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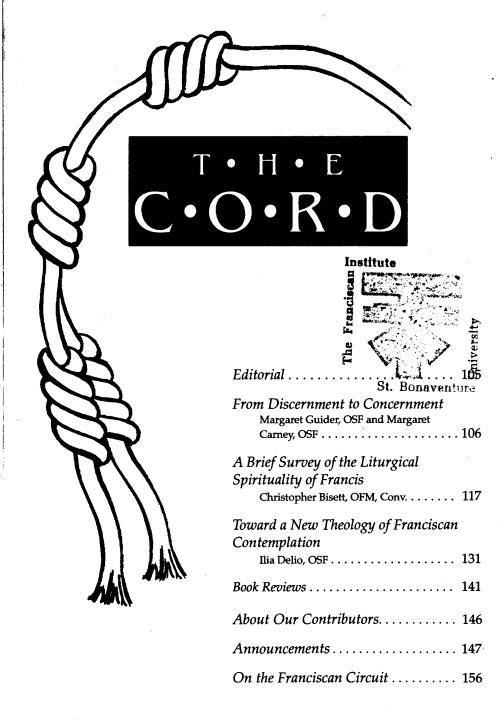
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A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



THE CORD

A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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- 2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 13 ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
- 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.
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(1Cor. 13:6). (RegNB 23:2). (2Cel 5:8). (4LAg 2:13).

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The Cord, 46.3 (1996)

Editorial

The prayer life of Francis and Clare is a never-ending source of fascination for those who follow them. Today, though we emphasize the "evangelical" character of our Franciscan life, we nevertheless continue to struggle with the too obvious tension between what we call our prayer life and what we call our life of ministry or action. The mood of our times makes us yearn, often enough, for a more contemplative and even solitary existence. Yet the needs of our world compel us to be engaged, to embrace solidarity with our suffering brothers and sisters, to serve human needs to the best of our ability. Many books and writings grapple with this question.

In this issue of *The Cord* we offer some aspects of a Franciscan approach to a life that is characterized by the "Spirit of prayer" (EpAnt 2). Sisters Margaret Guider and Margaret Carney present some helpful and practical thoughts on the process by which we discern God's will in our corporate as well as in our individual lives. Our desire to be guided by the Spirit of God in all our life responses moves us to seek this knowledge, alone and in our communities.

Father Christopher Bisett reflects on the significant role that liturgy plays in our Franciscan life and tradition. As a post-conciliar Christian, Francis was very concerned that the teachings of Lateran IV be well-understood and integrated into the lives of his followers and of all Christian people. One of the most pressing issues of his time was the need for a more meaningful practice of the sacramental life of the Church. As post-Vatican II Christians, we are faced with many of the same issues. As Franciscans we seek spiritual nourishment continually in this sacramental life and strive to teach others about its vast possibilities.

Sister Ilia Delio offers us a penetrating study of St. Bonaventure's approach to the mystical life as it squarely faces the full implications of the Incarnation. This is a message with great contemporary relevance, especially for us Franciscans, as we continue to seek in Christ, our brother, the full meaning of being human today.

From Discernment to Concernment: A Franciscan Approach to Choosing the Good as Sister and Sisters

Margaret Guider, OSF and Margaret Carney, OSF

[In anticipation of the upcoming general chapters of several congregations of Franciscan sisters, this article was written to facilitate shared reflection on the election of leadership.]

Introduction

The election of new leadership is an important event in the shared life and history of a Franciscan sisterhood. The process raises feelings of hope, anxiety, and frustration and a sense of new horizons. These days are days of reckoning for each of us and for all of us, especially as nominees for elected leadership come together for a brief moment in time to hold in a common trust the collective hopes, dreams, convictions, and longings of their sisters. The call each nominee receives is as much an affirmation as an invitation. It compels all of us to ponder two questions which are foundational to our identity as Franciscan women: What does it mean to be sister? What does it mean to be sisters?

The task we assumed in preparing this reflection for sisters nominated for elected leadership is simply this: to use a few insights from our Franciscan tradition as starting points for reflection on the qualities of a leader, on the meaning of individual discernment, and on the desire to choose the good in common. Our offering includes three short reflections and a brief conclusion. At the end of each reflection, we invite our readers to consider a few suggested questions and to share with each other their thoughts on these questions. When the time for shared reflection is over, we encourage you to pause for a moment of silence, ponder what you have heard, and continue to the next section. At the end of the third discussion period, we offer a few concluding remarks for your ongoing consideration.

From Discernment to Concernment

Why have we chosen this title, "From Discernment to Concernment"? Let us take a moment to review the origins of the word "discernment."

cerno, crevi, cretum L. - 1) to distinguish with the senses, to perceive with the mind, to show oneself or be shown; 2) to decide, to contend, to resolve, to determine, to accept an inheritance.

We find the last entry to be particularly fascinating. However, moving from the dictionary definition to the task at hand, we recognize that the title, "From Discernment to Concernment,"—especially in the context of a reflection process on elected leadership—might seem to be contrived in an effort to put a Franciscan spin on what is typically seen as an Ignatian corner on the spiritual market we have come to know as "discernment." For better or for worse, there is a measure of truth in such a caricature. However, this measure of truth should not be confused with the whole truth.

Admittedly, proponents of Ignatian spirituality have at their disposal a set of rules for discernment contained in the *Spiritual Exercises*. For generations, this method for discernment has guided the imaginations and consciences of those who have sought to respond to the apostolic vocation to be men and women for others. Though Jesuits, along with their lay collaborators and many other vowed religious, continue to have an influential perspective on discerning God's actions in the individual and collective histories of human persons, few among them would make the exclusive claim that theirs is the only way or necessarily the best way for everyone. Recognizing this fact requires that those of us who have been drawn to the evangelical life as envisioned by Francis and Clare take hold of the charism entrusted to us. As Franciscans, we must find ways of discerning God's will that are authentically our own ways. This is not always an easy task.

Ignatius's rules for discernment have been well-articulated, described, codified, and mediated over the course of four centuries. Franciscan approaches to discernment, however, have not been equally and abundantly clear, even among those of us who have made a lifelong profession of following a Franciscan spiritual path. In fact, as members of Franciscan sisterhoods founded in the nineteenth century and living as women religious at the turn of the twenty-first century, our respective spiritualities are unquestionably hybrid. Take for example, a congregation whose constitutions were written by Passionists, whose spiritual directors were Jesuits, and whose title was Franciscan. Members of such a congregation might have experienced some existential confusion following the Second Vatican Coun-

cil, a confusion which gave rise to much growth and some wonderful humor as well.

Consider as well a Franciscan sister who has spent many years of her life affiliated with the Catholic Worker community and whose own commitment to non-violence has been deeply influenced by the Buddhist practice of vipassana meditation. It goes without saying that we have drunk from many spiritual wells over the course of two centuries, and we continue to do so today. For many of us, this diversity of spiritualities has been a great blessing that has enriched and strengthened our lives and ministries. Yet, at a time like this, when the approach of a general chapter stirs up in us countless expectations and anxieties, we are led by divine inspiration in much the same way as the Risen Christ led the disciples of Emmaus. We are faced with questions central to our identity. What does it mean to be Franciscan? What does it mean for each of us individually? What does it mean for all of us collectively?

In light of these observations, we invite you to consider the following four questions:

- 1) From what spiritual well(s) do I draw life-giving water?
- 2) In what ways does my spirituality shape and influence my self-understanding as a Franciscan?
- 3) How do our diverse approaches to spirituality contribute to our collective identities as women? as Christians? as Franciscans? as sisters?
- 4) What insights do these approaches bring to our understanding of the call to elected leadership?

A Franciscan Approach to Choosing the Good as Sister and Sisters

It is natural for Franciscans, in circumstances such as those in which nominees for elected leadership find themselves, to recall the prayer of Francis as he gazed upon the Crucifix at San Damiano.

> Most High, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart.

Give me correct faith, certain hope, and perfect charity, sense and knowledge

so I might always discern your holy and true will (OrCruc).1

This prayer captures Francis's deepest desire to discern God's holy and true will. No doubt this prayer remained in Francis's heart throughout his lifetime. To pray this prayer was to be reminded of how the process of his conversion began and how it unfolded—from the grottoes of Monte Subasio, to encounters with the lepers, to unsettling visions, to the church of San Damiano, to understanding more completely the call to "rebuild the church" (see LM 2:1; 1Cel 6-7; L3S 13; 2Cel 9-11).

In reviewing the writings of Francis, we do well to remember that this is the only prayer in which we find Francis praying for "sense and knowledge." Although the desire to do God's will is quite prominent in Francis's prayers and writings, these particular concepts appear only in this prayer. Unlike the other prayers of Francis which are characterized by a certain universalism, (for example, we think of the wonderful lyrical Chapter 23 of Francis's Earlier Rule), the Prayer before the Crucifix is also the only prayer in which we find Francis using the first person singular. This prayer—and its context—provide us with an important key to understanding the relationship between Francis's desire to discern God's will and his commitment to the evangelical life.

When Francis heard the command: "Go rebuild my church," he interpreted it quite literally and understood it to be a personalized expression of God's will for him. In time, however, Francis discovered that this command had little to do with bricks and mortar. It was not about masonry or carpentry. The command was not about the refurbishing of San Damiano. Rather, it was about building the Reign of God. The command was about discipleship. It was about compassion and justice. It was about participation in the unfolding of God's will for all of creation. It was about experiencing God's will as mediated by the person of Jesus Christ.

We might ask ourselves how often we have desired to understand God's will for ourselves—or others—in terms of concrete particulars? How often have our so-called prayers of discernment been oriented toward getting clarity on the bricks and mortar of our personal lives only to discover that God's only will for us is that we participate in the compassion and justice of the Reign of God. *How* we participate is not so much a matter of discernment, but rather, a matter of "concernment." There is more at issue than discovering "how" we could, should, or might participate in God's will, for we already know this. At issue is our understanding of the power of choice—my will, your will, our will—and coming to terms with what each of us, some of us, and all of us will choose to do, knowing that every choice involves choosing and not choosing.

In our efforts as Franciscans to choose the how, the what, the where, and the when of our participation in the Reign of God, it is helpful for us to recall how Francis, when faced with such choices, sought out the prayer and counsel of others (see 1Cel 91; LM 12:1; LM 13). Bonaventure beautifully recounts a great classic example in his *Life of St. Francis*, Chapter 12. In this story, Francis sends friars to both Sylvester and Clare to ask each of them to spend time in prayer (and Clare we might add in conversation with other trusted sisters), so as to help Francis discover God's pleasure. Should he spend more time in the hermitages or should he be about the evangelical and apostolic task of preaching? Bonaventure introduces this story by saying:

[Francis] was not ashamed to ask advice in small matters from those under him, true lesser brother that he was, though he had learned great things from the supreme Teacher. He was accustomed to search with special eagerness how and in what way he could serve God more perfectly according to God's good pleasure (LM 12:2).

Bonaventure goes on to say that he was willing "to inquire from the wise and the simple, the perfect and the imperfect, the young and the old" (LM 12:2) so that he could more effectively reach his goal.

