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**THE CORD**  
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1. MSS should be submitted on disk or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced.
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 13 ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.  
Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or italicized.
4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:  
(1Cor. 13:6).  
(RegNB 23:2).  
(2Cel 5:8).  
(4LAG 2:13).

A list of standard abbreviations used in *The Cord* can be found inside the back cover. The edition of the Franciscan sources used should be noted in the first reference in a mss.

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## Editorial



January is traditionally a month when we consider hope. There is something about beginning a new year that allows us to expect new possibilities for ourselves, for others, for our world. Surely it is a sign of the presence of the Spirit among us that we continue to believe we can get better, our world can get better, there is always a new chance for all of us. The "getting better" often has to do with relationships. In our families, in our communities, in our societies, we are deeply and painfully aware of how much misery is caused by our inability to get along with each other, to exercise, sometimes, even the most basic kindness, to enjoy the blessing of peace.

In this issue of *The Cord*, we share with you an article by Zachary Hayes, OFM, reflecting on Franciscan Christocentrism and what it means for us today. Contemplating the Incarnation is an experience of learning how to be truly human. Christ is God's way of being human with us. Moreover, the entire universe participates in this transformative event. It has profound implications for our way of being together.

Christine Pecoraro, OSF, reflects on the Franciscan mission to the world by meditating "aloud" on Jesus in action. Hers is a practical Christology which develops the implications of Christological understandings for contemporary mission.

Philippe Yates, OFM, traces the Franciscan hermitage tradition, drawing out implications for the contemplative undergirdings of our way of life today.

A brief account of Hermann Schaluck's visit with the Patriarch of the Eastern Church reminds us of the broadness of our Franciscan vision of the Church and world. With the celebration of Church Unity this month, we grieve over the divisions that the Church itself experiences and rejoice over any signs of healing and reconciliation.

If it is in Christ that we are all reconciled and made one, then surely this is the time to seek ever greater understanding of what it means that God came to live in our very world as one of us. Our Franciscan tradition has much to teach us about this extraordinary reality.

With this month's issue we are happy to announce a new editorial board. The following persons have generously agreed to serve as advisors and evaluators for our publication: Marie Beha, OSC, Julian Davies, OFM, Patricia Hutchison, OSF, Frances Ann Thom, OSF, Dominic Scotto, TOR,

and Ed and Mary Zablocki, SFO. We are grateful for their support in making *The Cord* a vehicle for "effecting among us a deeper knowledge and more ardent love of the Franciscan way of life" (mission statement).

And finally, a word of apology. The beautiful design depicting Clare with the infant Jesus on page 2 of the November/December, 1995, *Cord*, is the creation of Clairvaux McFarland, OSF, Franciscan Sister of Rochester, MN. We regret not giving her the proper acknowledgement.



*The Cord*, 46.1 (1996)

## Christ, Word of God and Exemplar of Humanity

*The roots of Franciscan Christocentrism and  
its implications for today*

Zachary Hayes, OFM

[This presentation was given to the joint meeting of the Franciscan Federation and the Friars' Conference, Anaheim, CA, August, 1995.]

### I. Introduction and elements of St. Francis's spirituality.

There are many ways in which we might approach the spirituality of St. Francis. We could begin, for example, with the issue of poverty and move from there. Or we might attempt to reconstruct the chronological sequence of crucial experiences in his life. In this case, we might begin with the dream at Spoleto and move on through subsequent experiences of his conversion process.

I would like to suggest another approach. There are a number of crucial insights to be discovered in the spirituality of Francis. Regardless of how or when they appeared, it is possible in retrospect to see a significant relation between them. The discovery of such a relationship is, I believe, what happened in the early writers of the Franciscan movement, both in the case of the *Legenda* and in the case of the theological tradition associated more explicitly with the universities of the Middle Ages.

There are at least three such insights that may be discerned in the spirituality of Francis, and these three were developed into distinctive theological perspectives by the authors of the Order. The first of these insights is the tendency of Francis to focus his spirituality on the figure of Christ. The second is his sense of God as a loving Father. The third is his sense of creation as a mirror and image of God.

Regardless of the chronological sequence of events in the life of Francis, one can perceive a certain logic connecting the scene before the cross at San Damiano and the scene with his father before the Bishop of Assisi. There is also a certain sort of logic that connects the scene before the crucifix, the incident of the crib at Greccio, the intense eucharistic sensitivity, and the

scene on Alverna. Similarly, there is a sort of logic that connects all of these with the *Salutation of the Virtues* and the *Canticle of Brother Sun*.

I would like to focus on the sort of logic that connects these elements. I believe it is this issue that connects the tradition of Franciscan spirituality with the tradition of Franciscan theology, and specifically, with the tradition of Franciscan Christology. Put simply, while Francis was not a professional academic theologian, his spirituality was such that it led with an inner logic to a style of Christology that became distinctive of the Franciscan tradition. This Christology, in turn, is cast against the background of a distinctive style of trinitarian theology. And all of this finds expression in a rich theological understanding of creation.

The first point I would like to single out is the way in which the spirituality of Francis focuses on the humanity of Christ. From the scene before the crucified Christ at the little church of San Damiano to the power of crucified love on Alverna it is, I believe, concern with the humanity of Christ that leads Francis on his way. And between San Damiano and Alverna, other factors point in the same direction. I think here of the crib of Greccio celebrating the birth of Jesus in his human reality together with Francis's devotion to the mystery of the Eucharist. The focus of Francis's experience was on the humanity of Christ; and the burden of his spirituality is well captured in the idea of the *imitatio Christi*. So much was this the case that Francis has come to be known as the pre-eminent Christ-figure of the Middle Ages.

In his own writings we note in the first *Admonition* a strong centering on the mystery of Christ as he reflects on the text of John 14: 6-9. Our Lord Jesus says to his disciples:

I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would also have known my Father; and from now on you will know him and have seen him. Philip says to him: Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us. Jesus says to him: Have I been with you for so long a time and you have not known me? Philip, whoever sees me, sees also my Father (Adm 1:1-4).<sup>1</sup>

Francis goes on in the same *Admonition* to speak of how the eternal Word humbled himself in the incarnation and again in the mystery of the Eucharist.

Even more so, we sense the focusing on Christ in the terse statement of the fifth *Admonition*: Try to recognize the dignity God has conferred on you. He created and formed your body in the image of His beloved Son, and your soul in His own likeness.

However we might explain this in terms of historical influences and personal experiences, Francis's vision of Christ departs from the Byzantine style which was still perceptible in the religious art of his time—even in the San Damiano crucifix—to a style that is more recognizably directed

to the human in Christ. The Christ that stands out here is not the Pantokrator. It is, rather, the poor, suffering Christ. It is the Christ who, in his human condition, can be recognized as neighbor and brother. But if Christ is seen as brother, then it follows that God, who is Father of the eternal Son in a pre-eminent sense, may be seen in an analogous sense as Francis's Father as well.

Thus this perception of Christ relates with Francis's understanding of God as a loving, generous Father. This may be seen with particular emphasis in the scene with his earthly father before the bishop of Assisi. "From now on I will say: 'Our Father who art in heaven,' and not Father Peter Bernardone" (L3S 6:20).<sup>2</sup> This seems to express the strength of a new-found sense of filial relation to God, who can now be called Father in a much more radical sense than previously. If Francis is son in relation to the heavenly Father, then the question of his relation to the one who is Son in a pre-eminent sense emerges from this scene. And the question of that relation may be dealt with in terms of the spirituality of the *imitatio Christi*.

But if it is true that Francis is related to a loving, heavenly Father, the same is true of all the other people and things that he meets in life. All come from the same loving God. All should be seen, then, in terms of a familial relationship. This sense of family, the seeds of which are seen early in the conversion process of Francis, would become more intense during his life. In the *Salutation of the Virtues*, Francis describes the obedient person as one who is subject and submissive to all persons in the world, and not only to human beings, but even to all beasts and wild animals so that they may do whatever they want with that person inasmuch as it has been given them from above by the Lord (SalVirt 14-18).<sup>3</sup>

In the *Mirror of Perfection* we read of the sorry straits to which Francis had come toward the end of his life. His health was at a low point and he was unable even to bear the light of day. He was living in a miserable cell that was infested with mice. Out of the midst of this misery, he is described as saying:

So, to God's praise, for our own comfort, and to edify our neighbors, I want to compose a new *Praise of the Lord in His Creatures*; for we daily make use of them and cannot live without them, and through them the human race greatly offends their Creator. For we are always ungrateful for God's many graces and blessings, and do not praise the Lord, the Creator and Giver of all good gifts, as we should (SP 100).<sup>4</sup>

This text is particularly interesting since it acknowledges that human beings make daily use of other creatures in order to live. We depend on them. Yet we are ungrateful and fail to recognize the Creator from whom they come as gifts and blessings.

This is important to those who like to appeal to Francis for a sort of naive form of nature-versus-culture solution to the environmental issues.

Not only do we admire water, we also drink it and use it to clean ourselves. Having acknowledged our need for and dependence on other creatures, Francis then gives the most sublime expression of the familial relations that ought to exist between humanity and all other creatures since all come from a common loving God. It is what we know as the *Canticle of the Creatures*, or the *Canticle of Brother Sun*.

We have singled out three elements of Francis's spirituality which will play an important role in the theological tradition of the followers of the Poverello. There is a distinct focusing on the humanity of the Lord; there is a strong sense of God as a mystery of generous, creative love; and there is a distinctive, familial understanding of the world of creation. We notice a similar sort of emphasis in the spirituality of Clare, though it is expressed in a unique way. And we find this spirituality reflected on by the great theologians of the Franciscan movement in a history that goes back to the very beginnings of Franciscanism.

## II. Development of this vision in the Doctors of the Order, especially in Bonaventure and Scotus.

I will preface these reflections on the theology of the Franciscan authors by pointing out that there is a common tendency among Western Christians, perhaps from the Middle Ages, to limit the meaning of the Christ-mystery to the figure on the cross who offered the sacrifice of infinite merit for the salvation of all others. I do not wish to denigrate the meaning of the cross. Nor do I wish to say that the cross is not of importance in the Franciscan tradition. This would be simply false. As we have just seen, in the experience of Francis, the crucified Christ played a foundational role throughout his life, and especially at the end. This would be developed particularly by Bonaventure. But it is nonetheless true to say that the Franciscan tradition, at least in its classical authors from Alexander of Hales to Scotus, including Bonaventure, did not limit the discussion of the meaning of Christ to the reality of the cross. While the cross was always important, it was never the entire story. The tendency of the theologians was to move from the story of Jesus and the cross/resurrection to the widest possible horizon. They developed a style of reflection that today is commonly called cosmic Christology.

This does not mean letting go of the story of Jesus. On the contrary, it means looking out at the entire world as one sees it at a particular time and trying to perceive the possible relations between the story of Jesus and the larger picture of the world. We might summarize the conviction of the early Franciscan theologians by saying simply that a world without Christ is an incomplete world. Or, in another formulation, the whole of the created cosmos is structured Christologically. If Christ is what Christians claim him to be, he cannot be an after-thought on the part of God. As Bonaventure will say, Christ cannot be willed by God *occasionaliter*, that is, simply because of

sin.

How, then, does the mystery of Christ relate to the rest of reality? What sort of world must we inhabit if the values involved in the life and example of Christ are to be seen not as destructive but as a life-giving, fulfilling way of relating to reality? How can Christ's way be for us a true spirituality? It is to this that we shall now turn our attention.

## A. Scriptures and traditional roots for the cosmic Christology.

This is not the place to retrace the history of cosmic Christology. But some indication of how this theme relates to the Scriptures and to the pre-medieval tradition would be in place.

A careful reading of contemporary Scriptural studies will indicate that the historical journey of Christianity began with the early disciples' experience of the human history and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. In this very limited piece of history, enacted in an out-of-the-way corner of the earth by a man who left no known writings or great works of art to enrich subsequent history, the early Christians came to discern something of immense significance. The sense of meaning which was derived from the person and ministry of Jesus was far more than the meaning of one human being's life. It is, if John and Paul and the Epistle to the Hebrews can be taken as dependable guides, a meaning that is embedded from the beginning in the very web of created existence as creation emerges from the mind and will of God.

