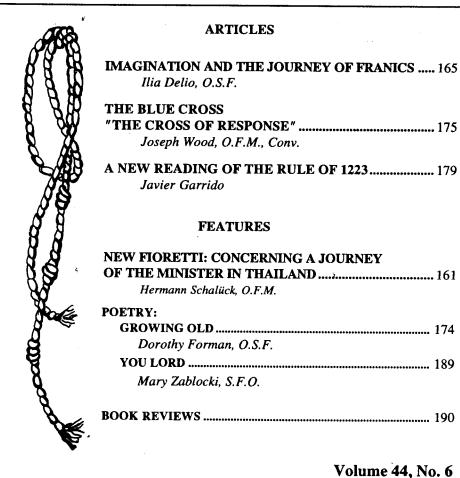
The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



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A Monthly Franciscan Spiritual Review

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Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD

for Early Franciscan Sources

I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions
BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo
CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun
EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony
EpCler: Letter to Clerics¹
EpCust: Letter to Superiors¹
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful¹
EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo
EpMin: Letter to a Minister
EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order

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

Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221 LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God LaudHor: Praises at all the Hours OffPass: Office of the Passion OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix RegB: Rule of 1223

RegNB: Rule of 1221
RegEr: Rule for Hermits
SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady
SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues
Test: Testament of St. Francis
UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare
VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy
'I. II refer to First and Second Editions.

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).

New Fioretti Concerning a Journey of the Minister in Thailand

HERMANN SCHALÜCK, O.F.M.

"Your oceans, O Lord, are so immense, and our boats are so small"

While an intense cold was holding Old Europe in its grip and an absurd war was destroying lives and hopes in the Balkans, the Minister, friar Hermann, decided to set out once more from Rome, from the city called eternal, and from the hill redolent of the sweet scent of jasmine. He, too, had heard the mysterious words "ex oriente lux" and had resolved to betake himself on the wings of Brother Wind to Asia and Oceania in order to hold a fraternal meeting with all the Ministers of that continent and its numerous islands. He was also moved by a strong desire to become better acquainted than had hitherto been possible for him with the cultures and religious of the East which have so much to say to us about peace and humanity. And as he flew through the night above the lands of the Caucasus, Persia and Kashmir, always in the direction of the rising sun, he fervently prayed the Lord of history to give him in Asia, too, the opportunity of conversion and penance to enable him the more clearly to point out to the universal fraternity which was the road of the future. Shortly before the majestic airplane bearing the name "St Francis of Assisi" embraced the fertile soil of Thailand, the Minister laid aside for a moment the Roman breviary and prayed instead a psalm composed by an unknown poet of the isle of Kalimantan:

You have created the continents, you have made men diverse in language and culture.

For man's sake you cause the rice and the bamboo to grow.

It is you who show yourself to be the source of life

in all the diverse religions and cultures.

It is you who are our God, good, peaceful, merciful, and compassionate.

O Lord, grant a cessation to the mortal combat between races, peoples and religions.

Grant that everyone may become convinced that they are brothers and sisters under the one God.

Many readers have voiced their appreciation of Fr. Hermann's "New Fioretti." Here the General Minister of the Order of Friars Minor invites us to venture beyond a more familiar Franciscan world and to ponder the wisdom of the East.

Give peace to Asia and to the whole world.

Give peace to the whole universe, to the steppes and the forests, to the seas and the shores.

Give us pure eyes to see the beauty of your presence and to love others.

Lord, give us trust in one another; above all give us the great ability to read the signs you have inscribed in history and in the cosmos.

And we pray that you will not let us fall into fear and faint-heartedness.

Because your oceans are so immense, and our boats are so small and fragile.

In the fraternity of Lamsai, a placename meaning in the Thai language "Garden of peace and celestial beauty," the Minister was able to see for himself how the friars in accordance with the mandate of the last Pentecost Chapter sought to combine contemplation with a presence among the poor. Situated at the gates of the great and noisy city of Bangkok, their house is a place of welcome and of spiritual and bodily care for numerous victims of AIDS. Moreover the members of this international fraternity joyfully imparted to him the news that, with the help of God and of the Seraphic Father, they would soon be welcoming the first candidates to the year of probation. The Minister in his turn gave thanks to the Lord who after innumerable trials and sufferings was now in his providence granting to the tender little plant of the Thailand project some growth and hope for the future.

Thereafter the Minister journeyed to Udon Thani in the northeast of the country, for a fraternal meeting with the Ministers and friars who had there come together from all parts of the vast continent as well as from some of the more remote islands, as for example from the islands of Bismarck, Solomon and Tonga. All were given lodging in the house of the bishop of that place, the magnificent garden of which was lush with rhododendron, eucalyptus and myrtle bushes, with delicate orchids and wild magnolias, but was also, alas, home to some snakes. For three days the friars talked among themselves about the signs of hope and of sorrow which they noticed in their provinces and fraternities. All were convinced that in the future the Order would have to present a more Asiatic face, if the universal fraternity were to be capable of being transformed into an instrument of peace and of evangelization increasingly Catholic and apostolic, but at the same time ever more ecumenical and ecological. The friars of Asia and Oceania promised that, even in their poverty, they would come to the assistance of other provinces and of the numerous international projects of the Order.

While in these lands and on these seas the Chinese Year of the Butterfly was just beginning, a bright day in the month of February was dedicated to an experience if inculturation. For this purpose the friars who had come from

Rome, Papua and all the other quarters, set out on a journey towards the border with Laos. They first made a stop at a place called Wat Phra That Bang Phuan, in order to make a fraternal visit to a venerable monastery of the tradition of the Lord Buddha. After they had spent some time in the shrine, a saffron-robed monk offered on his own accord to predict the future for the Minister. And so, as was the custom of the place, the Minister, while reclining with the other friars on a bamboo mat, had to shake a wooden container rhythmically until there came out of it one of the many hollowed sticks, inside each of which was a minuscule roll of parchment. After the Minister had complied with this ritual under the curious gaze of his companions and of some Buddhist novices, the master read for him the following oracle:

In this world there are but two elements:
beauty and truth.
Beauty in the heart of the one who loves,
truth in the arms of the one who tills the land.

The minister greatly marveled at these words. They seemed to him to be very close to the spirituality of the Poverello of Assisi, who had loved the poor, extolled the beauty of the universe in song and asked his friars to work with diligence. While the Minister was thinking how profound these words were and how applicable to the life of his friars, the monk spoke and added the following words:

If you discover how to praise the beauty of the world in song, even in the most solitary desert place you will find a hearing.

Pondering on all that he had heard, the Minister understood as never before that his fraternity, scattered throughout the world in many places where war, poverty and conflict prevail, was living out the destiny of those who sow in tears, but at the same time hope to be able one day to reap a harvest in joy and exultation.

That same day the friars also visited Phuttamamakasamakkom, a place famous for its amazing collection of statues and monuments representing the various types of Buddha, Vishnu and Siva. Thus, they consciously implemented the mandate of their Constitutions, according to which all should "discern the seeds of the Word of God and his mysterious presence in the world of Today and also in many aspects of other religions and cultures" (CCGG 93.2). Towards evening, they boarded a rickety boat and were taken on an excursion along the Mekong River which, in the region of Nongh Khai, marks the boundary between Thailand and mysterious Laos. Seated on the deck of the boat and having consumed a delicious supper whose main ingredient was fish, they gave themselves up to silent contemplation of the beauty of the star-studded horizon, so much so that at a certain point all found themselves listening in silence

to the Tao, the wisdom innate in all creation, in the mild evening breeze and in the sweet music which came wafting towards them from both banks of the river, as well as in the moving melody of the setting of the sun and in the soundless music of the spheres. These are the words which the Minister heard that evening:

With dampened clay are formed the pots,
but only their hollowness allows jugs to be filled.
From wood are constructed doors and windows,
but only the empty space they create makes the house habitable.
What is seen is indeed useful,
but what is essential remains invisible.
You possess only what you give away,
because what you try to keep will be lost to you.

That night everyone understood how the fraternity wherever it finds itself can contribute to evangelization and to the future of the world only if it adopts an attitude of profound listening, of minority, of solidarity with the poor and of respectful dialogue with all religions and cultures.