In stories such as this, we see the movement from individual discernment to what may best be described as fraternal or sororal "concernment." Although it is archaic English, the word "concernment" continues to keep its place in the Oxford English Dictionary. It is defined as

an experience of anxiety and solicitude; a matter in which anyone has or takes an interest; the quality of concerning or being important to persons.

In pondering this wonderful definition of concernment, it seems to us that the word could serve us well in our efforts as Franciscans to capture the values and insights of these narratives. The idea of concernment makes it possible for us to speak about the desire to give expression to the experience of human cooperation with "God's holy manner of working" in a way that is characteristic of our own spirituality. Or, to put it another way, the word "concernment" describes the process by which those of us shaped by the charisms of Francis and Clare endeavor to choose the good by actively listening to the Word of God and to the words of one another.

It is good to remember the great teachers of our tradition, such as Bonaventure. In his classical spiritual treatise, *The Soul's Journey into God*, Bonaventure explains that the power of choice involved in choosing the good is realized through deliberation, judgment, and desire. Deliberation consists of inquiring which is better, this or that—knowing that better has

meaning only in terms of its proximity to the best. Judgment relies on a deep understanding of the law which our Creator has imprinted on our mind. Desire tends principally toward what moves us most; knowing that what moves us most is what is loved most, and what is loved most is happiness, understood as the highest good (Itin. 3:4).

Given these thoughts, we pose the two following questions for reflection:

- 1) In light of the nomination process, what ideas or questions does this reflection on the movement from discernment to concernment raise for you? for your congregation?
- 2) Are there other insights from the Franciscan-Clarian tradition (or other spiritual traditions) that inform your own understanding of how to choose the good—individually and collectively?

Spirituality and Elected Leadership: Insights from the Life of Clare

Clare's embodiment of the qualities of an elected leader and her encouragement to those who dispose themselves to such a call are noteworthy. Throughout Clare's life, we see the interactive dynamic between spirituality and leadership unfold in countless ways. Unquestionably, Chapter 4 of her Rule offers a number of important insights regarding Clare's vision for elected leadership. However, in an effort to understand more fully the person of Clare as an elected leader herself, we may learn more from her example as described in the Bull of Canonization, 10:

This Woman, the first of the poor, the leader of the humble, the teacher of the continent, the abbess of the penitents, governed her monastery and the family entrusted to her within it with solicitude and prudence, in the fear and service of the Lord, with full observance of the Order: vigilant in care, eager in ministering, intent on exhortation, diligent in reminding, constant in compassion, discreet in silence, mature in speech, and skillful in all things concerning perfect government, wanting to serve rather than to command, to honor than to be extolled.

Her life was an instruction and a lesson to others who learned the rule of living in this book of life (Rev 21:27). The remainder learned to behold the path of life in this mirror of life.

Although in the body on earth, nevertheless, she was dwelling in spirit in heaven. [She was] a vessel of humility, a fortress of chastity, a fire of peace, and the communion of familiarity: meek in word, gentle in deed, and lovable and tolerant in everything.

When reading these words, it is hard to resist the temptation to dismiss this passage as another one of those ideal role descriptions such as we usually reserve for designated leaders and persons in authority, role descriptions that are nearly impossible to fulfill. However, before succumbing to this temptation, we encourage you to think for a moment about the qualities ascribed to Clare and the qualifications which were indeed rooted in very factual observations: her conduct, her writings, and her life. We would like to take some of these descriptive phrases and use them as a method of exploring a few practical examples of the way in which Clare understood her role and the role of others who shared in governmental structures within her Franciscan community.

First of all, it is important to note that the biographies reveal that Clare resisted assuming the office of abbess, an office urged upon her by Francis just a few years after she entered San Damiano. His position eventually prevailed, and she did accept the title, although she used it sparingly in reference to herself. Clare did not like to use language associated with positions of prestige, precedence, or honor. She was not shy or naïve, however, about the very real importance, authority, and impact of her abbatial role, and she used it prudently and with great love for the community and the common good.

We see Clare, therefore, as one who governed with solicitude and prudence. Part of her solicitude was to be very sure that in governing the monastery she always had, to the greatest possible extent, the consent of the sisters in decisions great and small. We know from her legislation that there were regular chapters of the entire community. She exhorted that all be heard, specifying that even the youngest be given the opportunity to speak.

Clare clearly indicates in her writings that decisions for the monastic community were not to be made in the privacy of the abbess's chamber, nor that of her council, but rather with "all of my sisters." Thus we see that, in Clare's thinking, the bedrock of governance is the mutuality of hearts and respect for the operation of the Holy Spirit in each member.

We also see Clare described as someone vigilant in care. She expressed vigilance in showing a great concern to maintain certain forms of order, certain practices, and certain attitudes. She realized that leadership needed to call the sisters to a constant conversion and a constant awareness of the kinds of disciplines and directions required for commitment to the path of publicly vowed religious witness.

We read that Clare was intent on exhortation. In her letters, in her statements to the sisters in the course of chapters, in her individual conferences, counseling, and spiritual direction, she found many occasions to remind the sisters of their high ideals and of the overwhelming love of Jesus as a

source of energy and power for their lives. We see also that Clare did not limit her exhortations to members of the community, but appealed also to the friars and to princes of the church to understand and interpret correctly, not only the legislation by which the Poor Ladies lived, but the heart of their commitment.

We are told that Clare was diligent in reminding. There is an interesting passage in her Rule in which Clare cautions about the destruction of community that comes about through gossip, through murmuring, through dissension. Clare rarely spoke in abstractions about ideals or values that should bind the community together. She clearly had some very concrete examples of how community life and community experience could be fractured and fragmented by imprudence in speech, reaction, conversation—the kinds of disharmonious activity and behavior which we recognize in ourselves and others at times. Clare therefore did not hesitate to call the sisters continually beyond the limitations of human frailty and egocentricity in her desire to see to it that the common heart was rooted in Jesus and in the gospel message.

But lest it appear that Clare was constantly about correction and exhortation, we are told that she was constant in compassion. This truly was a major hallmark of her governance. There are many indications of her profound concern for the sick, careful instruction of the young, hospitality to guests, mutual regard for and rapport with the friars. All of these indications tell us that Clare did not hesitate to make exceptions, to modify policy, to dispense, to bend the rule a little or a lot, when charity, necessity, or human frailty cried out for attention.

Clare is described as skillful in all things concerning perfect government. One of the discoveries that gives great pleasure to those who immerse themselves in the study of her Rule is the recognition that Clare understood very well the structures and the origins of the structures by which she lived. She had a consummate skill in addressing the realities of current church law, traditions handed down from generations of monastic practice, new policies or legislation arrived at by common consent as well as by long and proven experience. At the same time, she never lost her excitement and enthusiasm for the fresh new charism that she shared with Francis. Taking all these factors into account, Clare was able to develop stable governmental forms and to articulate a Rule of life. At the same time she was able to allow maximum flexibility for the abbess and the sisters to make judgments suited to time, place, and person.

It is very clear to anyone who studies Clare's Rule and conduct carefully that she was not an unwilling, slavish, or frightened administrator. She was confident. She was careful. She was authoritative. She was bold

when she needed to be and she was quiet, discreet, and very careful when necessity required such attitudes from her. At times we are tempted to romanticize the humility of Clare and of Francis, too, as they approached the responsibility of the office of minister, servant, or abbess. We would be better served by restoring a proper appreciation of the manner in which Clare, the first Franciscan woman, understood the true measure and reality of her role and responsibility as leader in her community. She saw in that role an aspect of her vocation by which she might incarnate Christ among her sisters. She accepted it willingly and gave to it the best of her wisdom and energy.

And so let us consider these qualities of Clare: solicitude and prudence, vigilance and intentionality, diligence and compassion, discretion, maturity and deliberation, skill in governmental administration, a servant's heart, a modest woman's claim to the authority given by God and the common consent of the sisters among whom she was abbess, sister, and servant.

In the light of these observations, we suggest two reflection questions:

- 1) What qualities of leadership do others recognize in me? What qualities of leadership do I recognize in myself?
- 2) What qualities of leadership are most needed in the congregation at this time in our history?

Conclusion

Over the course of the past few years, many congregations have been influenced by reflections on religious life that use the Emmaus story (Luke 24:13-35) as a point of reference. Indeed the experiences of the disciples on the road to Emmaus offer all of us preparing for general chapters a number of insights, challenges, and consolations. Similarly, there is a passage from Thomas of Celano's *First Life of Saint Francis* (34-35)⁵ which in its own way, mirrors for us something of the gospel story of Emmaus as well as our own chapter experiences. The setting is Francis's return from the city of Rome to the Spoleto Valley shortly after he and the brothers had received from Pope Innocent III approval to live the evangelical way of life. Here is how Thomas describes what has come to be known as the *first* chapter of the Friars Minor:

While they were going along the way, they talked with one another about the number and quality of the gifts the most kind God had bestowed upon them and about how they had been received most kindly by the Vicar of Christ, the lord and father of the whole Christian world, about how they might be able to fulfill his admonitions and commands, about how they could sincerely observe

the rule they had taken upon themselves and keep it without failure, about how they should walk in all sanctity and religion before the Most High and finally about how their life and conduct might be an example to their neighbors, by an increase of holy virtues.

By the time the new disciples of Christ had sufficiently discussed these things in the school of humility, the day was far spent and the hour was already late. They came then to a desert place, greatly fatigued from their journey and hungry, but they could find no refreshment because that place was far removed from other people's dwellings. Immediately, the grace of God providing, a man met them bearing in his hand some bread, which he gave them and departed. But they did not know him and they wondered in their hearts and devoutly admonished one another to place even greater trust in the divine mercy.

The writer goes on then to describe how they came to a place near the city of Orte and stayed there for fifteen days. During that time, they were supplied with food by kind benefactors in the nearby town. They were given over to tremendous rejoicing and it was there that they began to understand better their compact with holy poverty. It was there that they strengthened their resolve to cling to poverty and to put aside all their solicitude for earthly things. Many people knew they were there and wished them well. Finally, as they began to understand that it was time for them to leave this tiny haven in which they had found so many consolations and had such wonderful deliberations, they made the decision to follow Francis to the Spoleto Valley. The story concludes:

They all conferred together as true followers of justice, whether they should dwell among the people or go to solitary places. But Saint Francis who did not trust in his own skill, but had recourse to holy prayer before all transactions, chose not to live for himself alone, but for the One who died for all.

We find in this narration by Thomas of Celano, not only a fascinating allusion to the Emmaus story, but also a wonderful indication of the spirit that first drew Franciscans together in chapter experiences: the desire to confer together about how better to live a rule of life formulated upon the marrow of the Gospel and the desire to exchange lengthy conversations with one another about God's favors. We perceive an equal desire to help one another discover pitfalls, encumbrances, temptations, and obstacles and to question, alone and together, how God might intend the implementation of Gospel impulses and desires. We observe, too, the friendly collaboration of their unknown and secret benefactors, who saw to it that they were fed during their stay.

Though we, unlike those early friars, might not be loathe to depart

from our chapter rooms and assembly halls, we share a common hope that might best be expressed in our longing to rekindle something of their spirit as we try to renew our experience of Franciscan chapters. At the heart of our desire to choose the good as sister and as sisters lies the fundamental insight of this story. Responding to the call of leadership is not solely a matter of asking ourselves the question: "What shall I do?" It is also a matter of asking ourselves the question: "How shall we do this together?"

