

T • H • E
C • O • R • D

<i>Editorial</i>	1
<i>The Assisi Experience of "Spirituality of Place"</i> André Cirino, OFM	3
<i>The Assisi Experience: Twenty-five Years of Ministry</i> Roch Niemier, OFM	11
<i>Discovering Francis in Sacred Places</i> Joanne Schatzlein, OSF	18
<i>Pilgrimage, Spirituality of Place, and Clare of Assisi</i> Thomas Barton, OSF	29
<i>Book Reviews</i> Ingrid Peterson, OSF	37
<i>About Our Contributors</i>	42
<i>Biographical Profile</i>	43
<i>Announcements</i>	44
<i>On the Franciscan Circuit</i>	48

THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

Publisher, Anthony M. Carrozzo, OFM
Editor: Elise Saggau, OSF
Production Assistant: Thomas Blow, OFM
Distribution Manager: Noel Riggs

Editorial Board: Marie Beha, OSC, Murray Bodo, OFM, Julian Davies, OFM,
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Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or italicized.
4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:
(1Cor. 13:6).
(RegNB 23:2).
(2Cel 5:8).
(4LAg 2:13).

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

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Editorial

"Pilgrimage . . . was often taken to be sacramental in the Middle Ages; certainly, it often mediated grace to the changing person in a changing world."¹ The notion of pilgrimage, for our own times, has many manifestations. Certainly there are still thousands of persons who embark on "holy journeys" with the intention of seeking help from God and the saints for their troubled lives. While these journeys may lack some of the extremely risky possibilities of medieval pilgrimages, they nevertheless have their own discomforts and even dangers—and thus can be experienced as true penitential practices leading to significant conversion of life.

There are those pilgrims, too, who travel to sacred places, not so much to seek alleviation of their own personal misery, as to enjoy a companionable association with others who share their faith—with saints who have gone before us as holy models and with fellow travellers who understand the sense of blessing we enjoy by actually being together in an acknowledged holy place.

Pilgrimages have had a significant place in the human experience from time immemorial. The human spirit is a questing spirit, a restless spirit, caught continually in the tension-producing paradox of loving this life and wanting to escape from it in some way. We are, as Peter Steele says,

cohaeredes et sodales of our Lord himself, the only human being to have loved this life, his life, our life, perfectly, the only non-alien, and the only one to have been able to be unconditionally committed to a Life not describable in the terms of this world.²

Francis of Assisi understood this perfectly. Can we imagine anyone more appreciative of, more comfortable and more "at home" in this world than Francis? But to us, his followers, his admonitions ring out over the centuries:

As pilgrims and strangers . . . serve the Lord in poverty and humility (Reg B 6:2). Let them [the followers] always be guests [in their dwellings] as pilgrims and strangers (Test 24).

This itinerant lover of the Crucified Lord made pilgrimage a way of life, believing that this was the way spelled out for us by him who called himself the Way.

If our way of life is a pilgrimage, how fortunate we are when we can celebrate that in an explicit pilgrimage experience. For the past twenty-five years this opportunity has been made available in a particularly attractive form in The Assisi Experience or the Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs. This issue of *The Cord* extends congratulations to the Pilgrimage staff and offers our readers a number of reflections on Franciscan pilgrimage written by members of that staff. We thank them and wish them well as they continue this gifted ministry to the Franciscan Family and its associates.

Endnotes

¹ Peter Steele, "A Spirituality of Change," *The Way* (Jan., 1994) 47.

² Steele, 53.

Pilgrimage . . . in the Middle Ages . . . mediated grace to the changing person in a changing world. . . . What must have gripped the imagination of millions was the matching of the heart's quest with the body's venture, both of them under the aegis of heaven's cruising Dove, and on the trail of a footslogging Christ. . . .

Had our Lord needed, like so many millions of his followers, to carry identification papers, 'homo viator' would have appeared in them. It was he who was the primal pilgrim, he the primal quester. His ~~bloodline~~ can be seen in those who embrace the same style.

(Peter Steele, "A Spirituality of Change," *The Way* (Jan. 1994) 47-48.)