During a farewell ceremony held in the house of the Bishop of Udon Thani the friars prayed together in the words of an ancient mystic of the Buddhist tradition:

May the rain of burning coals and of stones and the rain of weapons become a rain of flowers.

May the poor, benumbed by cold, find warmth and compassion and may coolness come to all who are exposed to scorching heat.

May the sick find healing and may an end come to all the violence in the world. May the fearful live in peace

and may the oppressed find liberation and justice.

May prisoners discover a new way of life

and may all who are sorrowful find courage and hope.

May the disinherited possess the earth

and may all live in friendship and respect.

For the only wealth that always grows bigger when it is given away with both hands

is love and peace.

Thereupon all returned spiritually strengthened and inwardly enlightened to their own provinces and fraternities scattered throughout Asia and the immense Pacific Ocean, while the Minister made his way back to Rome to the hill redolent of the sweet scent of jasmine.

Ad laudem Christi. Amen.

Hermann Schalück, O.F.M. Easter 1994

ILIA DELIO, O.S.F.

INTRODUCTION

The gift of the imagination is a powerful capacity of the human person that essentially influences our world, our relationships with others and our relation to God. The images we form of the world indicate how we experience the world. The Incarnation underlined a radical breakthrough for the human imagination because it opened up a new horizon for humanity — that of the infinite love of God. Jesus in his ministry appealed to the imagination by challenging his disciples to change their lives by changing the images of their lives. Through the use of parables, Jesus revealed new images and new potentials for his followers. The life of Francis of Assisi, itself a parable, is a response to Jesus' challenge. The cross of the crucified Christ became for Francis the image on the horizon — that which opened him up to the eternal love of God. The following article, gleaned from the notes of Fr. Joe Doino, explores the image of the cross in Francis' life and how this image influenced his spiritual journey to God through the gift of his imagination.

THE MEANING OF IMAGINATION

In the early period of Greek philosophy, imagination was considered to be a lowly faculty associated with the senses and what appeared to them. The Greek word phantasia, from which the English "imagination" is derived, was the word used to describe this faculty. It was St. Augustine who translated phantasia into the Latin imaginatio and raised it to a new level of meaning. Indeed Christian philosophical/theological tradition regarding the power and significance of the imagination can be traced to Augustine's De Trinitate. In this work Augustine states that just as the will is related to the vision of the outward person in the focusing of one's attention so is the imaginatio in internal vision the expression of the will and its desire. The imagination, according

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to Augustine, is no passive power of reproduction, rather it sets to work refashioning the contents of memory along the lines of the will's interest.² Augustine made an important contribution to the theory of imagination by distinguishing between simple sensory image and that related to memory and will.

In contemporary terms, imagination is defined as "the ability of the awake mind to produce symbolic functions without effort." It is a bipolar faculty which gives shape to objects not present to the senses or to the memory. At one pole, imagination is a necessary tool for organizing all of our daily perceptions of the world. It enables us to recognize things in the world as familiar, to take for granted features of the world, so that we may identify the reality that we encounter in our conscious lives. At the other pole, imagination is creative. By its means we see the world as significant of something unfamiliar and treat the objects of perceptions as symbolizing and suggesting things other than themselves. In this sense, it is not a simple or single faculty but rather the total resources in the human person which go into forming one's images of the world. The imagination is the foundation of creativity because it is an action of the mind that produces a new idea or insight. Out of chaos the imagination can frame a thing of reality, a thing which comes unheralded, a flash of something fully formed.

The thirteenth century Sufi mystic, Ibn al-'Arabi, stated that the creative imagination is ontologically rooted in God. Just as the Platonists and Stoics perceived God as the artist shaping the world, so too, Arabi held that by imagining the universe God created it. Creation, therefore, is an act of the divine imaginative power. This divine creative imagination, according to Arabi, is essentially theophanic. It is the same theophanic imagination of the Creator that renews creation from moment to moment in the human being who is created in the image of God. Thus our manifest being is the divine imagination; our own imagination is imagination in God's imagination. In this respect, the human imagination has the powerful function of projection and exploration in regard to what is possible to us, a possibility which is nothing less than participation in the divine life.

THE CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION

For the Christian the Incarnation grounds the meaning and importance of the imagination in the Christian life. The Incarnation, encompassing the entire mystery of Christ from birth to death, is the scandal of particularity — the experience of the ultimate coming through finite reality. It is God's entry into the details of human existence. Karl Rahner states, in the light of Christian faith, "the very commonness of everyday things harbors the eternal marvel and silent mystery of God and his grace." When God took our world to himself in the Incarnation, he entered the world's history as a perfect human being taking that history up into himself and summarizing it (Eph 1:10). In the Incarnation,

the eternal Word took the whole of humanity and the whole cosmos with its being and its historical development as his body: all realities, all values and all orders were joined into one in him. Thus all domains of human life have been raised in Christ into living unity with God. The whole thrust of the Incarnation is a breakthrough for the human person's imagination for perceiving, experiencing, and understanding the reality of one's new relationships with God, the world, self, and others. It is the imagination which reaches out toward the horizon of infinite possibilities by opening up the human person to the experience of the ultimate coming through finite reality.

Faith in the Incarnation is the belief that particulars of life are vessels of grace. It underlies a relationship with God who in Jesus has become immersed in this world. Faith, as a definite "yes" to life in its concreteness, requires the imagination since faith lives from hope and imagination provides a content for hope. The imagination is essential to Christian faith because it leads one to the concrete where one lives and experiences truth — that truth which affects the whole person, which embodies depth and mystery, and which calls for participation. Participation in life-events underlying personal transformation is made possible by the imagination when it is opened up to experience the world. Faith itself is a form of imagining and therefore of experiencing the world. To believe that the poor are blessed, for example, puts an entirely different light on things. Faith, as a life of the imagination, provides a structure or context of the world and as such precedes, supports and evokes every other context. Faith is not distinct from experience: faith and experience are integrally related to each other and as such can give rise to a new vision of reality.

In the Gospel, the relationship between faith and experience is aptly expressed in the parables, those stories which take the listener to the point where the course of ordinary life is broken and where faith and experience are challenged to reach out to the infinite horizen of God. It is in the parables that we see how Jesus' ministry was one which addressed itself most powerfully to the imagination of his hearers. He invited and empowered his disciples to reconstruct their lives with God introducing them into profound and new depths of intimacy through faith. He fired the imagination of his hearers with hope, with dreams of innocence and reconciliation, and with love and joy. In the midst of images drawn from daily life, he fathomed new potentialities for his disciples — the boundless love of a merciful father, the treasure of a lost coin. A strange world of meaning was projected which challenged their everyday vision by both revealing the limits to the everyday and projecting the limit-character of the whole.⁸

In his appeal to the imagination, Jesus exposed his followers to risk and to vulnerability in undergoing the surrender and entrusting themselves to unknown

horizons. His call to Matthew to follow him, for example, posed a challenge to the tax collector and his self-image among fellow Jews. Peter had his imagination fixed in the literal; it was unfree: "I shall never let you die." Conversely, the Pharisees could not imagine anything other than their own self-centered world. But through the parables, Jesus exposed new possibilities and freed the creative imagination from the burden of its own past for anyone who accepted him. By evoking decisive changes in the disciples' vision of the world, of others, of God, and of themselves, Jesus signified that conversion takes place at the deepest level of one's self-image. Conversion is a daily process whereby the image of one's self is always questioned. The parables signify that only by changing the images of one's world can a person experience conversion and thus change his or her existence. The relationship between faith, experience, and the imagination, therefore, is summarized in the process of conversion — that daily process which opens one up to the infinite love of God.

IMAGINATION IN THE LIFE OF FRANCIS

Although Francis of Assisi never sat at the feet of the Master, he was perhaps the most perfect imitator of Christ in the history of Christianity. This perfect and literal *imitatio Christi*, while springing from the roots of faith, was much more than faith alone. Rather, it was the fruit of a creative imagination grounded in the love of God. In his encounter with Scripture, Francis grasped the meaning of the Incarnation as the scandal of particularity and found his path through images of the finite to the infinite love of God. He made use of images in the form of drama, parable, and exaggeration and in doing so Christified imagination providing a paradigm of faith within which one could experience or imagine the world.