Francis and his brothers, in lonely and isolated places, deliberated with wonder and concernment. Clare and her sisters, in the tiny cloistered rooms of San Damiano, questioned, searched, and reflected. Now we too, discerning and concerned, must go forward to seek the will of God individually and as a sisterhood, so that peace and good may abound among us and the Reign of God may be clearly mirrored in and through our lives.

Endnotes

¹See Francis and Clare: The Complete Works, trans. Regis Armstrong, OFM, Cap. and Ignatius Brady, OFM (New York: Paulist Press, 1982) 103.

²The phrase *sancto operatio*, "holy manner of working," appears frequently in the writings of Francis. See 1EpFid 1:10; 2:19; 2EpFid 37; RegB 10:8; Test 39.

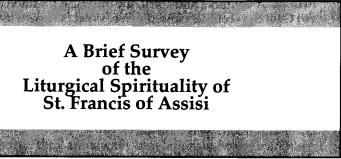
³See Bonaventure, The Soul's Journey into God in Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, and the Life of St. Francis, trans. Ewert Cousins (New York: Paulist Press) 83-84.

⁴Clare of Assisi: Early Documents, trans. Regis Armstong, OFM, Cap. (New York: Paulist Press, 1988).

⁵English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis, ed. Marion A. Habig (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983) 256-8.

Almighty, eternal, just, and merciful God, grant us in our misery [the grace] to do for You alone what we know You want us to do, and always desire what pleases You . . . [that we may] be able to follow in the footprints of Your beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. (EpOrd 50-51)

The Cord, 46.3 (1996)



Christopher Bisett, OFM, Conv.

Introduction

Liturgy and spirituality do not exist in a vacuum. Both are aspects of humanity's attempt to respond to the living presence of God as it is encountered in the midst of creation. In effect, liturgy and spirituality are organic realities in that they arise from, are shaped by, and give expression to a living human experience of the Divine. Liturgy and spirituality are relational and historical in nature; both take shape from the constant interaction of personal experience, religious tradition, and culture. As a result, there can be a diversity of spiritualities and forms of liturgy within our global human community, even within the same religious tradition. Liturgy and spirituality, as well as their union in "Liturgical Spirituality," demand an awareness and appreciation for the context in which they are formed and in which they are lived.

The liturgical spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi, as it is presented in his extant writings, cannot be properly understood outside the historical milieu in which he lived. Therefore it is important to take a few moments to examine some of the dynamics at work in the liturgical and spiritual life of the Church in thirteenth-century Italy.

"Liturgy" in Context

What did the term "liturgy" mean to the people of the Middle Ages, and how was it expressed in the Church?

In the Western church the word [liturgy] fell out of use for many centuries. Other words such as "divine office," "ecclesiastical office," or "sacred rites" were used to denote worship services. When

the word liturgy returned into use in the 18th century it referred to the entire cultic activity of the Church.¹

In origin, evolution, and spirit, the liturgical tradition of the Western Church is complex and diverse. What is known as the Roman rite was only one of several Western rites which existed between the 4th and 16th centuries. In matters of worship, local churches were free to develop their own forms. Until 1080, the Roman See never attempted to control the liturgical observances of churches outside of *Italia suburbicaria*.²

By the end of the Middle Ages liturgical 'pluralism' had become chaos and reform was necessary.³

It is apparent from the first citation that the word "liturgy" had faded from popular use in the Latin church. In its place a variety of terms emerged that attempted to express a variety of forms of liturgical worship (e.g., "divine office," "sacred rites"). It is evident that from the Patristic period through the Middle Ages, forms of liturgical worship were developed and practiced in the context of the local church (i.e., urban churches, dioceses). This allowed for the development of a variety of liturgical practices that existed throughout Western Christianity for more than twelve centuries. It is also evident that this plurality of liturgical forms generated some chaos within Latin Christianity, especially as the church began to evolve from being a union of local churches to a Roman-centered church. "Reform" was the word and the practice of the Church as it became centered in the person of the Roman Pontiff. Two major contributions to the Church of the early Middle Ages were the liturgical reforms which began under Pope Gregory VII (i.e., the Gregorian Reform), and the liturgical disciplinary canons of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215).

In the Western Church, liturgy includes all the sacraments (including the Eucharist), the Liturgy of Hours (sometimes called the Divine Office), funerals, the rites of religious profession, ordination, the blessing of persons (abbots, abbesses), as well as the consecration of persons (virgins) and things (churches). Liturgy is often called the "public or official prayer of the Church."

In the Catholic tradition, both of the East and the West, worship from the earliest days was sacramental, communal and always associated with the proclamation of God's word.⁵

From the earliest days of the Church, "liturgy" has referred to that activity of the Christian community by which they offer public worship to God. This activity has essentially been communal, sacramental, and centered on the word. Although the Western church has allowed a variety of ritual forms to be encompassed under the title "liturgy," the Eastern church

by the fourth century used this term to refer exclusively to the celebration of the Eucharist.⁶ The importance of public, communal worship (i.e., liturgy) has never been disputed in the Church. The worship of God has been a paramount value of the Christian people from the beginning. It is when forms of worship are discussed that disputes arise. There has always been one focus, one goal for all liturgical practices in the Church: the authentic worship of God.

"Spirituality" in Context

Although liturgy and spirituality can be discussed as separate topics, the fact remains that they are always in relationship to one another. Liturgy serves to promote, shape, and express the relationship and interaction that the human person shares with the Divine (i.e., spirituality). Spirituality, in its turn, serves to authenticate the form of worship that is being celebrated by a particular people. Thus, spirituality will always have a liturgical dimension, and liturgy will always have spirituality as its starting point.

The liturgical spirituality of St. Francis was not formed in a vacuum; it did not spontaneously appear in the beginning of the thirteenth century. The spiritual world in which the Poverello lived was shaped largely by the monastic spirituality of the Middle Ages (Benedictine, Cistercian) as well as by the mounting desire for a return to the simplicity of Gospel living. This latter tendency arose as a result of the need and process of reform in the Church.

Before considering the liturgical spirituality of St. Francis, we need a brief survey of two of the major contributing forces that helped to shape the spiritual world of Italy in the thirteenth century: Benedictine and Cistercian spirituality.

Because God is especially present in the liturgy, every aspect of its performance must be done with careful attention.⁷

What Benedict wants to inculcate is reverence, the basic religious sentiment that characterizes all genuine religious experience.⁸

The Rule of St. Benedict was the norm for monasticism in the Latin Church from the sixth century. The influence of St. Benedict's thought cannot be understated when examining its effect upon the Church in the Middle Ages. In the Rule of St. Benedict (43:3), the Saint writes: "Let nothing be preferred to the opus Dei." In effect, St. Benedict is presenting the core of his spirituality—the life of the monk is centered on the word of God. The Sacred Scriptures are a privileged source for experiencing the power and the

presence of the Divine. Therefore, the Benedictine tradition developed and promoted liturgical and spiritual practices and disciplines that enabled the participant to encounter the mysterious and hidden presence of God in the Word (e.g., in the *lectio divina*). For St. Benedict, God is especially present in the liturgy—the Mass and the Divine Office. The "heart" of the liturgy is always the Word of God, and so the entire monastic horarium centered around the celebration of the liturgy of the Church in its fullness. The proper and dignified celebration of the Mass and the Divine Office enabled the monk to listen with care to the Word, and it promoted the spirit of profound reverence which was considered by St. Benedict to be the proper response to the experience of the presence of God.

Although the *Rule of St. Benedict* was the rule for monasticism in the Western Church, by the eleventh century a reform of the monastic life was beginning. The "Gregorian Reform" had ignited an interest in retrieving the pristine vision of the *Rule of St. Benedict* which had been lost in the pursuit of wealth, influence, and because of multiple accretions to the discipline of the monastic life.⁹ By the early twelfth century, a reform of Benedictine monasticism was being established in the woods outside of Citeaux.

The new foundation was poor and isolated, without many of the material benefits of an established monastery. The monks attempted to live by the Rule quite literally, distancing themselves consciously from many, but not all, customs derived from Cluny and other traditional Benedictine centers. A return to poverty, the desire to be "poor with the poor Christ," was a hallmark of the reform. This was expressed particularly with regard to the liturgy.10

At the height of its reform in the early 13th century, it numbered approximately 750 monasteries.11

The Cistercian reform embraced the pure observance of the Rule of Benedict, but it did so by pursuing the path of evangelical poverty. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the poverty of Christ became the image and goal of reform within the Church. Therefore, the tremendous popularity of the Cistercian Order during the Middle Ages is not surprising, nor is its impact on other reform groups within Medieval Western Christianity.

The Cistercian spirituality maintained St. Benedict's conviction about the privileged place of the *opus Dei* in the daily life of the community. Nothing was to interfere with the monks' pursuit of the Divine Presence revealed in the word of God. However, the Cistercian vision rejected the multiple accretions (i.e., the "pomp and circumstance") that had been added unnecessarily to the liturgy. The reform of the liturgy in its fullness (i.e., the Mass and the Divine Office) was paramount for an authentic and vi-

brant pursuit of the Divine Presence. Evangelical poverty, as expressed in liturgy through simplicity, was to be the tool through which the community would reform its celebration of the Word in the Mass and the Divine Office.

The monastic practice, as well as ecclesiastical and liturgical reform, was to fashion the world in which St. Francis found himself. This was a society that existed before the printing press. It was a society that was, for the most part, functionally illiterate. Yet, at the center of this milieu was the emphasis on the power and presence of God in the Word. The psalms became tools for learning how to read and write, and yet these same psalms became the voice of God and the voice of prayer for the Church. Cathedrals and monasteries not only taught the people how to listen to the voice of God in the word proclaimed at the Mass and the Divine Office, but they also taught the faithful how to raise their voices, minds, and hearts to God through the same Word that was proclaimed to them. The thirteenth century was a liturgical world, a world that resonated with the sound of the Sacred Scriptures.

The Liturgical Spirituality of St. Francis—from His Writings

The Divine Office/Liturgy of the Hours

It is important to note that St. Francis of Assisi never used the word "liturgy" in any of his twenty-eight extant writings. As mentioned earlier, the word "liturgy" had fallen into disuse by his time. Instead, the Poverello used the word "worship," a functional equivalent for the term "liturgy" by the thirteenth century. It is important to note that only fourteen of St. Francis's writings make any reference to worship in a liturgical sense (e.g., 2EpFid 19-20; RegNB 22:27-31). The focus of much of the Poverello's writing reflects the teaching of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), as well as Benedictine and Cistercian influences.

St. Francis was a man of profound reverence for the presence of God in all of creation, most especially in the written word and the Eucharist. He was a man who was aware of the disrespect which people manifested towards God in their abuse and/or neglect of sacred things. The worship of God necessitated a reverence for all things that revealed the presence of the Divine, and this reverence needed to be manifested in the way in which they cared for the holy. For St. Francis, worship involved more than the faithful and recollected celebration of the liturgies of the Church; it demanded a care for all things connected to the celebration of the liturgy. Preparation, celebration, and care were intrinsically linked to reverence, and reverence was at the heart of authentic worship of God.