"In the beginning was the Word," writes John, and "through him all things came into being, and apart from him nothing came to be" (Jn 1:1-3). And this same Word through whom all things are made "became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1:14). Without going into long discussions about the sources that might have been used by the author of this Gospel, it is safe to say that for him the term "word" is not simply a linguistic or grammatical term. It is far more than this. It is a way of naming a mystery which contains a divine clue as to the structure and meaning of the universe.

Texts such as this one would be important in the theology of Alexander of Hales and would play a major role in the theology of Bonaventure. Such a text provides a ready scriptural basis for arguing that there is an intrinsic connection between the mystery of creation and the mystery of the incarnation. We discover in a deeper sense, in what we see and hear and touch in Jesus, the divine clue as to the structure and meaning not only of humanity but of the entire universe.

Think of the opening of the first epistle of John:

This is what we proclaim to you: what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have touched—we speak of the word of life. This life became visible; we have seen and bear wit-

ness to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life that was present to the Father and became visible to us. What we have seen and heard we proclaim in turn to you so that you may share life with us" (1 John 1:1-3).

It is within this grand vision of creation, of light and darkness, and of divine life shared by human beings that the epistle speaks of being cleansed of all sin through the blood of Jesus. Note, the story of the cross is not lost. But it is placed in a broader, richer context of meaning.

The great text of Paul's letter to the Colossians opens up similar vistas. Speaking of Christ, Paul writes:

He is the firstborn of all creatures. In him everything in heaven and on earth was created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations, principalities or powers; all were created through him and for him. He is before all else that is. In him everything continues in being. It is he who is head of the body, the church; he who is the beginning, the first-born of the dead, so that primacy may be his in everything. It pleased God to make absolute fullness reside in him and, by means of him, to reconcile everything in his person, both on earth and in the heavens, making peace through the blood of his cross (Col. 1:15-20).

One could add other scriptural citations such as Ephesians (1:3-14), 1 Corinthians (8:6), and Hebrews (1:2ff). But the point is clear from what we have already seen. Beginning in the Scriptures there is a significant movement in the faith-reflection of the early Christians. Their faith began, of course, from the experience of the earthly Jesus with all his human dimensions. Viewing his life from a post-resurrection perspective, they began to see it ever more as the paradigm of authentic human living. His cause and his values became ever more important in understanding their own human experience. But eventually, that individual human life, which was seen to be of universal significance for humanity, would be projected against the widest possible horizon. What happens in him and through him comes to be seen as the representative piece of humanity and of cosmic reality that has come home to God.

From here we can conclude that the cosmos is not just a random fact, but that it exists for something. We might refer to that, in the language of Whitehead, as the divine aim. And placing Whitehead's language in the context of Scotistic theology, we might say that in the incarnation of the Word and in his destiny, the divine aim for creation has been realized.

While this sort of orientation was developed in the Eastern Fathers of the early centuries of Christian history, it was eventually lost in the West in favor of a style that is more focused on moral rather than cosmic dimensions. The cosmic dimensions would remain in the treatment of eschatology and the final destiny of the material universe, but would play little if any role in the presentation of Christology.

In this regard, the Franciscan tradition stands out in the West. Following a path similar to that which can be discerned in the Scriptures, this tradition moves from a clear focus on the human history of Jesus and all that involves to a position which says: What Jesus is about is more than helping us get rid of sin. In the final analysis, the issue of overcoming sin is a matter of overcoming all obstacles that stand in the way of the accomplishment of God's creative aim. And that aim is the fullest possible sharing of life and love between God and creation. This is what God intends. This is what has happened in Christ. And we are called to share in this mystery in our own way and to our own degree. While redemption is the overcoming of sin, salvation is the completion of what God initiates in creating. Both of these are what we discover in the mystery of Christ.

## B. Principle themes.

1. *Christ as point of departure.* We have already suggested the way in which Francis's spiritual journey can be said to take its point of departure from the figure of Christ. One can think of the experience before the cross at San Damiano. We can recall also the first *Admonition*, to which we have already referred. As Regis Armstrong has pointed out, the centrality of Christ is obvious in this *Admonition*. But, we must add, the figure of Christ does not replace the mystery of God. The role of Christ that emerges in this *Admonition* is that of one who brings the revelation of God the Father.<sup>5</sup>

The role of Christ as revealer of God is developed extensively by Bonaventure throughout his career. Precisely in our meeting with one who is believed to be Son, we discover the meaning of God in a distinctively Christian sense. Bonaventure deals with the revelatory function of Christ particularly in his early *Commentary on the Gospel of John* and even more so in his final work, the *Collations on the Six Days of Creation*. In the latter case, in his expansive reflections on the meaning of the whole of the created universe and its history, Bonaventure asks explicitly about an appropriate starting point for such reflections. There, on the very first page, he argues that one must move from the center, which is Christ; for if this center is overlooked, no result will be obtained.<sup>6</sup> He then goes on to show in what sense Christ is at the very center of all reality.

Simply put, the mystery of Christ is the mystery of the Word incarnate. But, using a spatial metaphor, Bonaventure argues that the Word is the divine person that dwells at the very center of the Godhead. The same Word, the center of God, is the principle through which God reaches out to create the world. Thus, the Word, at all times and places, is the invisible principle of unity and meaning. But that same Word becomes the visible center of the cosmos and its history in the form of the incarnate Word. Thus it is the shape of Jesus' history and ministry that embodies the divine clue as to the structure of all reality.

If this is the case then for Bonaventure, by shaping our lives through

the values of Jesus (= the spirituality of the *imitatio Christi*), we are bringing ourselves into harmony with the fundamental law of reality; that is, the principle in which everything other than the Father is grounded; the law of the other which is the mystery of the Word or Son that lies at the heart and center of the Trinity. Thus, in the thought of Bonaventure, we move from the history of Jesus to the metaphysical basis for this history, which in turn becomes the theology of the Trinity. And this leads to our second theme.

2. *God as triune love is Creator.* If the movement of Francis was from Jesus to the sense of a loving Father, a similar movement may be discerned in the theology of Bonaventure. If we follow his line of thought, our starting point must be at the center. But as we attempt to ground that center we are led back into the depths of trinitarian theology.

Most Western understanding of the mystery of the Trinity has been shaped by the impact of the so-called psychological model of Augustine. The Franciscan school, however, beginning with Alexander of Hales and moving through Bonaventure and Scotus, was heavily influenced by the work of Richard of St. Victor. Instead of giving pride of place to the analysis of the unfolding of human self-consciousness and cognitional experience as the Augustinian tradition had done for centuries, the tendency of the Franciscan tradition, as reflected in these major figures, was to focus on the nature of love in order to give some deeper insight into the Johannine statement: "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16). Reflection on the mystery of the Trinity, therefore, would become a matter of seeking deeper insight into the mystery of divine love. We might see this work of the theologians as an unfolding of the primal insight of Francis into the mystery of God as a loving Creator.

In the case of Bonaventure, who took his inspiration from his mentor, Alexander of Hales, the development of trinitarian thought is the elaboration of a truly theological metaphysics which becomes a structural factor not only in his Christology but throughout the whole of his theology. The creative and sustaining principle of all created reality, that in which all things are grounded, is not a mystery of arbitrariness, nor a mystery of domination and control. Rather, in the word of Bonaventure, it is a mystery of orderly love. This insight strongly suggests the need to rethink our ideologies of power in the light of the Christ-mystery and its trinitarian background.

What, truly, is life-giving power? Is it the ability to control or the ability to call forth the good and perhaps the best in the other? If it is, as trinitarian theology suggests, the second rather than the first, then we must ask: How do we as creatures best mirror the divine mystery in shaping our relations with people and things in the world? Here we discover the deeper theological grounding for what Francis perceived, perhaps intuitively. The familial relation which he perceived in the universe is grounded here in the mystery of the creative love of God.

In the case of Scotus, the analysis of divine love will lead to a charac-

teristic understanding of creation. It leads, eventually, to the metaphysical notion of *haecceitas*, which might be seen as the metaphysical expression of Francis's respect for individual creatures. And, finally, the Scotistic understanding of the orderly love of God leads to his brilliant understanding of the place of Christ in creation expressed in the doctrine of the absolute primacy of Christ.

3. *World as gift of a loving Creator.* We have seen that Francis's vision reached from the loving Creator to the richness and beauty of the gift which pours forth in the work of creation. Whatever may be said about the matter of poverty and the issue of spiritual asceticism in the history of Francis, it is clear that neither of these led Francis to a hatred of the world of God's creation. He and his followers may have problems with the world of "human creation." But if his followers take their inspiration from Francis, his example offers a significant way of relating to the world of God's creation that is important for today particularly.

In the case of Bonaventure, the matter of poverty that plays such an important role in the Franciscan tradition, is grounded finally in the doctrine of creation. Thus, in his *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection*, Bonaventure indicates how the meaning of poverty lies basically in recognizing that all things in the created universe, myself included, come as pure gift from the loving, creative power of God.

This being the case, our first response to ourself and to the world of persons and things which is our home should be one of awe simply at the fact of our existence—awe and gratitude, not a search for possession and control. Poverty, then, for Bonaventure, who has learned well the lesson of his master, Francis, is not exclusively a matter for friars. It is first of all a question of the most appropriate way for any human being to receive and take up his or her existence as a gift of God in a universe which as a whole is a gift of God. Our first questions, then, ought not to be about rights, possession, and control. They ought to be about how one most appropriately receives and lives with the immense richness, goodness, and beauty of the gifts with which God blesses the whole of creation.

For both Bonaventure and Scotus, the richness of the divine mystery of love analyzed in the doctrine of the Trinity provides a basis for explaining the richness and diversity of the created world. God is the mystery of a self-diffusive love that is beyond measure. If the world is, in some way, an external expression of that mystery, and if no single created word can give adequate expression to the richness of that mystery, it is not surprising that there should be a rich variety of created words through which the eternal mystery of Love finds expression in creation. But even with that variety, the whole of the universe is not an adequate expression of the divine richness.

Bonaventure thinks of God in terms of divine simplicity and boundless fertility. Creation might be viewed in analogous terms. At one level, the elements of the created order are few and simple. But they come to-

gether to produce a staggering richness of both non-living and living forms—thus, the simplicity and richness of created reality and its awesome beauty that is at once tender and frightening. Can the created order be for Bonaventure anything other than a rich symbol that mediates to us a sense of the simplicity and richness of the mystery of the divine that is both *tremendum et fascinans*?

We find ourselves in a world, then, that is marked by the reality of the divine truth, goodness, and beauty and that is a powerful symbolic expression of the primal mystery of tender, creative, divine love. It is a world that at its deepest level is marked by the radical potential to receive the deepest sort of self-communication of the mystery of divine love into itself. Through its response to that divine self-communication, it becomes a created lover of the Uncreated Lover. According to Bonaventure, the deepest truth about the created world is that it has within itself the potential to become, through God's grace, something of what has already come to be in the mystery of Christ.<sup>7</sup> Paraphrasing Bonaventure's formulation, what has happened between God and the world in Christ points to the future of the cosmos. It is a future that involves the radical transformation of created reality through the unitive power of God's creative love.

4. *Humans as sisters and brothers in a cosmic family.* What we have just said provides the context for reflecting on Francis's sense of the familial relations that should obtain between all creatures since they come from a common Creator. This is carried over into the theological understanding of the essentially relational nature of human beings and of the values with which these relations ought to be shaped.

Certainly the values reflected in the theology of the vows help to define our relation not only to God but to each other and to the world in which we live. This is particularly clear not only in Francis's own statement on the nature of obedience to which we referred above. It may be seen also in Bonaventure's treatment of the meaning of poverty, which, in its deepest roots, is the recognition of what we are precisely as creatures and of what is the most appropriate way to respond to the gift(s) God has given us.

In terms of what Bonaventure himself accomplishes (bracketing all the other Franciscan theologians for the moment), we could say he has grounded the spirituality of Francis in a metaphysical vision and in a fully cosmic vision of reality. Moving from the spirituality of Francis and its centering on Christ, Bonaventure provides the larger road-map of reality. He assures us that in giving ourselves to Christ and to his cause and his values, we are defining our own reality in a way that will be ultimately life-giving and fulfilling since it opens us in a most radical sense to the mystery of the divine.