In order to understand the power of the imagination in Francis' life one must begin with the place of his birth, the mystically charming town of Assisi. It is here that the drama of the Poverello as a drama of the creative imagination was brought to life. Anyone who has had the joy of spending time in Assisi can easily identify with the unusual description Romano Guardini gave of his experience of this remarkable place. Guardini described a tension built into the very contours of Assisi's masses of stone buildings together with its topographical setting. On the one hand there is the clarity of the "hewn hardness of stone, row on row, the simple cubical masses suffused with light standing in the purity of wind and brilliant sunlight." This, he says, "touches the soul with the mystery of great depth. Every form standing forth freely in the light and pure air creates a desire just to be there and be embraced by its mystery — to be one with them in clinging so deeply to the little city on the side of a hill." But there is also another pull. Again and again the streets emerge into small squares and the wide view of the Umbrian plain meets the eye. The marvelous panorama of

the Umbrian plain that extends from Perugia to Spoleto with its hills rising in soft light has the power to draw our imaginations into the unknown and unseen. "It is impossible," says Guardini, "to describe how the power of the form of nearby things felt in all the fibers of one's being suddenly stretches out into a great distance of yearning and infinity.

Francis grew up in this tension and became a young man in whose soul echoed the call of far places while living in the circumscribed present. But that faraway call seemed to resonate more deeply in him than the desire to enter into Assisi's contours. Dreams and visions of himself returning in glorious triumph from far away military accomplishments took hold of his imagination and stretched it into unreal fantasy. It may be that his father's desire for distant journeyings to the fancy cloth marts of France resonated with particular force in his imaginative personality. We know also that the songs of the troubadours found particular resonances in his heart and stirred his imagination. Whatever the reasons, Francis was filled with an imagination that had surrendered to fantasy and let himself be overcome by dreams of glory mounted in knightly spelndor on a chosen steed. His path to glory was away from Assisi; even his revelries at home in the city were the acting out of fantasies of greatness that set him above the everyday humdrum of the city's struggles. His search for glory would not allow his imagination to tolerate anything but self-serving and unreal visions of grandeur. Francis' imagination was to be reborn, restored, deromanticized, brought down to earth; it was to undergo a painful and purifying process that would bring it to that happy tension whereby paradoxically the embrace of the concrete, everydayness of reality would be the actual entry into the imagined glory of that anticipated homeland we call heaven.

Francis' imagination had to submit itself to experience to be purified and restored to balance.

The process is well known. Defeat in battle and a year's imprisonment followed by a long illness led to some sobering realizations. When he looked far afield for consolation, he discovered that nature had lost its appeal and failed to arouse his imagination. Celano records that "he wondered therefore at the sudden change that had come over him" (1 Cel 3). Yet he could not resist the romantic call of another promising military engagement. "He still looked forward to accomplishing great deeds of worldly glory and vanity," says Celano, and puffed up by a gust of vainglory, vowed that he would go to Apulia to

increase his wealth and fame. This was terminated by a dream, a vision of a palace of armor covered with crosses and the voice that said, "Francis who can do more for you, a lord or his servant, a rich man or a beggar?" When he replied that a lord or a rich man could do more, he was asked, "then why are you abandoning the Lord to devote yourself to a servant. Why are you choosing a beggar instead of God who is infinitely rich?" (2 Cel 6)

"He met a leper and made stronger than himself, he kissed him." This was the rebirth of the imagination of Francis.

Francis took his fantasies into a cave and submitted them in pain and groanings to God. He was so exhausted with the strain that one person seemed to have entered and another to have come out. That led to a radical letting go of that which enabled him to pursue his lavish dreams — extravagant military journeys made possible by the money from his wealthy father's cloth business. Francis learned how all of his dreams were conditioned by that symbol of money and power. He would literally divest himself of cloth and in doing so begin to narrow down his imagination, call it back to a new experience of reality. The cross of Jesus was slowly taking hold of his inner mind and it began to exercise its demands upon him as previously cloth had done. He would move with it and into it facing up to himself in a radically existential way. He spoke of a spouse "more beautiful and more noble than you have ever seen" --- one which would "surpass all others in beauty and excell all others in wisdom" (1 Cel 7). A new image was taking shape within him. Yet, he hid in fear from his father; his vision of his father beating and embarrassing him publicly paralysed him and forced him to hide. But after long prayer, the image of the crucified asserted itself, and he boldly emerged in public as a new person.

Then came that awesome occasion when he made the break with his father, and with that cloth which had exercised so great a control over his fantasy life. In public he stripped himself, returned his clothes to his father, and professed that only God the Father would from then on rule his life. But as sincere as he was, as joyful and free as he felt, as capable as he was of sustaining with joy the attack of robbers, Francis was still a bit of the romantic. He had not restored that tension of Assisi; there was something of the concrete reality that his imagination could not tolerate, a reality that could not possibly lead him to

God because for him it was "bitter"; it was sin itself. Francis' imagination had to submit itself to experience to be purified and restored to balance. The leper stood in its way. So greatly loathsome to him were lepers we are told that he would look at their houses only from a distance of two miles and hold his nostrils with his hand. But one day came the remarkable encounter when "he met a leper and made stronger than himself, he kissed him" (2 Cel 9). This was the rebirth of the imagination of Francis. This was for him a deep, penetrating transformation. What had seemed bitter was changed into sweetness of body and soul. The total Francis was bathed in grace. The hideousness of the leper, that which his imagination could not tolerate, became an encounter with God. Incredibly, in this most rejected of created reality was to be found and experienced God through grace. The path to glory, to grace, was in and through the particular, the concrete, no matter what its shape or contours. Francis had implicitly grasped the meaning of the Incarnation through the cross which had become imbedded in his imagination in the most existential way possible. From now on, he could never tolerate in himself or in his brothers any fantasizing

Just as Francis' spiritual journey was marked by various encounters with the cross, so too, his imagination was shaped by the power of the cross.

that would allow them to leap over the limits of the concrete to get to instant glory. Rather, he came to the realization that the limited concrete is the path to glory and salvation. It was in and through Christ through the mystery of the Incarnation that he would overcome once and for all any mistrust of the finite and of the human and any desire to escape into an unreal and unrealizeable dream world where his soul might perpetually dwell with no pain to his body. Francis and his brothers accepted the tension of Assisi. This tension had taken hold of their Christian imaginations in a most productive way: in travelling and journeying they looked not for the fantastic but for the concrete opportunity to serve the world by "word and example." And in every concrete episode of life whether it be a sinning brother, a sick brother, a poor person, a leper, a rich man, or a Saracen, they experienced an opportunity to encounter God. Francis and the brothers could dream and imagine but they would dream only one thing—that wherever they would find themselves, nothing would stand in the way of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

FRANCIS' JOURNEY AND THE POWER OF THE CROSS

According to Bonaventure, the life of Francis cannot be spoken of and interpreted independently of that religious experience which revealed to him the mystery of Christ crucified. This experience brought about a transformation of his inner vision so that he almost always looked upon the wounds of Christ with the eyes of his mind. The principal structural element of Bonaventure's Legenda Major is the seven appearances of the crucified Christ. The progression is important. It moves from the appearances of an empty cross, to the vision of the crucified, to the voice of the crucified in the first three visions. These are all external visions and are prior to his dramatic conversion experience. In the next three visions, the image of the cross is projected from or within Francis, showing that he had taken into himself the meaning of the crucified Christ. These six lead to the seventh: the stigmata, Francis' final identification with the Christ of the cross. Bonaventure gives us the significance of the stigmata by stating, "the true love of Christ had transformed his lover into his image . . . the image of the Crucified" (LM XIII:5). Indeed love had fired the imagination of Francis, and in his conversion process he surrendered his imagination to the power of the cross.