Closely linked to Francis' attention to the word of God are his love and veneration for the Eucharist. Both the words of the Lord and the Eucharist are visible, concrete, and tangible realities for Francis: as the word is heard with human ears, so the Eucharist is seen by human eyes.¹²

Seven of St. Francis's writings were concerned with the celebration of the Divine Office. Two of the extant texts are undated, and they are entirely associated with the practice of the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours: the Office of the Passion and the Praises to be Said at All Hours. The Office is reminiscent of the practice of the Little Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary—a variation of the form used in celebrating the Divine Office, meant to be done in addition to, or in some cases as a substitute for, the celebration of the Hours. The Praises were meant to be an additional prayer to be offered along with the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours.

The remaining five texts come from the last seven years of St. Francis's life. All of them reflect the Poverello's concern for the proper celebration of the Divine Office. In the *Rule for Hermitages*, written prior to the *Earlier Rule* (1221), the Seraphic Father reveals the importance of the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours in the daily life of those committed to the eremetical way:

And they should always say Compline of the day immediately after sundown; and they should be eager to keep silence, and to say their hours, and to rise for Matins; and let them seek first of all the kingdom of God and His justice (Mt. 6:33). And let them say Prime at the proper time, and after Terce they may be free from silence. And afterward they should say Sext and None and Vespers at the proper time (RegEr 3-6).

It is clear from the text that St. Francis envisioned the celebration of the Divine Office to form the horarium of the eremetical community. It was important to the Poverello that the Divine Office should be celebrated at the proper hours and that the entire Office was to be prayed by the community. Once again, it is the word of God that nourishes the life of prayer for St. Francis and his followers. It is the Word that gives life. This horarium of biblical-public prayer is reminiscent of the theme underlying the prayer and the title: *Praises to be Said at All Hours*—our entire day is to be a hymn of praise to God.

St. Francis was clearly a man of the Church, and he was a man of the Council (i.e., Lateran IV, 1215). The *Earlier Rule* echoes the disciplinary reform of Pope Innocent III in 1213:

For this reason all the brothers, whether clerical or lay, should celebrate the Divine Office, the praises and prayers, as is required of

them. The clerical [brothers] should celebrate the office and say it for the living and the dead according to the custom of the clergy (RegNB 3-4).

From this citation it is clear that St. Francis believed in celebrating the Office "according to the custom of the clergy" (i.e., according to the discipline of the local/diocesan church). A few years later the Poverello refined this teaching on the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours:

The clerical [brothers] shall celebrate the Divine Office according to the rite of the holy Roman Church, except the Psalter, for which they may have breviaries (RegB 3:1-2).

This citation from the *Later Rule* reveals a remarkable change in the Seraphic Father's thinking. At the time of the *Earlier Rule* Francis seemed content to have the friars celebrate the Divine Office according to the custom of the local church where they found themselves. Thus, there was no single, monolithic form of the Office that was celebrated by the entire Order. The early friars enjoyed a flexible approach to this Prayer of the Church. The *Later Rule* reveals a change towards uniformity in practice, as well as communion with the symbol of unity for the Church on earth: the Pope (and his household).

In *A Letter to the Entire Order* (43), written after December, 1224, St. Francis renews his desire to have the friars celebrate the Hours according to the prescriptions laid down in the *Later Rule*. However, he also writes:

[Further, he should insist] that the clerics say the Office with devotion before God, not concentrating on the melody of the voice but on the harmony of the mind, so that the voice may blend with the mind, and the mind be in harmony with God. [Let them do this] in such a way that they may please God through purity of heart and not charm the ears of the people with sweetness of voice (EpOrd 41-42).

The Seraphic Father touches upon a concern that finds echoes in the *Rule of Benedict* (Chapter 19) and the Cistercian pursuit of simplicity and authenticity in worship. True worship of God arises from the heart that pursues the word of God, not through the "show" of liturgical prayer. St. Francis is challenging the friars to have integrity in their prayer—their hearts and their voices must be one in the praise of God.

In his *Testament* the Poverello offers his final thoughts on the celebration and the importance of the Divine Office:

And although I may be simple and infirm, I wish nonetheless always to have a cleric who will celebrate the Office for me as it is contained in the Rule. And all the other brothers are bound to obey

their guardians and to celebrate the Office according to the Rule. And [if] they are found who do not celebrate the Office according to the Rule and [who] wish to alter it in any way or [who] are not Catholics, let all the brothers be obliged through obedience that wherever they come upon [such a brother] they must bring him to the custodian [who is] nearest that place where they have found him. And the custodian is strictly bound through obedience to guard him strongly as a prisoner day and night, so that he cannot be snatched from his hands until he can personally deliver him into the hands of his minister (Test 29-32).

Although the Seraphic Father was blind by the time he dictated this *Testament*, he reveals that he did not want to be dispensed by illness from celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours. He requests that a cleric (i.e., a literate friar) read the Divine Office for him so that he might pray the Prayer of the Church. Furthermore, St. Francis did not want the friars to celebrate the Hours in any other way than that which was stated in the *Later Rule*. The Divine Office was to be celebrated according to the form of the Roman Church, no exceptions! These final words echo the importance of this form of worship—the hours of the day are to be filled with the praise of God arising from the word of God.

The Celebration of the Eucharist/Mass

Of the twenty-eight extant texts there are only eight that address the issue of the Eucharist itself in either its liturgical dimension or the eucharistic species. Although St. Francis refers to the Eucharist in few texts, he was just as concerned with it as he was with the celebration of the Divine Office. They are two sides of the same reality: the power and presence of the Divine manifested in the Word.

The Seraphic Father addresses the Eucharist under several themes: the "Real Presence," the respect and care due the Eucharist, the attitude necessary for reception of the Eucharist, the need for and the benefits that come from reception of the Eucharist, and the respect that is due the clergy. I will briefly survey these topics, providing citations as to where they can be found in the writings.

See, daily He humbles Himself (cf. Phil. 2:8) as when He came from the royal throne (Wis. 18:15) into the womb of the Virgin; daily He comes to us in a humble form; daily He comes down from the bosom of the Father (cf. Jn. 1:18) upon the altar in the hands of the priest. And as He appeared to the holy apostles in true flesh, so now He reveals Himself to us in the sacred bread. And as they saw only His flesh by means of their bodily sight, yet believed Him to be God as they contemplated Him with the eyes of faith, so, as we

see bread and wine with [our] bodily eyes, we too are to see and firmly believe them to be His most holy Body and Blood living and true. And in this way the Lord is always with His faithful, as He Himself says: Behold I am with you even to the end of the world (cf. Mt. 28:20) (Adm 1:16-22).

In this first *Admonition* we see the fundamental Eucharistic belief of St. Francis presented in poetic terms. The Seraphic Father is a mystic—he can see beyond the physical to the spiritual reality that lies hidden, a reality that invites discovery and belief. Jesus is fully present in the concrete realities of bread and wine, just as He was present in the concrete reality of His humanity as a baby in the arms of His Mother, Mary. The only true realization of the presence of Christ in the world is in the bread and wine that have become the Body and Blood of Christ by the proclamation of the word of God. This fundamental belief is echoed in three other texts by St. Francis: *A Letter to the Clergy*, 3; *A Letter to the Entire Order*, 26-29; *The Testament*, 10.

Therefore, kissing your feet and with all that love of which I am capable, I implore all of you brothers to show all possible reverence and honor to the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in whom that which is in the heavens and on the earth is brought to peace and is reconciled to the all-powerful God (cf. Col. 1:20) (EpOrd 12-13).

In this excerpt, St. Francis reveals his concern for the respect and care due the eucharistic presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The Seraphic Father exhorts his friars to hold the same respect for the Word of God in the bread and wine as he has told them to have for the Word present in the Sacred Scriptures. Fundamentally, the Poverello is calling his brothers to cherish the presence of the person of Christ. Once again, the Eucharist is not a mere symbol; it is the real presence of the person of Christ. This concern for respect is echoed in *A Letter to the Clergy*, 5.

Along with respect, St. Francis was concerned with the attitude that the brothers, and by extension all people have when receiving the Eucharist:

Therefore it is the Spirit of the Lord, Who lives in His faithful, Who receives the most holy Body and Blood of the Lord. All others who do not share in this same Spirit and who presume to receive Him eat and drink judgement to themselves (cf. 1 Cor. 11:29) (Adm 1:12-13).

Therefore, I firmly advise you, my lords, to put aside all care and preoccupation and receive with joy the most holy Body and the most holy Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in holy remembrance of Him (EpRect 6).

The first text speaks of the belief that the Poverello had concerning the fact that it is the Spirit of the Lord within us that makes it possible for us to receive the Body and Blood of Christ worthily. The reception of the Eucharist is a pneumatological experience (i.e., the working of the Holy Spirit). If we do not have "the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working" (RegB 10:8), then we cannot worthily and reverently receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

In the second citation, St. Francis exhorts those who are in positions of responsibility to lay aside their "cares and preoccupations" so that they may receive the Lord worthily. Reception of the Eucharist demands recollection, freedom from distractions. This is also "part and parcel" of the reverence due the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The Seraphic Father's concern about the attitude we bring to our reception of the Eucharist is further echoed in: the First Letter to the Custodians, 7; A Letter to the Entire Order, 18-19; the Second Letter to the Faithful, 24; and the Later Rule, 20:5.

It is also important to note the "response" which we are called to give to the reception of the Eucharist. In only one place in the extant writings of St. Francis, does the Poverello describe the response that should be given to the Real Presence of Christ:

And when It is sacrificed upon the altar by the priest and carried to any place, let all people, on bended knee, praise, glorify, and honor the Lord God living and true. And you must announce and preach His praise to all peoples in such a manner that at every hour and whenever the bells are rung, praise, glory, and honor are given to the all-powerful God throughout all the Earth (1EpCust 7-8).

This passage presents a majestic image of the Real Presence and a majestic response to this Presence. In it, the friars are called to be heralds of the Great King. They are to announce His praise, glory, and honor in such a way as to inspire others in joining them in offering worship in spirit and truth. The attitude necessary for reception of the Eucharist comes full circle with this joyful response.

The Poverello was well aware of our need to receive the Eucharist and of the benefit to be gained by our encounter with the Real Presence in our daily lives.

All those, however, who are not [living] in penance and do not receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, [who] practice vice and sin and walk [the path of] wicked concupiscence (Col. 3:5) and evil desires; who do not observe what they have promised and bodily serve the world by the desires of the flesh (1Pet. 2:11), the cares and anxieties of this world, and the preoccupations of this life: [such people] are deceived by the devil, whose children

they are and whose works they perform (cf. Jn. 8:41). They are blind because they do not see the true light, Our Lord Jesus Christ (EpFid 63-66).

He who does not eat His Flesh and does not drink His Blood (cf. Jn. 6:55, 57) cannot enter the Kingdom of God (Jn. 3:5) (EpFid 23).

And in every sermon which you give, admonish the people concerning [the need of] penance, and [tell them] that no one can be saved unless he receives the Body and Blood of the Lord (cf. Jn. 6:54) (EpCust 6).

