake Victoria to the land of Uganda and after a tedious journey through an area beset by robbers and brigands arrived by way of Entebbe and Kampala and Mabara in Kashekuro, where the Brothers and the Bishop and a crowd of people from the villages of the surrounding Savannas awaited him. It was the Vigil of the Feast of Saint Clare, which was at that same moment also being celebrated in Assisi in Umbria with much incense and Gregorian chant and under the presidency of a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. Here in far-away Kashekuro there was a great gathering of the people with their cattle, to celebrate the Holy Eucharist with the Bishop and the Minister, while listening to the rhythmic beat of drums and tambourines. In his homily, which the Bishop personally translated into the language of his people, Brother Hermann likened the Gospel to a bushfire which, having been lit in many places by many Brothers of Saint Francis and Sisters of Saint Clare, could one day soon enlighten the whole African continent. He also said that evangelization is what takes place when poor people joyfully recount to one another where fresh water and a plateful of rice and buffalo-meat are to be found. It is the task of Christians in Africa, so he continued, to dig many

new wells (Gen 26:17-33), to drink from fresh souces, to irrigate thirsty land also in Europe with water and hope, to watch over the garden of the Church and its basic communities and build on them, to live new visions of a brotherly and sisterly Church, to compose new melodies and sing new songs. He reminded them of the saying of the ancient Roman poet Ovid that poetry and music only arise from a heart that is at peace with itself. He begged Brother Richard from America, an older Brother who led the community, not to leave this place and quoted the African proverb, "When a wise man departs, it is as though a whole library has been destroyed."

At the end of the Mass the Bishop was so moved, that in the face of the whole assembly he knelt down and humbly begged the Minister General for the Blessing of Saint Francis and of Saint Clare for his diocese and all its people and all its cattle. And the assembled community was astonished at this gesture and thanked the Lord for this sign of a truly new evangelization.

Until late into the night, on the grass and between the banana groves around the church of Kashekuro, there rose the smoke from great pots of maize, banana, buffalo-meat and millet beer. Far into the darkness of the African night resounded the drums and the hand-clapping of the people.

* * * * *

The Solemnity of Saint Clare was celebrated by the Lord Bishop and all the Brothers from Uganda and Rome with the Poor Ladies in Mbarara. The Sisters greeted the Minister in the garden with symbols and words at once African and totally Catholic: a young Sister with the countenance of the Queen of Saba offered him a bowl of water, saying, "Here is fresh water, to bid you welcome. It is to tell you that we have awaited your visit as parched soil awaits the rain." Brother Hermann drank from the calabash and passed it on to the Bishop. A second Sister came up and said, "Accept this fruit of our land, a Colanut. I will break it into two, for me to eat one half, and you the other. The single colanut is to tell you that we were already bound to each other before you came." Then the Abbess came up and said, "Here is the tabouret ('the little stool'), on which you will sit in our circle not only as our guest, but as a part of our family. And we ask you to tell us in the assembly of our family, as is the custom in Africa, about your journey and about our great family." And so it was. As they all then sat under the great tree, the youngest novice asked him what the Friars Minor really understood by "Evangelization" in Africa, a continent with centenary traditions of its own. The Minister answered, "When we approach another culture, another people, another religion, we must begin by removing our shoes and sandals and remain a long time in silence. For the ground on which we tread is holy ground. If we do not do this, but instead come with our heavy shoes and loud words, we destroy the music and the hopes of the other; even worse, we completely ignore the presence of God who was already there before we came." He explained that in the past few years Brothers have come from all parts of the world to Africa, in order to discover there the other half of their souls.

In his homily, during the celebration of the Eucharist, Brother Hermann recounted how he had asked his Brother Ministers, the Bishop and the Mother Abbess of the Protomonastery in Assisi for permission to be absent from the opening of the Year of Saint Clare in Assisi and rather be present in Africa, for there, too, Saint Clare and her heritage have to be commemorated. All were so overjoyed at hearing this, that they clapped their hands, let out loud whoops of joy, and sounded their drums and tambourines. He went on to speak of the three dimensions of contemplation. To begin with, we have to acquire "clear eyes" and a "pure heart" in order to recognize the Lord in the Scriptures and in the Holy Eucharist and in the Church. Then it becomes important to have contemplative eyes, open hearts, and open hands for the poor, through whom in a special way the Spirit speaks to the Church and to the family of Saint Francis and Saint Clare. Finally, contemplation will also transform our relationship with nature and creation, for everything created, even though deformed by human hate or human avarice, is a trace and a word from the Creator.

Following the mind of the little Brother of Assisi, he encouraged the Sisters of Saint Clare in Africa also to evangelize tired old Europe by their example. "Be patient in affliction, wakeful in prayer, persevering in your work, cheerful and happy in your dealings with the poor, grateful for all benefactions, tireless in your gratitude to the Lord of History. Have faith in the creative power of contemplation. For it is not flight from the world. It is the power with which all religions, together and with the help of God, will create a new, more just, more peaceful world." He ended by passing on to the Sisters in Uganda the blessing which he had himself received in Kenya: "Let the Peace at the hearth of your home outweigh the enmity of the entire world."

* * * *

After all had fortified themselves in the monastery garden of the Poor Ladies with a frugal meal, the Minister of the Fraternity traveled back to Rome, crossing Lake Victoria, the waters of Aswan, the Gulf of Arabia and the Gulf of Naples, to pass some time again on his Jasmine Hill and to reflect on all those things which the Sisters and Brothers in Africa had taught him, both for his own benefit and for the edification of the Franciscan and Clarian Family throughout the world.

Francis of Assisi: Person of Graced Imagination

GILES A. SCHINELLI, T.O.R.

The Greek novelist Nikos Kazantzakis, whom you may remember from his passionate tale of Zorba the Greek, also wrote, in the early sixties, a biography of the little brother whom we honor this night in our gathering, Francis of Assisi. The spirit of that same individual animated that wonderful convocation of religious leaders from all over the world held in Assisi on this very day seven years ago (October 27, 1986)—what is now called the Franciscan Day of Peace.

In relating that familiar encounter of Francis with the leper—which he does through the eyes of Brother Leo whom the author uses as the narrator of the entire tale, Kazantzakis tells us that Francis although shocked by the sight and smell of lepers nevertheless runs to meet this leperman, embraces him, kisses him on the lips then wraps him in his cloak and carries him off to a leper hospital. During the journey—and Leo is accompanying him—Francis stops to uncover the leper and seeing that he has disappeared falls to the ground and begins to cry. The ensuing dialogue between Francis and Leo runs like this:

"Did you see, Brother Leo, did you understand?"

"I saw, Brother Francis, but the only thing I understand is that God is playing games with us."

"This, Brother Leo, is what I understand: all lepers, all cripples, all sinners \dots if you kiss them on the mouth \dots "

He stopped, afraid to complete his thought.

"Enlighten me, Brother Francis, enlighten me, do not leave me in the dark," begged Leo.

Finally, after a long silence, he murmured with a shudder:

"All of these, if you kiss them on the mouth, O God forgive me for saying this, they all . . . become Christ,"

The following talk was given at the Franciscan Convocation of Saint Francis College, Loretto, PA on October 27, 1993. Fr. Giles A. Schinelli, T.O.R. is a member and former Minister Provincial of the Immaculate Conception Province (Hollidaysburg, PA) of the Third Order Regular. Currently he serves as the President of the Franciscan Federation.