Just as Francis' spiritual journey was marked by various encounters with the cross, so too, his imagination was shaped by the power of the cross. His first encounter with the Crucified was a sense experience; the imagination played a humble role in reproducing and recollecting concrete images of this experience. The kiss of the leper, for example, and the renunciation of his possessions before the bishop were dramatizations of the cross impressed upon his imagination. As Francis experienced conversion through participation in these events, he became more like the Crucified - the image impressed on his memory and will. He saw the Crucified in all the concrete daily episodes of life, and this single image sparked his love for God and neighbor engaging and capturing the imaginations of those who followed him and who saw in him the example of "conversion to God." Through the power of the cross, Francis' imagination became refined, stimulated, and strengthened to receive the light from on high. The poet Dante said that the imagination is not a faculty in the service of the intellect but a means with which God communicates divine truth to people. This is made possible, the poet claimed, only by the "light . . . which is given form in heaven, of itself, or through a will which sends it down."9 Francis received this light when toward the end of his life in the midst of impending blindness he composed the Canticle of Brother Sun singing the praises of God in creation whose wisdom and glory he had perceived. The power of the cross had shaped his imagination to receive the divine light, to share in the imagination of the Creator and thus to experience the divine truth. On the mountain of La Verna, this divine light flooded the poverello's imagination revealing itself in the form of the six-winged seraph of the crucified Christ. The image of the cross — that image which occupied the center of his converted life — now imprinted itself in his flesh; the veil between Francis and Christ had been pierced, and his imagination had been shot through by the divine light. His conversion was complete. He no longer had to imagine the Crucified, rather, his imagination had led him back to the center of all life — all eternal life and temporal life, the perfect gift and Giver, the fountainhead of goodness. Francis became one with the crucified Christ. Thus through the gift of his imagination and the shaping of it through the cross, the Poverello's life was converted from a life of revelry to one of imitating Christ who hung poor and naked on the cross. That the world of Francis and the images of his life were forged into the image of the cross and that this image directed his journey back to God, recapitulates the notion of Bonaventure: "there is no other path than through the burning love of the Crucified." 10

CONCLUSION

Imagination is an inborn gift, a capacity of the human person that allows one to be open to new possibilities and new horizons in life. The Incarnation as a radical event in the world brought the imagination to a new level of significance when Jesus challenged his disciples to change the images of their lives and reach out to the infinite love of God. Through the use of parables, Jesus indicated that conversion takes place in the concrete episodes of our lives — in the images we form of ourselves, our world, and of God.

Francis of Assisi is one who listened to the parables of Jesus through the Word of God and accepted the challenge of conversion. Although by nature he had a lively imagination and could easily drift into dreams of grandeur, he was seized by the image of the crucified Christ and freely appropriated it as the image of his own life. Through the power of this image his life changed from one of dreams and fantasies to one of imitating Christ. The image of the Crucified as the ultimate love of God manifested in the poverty of the cross altered his vision of the world so that in every concrete particularity of life, whether it be the hunger of a brother or the suffering of a leper, he saw only the love of God. This image, therefore, opened him up to the infinite horizon of God. Francis lived from an understanding of image that corresponded to biblical-image thought whereby image was not merely likeness but a genuine actualizing of a reality, a rendering of a spiritual vision in a concrete way. He made use of the Christ image through drama, exaggeration and parable to draw others to the love of Christ and in doing so Christified imagination. His dramatization of the Gospel was not merely an acting-out of events but an experiential participation in the life of Christ. The imagination of Francis, following the footsteps of Christ, received the greatest gift of divine light on the mountain of La Verna where he became one with the image of the Crucified, the seal of his life. Here his imagination not only leapt to the infinite bounds of the love of God, but standing poor and alone on the solitary mountain, Francis entered into the love of the creatively imaginative God.

Endnotes

- ¹ Gerard Watson, "Imagination and Religion in Classical Thought," in *Religious Imagination*, edited by James P. Mackey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1986), 29.
- ² St. Augustine, *De Trinitate (The Trinity)*, introduction and translation by Edmund Hill (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1990), 11.3.11.
- ³ Silvano Arieti, Creativity: The Magic Synthesis (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 37.
- ⁴ Robert Avens, Imagination is Reality (Irving: Spring, 1980), 18.
- ⁵ Mary Warnock, *Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), ch. 2; cf. S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, edited by J. Shawcross (London: Oxford, 1907), ch. XIII.
- ⁶ Henry Corban, Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 191; cf. Coleridge, Biographia, XIII. It is interesting to note that Colerdige defines imagination as a "repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM."
- ⁷ Karl Rahner, Belief Today (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 14.
- 8 David Tracy, Blessed Rage for Order (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 138.
- ⁹ Dante Alighieri, Purgatorio 17, 16 quoted in M. W. Bundy, The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Medieval Thought (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1927), 420.
- ¹⁰ Bonaventure, The Soul's Journey Into God, translated by Ewert H. Cousins, Prologue 3.

* * *

GROWING OLD

Waves pounding relentlessly on the shore, Every day taking just a bit more, Inevitable erosion of age Humbling the mighty, dumbfounding the sage.

Dorothy Forman, O.S.F.

The Blue Cross "The cross of the response"

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

Most Franciscans would agree that really only since 1982, the 800th anniversary of the birth of Saint Francis, has there been a more serious scholarly pursuit of the richness of our Franciscan heritage. The rediscovery of the painted literature of the Franciscan movement has been a further benefit of our scholarly and meditative studies.

Franciscans and lovers of the Franciscan story may be eternally grateful to the Canadian Capuchin, Marc Picard and his mentor, Dominique Gagnan, for their research regarding the symbolism in the Cross of San Damiano. With their publication, **The Icon of the Christ of San Damiano**, Casa Editrice Francescana, these two authors have given rebirth to the cross of the call, and have provided the tools for the modern viewer to hear the San Damiano speaking again. After years of being neglected, it would be difficult now not to find the San Damiano Cross mounted somewhere in a prominent location in all of our friaries, convents and parish churches.

While living in Assisi for several years, further research and meditation has brought to light the other half of Francis' conversion story, the response to the call.

After Francis heard the voice of Christ speaking to him on that autumn day in 1204, "Go and rebuild my house ..." he never mentions the Cross of San Damiano again. The San Damiano was the cross of the call which passionately led Francis to convert his life. But his response to the call was to go forth and serve the glorified Christ in every crucified person, especially the poor, the dispossessed and the lepers of his day.

The Blue Cross, then, is one more rediscovered treasure of our communal pristine youth, too long forgotten by our Franciscan family. Painted by an unknown artist shortly after the completion of the Lower Basilica in Assisi (1230) where Francis is buried, the Blue Cross is the artistic synthesis of Francis' free response to the call of the San Damiano Christ. The Blue Cross was as much a

Readers of The CORD will welcome this second contribution of the author on the subject of Franciscan iconography. Our December, 1993 issue carried a detailed study of an icon of St. Clare which he co-authored with his confrere, Ciaran McInally. This present article offers enriching insight into the remarkable impact of our tradition on the artistic presentation of the mystery of Jesus.

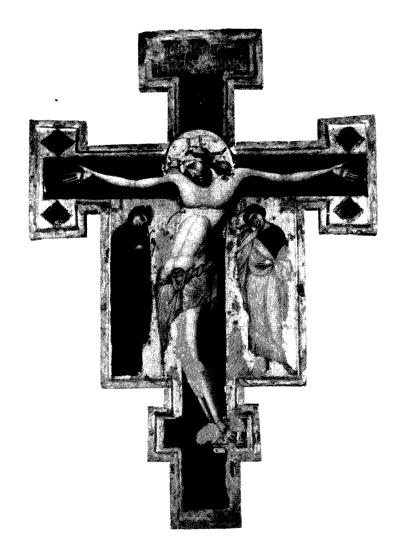
part of Franciscan evangelization as any of the world famous frescoes in the Basilica for which it was painted. The Blue Cross bespeaks the Franciscan vision of God — incarnational theology — which led a society out of the Middle Ages into rebirth, the Renaissance.

Originally, the Blue Cross was suspended from the vaulting above the *pontile*, an ornamental wall which functioned as an iconostasis separating the nave from the choir. For centuries the Blue Cross was the focal point of the portal of the *pontile*, the narrow passageway to the sanctuary where Francis' body rested securely below the high altar.

It is unfortunate that the Blue Cross, or even a replica, no longer hangs in this original position. Because of age and need for preservation, the Blue Cross is now on display in the museum of the Basilica. And yet, even though the pontile was also dismantled because of liturgical and theological developments, a study of the original meaning and purpose of the Blue Cross is no less potent for us today.