The Assisi Experience of "Spirituality of Place"

André Cirino, OFM

"Does geography have anything to do with spirituality?" Keith Warner recently asked. In Franciscan spirituality, he answers, it does.¹ The late Eric Doyle had also addressed the issue when he wrote that in addition to the writings of St. Francis and the early written sources about him and his message, "there remains still one more source: the city of Assisi itself. It is one of the holy places of the earth."² Additionally, Doyle proposed that anyone who wanted to "penetrate the mystery of St. Francis, . . . really ought to visit Assisi."³ For modern Franciscans, the journey to such a holy place means making *pilgrimage*.

In the fall of 1986, a group of pilgrims participating in The Assisi Experience made their way through San Damiano; the presence of thirteen Poor Clares among them made this a historic visit. Moving slowly through the monastery, the group eventually came to the large dormitory of St. Clare, where a cross and fresh flowers always mark the place where the Lady Clare met Sister Death. As the pilgrims entered the room, no explanations were given, no comments were made by the Pilgrimage directors. As the Poor Clares found themselves standing in this sacred place, which up to that moment they had envisioned only in their imaginations, the majority of the sisters were in tears. They had connected with a *sacred place*.

The directors of The Assisi Experience programs have for the last twenty-five years predicated their work on the concept of the spirituality of place. In these programs, *sacred places experienced in the context of pilgrimage* form the foundation of a profound religious experience. What follows is an elucidation of our understanding of a spirituality of place, based upon an examination of Franciscan sources and modern interpretive writers.

Pilgrimage

The concept of *pilgrimage* informs the entire Franciscan story. We know that in Francis's understanding of the Gospel, "Jesus was a traveler, a pilgrim on the way. . . . Francis uses the expression 'follow the footprints of Christ' five times in four writings." Other writers have likewise commented upon the Scriptural picture of Jesus as pilgrim; Kajetan Esser held that this theme was at the heart of Francis and of Franciscan spirituality.⁴ The Gospels themselves (Lk. 2: 41-42; Jn. 2:13; 5:1; 7:10) show us Jesus observing Jewish law concerning pilgrimages.⁵ And we know from various sources that Francis made pilgrimages to Rome and to the Holy Land (1Cel 8; L3S 10; LM 1:6 for Rome; 1Cel 55; LM 9:5-9 for the Holy Land). Francis and the early companions visited the tomb of Peter after they received approval of the primitive Rule, and Brothers Bernard and Giles journeyed to the shrine of St. James at Compostela (1Cel 34; 1Cel 30). St. Clare's mother Ortolana made pilgrimages to Rome and to the Holy Land (Proc 1:4; CL 1); Bishop Guido of Assisi was on pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Michael at Gargano when Francis died (2Cel 220). Pilgrimage is undeniably embedded deeply in our Franciscan roots.

In tracing the history of the phenomenon of pilgrimage, one learns that the idea of a holy journey precedes both Jewish and Christian traditions of pilgrimage. In classical terms, the Latin *peregrinus* denoted "a foreigner without citizenship"; later it referred to "one on a journey to a holy place or shrine."⁶ The earliest attestation of a Christian pilgrim identifies Alexander, bishop of Cappadocia, as going to Jerusalem to "pray and know the holy sites." After 313, the year of civil recognition of Christianity, the Holy Land journey became the source for all other devotional journeys.⁷ In the patristic era, becoming a pilgrim was considered on a par with the monastic state; in the following centuries *peregrinatio* acquired heavy connotations of an "ascetic wandering of the earth in exile, seeking a heavenly homeland."⁸ By the time of Gregory the Great (d. 1085) it had been deepened to include an inner desire and subjective experience, according to Warner.

Benedictinism and Bernard of Clairvaux moved the idea of pilgrimage to a journey one undertook in the heart and a need to keep oneself unentangled from the snares of the world. Irish monks proposed pilgrimage as a penance for sins.⁹ By the eleventh century, the notion of pardon had been attached to visiting a specific shrine. "When Francis exhorted his brothers to live as pilgrims and strangers in this world, he summoned images of Abraham, Jesus, and the holy men and women of the early Chris-

tian tradition."¹⁰ Indeed, the idea of pilgrimage to the Porziuncola in Assisi each August 2 for the feast of The Pardon (*Il Perdono*) is built upon the larger Christian context of pardon for one's sins.