Giving ourselves to the cause of Christ is not losing the world. It is ultimately finding the world in its truest reality in its deepest relation to God, the ultimate origin and end of all that is. In Christ we discover the

mystery of our origin in God and the mystery of our final end, sharing in the Son's relation to the Father through the power of the Spirit. And we discover the bond that unites the mystery of origin and end. This is nothing other than the ethics of agapistic love lying at the heart of the mystery of Jesus' historical life. This is the core of our spiritual journey in and with the world into the mystery of God.

I shall end these reflections with a quotation from a sermon of Bonaventure written for the second Sunday of Lent. The Gospel is the account of the transfiguration of Jesus. At the heart of this sermon is the conviction that the transfiguration is the anticipation of the Lord's resurrection. The resurrection, in turn, points to the radical transformation of the entire universe in Christ. Bonaventure writes as follows:

All things are said to be transformed in the transfiguration of Christ, in as far as something of each creature was transfigured in Christ. For as a human being, Christ has something in common with all creatures. With the stone he shares existence; with plants he shares life; with animals he shares sensation; and with the angels he shares intelligence. Therefore, all things are said to be transformed in Christ since—in his human nature—he embraces something of every creature in himself when he is transfigured.<sup>8</sup>

This is a fascinating statement. The metaphor of radical transformation dominates the entire statement. In the final outcome of Christ's history, his created bodily nature is not left behind. In homiletic form, the Seraphic Doctor here simply affirms that, in some way, Christ embodies the whole of creation in his individual human nature and all is transformed in the living presence of God. In his more scholastic works, such as the *Sentence Commentary*, he will struggle to explain how we are to understand that the material universe is not to be annihilated but to be fundamentally transformed into a richer mode of being.

Francis's love for creation is here brought to a stunning expression in the theological attempt to affirm and explain the conviction that, finally, the world will not be destroyed. It will be brought to the conclusion which God intends for it from the beginning. And that beginning is anticipated in the mystery of the incarnate Word and the glorified Christ. Is this not what one would expect if one took seriously the Scotistic doctrine of the absolute primacy of Christ? God creates so that Christ may come into existence. So that Christ may exist, there must be a human race. But a human race needs a place in which to live. So it is that, for both Bonaventure and Scotus, though for each in a distinctive way, a cosmos without Christ is a cosmos without its head. It is like an arch without its keystone. It simply does not hold together. But with Christ, all the lines of energy are coordinated and unified; all comes together in unity and coherence; and all is finally brought to its destiny with God.

At this point, you might want to ask: What happens to the cross of Christ? We have already suggested that the authors of the Order did not overlook the tragic outcome of the history of Jesus. They did not, however, see it as the motive for the incarnation. In terms of Scholastic theology, the Franciscan authors were convinced that, if one can speak of a motive for the incarnation at all, it must lie in the pure and uncoerced love of God and not in anything outside of God. In some instances, for example in Matthew of Aquasparta, the explicit question is raised: Would there have been an incarnation had Adam not sinned? And his answer is a resounding: Yes. Our authors, then, are inclined to distinguish the different ways in which the incarnation could take place.

Presumably, in the absence of sin the incarnation would have been in the mode of glory. But given the reality of sin, the incarnation, which is first of all the completion of creation, takes on a second function which conditions its mode. Not only is it the completion of creation. It is also the overcoming of the obstacles on the way to that completion. It is, therefore, an incarnation in humility, pain, and suffering culminating on the cross of Calvary. In Bonaventure's view, Christ's redemptive work relates to the overcoming of sin, but it does so in a way that brings God's creative action in the world to completion. It is salvific in the most positive sense of the term. God completes what God initiates in creation and crowns it with eternal significance.

Thus, in the theological reflection of the Franciscan Doctors, we have moved from the role of Christ in the spirituality of Francis to the cosmic vision of the Doctors and finally to the doctrine of the absolute primacy of Christ in its Scotistic form. Now I would like to draw some implications from this style of Christology.

### III. Implications

A. We might suggest that the first implication of this style of Christology is the way in which it answers the question: What are we as human beings? Rooted in the earth yet created in the likeness of the one who is the divine Likeness, we are destined to embody something of the divine Word in our own individual lives. Is this not the burden of the spirituality of the *imitatio*? The spirituality of *imitatio Christi*, above all, is a question of appropriating the values of Christ in the depths of our own life and allowing these values to shape our self-understanding as well as our relations to all others. Francis once wrote to Brother Leo: "If it is necessary for you to come to me for counsel, I say this to you: In whatever way it seems best to you to please the Lord God and to follow his footprints and his poverty, do this with the blessing of God and my obedience."<sup>9</sup> If we understand this as a general principle, we may take it to mean that each of us reflects the mystery of the Word in a personal way, in terms of our individual tastes, talents, and skills. All of these personal gifts are to be filled with the spirit of

the values of Christ. Especially in his later writings, such as the *Apologia pauperum*, Bonaventure pointed out the diversity of forms the *imitatio* might take. From the perspective of Christ, the mystery of the incarnate Word is so rich it cannot be limited simply to one form of expression. No single person can express the diversity of dimensions involved in the mystery of Christ. Hence, the varieties of gifts with which the divine Spirit endows individual people become appropriate forms of expression of the wealth of the Christ-mystery. One person may express a particular aspect of Christ; another person another aspect. Thus, we are not to become carbon copies of the historical Jesus nor of Francis nor of anyone else. We are to fill the Christ-form with the elements of our personal life and thus embody something of the Word in ourselves in a distinctive and personal way. This, of course, calls for great skills in the area of discernment and enlightened spiritual guidance.

B. Not only does this style of Christology suggest an answer to the question of human identity, it also suggests an answer to the question about the nature of our world which is the necessary context for human life. If we think of the humanity of Christ as the body of the eternal Word, can we extend that analogically to the cosmos and see the cosmos as the body of the eternal Word. This is one of the insights of Teilhard de Chardin. But independent of his suggestion, the ancient metaphor of the Word suggests that if the Word is the internal self-expression of God, then the cosmos is what comes into being when the divine Word is expressed in something that is external to God. The cosmos, as Bonaventure writes, is the primal book of divine self-revelation. And the meaning of the cosmos is concentrated in humanity and radicalized in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, the doctrine of the primacy of Christ points the believer to an understanding of the inherent meaning of the cosmos.

There has probably been no period in history when this doctrine of the cosmic Christ was as important as it is right now. This may be seen from two perspectives. First, in terms of contemporary perceptions of the nature of the cosmos, one might speak of a sense of cosmic terror. Who are we puny human beings when viewed in terms of the immensity of space and time and the awesome powers of the physical cosmos? Is such a cosmos truly a congenial home for us? Such questions emerge from the insights of the modern sciences. They are not, however, answered by the sciences. It seems that some way of bringing the wisdom of a tradition such as that of the Franciscans into conversation with the questions arising from the sciences might be a significant contribution to make to human self-understanding.

A second perspective is that of the environmental situation in which we now find ourselves. The environmental problems characteristic of the contemporary world point to serious problems in our fundamental way of relating humanity to the world of nature. For whatever reason, we in the Western world tend to do this in purely instrumental terms. We tend to

think of things in terms of what we may use them for, or in terms of their possible monetary value. The results of this may be seen in the many ways we despoil the earth. As I indicated earlier, Francis's vision of creation recognizes that we need at some point to use the things in the world around us. But this is not the whole story. The pragmatic attitude so common in our culture needs to be moderated by a recognition of other dimensions such as the aesthetic and the contemplative. Certainly our sense of human responsibility for the destiny of the human race and the world needs to be heightened, and this precisely as a religious issue and as a specifically Christian issue.

C. The biblical doctrine of the Kingdom of God, when viewed through the optic of the primacy of Christ, is a message about the eternal significance of creation and of human efforts to create a better world. In this we discover a genuine religious motivation for us to identify with all human efforts to overcome the obstacles to the coming of the kingdom. In the light of this doctrine, Christians inspired by the example of Francis of Assisi should be able to say with abiding truth that they love the world. And their love for the world need not replace their love for God.

Human destiny is intrinsically tied into the destiny of the world of God's creation. This challenges us to reflect not only on the final destiny (i.e., salvation) of spiritual souls, but on the final destiny of the whole of material reality. In this sense, the tradition of cosmic Christology widens our understanding of the meaning of salvation and places it in a cosmic context.

D. This Christological style offers a way to avoid the dilemma of being forced to choose between a creational theology and a redemption theology as the issue is formulated by some people today. I am thinking of how Bonaventure integrated the theology of redemption within the larger framework of a creational theology in what might be called the theory of redemptive completion.<sup>10</sup> Completion refers to the process of bringing creation to its God-intended end which is anticipated already in the destiny of Christ. Redemption refers to the necessary process of dealing with all the obstacles that stand in the way. Such a model could be easily related to the sense of an emerging cosmos as it appears to us today in the light of the sciences. This would allow us to create a larger framework for spirituality and theology which would have some resonance with the cultural images that have such a pervasive impact on the minds of our people.

E. Such a Christological vision, with its universalist implications, could well become a significant framework for entering into conversation with other religious traditions. This is particularly significant today in the context of our contemporary consciousness of religious and cultural pluralism. One can enter the conversation with a strong sense of Christian identity and yet without a sense of an absolute possession of Absolute Truth, and hence with a sense that each of the traditions may reveal something distinctive and important. Each may have something to learn from the oth-

ers. Pluralism and conversation do not have to mean total relativism.

Seen in the light of recent understandings of a new evangelization and deeper insights into mission theology, a genuine openness to the truth of the other may turn out to be crucial, if Christian missionaries are to avoid the imperialism that characterized much of our past missionary efforts. Such openness and readiness for conversation calls for partners who know their own tradition well enough to enter into conversation without feeling threatened by what at first may seem utterly foreign to a Western Christian understanding.

To conclude, what I am suggesting is not that we simply attempt to reconstruct the details of a medieval theological system. This, I think, would not be terribly significant. But I am suggesting that insights lying at the base of medieval, Franciscan spirituality and theology need to be retrieved and brought into conversation with the questions and needs of contemporary people. This would be a way of bringing the wisdom of a great spiritual, theological tradition to bear on the problems of a greatly troubled world. This tradition, like the Gospel itself, is not the private possession of any particular group. Those like ourselves who are the immediate heirs of the tradition inspired by the spirituality of Francis might better see ourselves as responsible stewards of a treasure that has much to offer for the healing of humanity and of the world at large.

#### End Notes:

<sup>1</sup>Francis and Clare, Regis Armstrong, OFM, Cap. and Ignatius Brady, OFM (Paulist Press, 1982) 25-26.

<sup>2</sup>Omnibus of Sources, ed. Marion A. Habig (Franciscan Herald Press, 1972) 909.

<sup>3</sup>Francis and Clare 151-152.

<sup>4</sup>Omnibus 1236.

<sup>5</sup>Regis Armstrong, OFM, Cap., *St. Francis: Writings for a Gospel Life* (Crossroad, 1994) 139.

<sup>6</sup>Collations on the Six Days, tr. J. De Vinck (St. Anthony Guild Press, 1969) col.1, n.1.

<sup>7</sup>Sermon II on the Nativity of the Lord, in: Z. Hayes, *What Manner of Man? Sermons on Christ by St. Bonaventure* (Franciscan Herald Press, 1974) 74.

<sup>8</sup>Sermo I, Dom. II in Quad. (IX, 215-219).

<sup>9</sup>Francis and Clare 47-48.

<sup>10</sup>Z. Hayes, *The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure* (Paulist Press, 1981) 152ff.

Those . . . who are the immediate heirs of the tradition inspired by the spirituality of Francis might better see ourselves as responsible stewards of a treasure that has much to offer for the healing of humanity and of the world at large (Hayes).