Even though the Middle Ages were 1200 years beyond the resurrection, the Franciscan movement was reconfirming for the multitude of pilgrims visiting Francis' tomb that the Old Testament had *become* the New Testament. The God of paradoxes had been born, had died and is resurrected. Everything in the new order has been reversed from the old order. No longer is there an "eye for an eye," but now we are called to "turn the other cheek." No longer is God all powerful, but he is weak, born as an infant. No longer is God the Lord of armies, the Lord of hosts, but now he is the God of the shepherd, the God of the prostitute and tax collector and the God of fishermen. Therefore, the Franciscan movement, in its attempt to "rebuild" the weakened Christian faith, is credited with initiating a reversal in the art conventions of the day — art being the form of communication for a society that could not read and write.

The style of painting before the Franciscan movement was greatly influenced by the Eastern Empire which was called Byzantium. Byzantine art adhered to strict colour conventions: red represented humanity, blue represented divinity. If one looks at the San Damiano Cross, one has the overall impression of the colour red. Christ is human; He is a man. And yet, the *text* of the San Damiano is the Gospel of Saint John, Christ is portrayed as resurrected, triumphant, in complete control of the elements. The *text* of the Blue Cross, on the other hand, is the Christ of the Synoptic Gospels; He is completely at the mercy of external elements; He is crowned with thorns, spat upon, jeered. The Christ of the Blue Cross is not resurrected, He has died. Blood spills from his side. At first, the medieval viewer may have been confused by the reversal of the tradi-



tional colours. The colour blue bespoke divinity, but Christ is depicted as dead. Is it a contradiction? Is God weak? Did God fail?

The plainness of the Blue Cross, as compared to the busyness of the San Damiano, satisfies the medieval quandary. The cross on which we are gazing offers one simple truth, one simple message: this is true glory, true divinity—to give one's life for another. Our God suffers with us. The God who gave us the greatest gift of all, free will, was crucified by men who freely used that gift. A mystery of love which remains a mystery to logic.

John the Beloved and the Virgin Mary, standing at the foot of the cross, are not like the John and Mary of the San Damiano. These two holy people, although wearing blue garments, representing their heavenly status, are not shown as rejoicing in the future resurrection. The John and Mary of the Blue Cross, having their faces cupped in their hands, the traditional imagery of meditation, are looking at the viewer but pointing to Christ, sadly admitting that God/Christ/Jesus really was human — like us — and He died. He was not merely pretending to die on the cross as several of the heresies of the Middle Ages believed.

The mourning depiction of John and Mary is not the end of the story, however. The medieval pilgrim, poised for a happy ending, and now more attentive to a new manner of perception, would perhaps recognize yet another new artistic convention. The loincloth, which was a neat priestly liturgical garment on the figure of Christ in the San Damiano, has now become a bulky unfurled banner. Although at rest, it is clearly a type of standard, impatient for victory. The male anatomy of Christ becomes commonly accented in such a manner because of a renewed, more healthy view of the goodness and beauty of the human form. The banner-loincloth proclaims that there is still life in Christ, the seed is but hidden, veiled in death, as in a field lying fallow, patient for renewed cultivation. There will be a resurrection!

The four diamond shaped designs near the hands of Christ, also offer hope to the perceptive medieval pilgrim. These four diamond shapes may be understood as haloes for allegorical figures representing the cardinal or moral virtues: prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude. Also, the four sided design could represent the four last things: death, judgment, heaven, hell. The four sided shapes near the hands of Christ could also represent the four corners of the earth of the four winds; Christ's compassion is all encompassing, North-South-East-West.

The Blue Cross, as the mirror of Francis' theology, is the artistic beckoning to his followers: go forth and serve the glorified Christ in every crucified person. Francis, the joyful mystic, had discovered the greatest Christian reversal of all, "he needed to suffer the great pain of his age, because not to suffer, especially to miss out on the suffering of the world, was not to live." A mystery of love which remains a mystery to logic.

Endnote

¹ Hampl, Patricia. Virgin Time. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 1992) p. 121.

A New Reading of the Rule of 1223 (*Regula bullata*)

JAVIER GARRIDO

In the name of the Lord!

Our history as friars minor began in Assisi, through the mercy of God, at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Francis and his movement took part in an experience that was formalized in writing in 1223. Approved by the authority of the Church, this text is still the definitive document defining our identity today.

Chapter 1

Our fundamental program is to believe in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and to observe it by living its message, its manner of being and acting, and its messianic options of celibacy, poverty, minority and obedience. We want "to follow His footsteps" by identifying ourselves with His love for the Father and humanity to the deepest degree possible.

We receive the Gospel from the Church and we live it out in communion with the Church. At times we provoke conflicts, without wanting to do so, with our style of life. Our position within the Church, in as much as it is a religious institution, is that of minors; therefore, we promise to obey especially the pope and bishops who work for unity, rather than be separated from our brothers and sisters.

We are dispersed throughout the world, but we feel ourselves to be a fraternity because we profess the same life and rule and obey the minister general, who is the successor of our first brother, Francis.

Chapter 2

No one can be a friar minor if he is not called personally by the Lord. This supposes a process whereby our evangelical project is assimilated and, with the accord of the minister provincial, culminates in incorporation into the fraternity.

The CORD is very grateful to Timothy J. Johnson, OFM Conv. for his translation of a thought-provoking contemporary rereading of the Rule of 1223. The author, Javier Garrido, published the original under the title "La forma de vida franciscana ayer y hoy" (Centro de Franciscanismo de Espana, 1985). Fr. Timothy's translation was from the Italian version of Ginepro Zoppetti which was published by Edizioni Messagero (Padova, 1987).

We do not demand anything from our candidates other than those conditions which facilitate their true experience of conversion to the Gospel. Firstly: a sense of revelation and gift of God which is received within the Church. Secondly: the option for celibacy, that is, the breaking of those ties which are not founded on adherence to Jesus. Thirdly, and above all: a break with the system of power and possession which characterizes the "anti-kingdom."

We leave to the discernment of the candidate how he ought to concretize his breaking away; however, we believe that the authenticity of his vocation depends essentially on this growth in interior freedom, a freedom in which the Holy Spirit guides him into direct obedience to the words of the Lord.

Therefore it is necessary that the friars and ministers manifest the same freedom, that is, a great disinterest toward every other motivation which is not the will of the Lord alone.

In this phase of formation marked by discernment and challenge, both the candidate and the friars live the dynamic characteristic of this type of life: they have not entered into the conversion process in order to fulfill laws of perfection and to belong to a privileged socioreligious group, but rather, they have place themselves under the lordship of God, moved by the breath of his Spirit, creator and animator of this fraternity.

Profession represents the determining moment of the vocation. The fraternity embraces the new candidate with joy. Now he may be called "brother" in the fullest sense of the term. He experiences the bonds which give a definitive sense to his life: belonging to the family of friars minor; identification with the spirituality, charism, and mission of Francis; a commitment of fidelity to this rule; lifelong belonging to this institution in which God's design on his personal history is effectively incarnated.

No one is able to opt for the Kingdom in the way Francis did if his faith depends on that which he left behind or the fears which arise from calculating his possibilities. In order to make profession it is necessary that one has experienced the absolute character of the call to follow Christ, the faithfulness of the Father, who loved us first, and the force of the Spirit that works within our weaknesses.

We have to be a sign of the Kingdom in a secular world by means of our option for social minority. We have to identify ourselves as an evangelical community not in order to adopt religious, institutional signs, but in virtue of our style of existence: voluntary social marginalization, poor dwelling place, humble style of dress, and a precarious type of life.

What does our radical choice serve if our hearts are filled with ourselves and we believe ourselves to be better than others? Minority is understood by means of a clear conscience which enables us to acknowledge our sinfulness

Chapter 3: 2-10

Among the elements and aspects which shape our form of life, the primary and most essential one is that of our relationship with God. The Catholic liturgy comes first because our Lord gave us such faith that we are able to live that gift that he offers of Himself in Christ Jesus, who died and rose again: the Eucharist, incomprehensible mystery of the body and blood of the Son of God, sacrifice of reconciliation and fraternity; the Word, spirit and life; and the liturgy of the hours, the response which the Spirit awakens in the heart of the Church.

Therefore we organize our schedule so that the principal encounter of the fraternity may be before the Lord. We are not monks who dedicate themselves principally to worship but we do subordinate everything to the spirit of prayer and devotion. Every fraternity selects its privileged moments in which it dedicates itself to the one thing necessary, that is, to empty itself of that which is not our essential and total Good: every day; at the end of every week; every month; every year . . . since it is our style to leave ample margin to personal initiative, every friar is to search for his space of solitude in order to encounter the Lord face to face.