Francis did not conceive of pilgrimage as exclusively an inner journey, but as "an inner journey which corresponded to an outer one."¹¹ In the understanding of the late Joseph Doyno, OFM, pilgrimage is "extroverted mysticism," and mysticism is "introverted pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is prayer of the feet while mysticism is interior footwork."¹² Doris Donnelly, a contemporary Catholic writer, further expands our notion of pilgrimage when she writes:

Most pilgrims who undertake physical pilgrimages understand that it is their own interior incompleteness that leads them to seek contact with holy places and persons to do for them what they cannot do by themselves: to deliver them from fragmentation and effect a glimmer of wholeness which invariably opens unto God.¹³

There are five ways in which pilgrims and tourists differ. The distinctions between tourist and pilgrim are worthy of consideration here.

1. Pilgrims perceive an internal dimension to pilgrimage, while tourists are concerned with the external journey alone.
2. Pilgrims invest themselves; tourists avoid personal commitment.
3. The focus for the pilgrim will be affected by the pilgrimage. Tourists seek to remain untouched on a deep level by their experiences.
4. Both the journey and the arrival are important to the pilgrim, while only the arrival matters for the tourist.
5. Community is formed for pilgrims; community is not a *desideratum* for tourists.¹⁴

It seems that a deeper understanding of *pilgrimage* would serve well the People of God of the post-Vatican II era: our life is a Christian spiritual journey, we are a Pilgrim Church (Lumen Gentium 48).

Sacred Place

Beyond the notion of pilgrimage, a second concept holds our attention in The Assisi Experience. Recalling the 1986 visit of the Poor Clares to the dormitory at San Damiano, we see an instance of immediate apprehension of and encounter with the sacred place they had entered—the place where St. Clare slept, where she had spent many days and nights in convales-

cence from illness, and where she was embraced by Sister Death on 11 August 1253. These events and the place coalesced into a most powerful moment for the Clares; their tears gave witness to the depth of their experience with the spirituality of sacred place.

James Postell, teacher and architect, provides a rich explanation of sacred place: "Sacred has to do with both an inner and an outer presence—a spiritual power, an intersection of Heaven and Earth. Place implies human significance, human action derived from history, belief, ritual, and everyday . . . activity."¹⁵ According to Postell, sacred places are perceived as sacred and serve to mark "important geographic, cultural, political, and religious transitions involving spiritual power. As such, their presence requires an attentive eye and open mind and heart."¹⁶

One of the first lectures presented to pilgrims in The Assisi Experience explains the focus of the pilgrimage—the spirituality of place. In bringing the pilgrims to so many places associated with the lives of St. Francis and St. Clare, the directors invite the pilgrims into an experience of the spirituality of these sacred places. Each pilgrim has a copy of *The Pilgrim's Companion*, a book containing excerpts of Franciscan sources as well as prayers, rituals, Eucharistic celebrations, and historical background on each Franciscan site in Rome, Rieti, Assisi, and LaVerna. Equipped with *The Pilgrim's Companion* and guided by the staff, pilgrims are invited to participate in an unfolding process at each of the sanctuaries. First, there is the historical visit: upon arrival at one of the sanctuaries, a staff member guides the pilgrims on an extensive historical visit of the sacred place. This is followed by the prayer experience: in each sanctuary the pilgrims are called to participate in prayer through celebration of the Eucharist or another ritual, or through a morning or evening prayer service. Thirdly, there is reflection time: personal time for reflection on the meaning of the particular sacred place is provided for the pilgrims. Always, the pilgrims are advised that the staff will be able to do the first two parts of the process with them, but the third part—the reflection—can only be done by the pilgrims themselves. It is precisely in reflection that the spirituality of the sacred place unfolds and is experienced.