In these three citations St. Francis views the "need" and the "benefit" as being one and the same: salvation. Those who do not receive the Eucharist worthily and with reverence bring the judgement of damnation upon themselves. The Eucharist is truly the bread of life, for in it we receive the Lord of Life. For other echoes of this teaching see: 1EpFid 1:3,5; 2:2, 6; RegNB 20:5-6; Adm 1:12-13. It is important to note that the Seraphic Father does not mention the reception of Eucharist or Holy Communion in four of his texts: A Letter to the Clergy, the Later Rule, the Rule for Hermitages, and The Testament.

The respect which St. Francis demonstrated toward priests arose from his respect for the Word of God and the Eucharist which they administer. The Poverello did not consider the individual person of the priest as the determinant for the respect they were to receive. Respect, reverence, and obedience were given because it was with their (i.e., the priests) hands and voices that the presence of the Divine was revealed in the word of Sacred Scripture and in the bread and wine of the Eucharist. Thus, the Seraphic Father's liturgical spirituality reached beyond the word and the eucharistic species to encompass those who administered them to us. For other references to this teaching see: EpOrd 14-15; 2EpFid 33; Test 13.

In a related teaching, mentioned only once in the entire corpus of extant texts, St. Francis speaks of his desire to have Mass celebrated every day where the friars are living:

Therefore I admonish and urge in the Lord that only one Mass according to the form of the holy Church be celebrated each day in the places in which the brothers stay. If, however, there should be more than one priest in that place, let one be content, for the sake of charity, to assist at the celebration of the other priest; for our Lord Jesus Christ fills those who are present and absent who are worthy of Him (EpOrd 30-32).

Here the Poverello is encouraging the celebration of a single Mass, even if more than one priest is living in the community. St. Francis is not presenting a theological position for or against concelebration. He is simply

expressing his belief in the value of a shared liturgy for the growth of unity among the friars. What is of value is the sense of community that is formed and expressed when one group of friars shares the one bread, the one cup, and the one word.

Concern for the Care of the Sacred

St. Francis was aware of the abuse and neglect that occurred in regard to those things that were part of the liturgical life of the Church. The Seraphic Father was a witness to the deplorable conditions of many of the churches that he happened upon during his tours.

Consider the sad state of the chalices, the corporals, and the altarlinens upon which the Body and Blood of our Lord are sacrificed. And [the Body and Blood of our Lord] is left by many in dirty places, carried about in a miserable manner, received unworthily and administered to others without discretion. Even His sacred written words are sometimes left to be trampled underfoot; for the person who does not have the spirit does not perceive the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14) (EpCler 4b-7).

As is seen in this excerpt, these conditions were often revelatory of the attitude of the people and the clergy towards God and His Presence in their lives. St. Francis was well aware of the teachings of the Fourth Lateran Council regarding the care of the Eucharist, the Sacred Scriptures, and those things which are connected with worship (e.g., sacred vessels, linens). He sought to correct the abuse and neglect in two ways.

First, his biographers mention that the Seraphic Father taught the clergy during his tours how to care for the church, the Blessed Sacrament, the Scriptures, and those things which were associated with the liturgy. He is known to have carried a broom with him when he visited churches to demonstrate by his actions that the "House of God" was to be kept clean and cared for—a sign of reverence for the presence of God.

Secondly, St. Francis used the power of his words and personality to convey his concerns and to exhort his friars to promote care for the sacred:

I beg you, with all that is in me and more, that, when it is appropriate and you judge it profitable, you humbly beg the clergy to revere above everything else the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and His holy written words which consecrate [His] Body. The chalices, corporals, appointments of the altar, and everything which pertains to the sacrifice must be of precious material. And if the most holy Body of the Lord is very poorly reserved in any place, it should be placed in a precious location under lock and kept according to the mandate of the Church and carried about with great reverence and administered to others with discretion. In a similar way the written words of the Lord, when-

ever they are found in an improper place, should be gathered together and kept in a becoming place (1EpCust 2-5).

This excerpt not only reveals the Poverello's concerns for the care of the sacred, but also his awareness of the teachings of the Church. St. Francis wanted his confreres to be instruments of renewal wherever they found themselves, not for his sake, but out of respect and reverence for the presence of God. (See also: EpOrd 34-37; EpCler 4; Test 11-12.)

Conclusion

The liturgical spirituality of St. Francis reflects his mysticism and his sacramental imagination (i.e., his appreciation for the concrete ways in which God manifests the Divine Presence). Michael Scanlon, OSA, a professor of systematic theology at Villanova University, is well known for teaching: "That which is not expressed, is not real!" This can be easily applied to the Poverello's approach to liturgical spirituality. The Seraphic Father's sacramental imagination was reciprocal. God reveals the Divine Presence in myriad ways in the concrete world—preeminently in the Incarnation. Through this awareness, St. Francis realized that he must reveal his reverence, respect, and love for God through real and tangible actions in the world.

The mysticism of the Poverello brought him to see, hear, and touch the Presence of God in the midst of life. The privileged place for this encounter was the liturgy of the Church. In the Church's celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours and the Mass, St. Francis encountered the spiritual, yet tangible, presence of God in the words of the Sacred Scriptures as well as in the bread and wine that was blessed, broken, and shared. Through the liturgy the Seraphic Father came into contact with the most tangible and real presence ever revealed by the Divine, the person of the Christ. In turn, his rendezvous with the Word empowered him to reveal the hidden secrets of his heart through tangible gestures of love. For the Seraphic Father and for us, liturgy and spirituality meet in the life that is truly devoted to the love of God in spirit and in truth.

In light of the conciliar reforms instituted by the Second Vatican Council, we are challenged to retrieve the best of our spiritual tradition and make it tangible in our world today. The gift of St. Francis's enthusiasm for the liturgical life of the Church should inspire us and guide us in our attempts to retrieve the best of our Seraphic inheritance. The Poverello has given to us, through his life and writings, an invaluable path and example to follow. For St. Francis and for those of us who seek to follow in his footsteps in this post-conciliar world, the liturgy is our greatest work and a

privileged path in the pursuit of holiness (i.e., union with the poor and crucified Christ). Wherever St. Francis encountered the People of God, he sought to teach them and share with them the tremendous treasure of the Church's liturgical life. We can do no less! Wherever we find ourselves, we must participate fully and actively in the liturgy of the Church and assist others in doing the same.

Endnotes

¹Fink, Peter E., ed., *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* [NDSW] (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990) 740.

²NDSW 1282.

³J.G. Davies, ed., *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* [NWD] (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986) 470.

⁴Michael Downey, ed., *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* [NDCS] (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993) 603.

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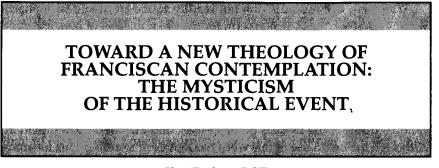
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¹⁰ NDCS 175.

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"The liturgical spirituality of St. Francis reflects his mysticism and his sacramental imagination. . . . (It) brought him to see, hear, and touch the Presence of God in the midst of life."



Ilia Delio, OSF

Introduction

In his address to the Fifth Plenary Council of the Capuchin Friars, Jose Pedroso identified the ambivalence of the word contemplation in the contemporary discussion of Franciscan spirituality: "We talk a lot about Franciscan contemplation without really knowing what it is." Pedroso defines the problem of Franciscan contemplation as one essentially weighed down by the monastic model, fostered by educating friars (and sisters) in the monastic writings rather than the Franciscan sources.

In this essay, I would like to offer a new vision of Franciscan contemplation, one that is rooted in the spirituality of Francis himself and expounded by Bonaventure. This distinct type of contemplation is referred to as mysticism of the historical event, a term originally identified by Ewert Cousins to signify mystical union through participation in the historical event.² In the mysticism of the historical event, imitation of and conformity to the humanity of Christ lead one to union with God through the power of the Spirit. Mysticism of the historical event is a type of mysticism that is characteristically Franciscan since in no other type of Christian mysticism does union take place on the level of the Incarnate Word.

In comparison with the ascent to mystical union in the monastic tradition, which is essentially a Neoplatonic ascent, the mysticism of the historical event is a Christocentric, Christiformic ascent to God. In this article I will try to show how the mysticism of the historical event stands apart from mystical union in the monastic tradition by examining it through Bonaventure's Christ mysticism. The goal is to identify an authentic type of Franciscan contemplation that is marked by devotion to the humanity of Christ.

The Monastic Quest For Union With God

The term mysticism is one not readily found in medieval monastic writings. Rather, the common term for the phenomenon of mystical experience in the Middle Ages is *contemplatio*, a Latin translation of the Greek *theoria*, meaning "looking at" or "gazing at." Thomas Aquinas defines contemplation as "a simple act of gazing on the truth." Jean Gerson describes it as an "experimental knowledge of God." The word mysticism is a relatively recent word, entering the language of spirituality in the seventeenth century through the discussion of infused and acquired contemplation. Although the broad use of this word has lent itself to ambiguous meaning, it refers, in its Christian context, to the hidden encounter with God perceived by the eyes of faith. Bernard McGinn, in his comphrehensive study on mysticism, defines it as a "direct or immediate consciousness of the presence (or absence) of God." In this article, the words contemplation and mysticism are used synonymously to describe the intimate experience of the hidden presence of God in Christ.

In the monastic tradition, contemplation has generally been assumed to be an essential part of the life, although in the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, one of the principal rules of western monasticism, the word contemplation is absent. Benedict offers a distinct doctrine of prayer, however, that is derived largely from the writings of John Cassian, a sixth-century monk, who obtained his teaching on prayer from the desert Fathers and Evagrius Ponticus. The tenets of prayer that are incorporated into the *Rule of Saint Benedict*—hesychia, compunction, and short and pure prayer—are essentially eastern in origin.

Although Benedict does not explicitly discuss contemplation in the *Rule*, he implies that contemplation arises from pure prayer and encourages the monk to pursue this path under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His incorporation of an eastern doctrine of prayer in the *Rule* underscores the path to contemplation as a Neoplatonic ascent to God. Neoplatonism is a metaphysical structure of relationships, arising in the third century (A.D.) among both pagan and Christian thinkers. Contemplation among Christian Neoplatonists such as Evagrius and Origen is identified by the characteristics of emanation and return, introversion and ascension, passionate striving and union with divine transcendent Being. In this type of ascent, prayer enables the soul to rise above the material world to attain an intellectual transforming vision of God.

The ascent to union with God in the Middle Ages is principally Neoplatonic since the goal of contemplation is union with the uncreated Logos. Although devotion to the humanity of Christ arises within monastic circles, it does not significantly affect this type of ascent. The mystical theology of Bernard of Clairvaux is typical of this medieval trend. Bernard is considered a primary advocate of devotion to Christ in his humanity. He describes, in various sermons, the human tribulations that Christ endured in his earthly life. Bernard's influence on the current of medieval spirituality has been highly regarded and identified as a factor in the development of affective spirituality in the Franciscan tradition. However, Bernard's influence, as Jean Déchanet notes, may be overemphasized.⁹

As the "last of the Fathers," Bernard's theology stands in much closer affinity to the Greek Fathers, especially that of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, than to Francis and Bonaventure. Although he advocates devotion to the humanity of Christ, such devotion serves to foster the movement from carnal love to spiritual love. Because fallen humanity is initially unable to love God other than in the flesh, Bernard takes this as a starting point, albeit a necessary one, to begin the journey to union with God. However, he does not place the primary emphasis on the earthly life of Christ but rather on the ascended and glorified Christ. As Jean Leclercq states, Bernard's focus lay on the Jerusalem above and the hope of sharing the life of the risen and glorified Christ. The ascent to union with God is an ascent of the soul to union with the divine Logos; the carnal love of God impels one to the spiritual love of the Logos marked by passionate desire.