While it is clear that Kazantzakis takes creative liberties with the sources (1 Cel 17b; 2 Cel 9c; 3 L3S 11b; LM I:5) and is inclined to follow Bonaventure in the sudden disappearance of the leper and has Francis kiss the leper on the mouth rather than on the hand, his genius lies in his accurate perception of Francis' vision and spirit. For in this little episode, Kazantzakis pinpoints what we Franciscans have tried to say in so many different ways: that Francis was a person who took the Incarnation seriously. Or to put it another way, Francis was a practical man and concepts for him had real-life implications: — If Christ could become flesh, then all flesh could become Christ . . . and that meant all flesh . . . his flesh, lepers' flesh, crippled persons' flesh, sinners' flesh, non-believers' flesh, even the flesh of his own little brothers and sisters.

In Zen practice the koan — a paradoxical statement that confuses and upsets the ordinary rational mind — is given so that the spiritual seeker has an opportunity to break through to an entirely new level of insight into reality. The individual wrestles in his/her mind with the koan and eventually breaks through to the new understanding. The experience whereby Francis acquired his incarnational insight was similar except that his wrestling was with personal experience and not simply something he did in his mind. The collection of his life experiences — his life wrestlings if you will — are instructive both for us who have been given the task of keeping alive his precious legacy as well as for those who wish to understand his relevance in our contemporary world.

Time, of course, does not permit us to recount all of Francis' experiences but a few will suffice to hint at how Francis came to become convinced that if Christ could become flesh then all flesh could become Christ. And let us say clearly that for Francis (and for us too) this insight did not fall fully developed into his heart but rather developed and deepened as his capacity to understand himself, human life . . . and God developed and, more importantly, moved him to commitment.

If Christ could become flesh then all flesh could become Christ.

Recall his infatuation with chivalry, the excitement of being a knight and fighting for the right cause, owning a horse and armour and the intent of the young idealist as he set off for battle. Those experiences were matched with the reality of being a captured prisoner, of seeing and perhaps enduring the horrible indignities which prisoners of war were subjected to, his subsequent illness and

a long period of recuperation. Taken all together they became formative for Francis.

Recall his trip to the Holy Land in 1219 and his discovery, upon his return a year later, that the Order had begun to take a different direction and that friars he had trusted to guide the Order had misunderstood both his intentions and his ability to lead. Imagine his frustration and anger and glimpse if you can the reasons behind his desire to resign from his position.

Recall his touching letter to a Minister in which he tries to comfort this friar obviously overwhelmed with his responsibilities, attempts to speak to him in the words of the Gospel about forgiving those brothers who had fallen aside from their life commitment all the while searching for some practical solution when similar problems would arise in the future.

Francis' experiences were such that he could have easily become a cynic. They could have easily led him to make incessant commentary on the reality of original sin (the seamier side of life) as he saw it in himself, his brothers and the people around him. Why didn't he? Was it because he was at heart a romantic and preferred to look at reality, life, through rose-colored glasses and simply embrace all folks and all behaviors in the name of a certain naiveté and lack of critical judgment? Was it because he was by nature an optimist and easily given to habits of positive thinking. No, I don't think so!

Rather, I would like to suggest that Francis was a person of rare and graced imagination. His genius lies in the quality of his imaginative skill which I would equate with a certain kind of poetic talent. It was this imaginative ability which allowed Francis to understand a Gospel paradox: just as Christ had become flesh ... so too all flesh could become Christ. Or to put it another way ... all flesh could become Christ only if he, Francis, would allow it to be so.

Only if Francis could forgive those who imprisoned him and made him ill and kiss them on the lips by this forgiving action so to speak . . . only if Francis could forgive those who had tried to change the direction of the Order by correcting them but loving them at the same time and thereby kissing them on the lips, so to speak . . . only if Francis could turn the minister's thoughts away from going to a hermitage while at the same time showing that he loved him deeply enough to encourage him to practice the forgiveness of the Gospel in regard to the lapsed brother and thereby kissing him on the lips, so to speak . . .

Francis' imagination enabled him to understand the Incarnation. He did this on two levels, I believe. First on the level of history — Francis grasped that Jesus, Son of God had become flesh, one like us in all things but sin. The marvelous condescension of God in this activity truly captured Francis' imagination. We

all know the story of how he was so impressed by the poor circumstances of Jesus' birth that he wished to create some vehicle which would perpetually commemorate it. This was only the beginning. Down through the ages sons and daughter of Francis would write rhapsodic volumes about this core truth of our faith.

Yet Francis understood the Incarnation on another level — the level of invitation. It was here that his imaginative skill is most operative. This mystery of faith was not simply a historical fact. For him it was also an invitation. An invitation to participate in the mystery. Each time he could break through the patina of his experiences, move deeper into the circumstances and grasp the underlying reality — each time he could allow all flesh to become Christ — then the Incarnation was a palpable phenomenon.

Kazantzakis, in the prologue of his book on Francis, puts it this way:

Everywhere about me, as I wrote, I sensed the Saint's invisible presence; because for me Saint Francis is the model of the dutiful person, the person who by means of ceaseless, supremely cruel struggle succeeds in fulfilling our highest obligation — something higher even than morality or truth or beauty — the obligation to transubstantiate the matter which God entrusted to us, and turn it into spirit.²

The significance of Francis' vision is not difficult for us to appreciate in our time. We who are more educated, more technological, more globally aware, more political and more sophisticated still find that all the "mores" do not necessarily appease our appetites or assuage the human conflicts which seem to increase daily. Wars, ethnic cleansing, famine, racism, nationalism, sexism, exploitation, religious and political forms of domination—the world groans and the sound is overwhelming.

Added to this groaning, our fears and pre-conceived notions serve to isolate us and stifle our creative imagination. We are afraid of the homeless person who accosts us asking for a few cents and perhaps a kind word and find it impossible to understand how the number of these folks continues to grow. We fear the AIDS victim, easily expostulating moral principles yet keeping a healthy distance while understanding little of the politics or human desires involved. We fear the political implications of our faith and hence continue to pollute our world and ignore the global inter-connectedness we read about.

But wait! For Francis and for the religious leaders who gathered in Assisi seven years ago today, the message was not rhetoric. Rather it was action—one person at a time, one encounter at a time. Each person, each encounter an invitation to enter into the mystery of Incarnation. Each person, each encounter an opportunity to "transubstantiate the matter which God entrusted to us."

At the conclusion of his wonderful book *The Canticle of Creatures*, Eloi Leclerc shares with his readers the very poignant excerpts of his personal diary written in the spring of 1945.³ Apparently arrested and exiled by the Nazis, he records a month's horrendous journey in an overcrowded open boxcar on the way to Dachau. The details describe gut-wrenching hunger, exposure to the elements — particularly rain and cold, the mistreatment and cruelty of the guards, the horror of hoping that someone will die so that there will be more room, the discipline of not being allowed to stand, the filth and vermin and circumstances which visitors to the new Holocaust museum in Washington, D.C. are revisiting with heart-rending clarity and horror.

Francis was a person of rare and graced imagination.