Dr. Ewert Cousins writes of what he calls the "mysticism of historical event." During the Middle Ages there was in Western Europe an immense transformation in popular devotion, with a new focus on devotion to the humanity of Christ and the historical events of Christ's life. "Religious sensibility" of the era desired to "imagine and re-enact these events and to imitate Christ in the concrete details of his earthly life." According to Cousins, it was Francis of Assisi, "more than any other saint or spiritual writer," who helped transform religious sensibility this way.¹⁷ This use of imagina-

tion has consequences for a spirituality of place. For each pilgrim, the meaning of a given place is colored and shaped by her/his own personality type, just as it was for Francis. When one looks at the types identified in the Myers-Briggs Preference Indicator and attempts to apply them to St. Francis, it may be conjectured that Francis was probably an ESFP—extrovert, sensate, feeler, perceiver. He "exhibited all the marks of the SP temperament, which is characterized by an attitude of openness and willingness to go in any direction the Spirit calls."¹⁸ As an SP, Francis was especially interested in the events, and therefore in the places, of Jesus' life. "The events surrounding [Jesus'] birth, his hidden life, his baptism, his miracles, his passion, death, and resurrection will hold special interest for the SP."¹⁹

When a modern pilgrim moves into the reflective stage of the process described above, she/he is already situated in a sacred place and is prayerfully pondering historical events that happened there. Cousins considers this type of meditation a form of mysticism, the mysticism of historical event—that is, "a distinct form of contemplative mystical consciousness whereby one attempts to enter into a significant event of the past in order to tap into its spiritual energies."²⁰ The events of Francis's or Clare's lives offer opportunities for each pilgrim to enter into a mystical experience. According to Cousins:

How should one assess this form of meditation? Is it a mere exercise of imagination . . . or is it rooted in deeper levels of the psyche and in the very structure of human existence? I believe that it is rooted in the very historicity of human existence and that it activates that level of the psyche whereby we draw out the spiritual energy from a past event.²¹

There are others whose work supports such a comprehension of reality. Historical events do not occur in a vacuum, they happen in places. Therefore, both event and place are conduits of spiritual energy—even in the post-modern world. A fine example of someone who experienced spirituality of place is Thomas Merton. In an insightful analysis of Merton's spirituality of place, Wayne Simsic maintains that Merton did not want simply to occupy a place, he wanted to be at home in it, dwell in it. "Through a solitude grounded in Christ, he discovered power and energy in the place itself. He found himself pulled toward places not so much out of emotional need or because he knew the place, but because the place knew him."²² According to Simsic, Merton also remained "open to the energy of the earth."²³ This resonates with Franciscan spirituality, especially when one thinks of our Sister, Mother Earth (CantSol).

Simsic identified two interesting elements in Merton's spirituality of place: the telling of stories and the enactment of rituals. Stories seem to trigger the release of the spiritual energies of a place. According to Simsic, Merton found that "people who live close to the land embody their wisdom in stories. Stories preserve their relationship with the land and with the natural order."²⁴ In fact, Merton's own stories connected with Gethsemani Abbey "reveal the sacredness of the place to him and act as a reminder of the spiritual landscape hidden within the physical landscape. . . . Stories knit his soul to the landscape, deepening his appreciation of and familiarity with it."²⁵ In a similar vein, The Assisi Experience makes constant use of stories from the rich storehouse of Franciscan sources. As the pilgrims move from place to place, they are encouraged to read these stories which recall the events of our larger Franciscan story.

Merton's rituals, according to Simsic, "anchored him in landscape" and "rooted him in the ground of Mystery" so that earth and sky stood within a deep primordial relationship with him. "Each gesture and action [of ritual] filled space with meaning . . . and became signs of his relationship with sacred space."²⁶ The Assisi Experience incorporates ritual in visits to the Franciscan sanctuaries. Many times, the ritual itself facilitates the release of the spiritual energy of the place in a way that lectures, homilies, or historical input are unable to accomplish.