Bernard's doctrine of mystical marriage is one in which, at the height of union, the soul is united to the uncreated Word in a bond of consummate love. The experience of union is one not of darkness but of light, transcending the humanity of Christ and the sensory world of images. Bernard's spousal mysticism is unique in its language and approach to union with God. It stands firmly in the monastic tradition, reflecting concepts already found in the Fathers such as transcending union, deification, and passionate desire. In this respect, his journey to union with God follows a Neoplatonic ascent marked by a light-transforming union.

Bonaventure and the Mysticism of the Historical Event

Dom Eudes Bamberger, in an article on St. Bernard's influence on medieval spirituality, remarks that Bonaventure "carried on the same doctrine" of Bernard's affective spirituality, providing a link between Bernard and the *devotio moderna* movement. Although Bernard's devotion to Christ is in the service of contemplation, a comparison between his doctrine and that of Bonaventure reveals that Bonaventure's path to union with God is distinct from that of Bernard and the monastic tradition. Among scholars of medieval theology, Bonaventure's doctrine of contemplation has been the subject of ambiguity, since he never clearly defined it nor did he devote

any particular work to elucidating it. However, throughout the course of his writings he constantly refers to contemplation as experiential love and wisdom in union with Christ, an experience integral to the journey to God and one comprising the goal of the Christian life.

In the Hexameron the Seraphic Doctor identifies the key to contemplation as the Word uncreated, incarnate, and inspired (Hex. 3, 2). It is the incarnate Word who, having touched both heaven and earth, reconciles humanity to God and thus enables the human person to attain to union with God. The humanity of Christ, as the restoring principle of fallen humanity, is the principal key to the contemplation of God, since Christ is the mystery of the Word uncreated and incarnate. Throughout his devotional writings, Bonaventure describes the humanity of Christ in detail with the purpose of fostering the contemplation of God. Bonaventure's Lignum vitae, for example, an amalgamation of the four Gospels, depicts the life of Christ, illustrating the various aspects of his historical life. While some scholars have argued that the Lignum vitae is dedicated to conversion and moral transformation, Bonaventure suggests at the beginning that the work is oriented to the contemplation of Christ as true God, that is, the Word through whom all things were made and through whom all things are restored:

When you hear that Jesus is begotten of God, beware lest some inadequate thought of the flesh appear before your mind's eye. Rather . . . in him the Father ordered all things from eternity; through him he made the world and governs it and directs it to his own glory. . . . ¹²

In the *Lignum vitae* Bonaventure seeks to establish a personal relationship between the reader and Christ. The focus of his meditations is directed to the person of Christ, who is truly divine and human. He draws upon the senses and imagination, impelling the reader to participate in the historical life of Christ, who is God. In describing the manger scene, for example, he states:

Now then, my soul, embrace that divine manger; press your lips upon and kiss the boy's feet, . . . marvel at the assembling host of angels singing with your voice and heart: Glory to God in the highest. . .(Lig. vit. 4).

In this meditation Bonaventure illustrates the profound mystery of Christ as divine and human. Just as in the incarnation God "kisses" humanity by taking on human nature, so too the kiss here signifies union. To kiss the boy's feet is to unite oneself to the humanity of Christ whom the

angels testify is true God. By drawing upon the senses and imagination, Bonaventure impels the reader to enter into the historical life of Christ, that is, to participate in the life of the one who is the divine-temporal exemplar.

Through descriptive detail of the historical life of Christ, Bonaventure advocates that one can experience the immediate presence of God hidden in the humanity of Christ; thus he illuminates a mysticism of the historical event. In union with Christ one can experience the presence of God. The mysticism of the historical event acquires a theological foundation in Bonaventure's Christology. For Bonaventure, Christ is the uncreated Word, the eternal exemplar, the perfect image of the Father, and the one in whom everything other than the Father is grounded. As Incarnate Word, he is the temporal exemplar and the expression of God.

Bonaventure notes by analogy that the temporal exemplar and the eternal exemplar are one. Just as the self-knowledge of God is expressed in the inner Word, when the Word is vocalized it becomes the world in which Christ comes as the most perfect vocalization of the inner Word. Because the human nature of Christ exists in a dialectical relation to the eternal Word, he is the single and undivided exemplar. The humanity of Christ is the perfect external Word in which the inner Word of God comes to expression in something ontologically different from God. His human nature and its history, therefore, are the historical embodiment of his eternal Sonship.

In the humility and poverty of the incarnate Word is the historical manifestation of the Son who is the pure receptiveness of being and full loving response to the Father. Since the Son is in union with the Father, to attain to union with God is to become like the Son. Thus, the human person enters into the movement of the trinitarian life by entering into the life-movement of the Son, personalizing the fundamental values of his life in his or her own life. Only through participation in the life of the one who is truly God can one attain to union with God, which is the goal of the Christian life.

Bonaventure's emphasis on the humanity of Christ as the path to union with God underscores the "mysticism of the historical event," indicating that devotion to the humanity of Christ can lead one to the highest level of mystical union. Unlike Bernard, devotion to Christ is not a mediating step from carnal love to spiritual love. Indeed, Bonaventure never directs his readers to the carnal love of Christ, but always to the mystery of Christ as God and man. Thus as one approaches the higher stages of contemplation, the humanity of Christ is not transcended, but is always contemplated in union with the divinity.

In his sermon, "Christ, the One Teacher of All," the Seraphic Doctor identifies Christ as the master of contemplative knowledge in his human-

ity and divinity, thus referring to a twofold movement of contemplation. He states that contemplation is both an inward movement, that is, a going in to Christ as the uncreated Word, and an outward movement, that is, going out to Christ as the Incarnate Word in the flesh.¹³ This inward-outward movement of contemplation characterizes the mysticism of the historical event, whereby conformity to Christ in body and soul leads one to the true contemplation of God. This twofold movement also underlies the concept of image, since to be an image of God is to be an image of the Son, who is the perfect Image; and to be an image of the Son is to be conformed to him in body and soul.¹⁴

In light of the mysticism of the historical event the question is raised, what does it mean to attain the height of contemplation? To address this question, one may look to the highest level of contemplation described by Bonaventure, which is ecstatic union. Ecstasy is a transforming union of love whereby the soul enters into the dark fire of God's love through union with the crucified Christ. Although Bonaventure uses terms and concepts of Pseudo-Dionysius to describe ecstatic union, he transforms the Dionysian Neoplatonic ascent into a Christocentric and Christiformic ascent to union with God. Thus, Christocentricity becomes the metaphysical path to union with God. He adopts the language of Bernard's nuptial theology to describe ecstatic union as mystical marriage with the Crucified. Whereas Bernard describes ecstasy as a union of wills, a union between the soul and the uncreated Word, Bonaventure describes ecstasy as being inflamed by the Holy Spirit and conformed to the Crucified in flesh and spirit. At the level of ecstatic union, knowledge is transcended, and one enters the order of divine love. It is a mystical darkness in which the soul, flooded by the brilliance of divine light, is suspended in mid-air like the Crucified, hovering between heaven and earth.

That ecstatic union takes place with the Crucified is wholly consistent with Bonaventure's thought. The mystery of the cross for Bonaventure is the mystery of poverty, because here God fully communicates the mystery of love in radical openness and acceptance of the human person. The life of Christ in its poverty and humility is a manifestation of the humility of God's love. The piercing of the human heart of Christ is the opening to the human person of the depth of divine love embodied in the love of the Son of God. The paradigm of Francis's stigmata is the model that Bonaventure holds up as the ideal of mystical union. To attain the level of ecstatic union with Christ, therefore, is to be crucified with him in body and spirit; it is to be inflamed by fire of the Holy Spirit (Itin. 7, 6) who is the Spirit of love.

In light of Francis's stigmata Bonaventure writes at the beginning of the *Lignum vitae*: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross" (Lig. vit. prol. 1),

indicating that devotion to the humanity of Christ is to lead one to the height of ecstatic union which is union with the Crucified Christ. The mysticism of the historical event, as the mark of Bonaventure's doctrine of contemplation, means that to attain to union with God is to become like Christ, crucified for the sake of the world.

One advances in contemplation, therefore, by acquiring the spirit of Christ. It is through the power of the Spirit that one becomes like the Son in union with the Father. Bonaventure refers to the power of the Spirit being both impressed and expressed, just as divine wisdom was "ploughed into the flesh of Francis" (LM 13:10) by the "finger of the living God" (LM 13:5). To attain the height of mystical union is not to transcend the world and become absorbed in God; rather, it is to become, like Francis, an *alter Christus*, and thus to express the love of the Father through the power of the Spirit. Mystical union, according to Bonaventure, is to manifest cruciform love.

Mysticism of the Historical Event: Mystical and Active

The tendency to "monasticize" Bonaventure's doctrine of contemplation obscures the uniqueness of his doctrine as one that advocates a contemplation of God that is both mystical and active. The mysticism of the historical event as union with God through imitation of and conformity to Christ means that conformity to the Son brings one into relationship with the Father. Since the most profound love of the Son for the Father is expressed in the cross, the goal of contemplation is to become like the Son, cruciform in love. In *The Triple Way* Bonaventure identifies cruciform love as peace; it is the highest stage of love whereby one is willing to suffer or die for one's neighbor (*De tripl. via* 2, 8, 11). Thus, it is compassionate love expressed in the desire for martyrdom. In union with Christ one becomes, like Christ, the servant of humanity, willing to offer up one's life for the goal of unity so that "all may be one" (John 17:22; *Brev.* 5, 8).

To be in union with Christ is to be both interiorly and exteriorly conformed to him, manifested by the power of the Spirit. In this respect, preaching the Gospel and the desire for martyrdom are not preparatory for union with God, but are themselves events of union. Mystical union marked by compassionate love is distinguished from that found in Bernard in whom passionate desire is the driving force of union; desirous love is characteristic of the Neoplatonic ascent. Conversely, the mysticism of the historical event is union with God through compassionate love, a love which by its very nature is poured out for the life of the world.

The mysticism of the historical event rests on a Johaninne Christology whereby the relationship between the Son and the Father underscores the goal of contemplation. The evidence of this is present in Francis's own writings, particularly in chapter 22 of the *Earlier Rule*. Francis composed this chapter as a "last will and testament" prior to his mission among the Saracens, where he anticipated the possibility of martyrdom. ¹⁵ The last part of the chapter is based on Jesus' Priestly Prayer (John 17:1-26). Francis indicates to the brothers that the goal of their life is to be in union with the Crucified and to express cruciform love; this is the path to the glory of the Father and the unity of the kingdom (RegNB 22:41-55).

The mysticism of the historical event, as it characterizes Bonaventure's doctrine of contemplation, takes a dramatic turn from the traditional monastic type of contemplation. In the latter, the journey to God follows essentially a Neoplatonic ascent whereby the soul, superior in its intellectual nature, transcends the body and thus the material world in attaining to a light-transforming intellectual vision of God. It is, in Plotinian terms, a flight of the alone to the Alone, emphasizing the privatism of the journey and the need to transcend the world. Even Bernard, despite his prodigious preaching throughout Europe, referred to preaching as an obstacle to contemplation and encouraged his monks to strive for the Jerusalem above.