A few sentences reference the sights and smells of spring — the budding trees high up on the mountain, the larks tumbling in the evening sky and the golden flowering of broom bushes. But the tone throughout is heavy, ominous:

There we were, thousands of persons abandoned to hunger, cold, vermin and death. The human being is completely crushed. Man, whom we up till now believed was made in God's image, now seems laughable: worthless, helpless, hopeless; a being caught up in a whirlwind of forces that play with him, or rather, pay absolutely no attention to him. That is how we see ourselves now — that and nothing more. Among the corpses that lie in the water of the car, eyes turned back, is a companion or friend. Everything we can see, every experience we must undergo, tells us we are in the grip of an iron law, handed over to the play of blind forces — and that this, this alone is reality (p. 233).

And yet, on the morning of April 26 when one of us (there are five Franciscans in this boxcar) is in his last moments and the light has almost left his eyes what rises from our hearts to our lips is not a cry of despair or rebellion but a song, a song of praise: Francis of Assisi's Canticle of Brother Sun (p. 234).

In asking why this happens he replies simply saying:

Theories have no place in our utter confusion of spirit; they offer no shelter from the storm. The only thing that remains and is priceless in our eyes is the patience and friendship this or that comrade shows you. Such an act by

someone who, like yourself, is immersed in suffering and anxiety, is a ray of light that falls into the wretched darkness that envelops us. It re-creates you, makes you a human being once again... And when such an act of friendly help has been done to you, you in turn are able to do it for another (p. 234).

Would that the creative imagination of Francis of Assisi which gave birth to such insight be ours. Would that it be ours!

Endnotes



TO JOB

I too have spoken without understanding Of things incomprehensible to me:

The usual winter storms and summer splendours (Which Blake would call God's contrariness in love & cruelty)

But, I would know further God's primal plan for all creation With and without human collaboration.

The dark mystery of death and suffering; The profound beauty of transcendent grace.

The strange history of His covenant with Israel His limitless thought for the universal race.

And yes, the depth of Francis' poverty and nothingness, And the height, he knew, of God's supreme worthiness.

Sr. Clare McDonnell

Contemplation and Confrontation

MARIE BEHA, O.S.C. ERIC LINDBLOOM, CAP.

"The North American Experience of Poor Clares" was the title of the session that started this man questioning what he knew of Poor Clares. I was curious, especially as a group of Poor Clares were new to my province.

"Contemplation involves confrontation" was a statement made by one of the Poor Clare presenters. This intriguing idea is not my everyday experience as a Friar Minor. I wanted to know more. Clare and Francis were collaborators. Second and First Order mythologies seem to say that the communities they founded were to minister to one another. So I tracked down the presenter, Sister Marie Beha, O.S.C., and we began to share more on the meaning of her insight and how we experience it in our respective communities. We invite you to join our dialogue.

My experience as a Capuchin Franciscan is that we claim a contemplative spirit. An easy way out here is to quote statements from our Constitutions. But my interest is in teasing out some lived experiences that led me to hope that the Clares could give some complimentarity to the First Order.

That Capuchins be contemplative is a stated value not only from our official documents but from sampling the membership. What I experience of confrontation leaves much to be desired. A lack of confrontation can stem from men's issues of closeness. This would be heightened if the confrontation were positive.

Masculine is the primary experience of the First Order. Much has been written on men's issues and the men's movement. Learned lack of emotional

This article by Sr. Marie and Fr. Eric resulted from a dialogue begun at a breakout session at the August 6-10, 1992 Franciscans Network charter Symposium in Denver, Colorado. Sr. Marie, who has served her community in formation work and as Abbess, is a member of the Poor Clare community at Greenville, South Carolina. Fr. Eric, a member of the St. Conrad Province of Capuchins, has recently moved to Denver to develop a program for Aids Ministry. The CORD shares their thoughts and hope for dialogue.

¹ Nikos Kazantzakis, Saint Francis, (Touchstone Books, 1962), 94-96.

² Ibid., 12.

³ Eloi Leclerc, *The Canticle of Creatures: Symbols of Union*, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), 227-236.

awareness is part of the male backpack. Numbness of feelings can be characteristic. Francis seemed able to ring most of the chimes in his emotional carillon. His emotional variety could be an inspiration for contemplation by Friars who tend to nurture one or a few reactions.

Men and Franciscan men too commonly avoid feelings through distracters of television, drugs (alcohol and nicotine) or the occasional guest. Another effective distracter is politeness. Niceness is a virtue lest offense be taken or communicated. Triangulation or talk about another is more common than engagement one-to-one and strangles possible clear conversation.

My experience as a Capuchin is that house chapters are a regular recommendation. As I have mulled over this dynamic through the years, I see it as a decent up-dating of what used to be called colloquy periods. These were daily, regular gathering times for conversation. They could be hilarious or ponderous. But they did carry the expectation that we would regularly speak with one another.

If I understand the house chapter correctly, this is an opportunity to sharpen the edges of our lives as we try to live the Gospel in a local community, with ramifications on the provincial and world-wide spectrum. These could be good opportunities for men to get beyond ideas and concepts and on to the values and meanings of faith and experience. That would require contemplative confrontation of self before another. It would require leaving behind the safety ledges of intellectualizing.

Yet house chapters should be the last place for confrontation. This goes to the heart of the Gospel. Jesus gives the sticky technique of approaching another to question differences that are always present. If a degree of resolution is unattainable, then another person is employed in the confrontation. Only then is the community invoked. Am I contemplative enough to approach a brother with a question, complaint, grievance or compliment? A translation of Francis' advice that the brothers are to proceed two by two could be the act of confrontation.

When anyone is confronted, the initial and natural reaction is anxiety. The confronter could be met with denial, defiance or defamation. Can I go two by two with my brother or another in their anxiety? Am I willing to stay with another's natural anxiety and talk her or him down to a point where understanding lives? This is nurturance in essence and can require patience and endurance, which are culturally more feminine attributes. From what Marie has said, the cloistered sisters have contemplated themselves into a distinctly masculine, culturally attributed stance of being willing to confront.

Deborah Tannen, in her book You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation speaks of how men report; women establish rapport. Could our sisters in Clare have something to teach us? Are Franciscan men willing to learn from our sisters? With the Second Order enclosed and literally rubbing up against each other and the First Order men often out and about, is this possible? Desirable?

To get beyond ideas and concepts and on to the values and meanings of faith and experience would require contemplative confrontation of self before another.

A Contemplative Confronts

When Eric approached me after the breakout session in Denver our discussion sparked a whole series of reflections. What began as a single-sentenced truism expanded into this article.

"Contemplation involves confrontation." That is what I said originally. Now I want to rephrase that to read, contemplation requires confrontation. Completely counter to the popular image of the contemplative as silent, withdrawn, and passive, the truth is that a person called contemplative must face up to reality, look it in the eye, see deeply, and then live out the vision. And this on many levels:

- 1) seeking God
- 2) facing self
- 3) discovering one's neighbor
- 4) unifying this vision in community.

In God, neighbor, self and community, confrontation must be joined. This is true for all Christians and particularly for Franciscans whose charism joins contemplation to action.

Confronting God

Face to face vision of God is the life-long goal of all Christian striving, the hope of all contemplative living. For the contemplative, seeing God is immediate and eminently practical. God is everywhere. Each moment is a given by God. It must be received in all of its reality, accepted as gift, and returned with thanksgiving.