A word about the most significant Christian ritual of Eucharist. One of the strongest elements of Christian pilgrimage is "the centrality of the Eucharist as the ritual that commemorates the roots of the community and re-establishes the identity of pilgrims and companions—breakers of bread."²⁷ Over the years in which The Assisi Experience has matured, rituals—especially the ritual of Eucharist—has played an increasingly important role in the experience of the spirituality of place. Celebration of the Eucharist at the various holy sites helps sustain a focus on Jesus Christ, the heart of the pilgrimage. Staff members consciously allude to how the lives of Francis and Clare constantly and unwaveringly point toward and conform to the life of Jesus Christ. Among the sources cited, two stand out: Thomas of Celano describes Francis as "always occupied with Jesus; Jesus he bore in his heart, Jesus in his mouth, Jesus in his ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands, Jesus in the rest of his members" (1Cel 115). Bartholomew of Pisa, near the end of the fourteenth century, wrote the *Book of Conformities*, in which he describes how Francis was conformed to Christ. Assisi pilgrims come to understand that the deepest reason for their journey to Franciscan Italy lies in their ability to see how the lives of Clare and Francis point consistently to Christ. Every pilgrim is on the way to meet Christ and to discover the glory of God in the face of Christ, even the crucified Christ.

Conclusion

In light of all that has been said, if we return once more to the experience of the Poor Clares at San Damiano in 1986, it is clear that the events which occurred in that sacred place, especially the death of St. Clare, were already part of the meditation of these women before they entered the dormitory. The historical events that had happened in that room centuries before effected a release of spiritual energy in each of them, bringing them to a mystical experience. When they found themselves in the sacred room, the place itself released its own energy, which brought them to tears—the external expression of a powerful interior movement. I recognized this movement because at one time I was privileged to accompany the late Carroll Stuhlmuller, CP, on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. At the church called "Dominus Fleuit," "The Lord Wept," (Lk. 19:41), Stuhlmuller gave a lecture on the "Theology of Tears." In that lecture he proposed that in the experience of tears there is a movement of God. The Poor Clares at San Damiano underwent a profound experience of the spirituality of place, encountered a release of San Damiano's own spiritual energy, and entered into a mystical experience discerned by their tears.

Each Assisi Experience eventually comes to an end. The pilgrims pack their luggage (usually a bit heavier than at arrival) for the return home. The biggest item taken home, however, is the collage of memories, which, in the words of Thomas Rossica, weigh nothing, go easily through customs, and can be enjoyed for a long time.²⁸ It is the memories of sacred events, sacred places, and sacred experiences that will enliven the continuing pilgrimage through life toward the final "homeland."

Endnotes

¹ Keith Warner, *Pilgrims and Strangers: The Evangelical Spirituality of the Early Franciscan Friars*, unpublished Master's thesis (Berkeley: Graduate Theological School) 1.

² Eric Doyle, "Select Bibliography on the Life and Message of St. Francis," in *Francis of Assisi Today*, Concilium Religion in the Eighties, ed. C. Duquoc and Casiano Floristán (New York: The Seabury Press) 74.

³ Doyle, "Select Bibliography."

⁴ Warner, 53-54, citing Kajetan Esser, "Studium und Wissenschaft im Geiste des hl. Franziskus von Assisi," in *Wissen und Weisheit* 39 (1976): 28.

⁵ Warner, 54.

⁶ Thomas M. Rossica, CSB, "Towards a Biblical Spirituality of Pilgrimage," *Catholic International* (December, 1994): 569.

⁷ Warner, 13, citing F. Raphael, "Le Pèlerinage, approche sociologique," *Les Pèlerinages de l'antiquité biblique et classique à l'occident médiéval* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geunther, 1973) 11-12.

⁸ Rossica, 569-70.

⁹ Warner, 73.

¹⁰ Warner, 76-77.

¹¹ Warner, 78. Emphasis added.

¹² Warner.

¹³ Joseph Doino, OFM, "Pilgrimage: Reality and Illusion," lecture delivered at the annual Assisi Pilgrimage Staff Meeting, San Antonio, Texas, 2 January 1991.