## Waking Up to a New Day

Christina Pecoraro, OSF<sup>1</sup>

This is what has been from the beginning  
and what we have heard  
and what we have seen with our own eyes  
and what we have looked at and touched with our own hands—  
I mean the Word who is Life (1 John 1)<sup>2</sup>

### WHAT HAS BEEN FROM THE BEGINNING

This is what had been at the beginning of our administration, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and in some instances, what we have touched with our own hands.

Five years ago, communism held sway in Poland. Nelson Mandela was in prison in South Africa. The Berlin Wall still stood. The Five Hundredth Anniversary of the Americas had not yet been mourned or celebrated. The Soviet Union still existed. The tragedy of Tiananmen Square had just taken place in China. The Earth Summit was still to be held in Rio. The European Union was not yet a reality. Yugoslavia was one nation. Earthquakes had not swallowed up Palau Babi, the small, populated island off the coast of Flores, nor had they devastated vast areas of Flores itself.

The tiny African country, Rwanda, where several members of our general council have set foot on the way to Tanzania; where our Dutch missionaries and some members of the Dutch council have passed countless times; where sisters of our international community in Tanzania—Indonesian, North American and Brazilian—have freely moved; Rwanda, which today mirrors our collective human soul, was holding together the thread of a fragile peace.

Peace. Five years ago our general chapter theme, influenced by important leaps in consciousness among many peoples, linked peace to justice and creation. In the face of the world's shimmering beauty and yet violent

behaviors, chapter members focused on two dynamics: *innocentia* and *misericordia*. Earth moved more to the center of our consciousness.

At the endpoint of these five years we come together marked by the dramatic shifts in history that occurred with unexpected swiftness since we began. We also come energized by reverberations of the recent Synod of Africa. Our African colleagues tell us it will cut new paths not only into their suffering continent, but into theology itself. The synod on consecrated life has stirred up questions and input from all over the world—including ourselves.

As we begin general chapter, our Franciscan celebrations of yesterday and today offer us hope and fire. Tomorrow the centenary of our sister Clare reaches its culmination. Through sources that were not available to other generations of Franciscans, Clare has walked boldly out of her history and into ours. During the past year she has sat with us, talked with us, prayed with us, awakened us to vibrant aspects of our Franciscan charism, and sometimes stunned us with her timely insight. All of this and much more we have seen with our eyes and touched with our hands.

What then will be the purpose of *this* reflection about our spirit and life? Its goal will be threefold: (1) to recognize movements of consciousness which mark the whole of our congregation; (2) to identify some concrete challenges growing out of these; (3) to see dynamic parallels between the Word of God and the movement of our congregation into the future.

When we open the New Testament, we see that only once do the gospels present us with two dramas that *always* appear under one heading. The reason? because the second "interrupts" the first. This interruption, a drama itself, changes how the first story continues and ends. These are the stories of the Dying Daughter and the Bleeding Woman from the gospel of Mark 5:25-43. Without the second, the first would not be whole.

When Jesus returns [from the opposite shore], all have been waiting for him. A man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, throws himself at Jesus' feet and begs him to come to his house because his only daughter, about twelve years old is dying. As Jesus is on his way, the crowd presses him from every side.

And so we join Jesus *in mission*. As he hurries to the dying twelve-year-old, the crowd pushing from every side, something suddenly stops him. A woman who has been suffering from a flow of blood for twelve years touches him.

### WHAT WE HAVE SEEN WITH OUR OWN EYES

Who is this woman? Today she could be someone from any one of our countries, bleeding from displacement, trauma, hunger, disease, brutality inflicted on those she loves, ethnic hatred, war, exploitation, domestic abuse,

or one of countless forms of violence. We have seen her in the haunting faces of the women of Rwanda. We have seen her in the features of their husbands, brothers, and children. For she is each and all of these.

She is also someone else. What Francis saw long ago, what contemporary mystics and scientists recognize, what indigenous peoples have known for thousands of years and continue to tell us today, what our recent general chapters have been moving us to see with greater clarity, is that the bleeding woman is ultimately our sister and mother, Earth.

Today Earth bleeds as never before. She bleeds in her children of the human species. She bleeds in her children, our "relatives"<sup>3</sup>—the land and soil, rocks and mountains, deserts and rain forests, "the clouds of the sky, the bushes and flowers, the waters and wind, the singing birds, the great blue whale under the sea."<sup>4</sup>

Earth's identity and the identity of her children hold a key to a quest that has repeatedly occupied us as a congregation during the recent years—the search to understand our identity and our mission. Almost each time we have a general chapter, some aspect of this search recurs. At this chapter too it re-visits us in several proposals. Why this restlessness to know what we have already attempted to answer many times? Why this seeming preoccupation with identity and mission?

I believe it has to do with the Spirit calling our congregation to further consciousness. On this feast of Francis we recall that Francis heard an inner voice say, "Go, rebuild my house." His mission was clear. He got some stones and mortar and began re-building. Only gradually as the Spirit pulled him further, did he become more and more awake to the deeper meanings of his original call.

For us Franciscan daughters of Mother Magdalen, concerned with our original call, who Earth is has much to say about who we are. How Earth relates to all of her children and we to her, has much to say about our charism, our mission, and our future.

In his book, *Dream of the Earth*, Thomas Berry stuns us by making clear what happens when we destroy any of Earth's life-forms. "The first consequence is that we destroy modes of divine presence."<sup>5</sup> What new meaning this gives to the call not to harm, which we name non-violence and our last general chapter called *innocentia*. What new consciousness about our capacity to be with the suffering in an attitude of *misericordia*, literally feeling their misery in our heart. I believe the one waking us up to these deeper meanings with the clearest voice is Earth herself.

Earth, full of grace, is the bleeding woman of the gospel. As we return to her in Scripture, we see that she is mingling with the crowd. When she can edge close enough, she comes up behind Jesus and touches the fringe of his cloak.

Now it is we who are stopped. Both the action of the woman and the clothing of Jesus have important secrets to tell. To begin with, both Jesus and the woman are true lovers of their culture. To one acquainted with the

Torah, the "fringe of the cloak" immediately discloses that Jesus is wearing the garment or prayer shawl prescribed in the Book of Numbers (15:38):

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, "Speak to the People of Israel and tell them to put a fringe on the hems of their garments, and a violet [tassel] on this fringe. . . ."

Similar practices were already known among ancient peoples, for whom such fringes were magical.<sup>6</sup> What then could have been Yahweh's purpose for such a directive? Were not the so-called magical practices of "alien" religions meant to be banished or replaced? In this case, obviously not. Something else occurred—inculturation: the interaction between faith and an existing culture or cultural practice, the result of which is that both faith and culture are enriched.

Here another question of consciousness confronts us—expanded understanding of the potential of inculturation. As we interact with the multiple cultures in each of our countries, we face the choice to encourage new forms of inculturation or to abort them.

#### WHAT WE WILL TOUCH WITH OUR OWN HANDS

I believe that within our congregation the challenge of inculturating both the gospel and our charism will continue to grow. The challenge will grow as the migrations of peoples bring more and more refugees to all of our shores. It will grow as the Spirit continues to call even small numbers of sisters to Lybia, Irian Jaya, East Timor, Mexico, Guatemala, the eastern parts of Germany, Russia, and so forth. It will grow as indigenous peoples long crushed in our cultures reclaim their identity and revive their sacred traditions. It will grow each time the Spirit sends sisters or associates from different cultures to live the spirit of Mother Magdalen. Surely inculturation will challenge us as we grapple with our call to continue in Tanzania.

Already we have begun to experience this beautiful truth: inculturation is more than the wedding of faith and culture, or charism and culture; it is a bringing forth of new life for *both*. Inculturation is incarnational. It is a way the Word becomes human and pitches a tent in the midst of a culture. It is a way Yahweh says to a culture, as in Ezekiel, "This is the place for the soles of my feet" (Ez. 43:7).

When Yahweh directed Moses to tell the people of Israel to put fringes and tassels on the hems of their garments, new life was born to an already existing cultural practice. For Yahweh added:

The sight of [these fringes with their tassels] will remind you of all of the commands of Yahweh. You are then to put them into practice . . . so you will remember . . . and you will be consecrated to your God (Num 15:38).

It is significant that the tassels were to be placed on the four corners of the garment: south and north, east and west. I believe that Jesus, on his way to the dying twelve-year-old with the Hebrew prayer shawl around him, was one who loved the soul of his culture.

It has been said that "loss of soul" has been "the great malady of the twentieth century."<sup>7</sup> If this is so, then it gives fresh urgency to the words of Clare: "Always be lovers of . . . your souls" (BCI 12)—to which I would add "and the souls of your cultures."

In not one of the countries of our congregation today is ethnic hostility absent. In most it is growing. I am persuaded that ethnic conflicts exist, even among good people, not because some love their own cultures too much, but because they love the souls of their cultures too little. When we love the souls of our cultures, then the need to defend them on the one hand, or to hold them superior on the other, will fall away. It seems to me that only those who learn to love deeply the souls of their own cultures—whatever the history of their cultures may have been—will be free to allow others this same love for theirs. The next natural step will be to reverence the cultures of one another.

#### WHAT WE HAVE HEARD

In the scriptures, there are many evidences that Jesus is a true son of his culture. He is also a discriminating son. We know this because he takes to task those not true to its soul. We remember that he denounces the pharisees for their hypocritical wearing of the same type of tassels we have been speaking about (Matt. 23:5). The bleeding woman too is discriminating. Mark gives us the reason she touches Jesus' garment: "because she has heard about him."

The woman trusts what she has heard. She trusts that for Jesus the prayer shawl is indeed a putting on of the faith of their common culture and a mark of his fidelity to Yahweh. The woman is also courageous. In order to reach out and to activate what is life-giving in their common culture, she must defy what is imprisoning. For she is a bleeding woman. In the culture she shares with Jesus, a bleeding woman is unclean. She is forbidden to appear in public. So long as the flow of blood continues, she renders unclean whatever she contacts—persons, objects, clothing itself (Lv. 15:25-27).

Yet the woman mingles with the crowd. By doing so, she dares to defy what is imprisoning in her culture. This too is our call—to love the souls of our cultures so deeply that we can defy those aspects which diminish them.

Now we reach the story's climax, the exchange:

The woman comes up behind Jesus and touches the fringe of his cloak. Her bleeding stops at once. The feeling that she is cured of her affliction runs through her whole body.

How does Mark know this? Only the woman herself could have told it. Our bodies are trustworthy instruments of consciousness. Often they "know" before we do. It is the same for Jesus.

Jesus asks, "Who touched me?" Everyone denies it. Then Peter says, "Master, the crowd is pushing all around you." But Jesus says, "Someone touched me for I felt power go out from me."

Here we encounter mystery. Here we encounter fact. Faith releases life. The faith within the woman pulls forward the power within Jesus. This is not the first time this happens between Jesus and a woman. At Cana Mary's trust that God wills to intervene through him is stronger than Jesus' sense that the circumstances are not yet right. Jesus himself feels unready. "My hour has not yet come" (John 2:4). But Mary acts decisively. She recognizes what Jesus misses: the *kairos* moment.

Later, a Syro-Phoenician woman, a despised foreigner, begs Jesus to cure her daughter. He believes his mission is to his own. He faces the same dilemma we face when we hear the cry from other lands, knowing the desperate needs of the poor in our own. "It is not right," Jesus says to the woman, "to take bread from the children and throw it to the little dogs." She gives a non-violent response. It disarms Jesus. It brings him to new consciousness about the scope of his mission. "It is true, sir, but even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table" (Matt. 15:26-27).

Returning to the bleeding woman, we see that so strong is the exchange of energy between her and Jesus that he spins around and asks, "Who touched me?" The pushing crowd remains mute. Only the woman forbidden by culture and law to touch and be touched comes forward. She comes trembling and kneels before Jesus. Her confession is to the crowd as well. Then she tells in front of everyone why she touched Jesus and how she has been instantly cured.

Jesus' response is also personal and public. He says to the woman who has dared to defy culture and religion, "Daughter your faith has healed you." We see here what we saw with Mary at Cana and with the Syro-Phoenician mother—that God's desire to intervene needs the partnership of both Jesus and the woman. God does not use Jesus only. God uses her spirit and life, her trust and initiative, to act.