Most people find their time too filled for much contemplation. Presence has another rhythm. We live and move and are in God's presence, allowing God to present Godself to us. This is contemplative confrontation. God is articulating in all the reality of our lives. God speaks love in warmth that comforts and food that nourishes. God speaks of joy in the surprise gift or the expected letter.

Receiving this word of God is basic to contemplative confrontation. Opening our hearts is the essential discipline. Are we looking? Do we want to see and hear? Or have we excused ourselves? More likely, we are into a purely functional mode. God gets a busy signal.

Confronting Self

Though the contemplative is always looking toward God, experience shows that this vision throws new light on self. As we grow we come closer to seeing ourselves as God sees us, as lovable. So basic is this development that any contemplation which does not bear this good fruit should be considered suspect.

However logical this statement, the reality about self often brings dismay to a novice in contemplative living. Issues unresolved in the past rise up and must be faced. My response makes all the difference. We can become frightened and resist, close our eyes and go back to where we were. What is needed is hope and a sense that the self one now confronts is the self that God has been calling and loving all along.

Confronting Our Neighbor

We see ourselves and our neighbor in God and God in all creation. That is the **real** truth and our vision is often clouded by sin. Specks in our neighbor take on the proportion of beams as we loose love's perspective. If only our neighbor were more perfect, we could be too.

Experience has shown every contemplative a litany of defective choices. We can let another's activity so fill the screen of our perception that we see nothing else. Contemplative confrontation begins differently. Prior to any attempt at criticism, it stands strong in love. This requires decisive prayer.

Standing in prayer is always the beginning of contemplative confrontation. It may not be the end. A particular relationship may not always be positive. Contemplative love does not mean that wrong is denied, ignored or unchallenged. How does this translate into action? The gospel suggest "If your brother or sister does wrong, go and take the matter up with them, strictly between yourselves..." (Mt 18:15)

Loving truth begins in the direct encounter with the other whose action is disturbing us. And not in grumbling to others. Beginning as soon as possible

after a specific incident, we limit ourselves to what we have noticed. Do not act on hear-say or generalizations like, "Everyone is concerned." Be careful not to impute motivation, "You don't care." Do not bring up a list of previous failures.

Limitations of enclosure allow the Sisters to know each other in depth. This makes it possible for us to support each other's weakness and maximize each other's strengths. But the same closeness that is the gift of Poor Clare community also puts a priority on responding to whatever could weaken this unity. Our groups are blessed with a healthy amount of pluralism. Difficulties can rise. Confrontation is called for so that differences do not build into divisions.

In contemplative communities, confrontation centers around what strengthens unity or could weaken it. The behavior at issue should be public, something many find objectionable. If we have any doubt about whether we are simply expressing our own prejudice, it may be wise to ask a reliable advisor for feedback. But this must be done in such a way as to respect the privacy of everyone concerned.

Persons in positions of authority in community may be able to provide some of this objectivity and add suggestions. Authority should not be used to avoid personal responsibility. Wise the authority figure who refuses to relay indirect complaints and insists on direct communication.

If contemplative confrontation is to be responsible it must also include a willingness to hear what the other has to say. Ask yourself: am I willing to be confronted in turn?"

Even with the best intentions, confrontation with our neighbor may not be effective. We need to accept this before we start. The other may be unable to change. We too may be unready to change. The truth is that all of us will have some changing to do, which brings us to community.

Completely counter to the popular image of the contemplative as silent, withdrawn, and passive, the truth is that a person called contemplative must face up to reality, look it in the eye, see deeply, and then live out the vision.

Confrontation In Community

Even private interchanges have a backdrop of community. For monastic contemplatives, community life takes on a particular urgency. We live together with the same Sisters and within the limits of enclosure. We confront God, self, neighbor with an intensity that makes our life realistic and rewarding.

In a Poor Clare community, when divisions cause serious damage, action must be taken. In the gospel approach, the initiative belongs to the offended party. While it requires strength to go to another and state simply and directly "I am having a problem," it may require more courage to face the reality that none of this may be enough. It is easier to settle for peace at any price. Gospel living suggests bringing a second or third party to the confrontation to provide greater objectivity and underline the seriousness of the situation.

If even this fails, the whole community may need to be involved in the confrontation. Here possible gain must be assessed against what are almost certain risks. Some of the difficulties to be considered: the shock suffered by the person confronted, the community's resources of time and energy, or the resulting disturbance of more or less innocent bystanders. On the other hand, perhaps the problem has already become so public that everyone is using excessive amounts of energy coping.

Hopefully a community devoted to contemplation will be so rooted in God that extreme measures will be rare. But they may be necessary. Even though contemplative love knows "no limits to its faith, its hope, its endurance" (1 Cor. 13:7), it has its priorities clearly in focus: the greater good of the whole body. A weak community damages the health of everyone, including the offender. A strong community builds up the health of each member.

Conclusion

Clare and Francis had different contributions to make to the Gospel project. Each represented different cultural expressions of being a woman or man. Thirteenth century women were primarily home-based while the men of that time were involved outside the home.

This still seems the case in the Second and First Orders: the Poor Clares and Franciscan men are represented by the home and the road. Being home-bound and road-based are different ways of approaching community issues. Can the First Order learn more effective ways of confronting issues from the Second Order? Can the Second Order be the teacher of the contemplative confrontation? Or will both lapse in silence? As stated at the beginning of this article, we invite you to join the dialogue, which is in itself confrontation.

How Francis Prayed

CLAUDE JARMAK, O.F.M., CONV.

To establish and maintain a personal relationship with anyone, some form of communication is not only necessary but essential. To express one's true thoughts, feelings and moods, to impart and interchange forms an integral part of communication. It is done in various ways: conversation, correspondence, body language, a smile, and even in silence, especially when two people love each other deeply.

The spiritual life is basically a relationship with God. In the gospel of Matthew Jesus describes this relationship graphically when he asks "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" Extending his hand toward his disciples, he said "There are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father, is brother and sister and mother to me" (Mt 12:48-50). At the last supper, Jesus told his disciples "I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you always" (Jn 14:16) and "Anyone who loves me will be true to my word, and my Father will love him. We will come to him; We will make our dwelling place with him" (Jn 15:23). God has not only invited us into a relationship with Himself, but also communicated fully with us by His Word, Jesus who said of himself "I have not spoken on my own; no, the Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to speak. Since I know that his commandment means eternal life, whatever I say is spoken just as he instructed me" (Jn 12:49).

In this relationship with God, an essential element on our part is communication. This communication is called prayer, which is nothing else but personal communion with God. Prayer can thus be defined as faith's answer to God who invites us to an intimate relationship with himself. In prayer God's initiative of love always comes first; our initial step is always a response to God's invitation.

St. Francis, after deciding to "follow in the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ" by living the Gospel life, was a man wholly dedicated to communion

Fr. Claude Jarmak, a Conventual friar of the Province of St. Anthony, teaches Franciscan Studies at St. Hyacinth College and Seminary in Granby, Massachusetts. He offered these reflections on how Francis prayed to his brothers at their Provincial Chapter.

with God, that is, to prayer. Thomas Celano, in his Second Life of the Saint, writes that Francis "not only prayed, but became himself a prayer" (2Cel 95), inasmuch as prayer was no longer something he did, but something he lived. What he practiced, he prescribed for his brothers.