Conversely, in the mysticism of the historical event, the Neoplatonic ascent to God is transformed into a Christocentric and Christiformic ascent. Union with Christ draws one into fellowship with humanity and creation. In Bonaventure's vision Christ stands as center of the soul and center of the world. As the divine-temporal exemplar, Christ is the absolute center. Only in union with the crucified humanity of Christ is union with the Father attained: "There is no path other than through the burning love of the Crucified" (Itin. prol., 3). As Zachery Hayes states: "He who has always been the Center of reality, though hidden in the history of a sinful world, is and remains the Center through whose humanity we enter into the contemplation of God." 16

The principal characteristic of mysticism of the historical event is relationship. Union with the Incarnate Word is the key to the total synthesis that Bonaventure envisions in Christ. And union with Christ is made possible through the power of the Spirit which is visibly expressed in cruciform love. Bonaventure develops this idea into a Christocentric world view (Weltanschauung), indicating that the destiny of the historical process and the consummation of creation are contingent on the relationship between the human person and Christ. The eschatological age of peace, he maintains, will ensue when those like Francis are conformed to the Crucified in body and spirit.

The mysticism of the historical event, as it unfolds in Bonaventure's doctrine, shares a similar world view with the Christogenesis of Teilhard de Chardin. In Teilhardian terms, the mystic in union with Christ urges

reality toward the Omega who is Christ, to the final synthesis which is constantly growing within him or her self.¹⁷ In Bonaventure, the mysticism of the historical event does not lead one out of the world but, in union with Christ, one enters into the heart of the world where Christ is the Center. Only in union with Christ, he maintains, can authentic contemplation of God beachieved. For in Christ alone all return to the Father.

Conclusion

Mysticism of the historical event characterizes a distinct type of Franciscan contemplation, described by Bonaventure, whereby participation in the earthly life of Christ through imitation of and conformity to his humanity enables one to attain union with God. Mystical union is not a Neoplatonic flight of the soul to pure transcendent Being giving rise to transcendence of the material world. Rather, union with God is union with the crucified Christ in whom the power of God's love is revealed. To attain the height of mystical union is to express the desire for martyrdom, since conformity to the perfect Image which is Christ is conformity to him in body and spirit. Union with the Crucified means to be imbued with the power of the Spirit, which both impresses itself and expresses itself in cruciform love.

The mysticism of the historical event makes no obvious distinction between "action" and "contemplation," since the overarching goal is union with the Father through conformity to the Son. In union with the Father one is, like the Son, willing to lay down one's life for one's neighbor, whether it be the preaching of the Gospel, the ministering to lepers, or the prayer of solitude.

To arrive at the level of mystical union is to enter the dark fire of God's love manifested in the Crucified, who is the center of the soul and the center of the world—that hidden center whom Francis discovered in the poverty and humility of the humanity of Christ. The mysticism of the historical event provides an answer to the quest for an authentic Franciscan doctrine of contemplation. Only in union with Christ can one attain the goal of mystical union with God, a union visibly expressed by the Spirit of compassionate love, that love which moves the entire created world to its destiny in Christ.

Endnotes

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²Ewert Cousins, "Francis of Assisi: Christian Mysticism at the Crossroads," in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, ed. Stephen T. Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) 166; idem, "Franciscan Roots of Ignatian Meditation," in *Ignatian Spirituality in a Secular Age*, ed. George P. Schner (Toronto: Willrid Laurier University Press, 1984) 60.

³William Johnston, *The Inner Eye of Love: Mysticism and Religion* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982) 24.

⁴Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica II*, q. 180, a. 3, c. et ad 1; a. 7, c. et ad 1 cited in Adolphe Tanquerey, *The Spiritual Life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology*, trans. Herman Brandeis, 2nd ed. (Westminster: Newman Press, 1930) 649.

⁵Louis Dupré, Introduction to *Light From Light: An Anthology of Christian Mysticism*, ed. Louis Dupré and James A. Wiseman (New York: Paulist, 1988) 4; Johnston, 24.

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⁷Robert Woods, Mysterion (Chicago: Thomas More Press, 1981) 32.

*Bernard McGinn, The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century, vol. 1, The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism (New York: Crossroad, 1994) xix.

⁹Jean Marie Déchanet, "Les mystères du salut: la christologie de S. Bernard," in Saint Bernard Theologien: Actes du Congres de Dijon, 15-19 Septembre 1953, 2nd ed. (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1953) 86.

¹⁰Jean Leclercq, Bernard of Clairvaux and the Cistercian Spirit, trans. Claire Lavoie (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1976) 81.

¹¹John Eudes Bamberger, "The Influence of St. Bernard," Cistercian Studies 25 (1990): 108-

¹²Lignum vitae 1, Engl. trans. Ewert Cousins, Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis (New York: Paulist, 1978) 126.

^{13"}Christ, the One Teacher of All," in What Manner of Man: Sermons on Christ by St. Bonaventure, trans. Zachary Hayes, OFM (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1989) 31-2.

¹⁴See Adm 5 where Francis advocates a similar concept of image.

¹⁵David Flood and Thaddée Matura, The Birth of a Movement: A Study of the First Rule of St. Francis, trans. Paul LaChance and Paul Schwartz (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1975) 45.

¹⁶Zachary Hayes, The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1992) 222.

¹⁷Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Activation of Energy, trans. René Hague (New York: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1971) 279-80.

"Therefore let us desire nothing else let us wish for nothing else let nothing else please us and cause us delight except our Creator and Redeemer and Savior." (RegNB 23:9)

Book Reviews

Arnulf Camps, OFM and Pat McCloskey, OFM. *The Friars Minor In China* (1294-1955): Especially the Years 1925-55. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1995. 318 pages. Hard cover. \$28.

In 1955 there were 3,300,000 Catholics among the 461 million people who populated China. Annual confessions and communions hovered close to the million mark. Two years later relations between the Vatican and the People's Republic of China were severed, and remain strained to this day. The Bamboo Curtain was lowered to lock out the world, and the records of the missionary activities were stored in the archives of the Roman Curia and local religious provincialates.

Forty -six pages outline the Franciscan presence in China from 1294 to 1924. The remaining pages of *The Friars Minor in China* deals with the thirty years immediately preceding the divorce between Rome and Peking in 1957. During those thirty years members of forty-seven religious institutes of men and 6,927 women religious (4,832 Chinese) labored as missionaries among the Chinese people throughout the constant turmoil of civil wars, the Japanese occupation and the eventual victories of the Communist forces.

The Order of Friars Minor first arrived in China in 1294. As early as 1307 a Franciscan, John of Monte Corvino, was archbishop of the largest archdiocese in the world for it comprised the entire Far East. It was short-lived, but again in 1575 the Macao diocese was established, and the bishop had jurisdiction over all of China. Late in the seventeenth century, China was separated from Macao, and during the centuries which followed, hap-hazard ecclesiastical boundaries of jurisdiction were created on Roman drawing boards as zealous missionaries from the West attempted to penetrate the widely scattered territories of China.

In 1948 there were 706 (150 Chinese) friars minor from twenty-three European and American provinces in China, working in twenty-eight sees. Written records, documents, photographs and maps abound in the archives of the Order's General Curia. A mountain of boxes marked SINAE, SGMA, MH and copies of HKA fill yard after yard of shelf space in the Roman Curia in Hong Kong and in Provincial archives of the respective friars who labored in China.

In 1980, the Minister General of the Friars Minor, Fr. John Vaughn, OFM, entrusted a difficult task to Fr. Bernward Willeke, OFM, and Fr. Domenico Gandolfi, OFM. The project was known as the "Twentieth Century Franciscan Missions in China Project." In less than ten years, these two friars managed to produce over forty monographs (1000 pages) on the

mission activities of the Friars Minor in China. These monographs provided the basic contents of *The Friars Minor in China–Especially the Years* 1925-1955.

The Order's China Commission met in Taiwan in 1992. The Commission requested Fr. Pat McCloskey of Cincinnati and Fr. Arnulf Camps of Holland to "edit the monographs of Willeke and Gandolfi" and produce "a unified and popular-level work." They accomplished their task within two years, and have provided the Franciscan world with a compact overview of the history of the friars' missionary evangelization efforts from 1925 to 1955, as well as valuable insights into the 1957 split between Rome and the Patriotic Church of China.

The format is simple by design. The editors focus on a specific ecclesiastical jurisdiction entrusted to friars and provide a brief sketch of (1) the political situation; (2) a thumbnail sketch of the historical leadership, i.e. the friar leaders who were responsible for the development of the mission; (3) the personnel of the mission, i.e. the religious sisters, the lay catechists, the local clergy, and the local ordinaries; (4) the founding of local congregations; and (5) the apostolic works of the missionaries—especially the schools, hospitals, dispensaries, and orphanages which all missions were involved in. The information contained in chapters three to seven follow this format and provide the reader with concise and practical data. The editors provide an almanac of sorts.

Fr. Arnulf Camps, OFM, has been an avid observer of the Church in China for the past twenty years. It is not surprising that he was chosen to assist in the editing of the monographs. Fr. Arnulf is a recognized expert of missiology and the theology of the local church. This work offers honest insights into the minds and hearts of the Chinese bishops, priests, and laity who opted to favor the Autonomous Church of the Chinese Patriotic Association. The ever present and growing conflict between the local clergy and the foreign clergy and religious is clearly presented, and the position of those who opted for the Patriotic Church is obviously viewed in positive terms. Underlying the views in this work is the probability that the Chinese Patriotic Church is a classic example of a truly "local church"—a concept yet to be acknowledged by Rome. This is perhaps the most valuable new contribution and should serve well any future theologian or historian who desires to analyze the Patriotic Church of China from a realistic perspective.

Modest in its purpose, *The Friars Minor in China* is a valuable contribution to the Franciscan Mission world, and has nuances which will be appreciated by China Church-watchers in the years ahead. Just as American Catholics have discovered a way of being both American and Catholic, so too the Chinese sincerely desire to be both Chinese and Catholic. Just as

some Americans claim American Catholics are too Roman, and the Roman Church feels American Catholics are too American—so too the Chinese Church struggles today. The editors have presented the sources of this struggle in simple but honest terms. The question raised by the editors is how the local church and the universal church can be united in the love of Christ who prayed that "all be one."

Chapter 8 summarizes other contributions of the friars minor in China. Among those treated are: (1) The Language School of the Belgian friars in Beijing which became the model for Franciscan language schools in Tokyo, Japan, and Seoul, Korea; and (2) Fr. Gabriele Allegra's translation of the entire Bible into Chinese. The work of Fr. Allegra continued after 1948 at the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Hong Kong. The credit given to Fr. Allegra by the editors is certainly deserved for he was a genuine learned scholar as well as a saintly and apostolic friar. His life makes him a candidate for canonization and his monumental work deserves continued inquiry by scholars.

Flavian Walsh, OFM

André Cirino, OFM and Josef Raischl, eds. *Franciscan Solitude*. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1995. 370 pages + xviii. \$18.00 paper.