Realizing this, once again the consciousness of Jesus is stretched. So is our own. When Jesus tells the woman in the hearing of all "Your faith has healed you," he is saying in effect what Clare will one day say to Agnes of Prague: "I consider you a co-worker of God" (3LAg 8).

The parallel challenges for us are compelling: to be discriminating—another word for discerning; to love the souls of our cultures; to defy what diminishes their souls; to recognize the *kairos* moment; to allow the scope of our mission to be questioned; to let no barrier prevent us from reaching

out for Jesus; to trust what we feel running through our body—even our chapter body; to witness in the presence of others our experience of God's action; to ask ourselves as persons, provinces, congregations, and chapters:

- 1) In what decisions is God relying on *our* spirit and life, *our* trust and initiative, in order to act?
- 2) In what matters are we being called to be God's co-workers?

In the gospel, Jesus continues speaking to the woman who will continue to bleed, but now in natural cycles: "Go in peace." As he is saying this, someone arrives from the house of Jairus with two messages: first, "Your daughter has just died;" second, "Don't trouble the master any further." Now that the child has died, everything changes. It is Jesus who must discern the *kairos* moment. Jesus who must discern how further to understand his mission.

His interruption by the bleeding woman also changes everything. It strengthens Jesus' growing consciousness about how God chooses to work. Scripture scholars tell us that now Jesus "decides upon his course of action from the development of events"—that is by his encounter with the woman. As a result, "he recognizes the divine will to raise the girl to life."<sup>8</sup>

It is tempting at this point to focus on the brief lifetime of the girl, twelve years. This same period of years spans three key moments in our own lifetime: the centenary of Francis twelve years ago, our congregation's 150th jubilee in 1985, and now the centenary of Clare. Each have exploded new seeds of consciousness within us.

What we have said about Earth, about *innocentia* and *misericordia*, about growing into the full truth of our original call—these have been small glimpses into the depths of Francis.

As for Clare, with her privilege of poverty she shows us a way to hold fast to a grace even when others consider it an impossible grace. With her concept of "gazing," she gives us a fresh way to approach contemplation.

At the end of these twelve years, Clare has been the one calling us to be more fully awake to the Franciscan charism that was, and is, Mother Magdalen's gift to us. Clare has done this the way a morning sun wakes up those for whom a new day is waiting.

## THE WORD WHO IS LIFE

We hurry now with Jesus to the house of Jairus. Once he arrives, Jesus permits no one to enter with him except Peter, John, James, and the child's parents. In Mark's version of the story Jesus is struck by the noise of people wailing and crying loudly on all sides. He says to them: "Why do you make this din with your wailing? The child is not dead, she is asleep." They begin to ridicule him. But Jesus goes on. He moves into the room

where the twelve-year-old lies lifeless. "Who is she?" we ask. In the gospel, she is clearly the first and only child of Jairus and his wife. She is the new bearer of their identity. She is their future.

Perhaps then we can consider her our future too—a symbol of the young consciousness that has been developing in our congregation during the past twelve years. In the gospel it is significant that all the while the woman had been bleeding, the child had been growing. Now that the woman is healed, the girl will begin to bleed for she is just on the brink of young womanhood. Is she brave enough to make the transition? Are we brave enough to allow our growing consciousness to push us to a next stage?

The weepers and wailers will say no, we must not ask this of ourselves in such a chaotic and violent world. Whether they are our own inner voices or those of others, they will begin to ridicule new ways of thinking about Earth, about mission, about soul, about inculturation, about contemplation, and about God's power working in us. There is nothing like ridicule to kill spirit and life, or to keep new consciousness from developing further.

Jesus leaves the ridiculers behind. He approaches the child's bed. He reaches for her hand. He says to her "*Talitha cum*. Little girl, get up." There is a moment of suspense. Although she is young, Jesus knows from the encounter with the bleeding woman that what happens next will depend upon *her* partnership, *her* response. What will she do? Immediately the girl stands up. Not only that, she begins to walk around. Consciousness, especially young consciousness, needs exercise.

Jesus then asks her ecstatic parents two things. The first is to tell no one what has occurred. Surely the child's aliveness will speak for itself. Secondly Jesus says: "Give her something to eat." Consciousness, especially developing consciousness, needs to be nourished. It is so for the girl. It is so for us.

Who can doubt that it is the girl's mother who runs to the kitchen, or that it is our mother, Magdalen, who runs with her? Who can doubt that Jairus once again falls at the feet of Jesus, his body one with Earth's body? Who can doubt that a great celebration follows?

The girl, in whom we recognize the spirit and life of our congregation, has awakened to her unique moment of transition and even more to her hour in history. A new day awaits her, and close behind, a new millennium.

The healed woman awaits her too. Together they sing:

This is what has been from the beginning  
and what we have heard  
and what we have seen with our own eyes  
and what we have looked at and touched with our own hands—  
... the Word who is Life (1 John 1).

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> This theological reflection was given by the General Minister as a report to the General Chapter of the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, Rome, October, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise stated, I will use Scripture texts from from *Christian Community Bible* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications and St. Paul Publications, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> During our international formation meeting in Rome in 1992, S. Geraldine Clifford and her brother Gerald Clifford of the Lakota tribe explained the sacred tradition of their people—that we and all of the other elements of creation are “relatives.”

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988) 11.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Berry 11.

<sup>6</sup> *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* 42:63.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Moore, Introduction, *Care of the Soul*. (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> *The New American Bible* (New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1971) 1089, footnote.



## Early Franciscan Eremitism and its Implications for the Life of the Friars Today

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### Introduction

During his presidential campaign Bill Clinton's headquarters had a large sign up saying "The economy, stupid" so that campaign workers would remember the single most important issue in the election. In the last election campaign in the United Kingdom many observers feel that the Tories won because they aroused fears that the Labour opposition would not be able to manage the economy efficiently.

At least in Anglo-Saxon cultures there is a strong emphasis on the practical, the tangible, on achieving results, and we find it difficult to justify any activity which does not have a definable goal. In such a culture the importance of prayer cannot be demonstrated persuasively by argument. It needs to be experienced at least vicariously before it is seen to be a value worth incorporating into our lives. Hence it is most important that those who seek to evangelize our culture be steeped in prayer so that they can communicate a lived experience and not just traditional formulae that convince no one. In this context we might investigate Franciscan eremitism and consider how this tradition can nourish Franciscan life today.

However, just to investigate eremitism would be inadequate, because it presumes that even our prayer life is goal oriented. If this paper were merely to investigate eremitism in the context of evangelization it would reflect the prejudices of our culture, assuming that such an impractical activity must have a "practical" end. A question behind this investigation then, is "how far can Franciscan eremitical life be seen as an end in itself, or should it rather be seen as respite from or preparation for the active life?"

### Historical Background

The rule of St. Benedict tells us there are four kinds of monks: the ceno-

bites who belong to a monastery and serve under a rule and an abbot; the anchorites or hermits "who have come through the test of living in a monastery for a long time and have passed beyond the first fervor of monastic life. . . . They have built up their strength and go from the battle line in the ranks of their brothers to the single combat of the desert";<sup>1</sup> the sarabaites and gyrovagues of whom nothing good can be said. The monastic eremitic tradition inherited in the West, then, presupposed a period of formation in community which built up the virtues necessary so that "self reliant now, without the support of another, they are ready with God's help to grapple single-handed with the vices of body and mind"<sup>2</sup> and live the solitary life of a hermit. Hermits were envisaged as an elite of monks who had reached a stage where they were finally ready to enter the arena of the hermitage and undertake single combat with the devil.

From the sixth to the eleventh centuries, the call to the eremitical life came to be seen as a rare vocation of the few. Some progressed through the ranks of the monks as envisaged in the Benedictine rule; others went directly to a hermitage. For some the eremitic life was a retreat to renew their fervour, or as a reward for their service in the monastery, and would be followed by a return to the cenobitic life. There was little tension between such hermits and the cenobites who stayed in the monastery because it was admitted that although the solitary life was the life of highest perfection, it was also very dangerous and therefore for most people it was safer to stay in the monastery.<sup>3</sup>

A new eremitism emerged in Italy in the late tenth century with Romuald and his biographer Peter Damian. Their inspiration gave rise to the Camaldolese monks. In France between 1075 and 1125 many new eremitical communities were founded, including Grandmont, the Great Charterhouse, Cîteaux, and Prémontré. The new hermits were critical of the old monasticism, considering the monasteries too worldly. They did not in general reject the old rules, seeing reflected in the Rules of Benedict and Augustine the *vita apostolica*; instead they sought to follow in them the *vita primitiva* of the early church. A major difference between the new hermits and traditional hermits was that

for traditional hermits the eremitical life was a goal, a definitive state, very probably reached after some previous religious experience. For the new hermits, by contrast, it was not an end but a beginning.<sup>4</sup>

The new hermits started with a sense of unease with the world they inhabited whether monastic or secular and sought in the desert a way of finding peace. Thus a hermitage was not so much a battleground for hand to hand combat with the devil as school of perfection or "a garden of heavenly delights. . . . The scent of virtue fills the air with fragrance."<sup>5</sup> They often lived in community but practiced an asceticism and austerity they felt the traditional monks had lost.

Whereas traditional monastic hermits usually had contact only with their own monastery, the new hermits remained in close contact with the poor, and their hermitages became a place of refuge for those seeking guidance and sometimes a physical refuge also.<sup>6</sup> Some new hermits, like Peter the Hermit who preached the first Crusade, undertook itinerant preaching missions. They often sought confirmation for these missions from the Pope or a bishop. Their preaching used "the simple language of penance, conversion, salvation and love of the Savior"<sup>7</sup> and responded to a need for preaching that was not being fulfilled by the diocesan clergy or the monks.

By the thirteenth century many of the new hermits and hermitages had been absorbed into one of the groups which grew out of the eremitical movements of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These groups had settled into a pattern of life which in part reflected the influence of traditional monasticism and in part the genius of the Church for harnessing the energy of the new hermits.

Prémontré, which had adopted the Rule of St. Augustine, and its daughter houses accepted the care of souls. Perhaps in this we can see the institutionalization of the new eremitism's close contact with the poor and the preaching missions of hermits. Carthusians adopted a strict separation from the world and even considerable isolation within the monastic community. The Camaldolese lived a traditional monastic eremitism with a preparatory community life leading to a life of solitude in cells near the monastery. Within the Cistercians, the lay brother, often alone on an isolated croft, lived a life which reflected many of the elements of the new eremitism. Thus the new eremitism was institutionalized in new orders, the most successful of which was the Cistercians. These orders kept alive the spirit that inspired hermits, but at the expense of some of the élan of their founders.

#### Francis's Observance of the Gospel Life

Merton places St. Francis squarely in the tradition of what he calls the lay hermit and what I have termed the new eremitism.<sup>8</sup> Francis's first intention when he started on the road to conversion was to follow the eremitical life. At first he wore the habit of a hermit as Celano tells us and many others confirm (1Cel 21).<sup>9</sup> Even when Francis had abandoned the hermit's habit and the Lord had sent him brothers, he displayed a marked predilection for the contemplative life. Indeed all the early friars on the journey back from Rome after the approbation of the rule were tormented by the question of whether they were to go about the world and preach or retire into solitude (1Cel 35). That this was immediately after being given the commission to preach by Innocent III shows the strength of the eremitical tendency of the group. In 1213 Francis accepted the use of Mount La Verna as a hermitage for his friars and sent two friars to take possession of the mountain. He himself soon visited to spend the Lent of St. Michael

there (CSD 1). Mount La Verna pleased him because of its isolation and he returned often for solitude and tranquility (1Cel 91; c.f. LM 8:10, 11:9, 13:1; LP 93 *passim*).

His biographers reveal that Francis saw contemplation and the eremitic life as central to his vocation. Francis felt at home in the hermitages of the Order and allowed his emotions to overtake him in prayer, whereas in public he forced himself to hide the visits of the Spirit (2Cel 94, 95). He would return to a hermitage to recuperate and shelter from the crowds after his preaching tours (1Cel 91). When in solitude in a hermitage, he did not suffer being disturbed even when friars had come long distances to see him (LM 11:9, 12). Likewise, when staying with benefactors he would try to live as eremitical an existence as the situation allowed (LP 92). He wanted all the friars who were travelling about to conserve a spirit of prayer as if they were in a hermitage and compared the soul to a hermit within the body (LP 80).