Sometimes we fail to realize the novelty and newness of Francis' movement. In the thirteenth century anyone called to a vocation in the Church became either a secular priest, a monk, a canon regular or a hermit. After his conversion, Francis himself lived as a hermit until that fateful day in the Porziuncola when he heard the gospel of the mission of the disciples not to possess gold or silver, not to carry a scrip or wallet or bread or staff. Francis was overjoyed and exclaimed "This is what I wish, this is what I seek, this is what I long to do with all my heart" (1Cel 22). He rejected all other life styles, and chose to follow the Gospel life of Jesus Christ. In his Testament he wrote: "No one showed me what I should do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel." Instead of running away from a wicked world, and hiding safely behind monastic walls, Francis sent his brothers into the marketplace to call the people of God to repentance and to proclaim the good news of the Gospel.

Combining the apostolic life of activity with contemplation, Francis realized the dangers inherent in such a life style. Lacking monastic structure, the life of prayer and contemplation can easily be supplanted by busy apostolic activity. That is why in the Rule Francis mentions the necessity of prayer not once but twice. In Chapter five, speaking about work, he warns us that work should "not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion to which all other things of our earthly existence must contribute." And in Chapter ten: "Let the brothers pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and his Holy manner of working and to pray to Him always with a pure heart." After commissioning St. Anthony to teach theology to the brothers, Francis warns him "not to extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion with study of this kind." Not only work, but also the study of theology can be a hindrance to the life of prayer.

The gospel of Luke says that Jesus "told them a parable of the necessity of praying always and not losing heart" (18:1). In chapter 23 of the Earlier Rule, Francis reminds the brothers in an exhaustive way of the necessity of praying constantly: "Let all of us, wherever we are, in every place, at every hour, at every time of the day, everyday and continually . . . love, honor, adore, serve, praise and bless, glorify and exalt, magnify and give thanks to the most High and supreme eternal God." His biographer mentions that Francis "was always occupied with Jesus; Jesus he bore in his heart, Jesus in his mouth, Jesus in his ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands, Jesus in the rest of his members" (*ICel* 115).

In his prayers Francis reveals his idea of God and of himself. Conscious of a personal, transcendent God, who loves him and invites him to a relationship with Himself, Francis thought of himself as a vile sinner, a creature in the presence of a Creator God who created him, redeemed him and would save him. He prayed "O, Our Father, our Creator, Redeemer, Consoler and Savior who are in heaven" (ExpPat). In the Fioretti we read that on La Verna, before his stigmatization, Francis kept on repeating the prayer: "Who are you my dearest God, and what am I?" In Chapter 23 of the Earlier Rule, he writes "God has given and gives to each one of us our whole body, our whole soul and our whole life. He created us and redeemed us, and will save us by His mercy alone. He did and does every good thing for us who are miserable and wretched, rotten and foul smelling, ungrateful and evil." And in the Second Version of the Letter to All the Faithful. Francis wrote "And let us hold ourselves in contempt and scorn, since through our own fault all of us are miserable and contemptible, vermin and worms." Yet Francis and the early brothers had a healthy and good self-image, due to the fact that it originated not from self bur from God, who "has given and gives to each of us our whole body, our whole soul, and our whole life" (RegNB, 23).

In addressing God in prayer, Francis was always conscious of the infinite difference between the Creator and the creature, that is, of the transcendence of God, who is beyond any categorization or classification, whether of time, place or space. In *The Praises of God* he speaks directly to God "You are holy, Lord, the only God, . . . You are strong, You are great, You are the Most High, You are the almighty King, You Holy Father, the King of heaven and earth. And in the first *Admonition*, he says "The Father lives in inaccessible light, and God is Spirit, and no one has ever seen God." In the *Canticle of Brother Sun* Francis addresses God "Most High, all-powerful, good Lord." In the *Letter to the Order* Francis calls God "Almighty, eternal, just and merciful." In Chapter 23 of the *Earlier Rule*, God is "All powerful, most holy, most high and supreme God."

Francis was, however, not only conscious of God's transcendence, but also of His immanence, that is, His presence among creatures, His love and goodness. The inexpressible, the incomprehensible, the ineffable God makes Himself known to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. The transcendent One did not reveal Himself to satisfy our intellectual curiosity, but in order that we may participate in the very life of the Trinity. Francis, in chapter 23, of the *Earlier Rule*, after calling God "glorious, exalted on high, sublime and Most High," all transcendent qualities, adds that God is also "gentle, lovable, delectable and totally desirable above all else forever."

Some people experience God as Truth, or Justice, others as Omnipotence or Glory. Francis experienced God primarily as "Love" which he called "Good."

In his prayers, whenever Francis used the word "good," his poetical gift as well as his mystical bent become evident, for he rarely uses the word "good" only once, but repeats it to emphasize the point. Thus in *The Praises To Be Said at All Hours* Francis writes: "All powerful, most holy, most High and supreme God: all good, supreme good, totally good, You who alone are good." In the *Prayer Inspired by the Our Father*, he prays: "You Lord are the Supreme Good, the Eternal Good, from whom comes all good, without whom there is no good." In chapter 17 of the of the *Earlier Rule* he says "Let us refer all good to the Most High and supreme Lord God and acknowledge that every good is His and thank Him for everything, He from whom all good things come . . . for every good is His, He who alone is good." In chapter 23 of the same rule, Francis prays: "God, who is the Fullness of Good, all good, every good, the true and supreme good, who alone is good."

The foundation on which St. Francis constructed his own prayer life, and which is the keystone of Franciscan Spirituality, is the simple yet profound mystery that God is good.

The foundation on which St. Francis constructed his own prayer life, and which is the keystone of Franciscan Spirituality, is the simple yet profound mystery that God is good. It was the goodness of God, that is His love, which motivated all of God's work of creation, redemption and salvation. In *Genesis* we read that after He created light "God saw how good the light was" (1:3). God did the same after creating the earth and plants, and living creatures. At the end "God looked at everything he had made, and He found it very good" (Gen 1:31). It was love that prompted the Incarnation: "God so loved the world that He gave his only Son that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). It was love that prompted the Redemption: "Jesus had loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end" (Jn 13:1). In chapter 23 of the Earlier Rule Francis wrote "We thank You, Father, for as through your Son You created us, so also through Your holy love with which You loved us, You brought about His birth as true God and true man." Francis realized that God's love radiates throughout the entire drama of the plan of our salvation.

According to Francis, the foundation of our poverty is the total expropriation of self, and trusting dependence on God. The kenosis of Jesus who "did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at, but rather emptied Himself and took the form of a slave" (*Phil* 2:6) was for Francis the example of his expropriation. An integral part of Francis' poverty was the admission of

powerless helplessness without God. In Admonition eleven Francis writes: "A servant of God may be recognized as possessing the Spirit of the Lord in this way: if the flesh does not pride itself when the Lord performs some good through him, since the flesh is always opposed to every good." In fact, the more good one does, the more worthless he should consider himself, recognizing the power of God working through him. This is the reason that Francis often refers to himself as "your servant and little one" (EpCust), or "the least of the servants of God," (EpCust), or "a worthless and weak man, your very little servant" (EpOrd).