The renewal of interest in Franciscan forms of contemplative living has prompted a new and welcome publication from the Franciscan Institute. *Franciscan Solitude* gathers into one place and one language twenty-seven essays from Italian, German, Latin, and English sources. This is a large task of editing and translating, and the editors, André Cirino, OFM, and Josef Raischl have done a fine job of making this tradition accessible to an English-speaking audience.

The book's five chapters help to locate the Franciscan solitude tradition in its context. The pre-Franciscan experience of solitude is traced first, beginning with the New Testament accounts of Jesus in solitary places, moving through the desert hermits of early monasticism, and into the lay and women's eremitical movements in the centuries just before Francis and Clare. "Ideals of the Women's Hermitage Movement" by Edith Pásztor is especially important for casting light on the traditions contemporary with the growth of the Poor Clares.

The work of Benedikt Mertens, OFM, on solitude and hermitages in the life of Francis (Chapter 2) helps to illuminate an aspect of Francis's "evangelical life" that has been gaining increasing attention in the past decade.

The heart of the book is Chapter 3 on the "Rule for Hermitages" with a critical edition of the text and commentaries. These pages make available Kajetan Esser's Latin and German work on the text, along with that of Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap., and Ignatius Brady, OFM.

Many studies would end here. Fortunately this one does not. The editors have chosen (in Chapters 4 and 5) to show the ongoing vitality of the Franciscan tradition of the hermitage from the thirteenth to the twentieth centuries.

Here can be found: Poor Clares' expression of the hermitage tradition; an urban hermitage experience; Third Order Regular women and men interpreting solitude and the contemplative tradition in a Pennsylvania parish or a South Bronx "cabin." Josef and Bernadette Raischl reflect on the meaning of this tradition for a married couple.

Special recognition should be given here to the translators, especially Nancy Celaschi, OSF, who took on the daunting mass of the Italian texts. As a translator myself, I applaud her service and that of Berard Doerger, OFM, as well as that of the editors for their work on the German material. On the matter of the translations, I would suggest one change of term—"houses of recollection" rather than "houses of gathering" for the sixteenth-century Spanish contemplative communities.

André Cirino and Josef Raischl and their collaborators deserve congratulations for bringing to our attention this important and little-known piece of our Franciscan story. I hope they now have the opportunity to enjoy some of the silence and solitude of the hermitage they so clearly love.

William J. Short, OFM

Saint Anthony: Herald of the Good News, a Guide and a Light for Today. Excerpts from the Sermones of Saint Anthony. Trans. Claude M. Jarmak in collaboration with Thomas E. Hunt. Ellicott City, MD: Conventual Franciscan Friars, 1995. 227 pages.

In 1995 the celebration of the 800th anniversary of the birth of St. Anthony occasioned the publication of numerous scholarly and popular works in his honor, and the output of printed tributes continues during 1996 as we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of his being named a doctor of the Church. The book under consideration is unique among the items that have been issued and continue to be issued around the world in that it has earned

the acclaim of both specialists in the life and writings of the Evangelical Doctor and devotees of the Wonder-worker of Padua. The former applaud its readable translation of selected texts from the 1979 critical edition of St. Anthony's *Sermones*, and the latter express appreciation for its deft rendition of the Franciscan tone of the prayers.

Readers should be aware, however, that the *Sermones* are not sermons in the modern sense or homilies actually preached by the saint, but rather a collection of sermon sketches and preachable material assembled for the use of busy and less gifted pastors of souls. The themes of the seventy-seven extant *sermones*—fifty-three for Sundays and twenty-four for feast days—derive from the texts of the liturgy of the day, and each concludes with a prayer.

In 1986 Edizioni Messaggero of Padua published *Praise to You Lord*, Father Jarmak's translation of selected prayers of St. Anthony; and two years later the same publisher released *Seek First His Kingdom*, Jarmak's translation of excerpts from the *Sermones. Saint Anthony, Herald of the Good News* draws heavily but artfully from both these earlier works. Each of its sixty selections contains an excerpt from the *Sermones* and an accompanying Anthonian prayer, all organized under ten basic topics. An appendix, which rearranges the selections according to the liturgical seasons, will prove helpful to those who may wish to use the book for private devotion or to incorporate its contents into public services honoring the saint.

Cyprian J. Lynch, OFM

Among all the other gifts which we have received and continue to receive daily from our benefactor, the Father of mercies, and for which we must express the deepest thanks to our glorious God, our vocation is a great gift.

... The Son of God became for us the Way which our Blessed Father Francis, His true lover and imitator, has shown and taught us by word and example.

(Testament of Clare 1-2)

Contributors

Christopher Bisett, OFM, Conv., is a friar of St. Joseph of Cupertino Province, California. He is engaged in pastoral work at St. Thomas Aquinas Cathedral in Reno, Nevada.

Margaret Carney, OSF, is President of the Sisters of St. Francis, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She is on the summer faculty of The Franciscan Institute and is the author of *The First Franciscan Woman, Clare of Assisi & Her Form of Life* (Franciscan Press, 1993).

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Flavian Walsh, OFM, is Provincial Vicar for Holy Name Province, New York.

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Thursday, August 15-Saturday, August 17 Atlanta, GA

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Some of the things to come in 1996:
"The Franciscan Apostolate," by Julio Micó, OFM Cap. "St. Clare and Nuptial Spirituality," by Jean Leclercq, OSB "Francis of Assisi: Prisms of Theology" by Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap. "The Virgin Mary in the Works of St. Anthony of Padua" by René Laurentin History of the Secular Order by Prospero Rivi, OFM Cap.

Some part selections

Christ Our Joy: Learning to Pray with St. Francis and St. Clare by Michael Hubaut, OFM (Vol. 9: Supplement)

"The Sermones of St. Anthony and Franciscan Theology" by Alfonso Pompei (Vol. 9, No. 3)

"Clare of Assisi's Mysticism of the Poor Crucified" by Ingrid Peterson, OSF (Vol. 9, No. 2)

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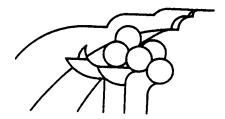
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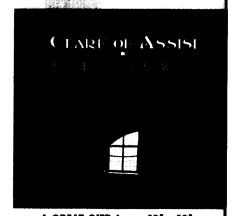
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ne October afternoon in 1993, having finished their duties as tour guides at the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, Italy, Friars Robert Melnick and Joseph Wood decided to walk across the city to view an exhibit on the life of St. Clare. They were amazed to experience the 13th century Clare coming alive through the medium of modern photography and spoken narrative.

Their imaginations fired, the friars began to build upon the idea of transforming photographs into symbolic images through written narrative. Robert and Joseph painstakingly and lovingly photographed Assisi and its surroundings in black and white. They selected thirty-three of the most moving photos, created some marvelous poetic prose, and developed the heart of this newly published work, Clare of Assisi: Love's Reflection in the Window, from Marytown Press.



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lic 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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- Writings of Francis and Clare-Sansone
- •Development of the Franciscan Person-Coughlin
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- Francis and the Christian Tradition-Sansone

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May 5-11, 1996 - Fr. Patrick Donahoe, TOR

Soul's Journey Into God

May 17-25, 1996 - Fr. André Cirino, OFM and Josef Raischl

Bringing Forth Christ:

On St. Bonaventure's Five Feasts of the Child Jesus

December 6-12, 1996 - Fr. André Cirino, OFM

The San Damiano Crucifix

February 21-26, 1997 - Fr. André Cirino, OFM

The Prayer of Francis and Clare

November 7-13, 1997 - Fr. André Cirino, OFM

Admonitions and Scripture

June 1-7, 1997 - Fr. Giles Schinelli, TOR

For futher information on these and other programs, please contact:

Sr. Barbara Zilch, OSF, Director • Sr. Karen Schnoes, OSF, Office Manager Franciscan Spirit and Life Center • 3605 McRoberts Road Pittsburgh, PA 15234-2340 • Phone (412) 881-9207 • FAX (412) 885-7210

A Program of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God Ministries Corporation



The Franciscan Spirit and Life Center exists to promote the Gospel life rooted in Franciscan spirit and values. The Center reflects a commitment to evangelization, reconciliation, and healing, providing programs and services for the Christian community.

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Clare of Assisi: A Medieval and Modern Woman: Clarefest Selected Papers Ed. by Ingrid Peterson, OSF (1996)

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ON THE FRANCISCAN CIRCUIT COMING EVENTS 1996

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. (See detailed ad p. 154.)

Saturday, May 25-Tuesday, May 28

Second Bi-Annual Networking Seminar for Franciscan Renewal/Retreat Centers and Franciscan Spiritual Directors. At Serra Retreat Center, Malibu, CA. Contact: Julie McCole, OSF, St. Clare Renewal Center, 608 B Legion Road, Aston, PA 19014, ph. 610-459-4077.

Tuesday, May 28-Sunday, June 2

Retreat: "Letting Jesus Question Us: An Interactive Retreat around John's Gospel." Michael Crosby, OFM, Cap. Franciscan Renewal Center, 0858 Palatine Hill Road, Portland, OR 97219, ph. 503-636-1590, FAX 503-636-8099.

Friday, June 7-Friday, June 14

Retreat: "Freedom in the Service of God." Eric Kahn, OFM, Ramona Miller, OSF, Margaret Pirkl, OSF, Mira Radatz, OSF, Carol Rennie, OSB, Valerie Usher, OSF, Rosemarie Whitehead, OSF. Contact: Tau Center, 511 Hilbert St., Winona., MN. 55987, ph. 507-454-2993, FAX 507-453-0919.

Sunday, June 16-Friday, June 21

Institute on Nonviolence. Peter Damien Massengill, OFM, Conv., and Tau Center Staff. Tau Center, Winona, MN. (See above for contact information.)

Sunday, June 30-Sunday, July 7

"The Parables of Jesus Today." Nancy Schreck, OSF. At Shalom Retreat Center, 1001 Davis Ave., Dubuque, IA 52001. Contact Mary Therese Kalb, OSF, ph. 319-582-3592.

Sunday, July 7-Saturday, July 13

"Franciscan Evangelical Life." Ramona Miller, OSF. At Mount St. Francis Retreat Center. Contact Marilyn Uhing, OSF, 7665 Assisi Heights, Colorado Springs, CO 80919, ph. 719-598-5486.

Saturday, July 13-Monday, July 15

"Facing the Christ Incarnate." Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation at St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778. Contact: Federation Office, 650 Jackson Street, NE, P.O. Box 29080, Washington, DC 20017, ph. 202-529-2334, FAX 202-529-7016.

Sunday, July 14-Thursday, August 1

"Living in our Franciscan Experience" (Life Program). Cost: \$950 includes retreat, seminars, room and board. At the Fullerton Cenacle, Chicago, IL. Contact Madonna Hoying, SFP, 2473 Banning Road, Cincinnati, OH 45239, ph. 513-522-7516.

Saturday, August 3-Saturday, August 10

"The Gospels as Foundation of Franciscan Life," preached retreat and directed retreat. Ramona Miller, OSF, Margaret Pirkl, OSF, Carol Rennie, OSB, Linda Wieser, OSF, Jude Winkler, OFM, Conv. Tau Center, Winona, MN. (See above for contact information.)

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

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Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel	First Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
2Cel	Second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celan
3Cel	Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
ΑP	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