¹⁴ Doris Donnelly, "Pilgrims and Tourists: Conflicting Metaphors for the Christian Journey to God," *Spirituality Today* 44 (1992): 23.

¹⁵ Donnelly, 21.

¹⁶ James Postell, "Making Sacred Places," letter to Margaret Carney, OSF, 28 July 1995. Emphasis added. The point of reference for the letter was the renovation of the motherhouse chapel of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, Whitehall, Pennsylvania.

¹⁷ Postell. He also cited the view of Mircea Eliade that sacred sites have a single origin and function: they were the meeting places of heaven and earth, the sacred center through which heaven and the underworld are joined.

¹⁸ Ewert C. Cousins, "Franciscan Roots of Ignatian Meditation," in *Ignatian Spirituality in a Secular Age*, ed. George P. Schnier (Toronto: Willrid Laurier University Press, 1984) 56.

¹⁹ Chester P. Michael and Marie C. Norrisey, *Prayer and Temperament* (Richmond: William Bird Press, 1984) 69.

²⁰ Michael and Norrisey, 72.

²¹ Cousins, 60.

²² Cousins, 59-60. Emphasis added.

²³ Wayne Simsic, "Merton's Spirituality of Place," *Review for Religious* (July-August, 1994): 572. Emphasis added.

²⁴ Simsic, 575.

²⁵ Simsic, 573.

²⁶ Simsic, 574, 576.

²⁷ Simsic, 576.

²⁸ Donnelly, 33.

²⁹ Rossica, 573.

*St. Francis wandered through the world like a pilgrim and a stranger. When the Lord had called him to live in accord with the form and pattern of the Holy Gospel, his body found no permanent dwelling place anywhere. . . . He became an itinerant, both in the literal and in the spiritual sense. . . . According to what we know from the early biographers of St. Francis, we may be assured that seldom has a man more deeply felt and more literally lived the words of St. Peter: "Beloved, I exhort you as strangers and pilgrims. . . ." (1Pet. 2:11). St. Francis wanted these ideas—to be so much a part of the life of the Friars Minor that he inserted them into the Rule. (Philotheus Boehner, OFM, ed., "Introduction," *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, Works of Saint Bonaventure SS [St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1956] 12)*

The Assisi Experience: Twenty-five Years of Franciscan Pilgrimage Ministry

Roch Niemier, OFM

Introduction

This article offers a look into the twenty-five years that The Assisi Experience has been in existence. To begin, however, it might be helpful to say a word about the following: 1) the Pilgrimage Focus, 2) the Pilgrimage Ministry, 3) the Spiritual Power of Places, and 4) the Franciscan Dimension.

The Pilgrimage Focus

Each program of The Assisi Experience emphasizes and fosters the pilgrimage dimension. These are not tours. People come on pilgrimage because they wish to have their lives profoundly affected. Pilgrims invest themselves and seek transformation. A pilgrimage leads one into new discoveries and a deepening of faith with an emphasis on experience through study, prayer, and leisure. Various levels of life are touched as one or another facet of the experience might be the key event which affects a participant in a significant way; for example, a ritual, a particular prayer service, a lecture, a meaningful place, some particular music, or simply allowing one's imagination to run wild while sipping a *cappuccino* at a bar. The expression "conversion through travel" takes on meaning, as so many have testified.

The Pilgrimage Ministry

Pilgrimage work is a unique and specialized ministry. Staff members of The Assisi Experience share the privilege of walking with pilgrims on

this journey of discovery as God is revealed in surprising and profound ways. In addition to a professional attitude, humility and gratitude are also needed for balance—humility because of the awe engendered by being so invited into a pilgrim's journey and gratitude, which is the only possible response to such a gift.

The Spiritual Power of Places

The guiding principle of all the programs is the spirituality of Franciscan places. Places have power and awaken spiritual energy that is present because of events linked with these places. In the Franciscan tradition, one only has to mention places like San Damiano, the Porziuncola, the Carceri, Greccio, La Verna—to list only a few. All sorts of events connected with these places rise to the surface of consciousness, and one begins sensing the spiritual energy that flows. It takes little imagination to realize the spiritual power that is awakened when one actually visits these places with accompanying lectures, prayer, music, reflection, reading, Eucharist, and leisure. Thus, as one journeys to each Franciscan place and taps into the spiritual energy present there, the person is invited into an experience of God unique to the pilgrimage itself.