Our most profound desire is to "pray always," be it in times of rest or times of action, in favorable as well as adverse times. We know that it is a grace of the Lord; but, in as much as it depends on us, we attempt to remove every impediment to the action of the Spirit. We keep watch over external stimuli, distractions, and at times we experience the desert, fasting, and prolonged periods of listening to the Word of the Lord.

We are not contemplative, however, who separate themselves from the world. We have learned from Jesus the liberty of love that subordinates ascetical practices to mercy and service of neighbor. The normal mediator of our asceticism is the state of material indigency and social dependency we have chosen.

Chapter 3: 11-15

We are sent into the world which is our cloister: streets, fields, offices, places of harmony and controversy, missions, beaches, shanties, hospitals. . . . Our mission begins when we enter into the condition of our confreres, brothers and sisters — especially those who suffer.

We want a new humanity, egalitarian and fraternal, reconciled within ourselves and with God, according to the peace promised by the prophets and announced as a gift from Jesus, the Messiah. We do not have any illusions about this instable, violent, and unjust world. We are conscious that this world can only be transformed by those whose love exposes them to persecution and deprivation. Our method is to be scandalously evangelical: to live the beatitudes of the Kingdom in peace, peaceful and balanced, meek and humble. We believe that this love, that does not avenge itself and appears passive, is more powerful than death.

We subordinate the word to practice. Preaching urges us on, but we want to proclaim and actualize the Gospel, especially with our lives. We are pleased to draw near to those who are devoured by anxiety and wish them, with simplicity and frankness, the peace of the Lord, but we do not want to fall into the temptation of efficiency, not even with the pretense of pastoral motives. We have to remain minors in spite of the pressures, especially those within the Church and those of the "prudent" friars of the fraternity. We prefer the use of simple means, even though the expensive means appear to be more convenient for the duties which are considered necessary.

We make ourselves present in the culture, but without ideological power. We dedicate our lives to the promotion of justice, but without prominent social positions. We will announce the Gospel, but we value the person more than his or her belongings to the faith. Our most secure road is fidelity to our mission of minority and fraternity, taking on the mode of life belonging to the most unfortunate.

Chapters 4: 2 — 6:7

Analyzing the powers that enslave men and women, we see that the first one is money. We would be like Pharisees if we were to limit ourselves to depending on the friar ministers for monetary support, or on the other hand, if we were to accumulate money in banks and live free from every insecurity. Our option is to create an economic model at the margins of a system based on property so that we can satisfy our necessities and still allow our future material needs to be in the hands of God.

The first principle: we live from the work of our hands as poor salaried workers. This is our normal way of subsistence which allows other friars to dedicate themselves freely to the care of the sick, to preach, to pray. . . . Work does not define our identity. It is a grace of the Lord, as is everything in the life of the friar minor. The important thing is that we work according to God's will, and consequently, with loving dedication.

The second principle: not even the results of our work belong to us. We do not want to claim anything before human tribunals. We would thus separate ourselves from those who perhaps would not even be able to exercise the right of appeal. To accept the principle of ownership leads, sooner or later, to substitute pride for the following of Christ and, on the institutional level, to accumulate rights that guarantee the future. We could end up having to turn to violence in order to defend our rights.

The third principle: the positive expropriation of any form of capital (the house in which we live, that which remains of our work, institutional or pastoral benefices from where we work . . .). Perhaps this is too much? Humanly speaking, yes; but it is the only way to render effectively our fidelity to the poverty and humility of Jesus. Perhaps this would expose us to shame before other religious institutions, and what is even worse, it might make our evangelical option appear to be crazy. It is the moment in which our faith is put to the test, the moment to contemplate the Lord who made himself poor in this world. We have faith that the Lord will not abandon those who put their trust in Him, even when it concerns material necessities.

This socioeconomic model is naturally the fruit of the wisdom of the Kingdom. We do not think that it is in any way applicable to other forms of Christian life, and even less to the society in which we live. It is our heritage as friars minor, that which Francis left us, and it is born from the profound inclination of the one who is Jesus' disciple. It is the disciple who prefers poverty to riches, expropriation to rights.

We have not created this model of life as an alternative at the margins of society or as a nostalgic return to earlier times. To the contrary, we want to be a critical model (from the inside) of the ruling system, in solidarity precisely with its victims,

Chapters 6: 8 — 7: 5

Poverty and minority leave us undefended before the implacable powers of this world, like lambs among wolves. We find our support in the Lord; the warmth of the community helps and consoles us like the warmth of a fireplace.

Everyday we are happily surprised and full of gratitude before the marvel that is the fraternity. It is the closest sign we have of the saving grace of the Lord. We are brothers because the Lord has called us to be so and has brought about the miracle of love among us. Therefore we justify our evangelical project to the degree that we are brothers in reality and with our actions.

We have a very particular sense of our fraternity. We do not understand it as a group of friends nor as work group nor as a religious community presided over by God's representative, but rather as a family of spiritual brothers in which everyone can be himself and manifest to another his needs with trust. The quality of our interpersonal relationships is the most important thing to us.

We appreciate profoundly the psychoaffective component of the fraternity. Without this mutual affection, comprehension and acceptance, community life would seem to be more a simple living together or a spiritual community of individuals that a true fraternity. We have a special sensitivity which leads us to the avoidance of paternalism and dependency. A certain individual-

ism can even be a danger for us. In this case, however, we do not mitigate in any way another essential value of the community: that one share all one is able to do and possesses. From this point of view, it is poverty which saves the fraternity in that necessity provokes abnegation and expropriation of self creates a relational dynamic.

In our fraternity, the preferred ones have to be "the little ones"; that is to say, the sick, the discouraged, those who provoke conflicts, those disgraced by their infidelity to their commitments, those who feel marginalized, and those who have been victimized by the sinful structure of our institution or the abuse of power. We are able to be a sign of the Kingdom only if "the golden rule" (do to others what you would have them do to you) regulates our relations. The ideal of a reconciled humanity begins in one's own home.

The fraternity is not made by projecting our infantile needs on to others in the search for an ideal of love without conflict. To the contrary, the unconditional forgetting of self is the necessary point of departure for love. It is necessary to avoid getting angry and losing a sense of peace by being scandalized by the mediocrity or weakness of a brother. It is necessary to love like a mother, and even more than a mother, since the fraternity is sustained in the final analysis by the gratuitous love of God.

In as much as we try to confirm in a visible way the mutual affection and communal desire to live the Gospel, so too will love find a place in us — that love which "believes all, hopes for all, supports all," that love which overcomes evil with good, as Jesus did when he was offered up for sinners.

Chapter 8

Our fraternity is relational as well as institutional. We have a common life project for which we are all responsible. We elect from among all the friars, however, one to be minister and servant of the universal fraternity. We commit ourselves to obey him and he helps us to bring to completion, to the degree it is possible, our evangelical vocation.

Our chapters take place during Pentecost since the Holy Spirit is the principle guide of the fraternity. As we come together from various places we feel our brotherhood. We treat those things which are useful for the common good and in a particular way we encourage each other to remain faithful to our choices. We discern the will of God in the historical circumstances in which we live and commission certain friars to fulfill special duties. We correct the abuse of power or the irresponsibleness of the friar ministers and, if necessary, we remove them from their positions.

We are aware that the institution is one of the most direct menaces to our project of evangelical minority. The institution has a need for authority to reach its ends, but it is easy to pass from authority to power.

The fraternity has grown so much that it is divided into provinces. Each

Chapter 9

Among us there are certain friars who have received the particular mission to preach. They express with words that which all try to proclaim with their lives. But these, in addition, unite themselves to the apostolic ministry of the Word, which by the command of Jesus, gives life to the world.

In this we also have to be minors. And even if we are well prepared and have the charism of preaching, and the pastoral necessities clearly demand our word, we have decided to live in communion with the Catholic hierarchy. Truly we believe more strongly in the efficacy of love which searches for the last place than in the efficacy we possess. With the same logic, when bishops call us to collaborate in their ministries, we prefer the marginal or those services the others do not desire.