Prayer can be one of adoration, blessing, thanksgiving or petition. The prayer of adoration is the first attitude of one acknowledging that he is a creature before His Creator. We can easily understand why practically all of Francis' prayers are prayers of adoration. The prayer of blessing is one's response to God's gifts: because God blesses, the human heart can in return bless the One who is the source of every blessing. By the prayer of petition we express our relationship with God. The first movement of this prayer is asking forgiveness, like the tax collector in the Gospel.

Francis' prayers are full of adoration, blessing and thanksgiving. In the Canticle of Brother Sun, he says of God: "You are the praises, the glory, the honor and the blessing, and to You, Most High, do they belong." These four words, praise, glory, honor and blessing, are found in practically all of Francis' prayers. In the Praises to be Said At All Hours Francis prays "May we give you all praise, all glory, all blessing and all good things." In Chapter 17 of the Earlier Rule Francis says, "May He who alone is true God, be given and receive every honor, and reverence, every praise and blessing, every thanks and glory for every good is His, He who alone is good." In chapter 21 of the same Rule we read "Fear and honor, praise and bless, give thanks and adore the Lord God Almighty in Trinity and Unity." And in chapter 23 of this Rule, Francis writes "Love, honor, adore and serve, praise and bless, glorify and exalt, magnify and give thanks to the most high and supreme eternal God."

After Francis acquired a few brothers, they asked him to teach them how to pray. He told them to pray the Our Father and also taught them a prayer of adoration and blessing: "We adore You, Lord Jesus Christ, in all Your churches throughout the world, and we bless You, for through Your holy cross You have redeemed the world."

One of the most beautiful prayers of thanksgiving is Francis' Canticle of Brother Sun. "Praised be You my Lord, for the Sun... Praised be You, my Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars... Praised be You, my Lord, for Brother Wind and Sister Water... Praised be You, my Lord, for Mother Earth and Sister Death." Another beautiful prayer of thanksgiving is found in Chapter 23 of the Earlier Rule, sometimes referred to as Francis' great creed. He begins his prayer by

thanking God for being God. "All powerful, most holy, most high and supreme God... we thank you for Yourself." Who but Francis would have thought of thanking the Lord for being Himself? A real prayer of thanksgiving is entirely disinterested and rises to God, praises Him, and gives Him glory for His own sake, quite beyond what He has done, but simply because HE IS. Francis also thanks the Lord God for the gifts of creation, incarnation, redemption and salvation. Realizing that we can never thank God sufficiently, Francis writes: "we humbly ask that our Lord Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, give You thanks and it pleases You and Him for everything, through Whom You have done such great things for us."

There are only two examples of prayers of petition among the writings of St. Francis. One is the prayer which he recited before the cross at San Damiano, seeking what to do with his life: "Most High, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me, Lord, a correct faith, a certain hope, a perfect charity, sense and knowledge so that I may carry out Your holy and true command." The other prayer of petition is found at the end of the Letter written to the entire Order: "Almighty, eternal, just, and merciful God, grant us in our misery the grace to do for You alone what we know You want us to do and always to desire what pleases You."

It is interesting to note that in both of these prayers of petition, Francis requests not material but spiritual gifts. In one he asks for the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, which establish our relationship with God; and in the other, he asks for the grace to carry out God's will in all things.

From his writings we learn what Francis prayed; from his biographer, Thomas Celano, we learn how Francis prayed. In his second life of the Saint, Celano dedicates a whole section, chapters 61 to 67, to how Francis prayed. He introduces the chapter with the words: "We give here a few of the great things about Francis' prayers that may be imitated by those who come after him" (2Cel 94).

Celano writes that Francis "always sought a hidden place where he could adapt not only his soul, but also all his members to God. When he suddenly felt himself visited by the Lord in public, he would cover his face either with his mantle or the sleeve of his habit." In public he would not make any noise or sighs. But when he prayed in the woods or solitary places, he would fill the forest with sighs, strike his breast, and pray out loud. Celano writes that "there he would give answer to his judge; there he would offer his petitions to his father; there he would talk to his friend; there he would rejoice with the bridegroom." It is interesting to note the words "answer" his judge, "ask" his father, "talk" to his friend, and "rejoice" with his bridegroom. Francis looked at God with reverential fear, but also with great affection and love.

Concerning meditation and contemplation, Celano writes that "often, without moving his lips, Francis would meditate within himself, and drawing external things within himself, he would lift his spirit to higher things. All his attention and affection he directed with his whole being to the one thing which he was asking of the Lord, not so much praying as becoming himself a prayer (2Cel 95).

Francis was not only assiduous in his private prayers, but also in the recitation of the official prayer of the Church, the Liturgy of the Hours. In his *Testament* he writes: "Although I may be simple and infirm, I wish nonetheless always to have a cleric who will celebrate the Office for me as it is contained in the Rule." And in chapter 3 of the *Earlier Rule* he writes "All the brothers, whether clerical or lay, should celebrate the Divine Office, the praises and prayers, as is required of them." Celano mentions that "Francis recited the canonical hours no less reverently than devoutly" (2Cel 96).

Francis' prayers are scriptural, Trinitarian, affective, adoring and thankful, faith-filled and simple.

To summarize, we can say that Francis' prayers are scriptural, Trinitarian, affective, adoring and thankful, faith-filled and simple. In his prayers he often uses passages from Sacred Scripture; they are centered on the mystery of God's plan of creation, incarnation, redemption and salvation. These works of God Francis attributes to the Trinity, and all of them motivated by the love and goodness of God. Francis' prayers are effective and not discursive. In discursive prayer, the influence of reason predominates. In affective prayer we find expressions of affection such as love, gratitude, trust, and surrender. Although his prayers are simple, they are mystical expressions of Francis' experience of God. If prayer is intimate communion with God, then words at times do not suffice to express this experience. Celano writes: "Francis was often suspended in such sweetness of contemplation that, caught up out of himself, he could not reveal what he had experienced because it went beyond all human comprehension" (2Cel 98).

On his deathbed Francis said to his brothers "I have done what was mine to do. May Christ teach you what is yours" (*LM* XIV, 3). The gifts and graces given to Francis of Assisi were different from those given to each of us, his brothers. Francis cooperated with these gifts, and prayed accordingly. As did his early brothers, so we too approach Francis with the request: "Teach us how to pray." Francis would tell us: "Naked, I have followed the naked Christ. May Christ teach you what is yours." May each of us be given this grace in prayer.

THE CLOTH MERCHANT'S TALE

İ

Then laying his clothes at my feet he walks away, just like that, the sun dyeing the evening sky as we lift eyes to watch Francesco disappear from our sight.

He does not descend to the valley, but stops half-way at San Damiano, and that is the end of it.

My son, my pride, outside the walls, trades between San Damiano and the Portiuncula's lepers.

Threadbare, he rebuilds ruined churches, shuns the cloth trade for stone.

11

"I will no longer say, 'Father, Pietro Bernardone, but Our Father Who are in Heaven.'" A vicious slap in the face which I will never forgive.

Not that Francesco would stoop to beg my forgiveness. After all, what has God's son to do with a hard working cloth merchant who, like St. Joseph, only tried to teach his adopted son? God's curse on such ingratitude.