The Franciscan Dimension

Each staff person is a member of the Franciscan family, highly trained in his or her field of expertise. Likewise, each program carries the Franciscan vision and is a Franciscan experience because we journey to places in central Italy particular to the lives of Sts. Francis and Clare. We touch the living spirit of their amazing legacy. Moreover, all the participants are given exposure to the land (Italy) that gave the world these two great saints. In the process, one's "Franciscan" identity becomes clarified as each is drawn more fully into the mystery of the Gospel and Franciscan life.

The Assisi Experience: Twenty-five Years

History

The Assisi Experience was initiated in 1972 by Damien Isabell, OFM, of the Sacred Heart Province, USA. Originally the program invited young friars preparing for final profession in Sacred Heart Province to journey to the places of Francis in Italy and, through prayer and study of the Franciscan sources, to awaken more fully the depth of commitment to which they

were heading. By 1974 the program included friars from other provinces who were directly involved in formation and vocation work or seeking a renewal of Franciscan life. In the next four years groups of Secular Franciscans and Franciscan Sisters came to enjoy this experience. Until 1978 there were only homogeneous groupings, numbering from six to fifteen each. In 1978 the program expanded and became heterogeneous, numbering up to forty or more per group and composed of friars, Franciscan Sisters, and Secular Franciscans. The staff also expanded at that time to four members.

In 1981 Damien Isabell relinquished the directorship of the programs because of a commitment to the missions in Zaire, Africa. Roch Niemier, OFM, became director at that time and holds the position to this day.

Slowly the program offerings developed as did the expansion of the staff. In 1983 the office operated only one program, but today offers anywhere from six to eight programs each year between March and November. There is a staff of twelve men and women. There are three types of annual programs.

- 1) The flagship of the programs is the Franciscan Study Pilgrimage, a 24-28-day program which explores in-depth all the major places of Francis and Clare in Rome, Rieti, Assisi, and La Verna. It is supported by lectures, prayer, rituals, and Eucharist, with ample time for reading, reflection, and leisure.
- 2) The Franciscan Pilgrimage to Assisi is a 12-16-day program which covers the major places, providing solid input, prayer, and Eucharist. A rich Franciscan and spiritual experience, it is designed for those who can get away only for a short time.
- 3) The Franciscan Leadership Pilgrimage is a 10-day program for CEOs, Administrators, Board Members, and Major Superiors of Franciscan institutions. Since the administration of these institutions is no longer the principal responsibility of vowed Franciscan religious, this pilgrimage has a particular appeal to members of the laity who have been called to shoulder the task of directing Franciscan institutions and their mission. Thus the program helps participants clarify the Franciscan vision and values that shape the philosophy of one's institution.

These three programs are offered annually, but other singular offerings have been given over the years. During the Clare Centenary Year (1993-1994) unique pilgrimages were designed to focus on the life and spirituality of Clare, even though significant input on Clare is offered in each of the programs. A retreat experience at La Verna was designed around

Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*. For the year 2000 specialized programs are being prepared to usher in the new millennium, such as a Franciscan Pilgrimage of the Arts, a Franciscan Pilgrimage on Solitude and the Mystics, and a Franciscan Pilgrimage of Light. In 1998 the Franciscan Bernadine Sisters are planning a program to help center on their charism and spirituality with particular attention given to Bernadine of Siena. And for 1997, individualized pilgrimage programs are being planned for 1) the fiftieth anniversary of Bishop Timon-St. Jude High School in Buffalo, New York, 2) the General Superiors of the Franciscan Federation, TOR, during their bi-annual meeting in Assisi, 3) an Academic Franciscan Pilgrimage for students from Quincy University, Quincy, Illinois, and 4) a Franciscan Experience for the Franciscan Ministries Foundation of Aston, Pennsylvania.