Many important events in Francis's life occurred in hermitages. At Fonte Columbo he wrote an outline of the 1223 Rule, developed the idea for acting out the Nativity, and had his temples cauterized. Greccio was the location for many of the stories about Francis's love for creatures and where he demonstrated the true Friar Minor by coming to beg alms from his brothers one Easter. Here, too, was the setting for his representation of the Nativity. Mount La Verna witnessed his stigmatization.<sup>10</sup>

Not only did Francis see the eremitic life as a key component of his own vocation, but he felt it should be central in the life of all the friars. He was overjoyed when he heard a Spaniard extol the virtues and lifestyle of friars living in a Spanish hermitage (2Cel 178), and he wished that educated friars would enter the order with the intention of devoting themselves to prayer in remote places in order to concentrate the yearnings of their heart (2Cel. 194). When Giles came to Francis to ask him for an obedience, Francis sent him to live in the hermitage in Fabrone where Giles devoted himself to prayer.<sup>11</sup>

Despite his evident love of the eremitic life, Francis rejected the advice of Cardinal John of St. Paul that he and his friars become either hermits or monks in an established eremitical order like the Camaldolese. Francis wished to follow the Gospel as his only rule.<sup>12</sup> He saw his vocation, given to him by the Lord, as one of rebuilding the Church as well as practicing penance. To do this he needed to preach as well as pray.<sup>13</sup> Thus, while Francis would be in the tradition of the itinerant preachers, the orders of hermits of his day would not have been able to accommodate his desire to live the whole Gospel. Whereas they had sacred places where they rooted their experience of the holy, Francis's itinerant preaching mission made it imperative that he interiorize his experience of the holy.

So despite the temptation to retire permanently to a hermitage, Francis did not see the enclosed life as his own vocation, nor indeed did the contemplatives, Sylvester and Clare, whom he consulted on the matter.

Francis was happy to see the contemplative life lived in hermitages and was pleased that some of the friars devoted themselves permanently to it, but for himself and for the majority of friars the time spent in hermitages was to be interspersed with time spent on the preaching mission. The hermitage for Francis was a place where he could devote himself exclusively to prayer and ensure that his soul never forgot its vocation to be a hermit in the cell of his body during his preaching tours (c.f. RNB 22: 27).

### Rule for Hermitages

The rule Francis wrote for hermitages gives us an insight as to how he envisaged the eremitical life, especially for those who devoted themselves exclusively to it. It is consistently inspiring for its simplicity and charity. It seeks not so much to legislate a detailed way of life as to suggest or rather evoke the spirit with which the hermitage should be imbued. There is nothing on the number of hours to be spent in prayer, nothing on the ascetic rigours to which the brothers are to submit, but everything on the love with which the brothers ought to care for each other as "mothers" and "sons." The tension between fraternity and solitude is resolved not so much by designating times when they may speak, although this is done, but more by describing the dependency the "sons" should have on the "mothers" and the solicitude the mothers should have for the "sons." While the text contains certain restrictions and prescriptions, it is the vision, not the legislation, which inspires; the spirit, not the letter.

The hermitages are to be small, only three or at most four friars. In this way there will be less temptation to build elaborate structures or to seek out the endowments that would be needed to support a larger community in the remote areas where the hermitages are located. Francis's concern for poverty manifested itself in his relations with the friars in the hermitages. He warned the brothers on Mount La Verna not to abuse Sire Roland's generous offer to supply the hermitage with all its needs (CDS 2). Francis seems to have looked on the hermitages as safeguards of the spirit of mendicancy, and Celano gives this as one of the reasons why Francis wanted his friars to live in hermitages as well as in towns (2 Cel 71).<sup>14</sup>

Not all the hermitages lived up to his exacting standards. At Sarteano he found the cell constructed for him to be too fine, and so he ordered it covered in branches to hide the planed wood of its construction (LP 13); and at Greccio one Easter he played the prophet by coming to his brothers as a beggar when he saw how the table was laid with napkins, wine and good fare (2Cel 61; LM 7:9; LP 32).<sup>15</sup> On the other hand Francis would have been pleased by the poverty of San Urbano where they did not even have any wine to offer their sick brother and he had to perform a miracle in order to take a little wine for his health (1Cel 61; LM 5:10). The restriction on the size of the community was, then, a pragmatic provision to safeguard the poverty of the hermitages which could not be taken for granted.

Next Francis introduces the terminology that evokes more than anything else the tenderness that the hermit brothers are to display towards one another. Two of the brothers are to be "mother" and two are to be "sons." The image of mother and son is one that Francis uses to express the love and concern that the brothers ought to manifest towards one another (RNB 9:10-11; RB 6:8; EpLeo 2). It is an image of immense tenderness and calls to mind not only Francis's relations with the Lady Pica, not only our own relations with our mothers, but perhaps especially the love of Mary for the Son. How far this is from the dour grim struggle with the devil of traditional monastic eremitism.

The mother and son imagery also revolutionizes the traditional figures of Martha and Mary. The life of Martha, the life of concern with down-to-earth affairs such as preparing a meal, is not denigrated as it had been in monastic spirituality. Instead it is compared with the role of a mother caring for her child. Thus the Marthas of the hermitage are not to feel they are engaged in a lesser vocation, for by caring for their bodily needs they enable the Marys to devote themselves to prayer.

The hermitage is to have an enclosure, which is probably no more than a hedge or even a boundary marking off the isolation of the hermitage. Within this area the friars each have a simple hut or a cave where they are able to pray and sleep. Here we see Francis's practical wisdom: the geographic isolation of having separate cells is far better at protecting a spirit of recollection than regulations of complete silence as has been noted by Cistercian historians for example.<sup>16</sup>

The next section of the rule deals with the horarium and atmosphere of the hermitages. The day is to revolve around the liturgy of the hours. The friars are to recite compline after sunset and rise during the night for matins; they are to recite prime, terce, sext, and none at the proper times. In this way the hermitages are to follow a monastic routine of prayer. This rule is the only one where Francis enjoins on his friars the monastic practice of rising during the night for prayer, as it was hardly practical when on the preaching missions. The rigorous observance of the liturgy of hours is to remind the brothers of their purpose in being at the hermitage, which is "to seek first the kingdom of God and His justice" (Matt 6:33). To seek the kingdom of God we need to be inspired by His Word/words, and it is in the liturgy of the hours that we return to the words of God and allow them to soak into our very being. As we return again and again to the psalms and readings of the liturgy of the hours, we achieve an ever deeper experience of and insight into the working of God in history and in our lives. In praying at the set hours we allow the spirit of prayer to invade our hearts regularly and come to a state where it never leaves us. In this way we come to pray unceasingly, schooled in the presence of God by the regular recollection involved in the recitation of the hours. The liturgy of the hours is also the prayer of the Church, and so reminds the hermits that they are not engaged in a solo mission, but are part of a wider community that prays

both in heaven and on earth.

The openness to the world implied in the use of the liturgy of hours is also stressed in the interpretation that Francis gave to the verse from the first book of Samuel about the sterile woman bearing children (1Sam. 2:5, c.f. 2Cel 165; LM 8:2). The hermits are not to consider themselves as separate from the friars who work on the preaching mission. Indeed it is the prayers of the hermits that make the preaching mission efficacious. Similarly, when Francis spoke to the hermits of Mount La Verna about their life as hermits, he stressed that God had called them all into the Order for the salvation of the world (CDS 2). The Franciscan hermitage is not to be closed in on itself, repelling the world as evil, but "open to the world and oriented to the apostolic life."<sup>17</sup>

The recommendations on silence are characteristic of Francis's desire for the freedom of the Spirit to move the friars. They are to *strive* to maintain silence, but after Terce the sons *may* end their silence and speak with their mothers. The silence is not an end in itself, but a means of keeping recollected during the day. Silence and solitude are necessary components of the eremitical life but for the friar they need to be reconciled to the witness of fraternal charity. It is in the reconciliation of these two that Merton sees the genius of the Rule for Hermitages.<sup>18</sup>

Silence gives way to fraternal charity at certain times in the day so that the "sons" can express their needs to their "mothers" and beg alms from them as poor little ones. In this way the "sons" are reminded of their dependence on the charity of their brothers and ultimately on the charity of God. This provision guards against the sin of pride. The ascetic contemplative is not to feel superior to the rest of humanity just because he is devoted to the things of God while they are concerned with mundane matters. The space for prayer that is allotted to the hermit is a privilege, a gift given him, which he should never forget. He is further reminded of this when he changes places with the "mother" and has to struggle to find time for prayer amidst the competing demands of protecting the "sons" from disturbance, catering to their needs, and begging the daily bread of the fraternity.

Silence also gives way to obedience. When the minister or custos visit, the hermit cannot hide behind his silence and refuse to talk to them. They represent the needs of the wider brotherhood, and the hermit is to be open to those wider needs by listening to the minister and sharing with him the fruit of his prayer. In this way the hermit is reminded that he is dedicated to prayer, not only for his own good, but also for the good of others.

Regis Armstrong neatly encapsulates the main themes of the rule for hermitages:

Thus Francis tells us quite simply how he envisions a gospel life centered on the pursuit of God in solitude: a fraternal caring for one another that can be characterised only by a mother's love and a child's simple acceptance, an identification with the poor and

little ones of the earth, and a sense of freedom and mutual respect. All of these fraternal expressions centered on the celebration of the Word, the Liturgy of the Hours.<sup>19</sup>

### Implications for Today's Friars

The first implication that can clearly be drawn from Francis's approach to eremitism is that prayer is vitally important in the life of the friar. All that a friar does and is finds a basis in his life of prayer. In prayer he seeks the will of God and the strength to carry it out. He seeks to become as it were transparent to the will of God that it may shine through him. The life of prayer is the inspiration of his active ministry and provides him with the necessary strength. But prayer is much more than that. It is not practiced with an ulterior motive but as an end in itself. The nourishment of one's experience of and relationship with God is justification enough for prayer, which is why Francis permitted and even encouraged friars like Sylvester and Giles to devote themselves exclusively to the eremitical life. Thus no matter how active or seemingly important the ministry of the friar is, if he is too busy to pray, he is too busy.

One can also note the importance of solitude for Francis and the early friar hermits. The encounter with God needed space and silence in order for it to be profound. Even on his preaching missions Francis sought out solitude in which to pray. The activist attitude that "my work is my prayer" does not appear compatible with the eremitical strand of the Franciscan experience. Prayer in this tradition needs time out from the hurly-burly of life. It is not an escape, but penetrates the meaning of our life experience by bringing it into the encounter with God. Only then can prayer come to imbue the whole of life so that work does indeed become prayer. This understanding has repercussions in formation. It is essential that friars in their early years be exposed to solitude and silence and learn to appreciate them. The intrusion of too much ministry into the novitiate program robs the friars of the chance to develop a deep appreciation of the life of prayer, especially in Anglo-saxon cultures where the bias to the practical is so pronounced.

Francis felt the need to return for long periods to the hermitages. Many friars today feel a similar desire. This is why the three first orders and the third order regular have all encouraged the establishment of houses of prayer.<sup>20</sup> Such houses have been instituted in many places with varying results. There appear to be two models for such houses of prayer. The first is that of a community open only to the members of the sponsoring province, which Mrozinski calls a closed house, and the second open to all the faithful who seek a period of retreat, an open house.

A closed house of prayer has its advantages, since it allows the "mothers" to exercise their ministry and protect the "sons" from disturbance more easily. It is also a model which exposes the permanent community within

the house of prayer to less temptation to undertake too active a ministry of retreat-giving, which can endanger the spirit of recollection within the community. The danger of an open house of prayer is that it can soon become a retreat center, which, while a good ministry in itself, is not the primary purpose of a house of prayer in the Franciscan tradition. The downside of a closed house of prayer is that it may not have the openness to the poor that we have seen was a feature of the new eremitism. It draws more heavily on the model of monastic eremitism, with the permanent community having little contact except with members of their own province who come there for an experience of solitude.