The friar preacher does not hold any privileged place in the fraternity. Here there is proper equality and expropriation. The preacher has to be disposed to put aside his office at any moment. The one who preaches is no better than the one who keeps quiet, and the one who runs a parish is no better that the one who cleans the house. Therefore we make sure that our formation does not promote classes, that the offices rotate as a sign of fraternal solidarity, and that duties are for a certain time period in order to avoid the temptation of power.

Preaching has to be faithful to revelation — but we take care to ensure that it be fitting especially to our life choice. We do not refute theological investigation, but we prefer the living word which directs the heart. We can be part of a preexisting parochial institution but we prefer to go about freely, dedicating ourselves to those most abandoned. The important thing is that our word resembles that of Jesus; simple and clear, so that while it spreads the joy of salvation it also provokes conversion and ultimate decisions.

It is necessary that what we preach has been previously heard and contemplated in prayer. When it devours us like a fire from the inside, our word will be the spirit of the risen Jesus. It will be a prophetic word to denounce and save, to uproot and plant. By means of the Gospel we are made servants of all people and that same Gospel gives us the liberty to speak both "in season and out of season."

Chapter 10: 2-7

Within the fraternity, the relations between the friar ministers and the friars under them in obedience constitute the test of our vocational maturity. Be we one or the other, we all part from the principle of love for minority. We

would be living a lie if deep down we continued to think in sociojuridical categories, preoccupied by our respective competences and in a defensive attitude. We all serve the same life and rule in the same spirit of obedience which induces us to wash each others' feet.

This does not take away the fact that, in practice, given our limits and our sins, tensions exist. The friar minister exercises his service in fraternal correction according the spirit of the Gospel. In his use of authority he should not protect himself by separating himself from the friars and thus try to acquire for himself a sacred power over their consciences. On the contrary, he promotes fidelity with his life and, by taking personal notice of each friar and encouraging them, helps them as well as he can to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

The friars in obedience to the minister ought to remember their original proposal to observe the Gospel by living in obedience. In their profession they have denounced in a definitive way, for the love of God, to follow their own will. They no longer belong to themselves. The friar ministers, the other brothers and circumstances are the concrete situations that mediate for us the opportunity to lose our lives in order to gain them in Christ.

Obedience is not for us, however, a system of security or of ascetical perfection. Our manner of life among people and the respect for others, which characterizes our relations, leaves us at the mercy of our initiatives. This requires from us that we establish our vocation of obedience and the spiritual experience of discernment together, so that in all things and through all things we do the will of God.

At times certain provocative situations arise: an abuse of authority places a brother in a condition that gravely menaces his fidelity to the fundamental project of our life, or a friar feels called in conscience to realize a certain mission, or the spirit of a fraternity, in general, is so decayed that the institution has to be reformed from the roots. . . . These conflicts demand the spiritual maturity of the one who has reached the paradoxical synthesis of the sons of God: the friar has to disobey but he would prefer to suffer persecution rather than separate himself from his friars, or perhaps, he will submit himself blindly in the abandonment of faith. It is not possible to systematize with moral rules the mystery of Christian obedience as it deals with the living God.

Chapter 10: 8-15

From all that has come before one sees that evangelical radicalism is the profound dynamic which animates our rule and life. This radicalism can give the deceptive impression to search more for the fame of certain radical forms than the authenticity of the Kingdom, which, in the end, does not consist in either scarcity or abundance, but in the joy of the Holy Spirit. But how can we explain to those who have a vocation different from our own that, by means of his ineffable grace, the Lord has wanted us to be his disciples — even to the

point of losing everything and considering it all garbage so that we can find ourselves anew in Him and know the power of His resurrection and participate in His passion? It is "the hour" that no proposal of radical fidelity could choose. And in this sense, no friar minor is able to seize it. But why else do we sense, despite everything, this profound attraction of love to the point of identification with Jesus in the hour of the glory of absolute Love?

This journey asks a continual conversion from us which needs to be renewed everyday. The fruits of our flesh are pride, vainglory, and envy. We attribute everything we do and say to ourselves, we appropriate for ourselves the good that God does. Therefore we feel more joy for our pastoral successes, of for our personal maturity, or for the grandness of our institutions, of for our spiritual progress, than in disgrace and contempt.

The fruits of our flesh are avarice, preoccupation, and solicitude for this world. We feel more joy for the material success and social status that we have achieved — and even for the social-economic promotion of the poor for whom we are committed — than in persecution and injustice suffered for the love of Jesus.

The fruits of our flesh are defamation, murmuring, and the preoccupation of being considered important in our own fraternities. We feel more joy when our plans for the province are carried out, or when our ideological party dominates, or for the warmth of friendship and understanding that a companion offers us, or because we are appreciated by those in authority, or because we are admired for our culture and form of life — than in the uselessness, anonymity and weakness which opens for us the hidden treasure of "true and perfect happiness."

Perfect happiness is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Easter Jesus. The first thing that the Spirit teaches us is that we are to center our lives on that which counts, the reign of God and His justice, until we learn to consider everything else as excess. Then the Spirit stirs in us a sense of the absolute, not in a generic sense, but by means of an interior calm and insatiable attraction, which leads us to desire God alone. The Holy Spirit also brings about within us the spirit of prayer and devotion. We pray continually that the living flame be ignited in us and consume, purify, and transform everything. The same atmosphere, that of love, envelops everything: fusing the presence of the Lord and one's own heart. From now on, love will be one's passionate destiny until death. We will desire and do things others would consider to be crazy because all of life becomes a yearning to be identified with the crucified Jesus. Sickness, humiliation, persecution, injustice, slander . . . martyrdom. Joy and suffering inexplicably fuse in this atmosphere of love.

Chapter 11

Our type of life dedicates us to the Kingdom and demands from us a great sense of freedom. It is necessary to watch over our affective bonds. To what end will our freedom for the poor assist us if in the end we are bound by the subtle ties of the heart?

We do not live out our celibacy behind fortified walls. We are inserted in a society where women are being emancipated more and more, and where sex is no longer considered taboo. Now is the time to live our chastity with joyful liberty, but intelligently, so that the world feels itself unmasked.

There are some commitments which bind us with particularly tight bonds: belonging to the same religious family, a long-term pastoral relationship, relatives, shared living conditions, shared friendship. . . . It is not possible to stabilize precise rules; the friar minor lives on this earth as a "pilgrim and stranger."

Chapter 12: 2-3

Our fraternity does not exist for itself, but to promote the universal fraternity, the new humanity of those children who call God "Father" and ask for the definitive coming of the Kingdom. Mother earth is our sister; the water and the wind, the moon and the sun, together with fire and death are also our sisters and brothers. Those who suffer, those who do not believe, and all of humanity are our sisters and brothers as well. It is normal, therefore, that we are poised from the beginning to break ethnic, social, cultural, and religious barriers. We are moved by the creative and redemptive love of God which embraces us all. The Gospel, which unites all of creation, presses us to announce it with our lives and words.

Some friars feel themselves to be inspired by God to live this missionary vocation in difficult situations which could lead to martyrdom. We must discern these cases since heroic aspirations often hide obscure motivations. However, if the vocation is authentic, we come before the Lord with grateful hearts since He wishes to bring to consummation in such a way our evangelical ideal.

Chapter 12: 4-5

It is not easy to carry out our rule and life to the end. It is not a series of regulations and it is open to arbitrary interpretations. It is so essentially evangelical that it must necessarily create conflicts. We have to be a prophetic sign in the Church and in human history which, consequently, obliges us to be clear-sighted in respect to our centers of fidelity.

Our fidelity is both single and double at the same time. On one hand we have to give ourselves to the Lord and His will while, on the other hand, we are minors in the Church and our ultimate strength depends on our adherence to the Catholic faith. We have to be a voice of the Gospel that judges the Church but we also have to subordinate all of our efficacy to love which sacrifices itself. We do not ask anything else other than the freedom to observe the poverty and humility of our Lord Jesus Christ; yet, we decide to remain in institutions and concrete situations which do not always favor the incarnation of our radical project of life.

Only the Holy Spirit can bring about this synthesis. We entrust our fidelity, then, to the Spirit alone.

YOU LORD

In the recesses and cul-de-sacs of wood and leaf and mud and stone I'm wandering

Waiting.

Silenced by the God-presence around me.

Always twilight-never grey but golden sheaths

dip and flow branch to branch, over and beside me.

The trees, their envelopes sculpted rough or peeling shiny smooth beckon me to touch.