And when my flesh has finally putrefied, may my skull turn to powder, lest Francesco fashion it into a gargoyle's spout to flush his guilt like rain from the church's leaden gutters.

Ш

Lady Pica, my sometime wife, goes out to the olive trees now that her darling Francesco's gone. She sits like stone, except for her moving hands sewing mad patterns into cloth. Her flesh sags with fasting, her mad son preaches love.

The house of Bernardone's undone — frayed cloth, flawed stone.

Murray Bodo, O.F.M.

Book Review

Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying and Caring. By Henri J.M. Nowen, New York: Harper Collins, 1994. 118 pages. Hard Cover \$16.00

Reviewed by Sister Frances Ann Thom, O.S.F., a Pastoral Minister at St. Mary's Church in Baldwinsville, NY, and a member of the Editorial Board for the CORD. She holds an MA in English and in Franciscan Studies.

"Is it possible to prepare for our death with the same attentiveness as our parents had in preparing for our birth?"

Henri Nouwen raises a question which is (lodged) in the heart of every person. A question which emanates from our commonalty and our uniqueness. We all hold dear certain thoughts, feelings, dreams and visions which belong and have belonged to everyone who has lived, is living or will live. The author stresses the openness to the spiritual and the awakening to the reality of life when one perceives the approach of fewer and fewer years in one's life span. Just as we hope our lives in faith will be helpful to those whom we love, we further hope our deaths will be fruitful as well.

Nouwen's book is not just an insight into how to care well and how to die well, but it is a real breakthrough into the continuum of what we refer to as the Mystical Body of Christ. Nouwen tells us that "years after my mother's death, she continues to bear fruit in my life." Those of us who have experi-

enced the death of a loved one, can readily identify with this experience but are often reticent in speaking of this spiritual moment to others. Perhaps this is because we do not realize that this is a universal experience as well as an individual experience. We may think that others will shun us as being odd or others will think we are proclaiming ourselves as being spiritually above them. So we keep silence when we should share. Nouwen tells us that his mother continues to send him guidance by the Spirit of Jesus.

In the mind of Nouwen, the example of Jesus' dwindling popularity, powerlessness, and finally desertion by his friends, did not prove him to be a failure because the fruit of his teaching affected the feeling and thinking of people long after his death. In fact, "Jesus himself constantly referred to the fruitfulness of his life that would only become manifest after his death." We know this to be true of many famous men and women who were not appreciated while they lived but had a great impact upon history after their deaths. They did not see nor predict the fruit that would bud forth for others in later centuries.

The author has divided the book into two parts, 1) Dying Well and 2) Caring Well, and has sub-divided each part into three chapters. In the section on Dying the author uses the more universal pronoun "we" — as in all of creation we work toward our death. But in

the section on Caring he shifts to the second person—as if everything about caring depends on you, how you function in caring for others. He further gives us the overall view of personal association or assimilation into the existence of the dving person, then shifts to "these people keep sending the Spirit of Jesus to us and giving us the strength to be faithful in the journey we have begun." This wonderful exchange between dying and caring and caring and dying of individuals has the movement of a mosaic in open space with no limitations but a continuous movement in perfect harmony, a true living out of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Nouwen touches upon the extreme materialism in our society when he states, "In our free market economy... human care is spoken of in terms of supply and demand... the suffering person becomes the buyer of care and the care professional becomes the merchant of care. (Thus) the vision that underlies it (language) reduces the human person to nothing but a commodity in the competitive world of high finance."

"Care... is the loving attention given to another person... because that person is a child of God, just as we are."

The key to all of this is contained in our owning the fact of our own death. As Nouwen states, "When we who care are not afraid to die, we will be better able to prepare the dying for death and deepen their communion with others instead of separating them."

And again, "Caring for the dying means helping the dying to discover that, in their increasing weakness, God's strength becomes visible."

This is truly a book for our times! It is a magnificent jarring of one's materialistic complacency into the reality of the brevity of life and the necessity to live well, to give life, in order to be an effective instrument in the lives of others even after physical death.

Unexpected Answers. By Barbara Bartocci, Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1994. 168 pages, \$7.95

Reviewed by Sr. Frances Ann Thom, O.S.F.

Barbara Bartocci writes in a wonderfully easy style and uses incidents of real life which have meaning for all of us. She uses her own person as a main character, a spectator, a part of the crowd, but especially as a listener. She listens to many tales of strange and wonderful experiences of everyday life. Barbara combines animals and humans, humans and humans and, most especially, incidents from her own family life. The author develops serious themes such as loss, love and prayer but always with a bit of humor which helps to carry the characters through these deep experiences. Near the end of the book, the author asks, "What if you were told, 'You have six months to live?' How would you spend your time?" She suggests that it is a great exercise to keep us in touch with what counts. A further suggestion is to keep a list of things that make you happy. In order to keep things in perspective this type of balance is necessary. The author maintains that awareness of the brevity of life, using each moment for happiness for self and others and being enthusiastic (having God within) will help us "... to find answers that go beyond any of our imaginings."

I guarantee that anyone who reads this book will not want to put it down until it is finished, will feel deeply with the characters, and may even shed a few tears of sorrow as well as joy and will feel inspired to continue to pray.

Nothing Short Of A Miracle. By Patricia Treece, Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1994. 226 pages, \$9.95

Reviewed by Sr. Frances Ann Thom, O.S.F.

Patricia Treece has given us a timely book about miracles. In the prologue she tells of the horrible accident which could have blinded a baby for life but through the prayers of those who believe the child grew up to become a priest who knows he represents one of God's miracles through the intercession of Mother Cabrini.

This book is a series of inspiring stories recounting healings that have taken place through the intercession of various saints because of the faith and devotion of believers. The author wishes to put before the mind of the world today the fact that miracles still happen. Miracles are not a thing of the past. She wishes to inspire all people with devotion to the saints and to the power of their intercession.

Not only has the author given us a wonderful collection of modern miracles but she has also documented and researched these stories for evidence of their authenticity. Following fifteen well-chosen stories the author has given a listing of the calendar dates on which the feasts of these saints occur, an Appendix to guide the reader to more information about these saints, as well as a bibliography of sources.

The Angelic Doctor. The Life and World of St. Thomas Aquinas. By Matthew Bunson. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1994. 1168 pages, appendices and index. Paper, \$9.95.

Reviewed by Julian A. Davies, O.F.M., Professor of Philosophy at Siena College, Loudonville NY, and an Associate Editor of this review.

The author succeeds admirably in achieving the goal set by the sub-title of his work. He divides the life of Thomas into six periods and locates him in time and place and political, ecclesiastical and social context. His account of Thomas' being kidnapped by his brothers as he fled North to join the Dominicans and his subsequent escape from the castle two years later out a window and in a basket-- like St. Paul makes fascinating reading. He traces Aquinas, academic career at Paris and at the Papal Courts. He highlights Thomas' role in defending the right to existence of mendicant orders like the Dominicans and Franciscans, and their right to teach at Paris-or anywhere. The author also explains the nickname "dumb Ox" given him by his classmates. Dumb meant silent, quiet, not stupid. Ox refers, of course, to Thomas' girth.