The statutes of the Order of Friars Minor, when speaking of houses of prayer, prescribes that "the brothers who dwell in such places should make sure that without detriment to their own spirit of recollection they openly welcome groups of the faithful to introduce them to the Franciscan style of prayer."<sup>21</sup> While this would allow both styles of house of prayer it does manifest a preference towards a certain amount of openness. Perhaps the best way forward when starting such a house would be for it to start with a closed model so that the members of the permanent community can establish a routine and structures that maintain a spirit of recollection and then later, if judged prudent, to open the house to some extent. This way of proceeding would also give the rest of the province a chance to grow confident in the "new" venture, and mitigate the chance of it being regarded as another retreat center primarily for outsiders. If the venture is to be successful it is vital that it be regarded by the rest of the province as a resource of which they can freely avail themselves.

The style of life lived by the permanent members of the community needs also to be considered. Are they simply to be the "mothers" for those who come to experience solitude, or are they also to rotate so that they have an experience of being "sons"? In the early hermitages it seems clear that the friars of the permanent community spent at least some times as "sons." The Rule for Hermitages seems to assume it. The report of the Spanish friars living in hermitage which gave such pleasure to Francis mentioned that the friars there rotated each week, and Giles, after a while, spent nearly all his time in solitude. Therefore it would be most consistent with the early tradition if the permanent community were to rotate the ministries of "mothers" and "sons." Also, it would seem appropriate that they experience what they provide for others, if only for the practical reason that they could then experience the trials and pleasures of those they attempt to support as "sons."

The geography of the house of prayer is important. For solitude it would be best for it to be away from large centers of population as were the early hermitages. This would also make it easier to provide the geographical isolation within the house of prayer that contributes to the spirit of recollection. Ideally the house of prayer would consist of a central house where community events such as meals could be held, a chapel where the liturgy

could be celebrated and several hermitage cells where the "sons" and even the "mothers" could find solitude. It would have to be made clear to visiting friars and others that respect for the solitude of the "sons" was paramount. Of course the ideal is not always possible, but some arrangements could be made to ensure a spirit of recollection. As Cistercian historians remind us, geography is better than complex regulations. A site of natural beauty would be a great boon to such a community.

Francis laid great stress on the celebration of the liturgy of the hours in common in the hermitages. The hermitage experience would give great scope to deepen one's experience of praying the hours. It would also give an opportunity for innovation. This could provide the hermitage with its openness to the wider community, inviting people in to celebrate the Eucharist and to pray the hours with the friars, developing with them ways in which the ancient hours could be brought to life in our day.

A problem that would have to be resolved at the very outset of the venture would be the funding of the house of prayer. Various pointers emerge from the example of the early hermits that may help find a solution. The early hermits were forced to resort to mendicancy, and Francis saw this as one of the benefits of the eremitical life within the order. The Rule for Hermitages makes it clear that the brothers are to be mindful of their dependence on each other and on God. Francis chided the friars who lived too well in hermitages, and he refused to inhabit cells that he felt were too luxurious for a poor man. However, it is essential that the "sons" be freed from the need to work to support themselves so that they can devote themselves to prayer in solitude. The primary role of the "mothers" is to provide for the "sons." It is not beyond human wit to find an appropriate solution.

The most important features of a hermitage cannot be decided by legislation. They concern the atmosphere of solitude supported by an attitude of fraternal concern. These depend on the friars who live the experience. Only they can take the dead bones of a setting and framework and breathe life into it. Thus meditation on the Rule for Hermitages is a good preparation for Franciscan eremitical life. The only way of ensuring a successful contemporary eremiticism is, however, faithfulness in meditating on the Word of God, the revelation that gives meaning to eremitism. One needs more than anything else an openness to the working of the Holy Spirit in one's life. With this any obstacle can be overcome; without it the most perfect structure will be dead. This is true not only for those who live the eremitical life permanently, but also for the greater number who will dip into it to find refreshment and an anchor in their lives.

## Conclusion

Given the strength of the eremitical tradition in early Franciscanism, it is sad that it is not more strongly represented in many parts of the Order

today. The eremitical life is a valid option within the Franciscan tradition and adds a contemplative dimension to the life of a province that is difficult to preserve in houses engaged more directly in the active life. The attempt to remedy the situation by establishing houses of prayer that draw their strength from the Franciscan eremitical tradition is timely and important for the spiritual health of the Order. In these centers of solitude and prayer, supported by fraternal charity, the Order can find an important anchor rooting it to Christ, the source of its evangelizing activity. These centers can provide for their permanent members a prolonged exposure to the contemplative life, allowing them to grow closer to God. In them a province has a valuable resource, which strengthens the contemplative dimension of its reflection on its mission. Furthermore, the space that a house of prayer provides to friars in active ministry gives them a chance periodically to renew their life of prayer by a period of eremitic life. This and the witness of the hermits offer the possibility of an evangelization of the Order in which all are reminded of their eremitic roots and helped to find new ways of integrating the contemplative dimension with their active ministry. This can only strengthen the Order as it attempts to fulfil its mission to go and rebuild Christ's Church.

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup>The Rule of St. Benedict. In *Latin and English with Notes*, ed. T. Fry et al (Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 1981) 1:2-5, p.169.

<sup>2</sup>Rule of St. Benedict, 1:5, p. 169.

<sup>3</sup>H. Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism. A Study of Religious Communities in Western Europe 1000 - 1150* (London, Macmillan Press, 1984) 12-17.

<sup>4</sup>Leyser 22.

<sup>5</sup>Peter Damian, cited by Leyser 21.

<sup>6</sup>T. Merton, "Franciscan Eremitism," *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971) 359.

<sup>7</sup>Merton 359.

<sup>8</sup>Merton 360.

<sup>9</sup>See also C. Esser, *Origins of the Franciscan Order* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1970) p. 97 for citation from the *Legenda choralis Carnotensis*; p. 98 for the witness of Bartholemew of Trent; p. 102 for the confirmation of Jordan of Giano.

<sup>10</sup>O. Schmucki, "Secretum solitudinis, De circumstantiis externis orandi penes sanctum Franciscum Assisiensem," *Collectanea Franciscana* 39 (1969): 5-58. English translation: "Place of Solitude: An Essay on the External Circumstances of the Prayer Life of St. Francis of Assisi," tr. S. Holland, *Greyfriars Review*, 2:1 (1988): 77-132.

<sup>11</sup>"Vita Beati Fratris Aegidii" (VA) 6, in *Scripta Leonis, Rufini et Angeli sociorum S. Francisci: The Writings of Leo, Rufino and Angelo Companions of St. Francis*, ed. and tr. R. B. Brooke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) 326-327.

<sup>12</sup>Schmucki, "Place of Solitude" 108.

<sup>13</sup>O.R. Mrozinski, *Franciscan Prayer Life: The Franciscan Active-Contemplative Synthesis and the Role of Centers of Prayer* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1981) 2-12.

<sup>14</sup>In a hermitage because of its location there would be less likelihood of people spontaneously bringing enough for the friars to live on and therefore the friars would be obliged to go on the quest for provisions.

<sup>15</sup>The *Legend of Perugia* erroneously situates this event at Christmas.

<sup>16</sup>M. Casey, "The Dialectic of Solitude and Communion in Cistercian Communities," *Cistercian Studies* (Jan., 1988) 284.

<sup>17</sup>Merton 361.

<sup>18</sup>Merton 361.

<sup>19</sup>R.J. Armstrong, *St. Francis of Assisi. Writings for a Gospel Life* (New York: Crossroads, 1994) 63.

<sup>20</sup>Mrozinski .98; c.f. *The General Statutes of the Order of Friars Minor. Our Plan for Franciscan Living*, The Franciscan OFM Conference of North America (1992) 14:1, 2, pp. 8-9.

<sup>21</sup>*General Statutes* 14:2, p. 9.

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## About Our Contributors:

Zachary Hayes, OFM: a friar of the Sacred Heart Province, professor of historical and systematic theology at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago; visiting professor at the University of Notre Dame, Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley, and The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure.

John-Charles, FODC: Founder and Minister of the Franciscan Order of the Divine Compassion; an Anglican bishop for thirty-six years; Dean of Holywood Seminary, Liberty, N.Y.

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<sup>13</sup>O.R. Mrozinski, *Franciscan Prayer Life: The Franciscan Active-Contemplative Synthesis and the Role of Centers of Prayer* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1981) 2-12.

<sup>14</sup>In a hermitage because of its location there would be less likelihood of people spontaneously bringing enough for the friars to live on and therefore the friars would be obliged to go on the quest for provisions.

<sup>15</sup>The *Legend of Perugia* erroneously situates this event at Christmas.

<sup>16</sup>M. Casey, "The Dialectic of Solitude and Communion in Cistercian Communities," *Cistercian Studies* (Jan., 1988) 284.

<sup>17</sup>Merton 361.

<sup>18</sup>Merton 361.

<sup>19</sup>R.J. Armstrong, *St. Francis of Assisi. Writings for a Gospel Life* (New York: Crossroads, 1994) 63.

<sup>20</sup>Mrozinski .98; c.f. *The General Statutes of the Order of Friars Minor. Our Plan for Franciscan Living*, The Franciscan OFM Conference of North America (1992) 14:1, 2, pp. 8-9.

<sup>21</sup>*General Statutes* 14:2, p. 9.

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## **There are Many Colors But only a Single Rainbow A Visit by the Minister General to the Golden Horn**

[Last spring, Hermann Schalück, OFM, Minister General, with a friar companion, visited the Eastern Patriarch in Constantinople. This account of their experience was sent to the friars world-wide.]

### **SPRING IN THE BOSPHORUS**

It was Spring again [1995]. The Muslim world had begun Ramadan and Christians were preparing to celebrate the season of Lent. On the fragrantly scented hill of jasmine of the roman Curia, there came to fruition the plan for "an ecumenical gesture" on the Bosphorus—country of the Fathers of Cappadocia who were distinguished for their courageous faith and powerful word—where East and West still meet. For some months, with a tenacious gentleness, the Minister had been requesting an audience with His Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomew. It was his firm belief that the Catholic tradition does not lie in tending the ashes but in taking good care that the fire of hope is not extinguished. At the airport of Istanbul, the Minister and his companion, Br. Tecele, were welcomed by a certain monk named Gennadios who, with exquisite courtesy, accompanied his guests to their hotel. . . .

### **THE AUDIENCE**

With the monk Gennadios as their guide, the two Romans visited the principal monuments of the city on the following morning which was a Saturday. First called "Rome of the East" and later Byzantium, Constantinople was conquered in 1453 by the Turks. A most ancient tradition holds that it is the repository of the relics of the apostle Andrew and the apostle's disciples, Luke and Timothy. . . .

It was about midday when the visitors eventually reached Phanar Hill and St. George's Church, which, since 1612, has been the residence of the Ecumenical Patriarch of the East. His Holiness, receiving his Roman guests

with exquisite kindness, recalled the Council of Chalcedon and Nicaea, the fall of the city in 1453, and the need for communion between the Churches of the East and West. He expressed his joy that he would soon visit Rome and would be able to give the fraternal embrace of the Apostle Andrew to the Apostle Peter.

As a sign and confirmation that the friars throughout the whole world support this desire, Br. Hermann presented him with a replica of the Cross of San Damiano. The patriarch kissed it reverently and gave it a place of honor in his own study. In exchange he presented his guests with a glass-mounted seal of the Ecumenical Patriarch. Furthermore he invited them, together with some other members of the Holy Synod, to a frugal meal, of which they partook with hearts full of joy. . . .

On Sunday morning the visitors were invited to participate with the Patriarch in the liturgy according to the Eastern Rite. In preparation they had already meditated from early morning on the words of St. Origen: "Seek to drink from the spring of the Spirit which is already in you. In the depths of your being is the fountain of living water from which the inexhaustible rivers of spiritual feeling gush forth, unless they are blocked by earth and stones. . . . (Homilies on Genesis, SC 7 bis, p. 307).