Timidly exploring folds of crusty pulpy skin

I embrace as though an old, old man

the bent and twisted body in my arms.

It is you Lord - no other artist's brush or pen

could ever be so strong, express such will to Bel

The tiny growing things, all roundness greenness

curiously prodding upward

reaching for warmth,

curling, unfurling, little trumpets heralding your Glorious Name

I see the miracle unfold before me

Each soft flower of each furry moss a separate living creature in itself.

From moist and seeping pockets climbing,

the tender newlings gently press, green soft insistent opening, blinking toward the sun.

And you again Lord - the mystery of birth

from mud and dirt bursts forth the child of the Spring-seed the Easter sown, the gently harbored, nurtured new.

It is you Lord - always You, and on my knees

I bend to touch and welcome You.

Mary Zablocki, SFO

Book Reviews

Room For One More: A History of Franciscan Sisters, by David Flood, O.F.M., 1993, Missionary Sisters, West Paterson, NJ, 140 pages. \$10 plus \$1 for postage.

Reviewed by Daniel Hurley, O.F.M., National Chaplain of The St. Bonaventure University Alumni Association, Instructor in English, and Campus Minister of the University.

Father David Flood, O.F.M., a noted Franciscan historian, has written the story of the Missionary Poor Clares known as the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God. The author traces the history of this group of women religious from their founding in 1910 to the present. Much of the material for this work was obtained from the archives of the Congregation as well as from conversations with individual members of the Congregation. The writer makes much use of the records of the various General Chapters of the Sisters. Throughout the book, Father David emphasizes the Franciscan roots and charism of this group of Sisters.

In 1910, Bishop Amandus Bahlmann, O.F.M., Prelate of the Diocese of Santarem in Brazil, wanted to have women religious to work in his diocese. He received approval from the abbess of the Conceptionist Ajuda Monastery in Rio de Janeiro to have four of her nuns come to Santarem to begin a new foundation. The Conceptionists are a group of cloistered Poor Clares founded by St. Beatrice da Silva in Spain in the Fifteenth Century. Bishop Bahlmann went to Rome to get approval to have the four nuns live "outside the cloister." He then traveled to Germany in search of a teacher, going to the Poor Clare Monastery in Muenster. The abbess in Muen-

ster put him in touch with Elizabeth Tombrock, a teacher who had recently applied for admission to the Poor Clares. Elizabeth was a good teacher who had felt the call to become a Poor Clare, but since she wanted to teach and to be a Poor Clare, she did not know how a teaching career could be combined with a cloistered life. Bishop Bahlmann's desire to begin a new enterprise in Santarem with devoted religious solved her problem. After Elizabeth Tombrock had been clothed in the attire of a Poor Clare postulant, with the name Sister Maria Immaculata, she and Bishop Bahlmann set sail for Santarem. In Santarem, the four Ajuda Conceptionists entered the newly established convent and Sister Maria Immaculata began her novitiate. Thus began the Conceptionist community calling themselves Missionary Poor Clares of the Immaculate Conception. One of the nuns from Ajuda, Mother Coletta, was named abbess of the new community. The new novice, Sister Maria Immaculata, began the study of Portuguese and learned it rapidly.

The new community of Poor Clare Missionaries began almost at once to teach the children of Santarem and to reach out to the adults. Mother Immaculata would spend the day in the school and then go out and walk among the poor of the area where she would notice their poverty and other needs. It was never a surprise among the Sisters when she would return to the convent and school with an orphan or a hungry person. Her mind-set was that there is always "room for one more" (P. 102). The readiness of Mother Immaculata to recognize the needs of the people and to try to alleviate them brought her and her Sisters to

the attention of the civil officials of Santarem. The Sisters soon became an important part of the community. The interest and care that the "holy women" showed to everybody in the community made them welcome among all levels of society.

The Missionary Poor Clares were first a foundation of the Conceptionist Poor Clares, The Conceptionists are a cloistered Order. Bishop Bahlmann had obtained a dispensation for his nuns to live outside the cloister, but most of the legislation for the Conceptionists still covered the Missionary Poor Clares. In 1922, the Order in Santarem was suppressed and Bishop Bahlmann was authorized to found a diocesan congregation for its members. The bishop founded the Congregation of the Missionary Poor Clare Sisters of the Immaculate Conception with Mother Immaculata as Superior General. The Congregation was aggregated to the Order of Friars Minor and adopted the Rule of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis. The nuns of the Poor Clare Monastery in Muenster objected to the name Poor Clare in a missionary congregation, so the words "Poor Clare" were eliminated from the name of the congregation.

From their very beginning, the Sisters received their primary support from Germany. When the First World War caused devastating effects on the German economy, Bishop Bahlmann and Mother Immaculata sought and obtained help from the New York Franciscans. Although Bishop Bahlmann and Mother Immaculata came together to New York, when the bishop was ready to return to Santarem, Mother Immaculata had become ill and had to remain in the United

States. When it became evident that Mother Immaculata's health was not going to get better, the motherhouse of the congregation was established at St. Bonaventure, NY and later moved to West Paterson, New Jersey.

The community continued to increase in numbers and in areas of ministry. First, they ministered in Santarem, then in other locations in the State of Para in Brazil. As the Sisters went out to other countries, e.g., Germany, United States, China, Africa, the congregation found it beneficial to divide itself into provinces, especially because of the diversity of languages and culture.

After the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the document Perfectae Caritatis called for all religious to renew themselves, personally and corporately. Renewal was to be brought about by reflection upon the original spirit of the founder(s). Such a task of reflection by the Sisters would necessarily lead to Mother Immaculata. The Council document on The Church in the Modern World called upon religious to update themselves to the world. The two documents led to a crisis among the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. For the longest time, religious were taught to "strive for perfection" and to "shun the world." Now they are encouraged to be "in the world" but not "of the world."

Centering their attempt at renewal on Mother Immaculata and the beginnings of their Congregation in Santarem, the Sisters discovered that the renewal of their religious life could be accomplished most effectively if they could continue to remember and to emphasize that faithfulness to the mission that led

to the foundation of their community would assure their continuation as a congregation. That mission was exemplified in Mother Immaculata and the first sisters. The mission of the congregation was well expressed by Mother Immaculata when she applied in 1916 for incorporation in the State of Para. She stated that she and her Sisters "dispensed education and alleviated need" (p. 29). The General Chapters of the Congregation since the Second Vatican Council reveal a true updating of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and a realignment of their places of mission.

This reviewer found Room For One More to be an interesting story. Father David Flood has caught the central feature of the process of a Franciscan congregation discovering its roots and making the adjustments that the renewal called for by the Second Vatican Council required. The author's ability to sift through the volumes in the archives of the Congregation attests to his patience and thoroughness of study. What the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception have achieved is carefully presented in a readable and interesting fashion. Other religious congregations will benefit from a reading of Room For One More.

Your Life Story: Self-Discovery and Beyond, by Edward J. O'Heron, St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1993, paper, 181 pages.

Reviewed by Daniel Hurley, O.F.M.,

Fr. Edward J. O'Heron, a priest of the Diocese of Syracuse and chaplain at the State University of New York at Cortland, has written a book about self-discovery emphasizing the place of imagination in the search. "I invite you

upon a journey to and beyond self-discovery through the use of your imagination" (1). In twelve chapters, the author shows how the reader can use the power to form images to come to an awareness of his/her personal identity as well as his/her relationship with others. Imagination and memory are closely related: both are ways of forming mental images that assist one in growing in an awareness of self.

Each of the twelve chapters concludes with a series of questions for reflection and discussion and with an exercise for the reader to use for his/her own understanding of the subject matter of the chapter. After the exercise, the author lists a few references that deal with the subject material just reflected upon. This arrangement of the chapters suggests that the author sees his book being used in group gatherings.

Father O'Heron displays an acquaintance with many spiritual writers and many authors of literature. His references to these writers help the reader to reflect more deeply on his/her spiritual journey toward self-understanding and toward an appreciation of the wonderful work of God's creation, our inner selves.

This reviewer recommends this little book to all those who are striving to love God and one another. Each reader will be surprised to discover how much one's imagination means to a person. In a society that emphasizes the rational over the imaginative, a book that displays the benefits of the right-brain function while recognizing the importance of the left-brain function is a real contribution to a spiritual reading library.





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