The author delineates nicely the elaboration of the relation of reason and Revelation which is one of Thomas' major contributions to the Church and also explains Thomas, middle way between the extremes of Averroism and Augustinianism. I think he could have given a better definition of Averroism in his helpful glossary and a fuller explanation of the precise errors which caused such alarm in the Christian community-the denial of Divine Providence, personal immortality and creation in time. The chronology in the beginning of the work and the listing of Thomas' writings and the list of suggested readings are valuable. The short exposition of Thomas' system is accurate but far too compact for the reader to acquire much more than vocabulary.

The Angelic Doctor is very readable, and would be a fine supplement to a course in Aquinas. Philosophers who know Thomas only as a thinker would do well to read this book which reveals Thomas as a genuine mystic.

The Catholic Answer. Book 2. By Rev. Peter M.J. Stravinskas, Ph.D. S.T.L., Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1994. 238 pages, inc. Indices. Paper, \$9.95

Reviewed by Julian A. Davies, O.F.M.

Whether you are a pre-Vatican II Catholic, a baby boomer Catholic, an inquirer of another or little faith, this collection of answers to questions about Catholic Practices, Doctrine, Liturgy, Morality, and Scripture is a valuable source. Father Stravinskas seems to answer not only the question, but the question behind the question, as in his reply to "Why all the changes?"

The author is a man of the law, a canonist. He is very well informed on liturgical law as well. A couple of his answers will have to be changed in Book 3 when it comes out — altar girls are now allowed, and holding hands at the Our Father seems to be a practice that many Catholic people want to do in spite of a generally unknown prohibition by the Congregation of Sacraments and Divine Worship. His observations of the meaning of "local church" as "diocese," and the usage of "apostolate" for what laity do in lectoring, ministering the Eucharist, etc., instead of "ministry" were items new to me. I was also reminded that compassion means suffering with, and that priests who tell their people they do not have to keep the moral law which it is a hardship are really not suffering with their people.

I recommend this book. In future editions I would want the author to cite the exact sources and give the letters or parts of them he is answering, as sometimes that is needed to understand the answer.

Images of Jesus: Ten Invitations To Intimacy. By Alfred McBride, O. Praem, Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger, 1993. 229 pages, \$9.95.

Reviewed by Fr. Daniel Hurley, O.F.M., member of the Campus Ministry team at St. Bonaventure University and resident of Mt. Irenaeus Retreat Center.

Father Alfred McBride presents the reader with a wonderful book on spiritual self-discovery in Images of Jesus: Ten Invitations To Intimacy. The aim of self-discovery, the author says, is a fuller appreciation on one's relationship with Jesus Christ. To strengthen that relationship, Father McBride presents images of Jesus as found in the Gospels.

The author puts forth ten different approaches to appreciating who Jesus is for each one of us. The "images" are specific characteristics of Jesus that show how we can allow the image to become part of our own spiritual life. The first Chapter deals with the image of "Jesus, My Friend." The various ways in which Jesus related to different people in the Gospels show us how we can relate in friendship to Jesus and to one another. In similar fashion. "Jesus, My Healer" encourages us to become more aware of our capacity to relate in love to each other. In "Jesus, My Teacher," the author encourages the reader to picture Jesus as the teacher

who sends each one of us into our inner selves to "investigate ourselves, our approaches to life" (page 57). In other words, he urges us "to develop our capacity for meditative prayer" (page 57). The chapter entitled "Jesus, My Lord" emphasizes the divinity of Christ and at the same time reminds the reader that all of us are children of the same Father who sends his Spirit upon each one of us. Sharing that Spirit, we enjoy the gifts of the Holy Spirit (pages 87-91).

And so follow the other chapters: "Jesus, My Mentor," "Jesus, My Servant Leader," "Jesus, My Savior," "Jesus, My Evangelizer," "Jesus, My Cross-Bearer," and "Jesus, My Joy." Each chapter places before our mind's eye the image of Jesus in such a way that we discover more about ourselves and our capacity for growing spiritually in the different facets of our person.

Since all Christians are called to follow Christ, to imitate Christ, Father McBride helps us to discover how we can be true to our calling. The unassuming style of the author makes easy reading and each chapter concludes with practical suggestions and examples of putting into practice what we have learned about Jesus from the particular image. This reviewer recommends Images of Jesus to be used as a bedside reader to be picked up and to be read randomly, a chapter at a time.

Books Received

Baranowski, Arthur, ed. Faith Sharing for Small Church Communities. Questions and Commentaries on the Sunday Readings. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1993. Pp. 132, inc. Appendices. Paper, \$9.95.

Barkley, Elizabeth Bookser. Loving the Everyday. Meditations from Moms. Cincinnati, OH: Saint Anthony Messenger, 1994. Pp. 206. Paper, \$8.95.

Bartocci, Barbara. *Unexpected Answers*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1994. Pp. 168. Paper, \$7.95.

Busnon, Matthew. The Angelic Doctor. The Life and World of St. Thomas Aquinas. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1994. Pp. 168, inc. Index. Paper, \$9.95.

Crews, Clyde F. American Catholic. A Popular History of Catholicism in the United States. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1994. Pp. 166 with Index. Paper \$11.95.

Landis, Benson Y. An Outline of the Bible Book by Book. New York: Harper/Collins, 1994. Pp. 186, inc. Index. Paper, \$12.00.

Nouwen, Henri J.M. Our Greatest Gift. A Meditation on Dying and Caring. San Francisco: Harper, 1994. Pp. 118. Cloth, \$16.00.

Prejean, Helen. Dead Man Walking. An Eye Witness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States. New York: Vintage Books, 1994. Pp. 276, inc. Index. Paper \$12.00.

Schuster, O.S.B., Philip. Seeking God's Will Through Faith, Hope and Charity. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1994. Pp. 140. Paper, \$9.95.

Stravinskas, Peter, M.J. *The Catholic Answer Book 2*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1994. Pp. 238, inc. Index. Paper, \$9.95.

Travnikar, O.F.M., Rock. *The Blessing Cup. 40 Simple Rites for Family Prayer Celebrations*. Revised Edition. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1994. Pp. 52. Paper, \$3.95.

Treece, Patricia. Nothing Short of a Miracle. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1994. Pp. 226, inc. Bibliography. Paper, \$9.95.

FRANCISCAN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM in SPIRITUAL DIRECTION and DIRECTED RETREATS 24th Session:

March 26 — JUNE 17, 1995 (Deadline: Dec. 15, 1994)

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

For information contact: Fr. Tom Speier, O.F.M. St. Francis Center 10290 Mill Road Cincinnati, Oh 45231 Tel. 513-825-9300 Fax: 513-825-5441

SAN DAMIANO CENTER

Our Lady of Angels Convent Aston, PA 19014 610/558-7737

20 minutes from Media, PA 30 minutes from Wilmington, DE 30 minutes from Philadelphia International Airport

Oct. 29

REBUILD MY CHURCH: MYTH

OR CHALLENGE FOR THE

CONTEMPORARY FRANCISCAN

Christa Marie Thompson, OSF

Dec. 10 and 11 BY VIRTUE OF OUR BAPTISM —
A FRANCISCAN PERSPECTIVE
Joseph Nangle, OFM

Jan. 14 and 15 BECOMING "THE PEOPLE OF GOD"

Edward Coughlin, OFM

Feb. 11 IN THE CLOISTER OF THE WORLD
Justin Carisio, SFO

For complete list of programs, contact Center.