### **THE LARGE AND SMALL THRONES**

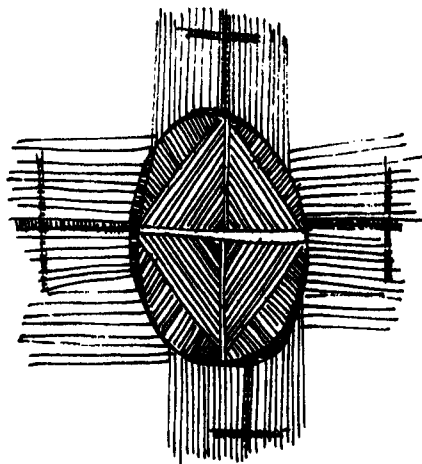
An Eastern tradition called for the setting up in St. George's Church of a large throne for the Patriarch, who conferred an unexpected honor on the Minister from Rome by seating him opposite himself on a small lower throne. Inwardly moved, Br. Hermann prayed for himself and for all his brothers and sisters . . . as Br. Francis inspired him at that moment: "Let us be satisfied with humble places. Grant us to serve without arrogance or vanity. Make us at home with the earth, with the poor and humble. Teach us how to wait, to listen and to remain silent. Make us small and weak, in such a way that others may even be able to come to our assistance. Give us that most beautiful of all privileges: not to have any privilege. Send us forth from here on the highways of the world to seek your name in all religions, confessions and creatures." . . .

### **FAREWELL**

At the end the pilgrims paid a visit to the Church of "Santa Maria in Draperis," where some friars from Tuscany have a ministry. The conversation was about the mission of the Friars Minor and of the Sisters called to foster friendly relations with Islam and with the other religions and confessions. Questions were asked as to how their presence in Turkey could be revived through new incentives. The Minister proposed the setting up in their house, for the entire Franciscan Family, of an "embassy" or "consu-

late" to the Ecumenical Patriarch.

Just before they left the Golden Horn behind them and boarded the plane to travel from East to West, they heard for the last time the slow call of the muezzin who was announcing the three days of *bairan*, i.e., the joyful conclusion of Ramadan. For Latin Christians, on the other hand, as well as for the brothers on the Jasmine Hill, the season of Lent began some days afterwards. This year, the maxim of John Climaco was chosen: "The love of the one and triune God is manifested in the love between brothers and sisters."



## Book Review

*Men of Habit: The Franciscan Ideal in Action.* Bernard Palmer (foreword by the Archbishop of Canterbury): pp. 180 with notes on sources and index. Paper back. The Canturbury Press: St Mary's Works, St. Mary's Plain. Norwich. Norfolk NR3 3BH, England. 12. 95 pds sterling.

The distinguished former editor of the *Church Times* (in England) presents in this book a series of mini-biographies of four Anglicans who made a mark on the history of Anglican Franciscanism in the first half of this century. Three were founders of religious orders. The other was the founder of an association of evangelists, which, like him, had Franciscan characteristics.

Father Andrew of the Society of Divine Compassion—poet, painter, preacher, evangelist, and renowned spiritual director—was the best known of the small group which, in 1894, founded the first modern Franciscan Community in the Church of England. The SDC, in turn, brought into being two religious orders for women: the Community of St. Giles (which specialized in work among lepers) and the Society of the Eternal and Incarnate Word (which did heroic work among youths). It also established a significant Third Order. Fr. Andrew's writings, poetry, and sermons were for several decades powerful instruments of evangelism and spiritual growth. He still has a following among those who are familiar with them.

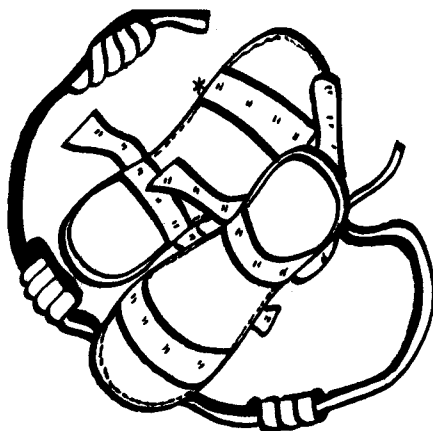
Brother Douglas was led to a life of wandering the roads and highways of Great Britain in the years after World War I. He had a passion for the souls and minds of the tramps (whom he called "wayfarers")—the unemployed. He had a vision of a fellowship in which the wayfarers and the friars would work and live together as equals. In the process the men would be trained for work, and employment would be found for them. He succeeded in getting harsh vagrancy laws changed and developed a chain of houses throughout the United Kingdom where men could be housed and fed, trained and sheltered—and touched by the power of the Gospel. Almost imperceptibly a religious order grew—the Brotherhood of Saint Francis of Assisi. In due time this united with another order (the Brotherhood of the Love of Christ) which had its roots in India. From this union the present Society of Saint Francis developed.

Father George Potter of Pecham founded the Brotherhood of the Holy Cross, a Franciscan Order devoted to the care and rescue of youths and younger lads. His was a remarkable and inspired ministry, but an essentially personal one. It did not long survive his death. Some of the surviving members joined SSF.

Brother Edward was a man with a clear mission—the evangelization of England. He founded the Village Evangelists, which was for a time a powerful agency of the Gospel through the parochial system of the Church of England. Edward's inspiration was Saint Francis.

These four vignettes give us four pictures of vision, sanctity, and sacrifice. Here are four men who stirred their contemporaries and who won many souls to Christ. Here is a glimpse of a little known part of the modern history of the Church in England. Here is a small part of the modern history of Franciscanism. Here is a reminder for our generation of the things that really count.

John-Charles, FODC



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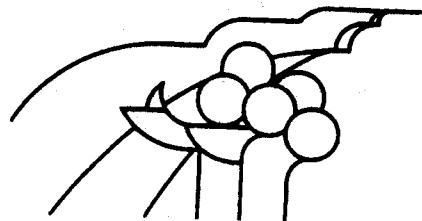
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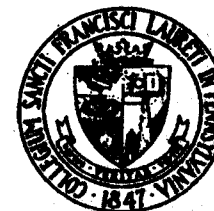
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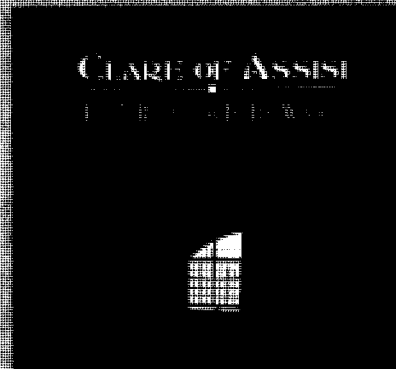
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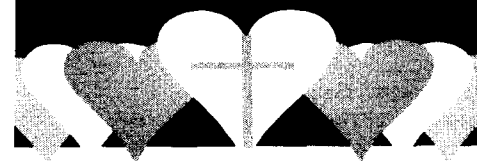
Friars Robert Melnick and Joseph Wood, OSF, have become a dynamic duo of creativity, collaborating on a number of artistic projects while working at the Franciscan Education Office in Assisi, Italy. Robert has just finished his M.A. in divinity, and is preparing for ordination in the Byzantine Catholic rite. Joseph has served on the Art Commission of the Diocese of Buffalo and writes regular columns in the Franciscan media.



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*Franciscan Poverty*. M.L. Lambert. Revised. (Summer 1996).

*Friars Minor in China 1294-1855: Especially the Years 1925-1955*. Arnulf Camps, OFM and Patrick McCloskey, OFM. (March 1996).

*Nicolus Minorita: Chronica*. (The Early 13th Century Poverty Controversy). Gedeon Gal, OFM and David Flood, OFM. (Fall 1996).

*St. Francis and the Song of Brotherhood*. Eric Doyle, OFM. Reprint. (May 1996).

## ON THE FRANCISCAN CIRCUIT COMING EVENTS 1996

### Sunday, February 4-Friday, February 9

Franciscan Gathering XVI, "The World is Our Cloister: Franciscan Contemplation."  
Marie Beha, OSC and William Short, OFM. Contact: Jo Marie Streva, OSF, Franciscan  
Center, 3010 Perry Ave., Tampa, FL 33603; ph. 813-229-2695; fax 813-228-0748.

### Wednesday, February 21-Monday, February 26

The San Damiano Crucifix, retreat by André Cirino, OFM. Contact: Franciscan Spirit  
and Life Center, 3605 McRoberts Rd., Pittsburgh, PA 15234-2340; ph. 412-881-9207.

### Friday, February 23-Saturday, February 24

Seminar on Franciscan Spiritual Direction. F. Edward Coughlin, OFM. Contact: Tau  
Center, 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987; ph. 507-454-2993.

### Saturday, March 23

Francis and Clare: The Legend Continues, a day of reflection, imagining and hope  
led by Joe Nangle, OFM and Marie Dennis, based on their book, *St. Francis and the  
Foolishness of God*. Co-sponsored by Franciscan Federation Region II and Sisters of St.  
Francis of Philadelphia. At Newman College Life Center, Aston, PA. Fee: \$10.  
Contact: Kathy Donovan, OSF, 609 S. Convent Road, Aston, PA 19014; ph. 610-558-  
7716; fax 610-558-1421.

### Friday, April 26-Sunday, April 28

Facing the Christ Incarnate. Tau Center, Winona, MN. Sponsored by the Franciscan  
Federation. Contact: Kathleen Moffatt, OSF, 650 Jackson St. NE, Washington, DC  
20017; ph. 202-529-2334; fax 202-529-7016.

### Saturday, April 27

Seeding a New Hope, a workshop on Transformative Elements for lay and religious  
Franciscans, co-sponsored by Franciscan Federation Region II and the Sisters of St.  
Francis of Philadelphia. Presenters: Celeste Crine, OSF and Kathy Donovan, OSF. At  
St. Joseph's Church, Columbia, SC. Cost: \$20 includes breakfast and lunch. Contact:  
Norren Buttmer, OSF. Ph. 803-795-3821 (days) or 803-762-6058 (evenings).

### Friday, May 17-Saturday, May 25

The Soul's Journey Into God. André Cirino, OFM and Josef Raischl. Contact:  
Director, Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, 3605 McRoberts Rd, Pittsburgh, PA 15234-  
2340; ph. 412-881-9207.

### Saturday, May 25-Tuesday, May 28

Second Bi-Annual Networking Seminar for Franciscan Renewal/Retreat Centers  
and Franciscan Spiritual Directors. (See detailed ad, p. 45.)

## Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	Admonitions	FormViv	Form of Life for St. Clare
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo	1Fragm	Fragment of other Rule I
CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun	2Fragm	Fragment of other Rule II
EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony	LaudDei	Praises of God
EpCler	Letter to the Clergy	LaudHor	Praises to be said at all the Hours.
EpCust	Letter to the Custodians	OffPass	Office of the Passion
1EpFid	First Letter to the Faithful	OrCruc	Prayer before the Crucifix
2EpFid	Second Letter to the Faithful	RegB	Later Rule
EpLeo	Letter to Brother Leo	RegNB	Earlier Rule
EpMin	Letter to a Minister	RegEr	Rule for Hermitages
EpOrd	Letter to the Entire Order	SalBMV	Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
EpRect	Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples	SalVirt	Salutation of the Virtues
ExhLD	Exhortation to the Praise of God	Test	Testament
ExhPD	Exhortation to Poor Ladies	TestS	Testament written in Siena
ExpPat	Prayer Inspired by the Our Father	UltVol	Last Will written for St. Clare
		VPLaet	Dictate on True and Perfect Joy

## Writings of Saint Clare

1LAg	First Letter to Agnes of Prague
2LAg	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague
3LAg	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague
4LAg	Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague
LEr	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges
RCI	Rule of Clare
TestCl	Testament of Clare
BCI	Blessing of Clare

## Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel	First Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
2Cel	Second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
3Cel	Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
AP	Anonymous of Perugia
CL	Legend of Clare
CSD	Consideration of the Stigmata
Fior	Fioretti
JdV	Witness of Jacque de Vitry
LM	Major Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LMin	Minor Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LP	Legend of Perugia
L3S	Legend of the Three Companions
Proc	Acts of the Process of Canonization of St. Clare
SC	Sacrum commercium
SP	Mirror of Perfection