Developments

1. Addition of New Places

All Franciscans know of the traditional places of Francis and Clare, and the pilgrimage programs guide participants to and through all of them. Over the years, however, other places have been added that many may not know of or ever visit. For example:

Lago Trasimeno, where Francis spent an entire Lent alone on one of its major islands, the Isola Maggiore. Our ritual of the loaves, in memory of Francis, brings alive his freedom of spirit and life of penance.

La Foresta, the unknown or unvisited sanctuary of the Rieti Valley, now beautifully restored and a center for helping young men reclaim meaning and balance in their lives by bringing balance back into nature.

Bastia, the first place to which Francis took Clare after she left her home on Palm Sunday night, 1212. The local people to this day preserve the memory of St. Clare's presence. The chapel contains the same altar she clung to as relatives tried to force her "back to her senses." Poor Clares who are with us renew their commitment while clinging to the same altar.

Tagliacozzo, the resting place of Thomas of Celano, Francis's first biographer, about one and a half hours east and a little north of Rome. Our Conventual brothers warmly welcome us and provide the setting for our initial exploration into Franciscan sources during the Study Program.

2. Contemplative Days

For the first sixteen or seventeen years the Study Pilgrimage ended with the participants being sent, in groups of four or six, to one of the hermitages founded by St. Francis in central Italy—Montecassale, Celle di Cortona, Santa Maria di Valdisasso in Valleremita, Poggio Bustone, Fonte Colombo, Speco di Narni, Colfano in the Marches, and others. More recently, however, we build contemplative days into the movement of the program, with specific opportunities provided at Poggio Bustone, Lago Trasimeno, and the Carceri.

3. Reaching Beyond the OFM and USA Perimeters

At first the Pilgrimage Programs were designed and intended only for OFM Friars. Within three years that changed. Now they include all members of the Family and beyond: Secular Franciscans, Third Order Regular Communities (more than sixty different congregations to date), Poor Clare Sisters of various Federations and branches, Conventual Friars, Capuchin Friars, Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn, Franciscan Brothers of Peace, Lutheran Franciscans, Anglican Franciscans, Diocesan Clergy, Presbyterians, and persons with no religious affiliation. The fascination for Francis and Clare is simply unmatched.

Early on, The Assisi Experience also began welcoming Franciscans from all over the world. Participants have traveled from forty different countries including: England, Ireland, Italy, the Philippines, Australia, India, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Zambia, South Africa, Jamaica, Peru, Thailand, Brazil, Canada, Japan, Singapore, Kenya, the United States, Belgium, Zaire, Zimbabwe, Bolivia, New Zealand, Jordan, Malawi, St. John / Antigua, Mexico, South Korea, Israel, Guatemala, Austria, Dominica, Pakistan, Lithuania, Uganda, Germany, Malta, Scotland, and Taiwan.

4. Pilgrimage Guidebook

For a number of years staff members produced their own Pilgrimage Guidebook. In 1991 a more permanent edition was put out with a final draft available for the 1995 season. This 450-page book, the *Pilgrim's Companion to Franciscan Places*, is now the mainstay for all participants. It is a collection of Franciscan and Biblical readings, descriptions of places with historical information, texts for Eucharist, rituals and prayer, and music, all of which are used throughout the programs.

Staff

Current staff members include: André Cirino, OFM, (1984), Carolita Greiner, SSSF, (1992), Hedwig Amati OSF, (1988), Joanne Schatzlein, OSF, (1990), Joseph Wood, OFM Conv, (1996), John Wojtowicz, OFM, (1985), Margaret Carney, OSF, (1996), Ramona Miller, OSF, (1985), Robert Hutmacher, OFM, (1995), Roch Niemier, OFM, (1976), Tod Lavery, OFM, (1990), and Thomas Barton, OSF, (1993).

Five of the twelve members have been trained in Franciscan studies at the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, New York. Others have done graduate work in Franciscan studies at the Antonianum in Rome. In addition to each one's professional expertise, there is a commitment to the Franciscan vision of reality, a comfortableness in living in a foreign environment, a working knowledge of Italian, an eagerness to enter into a pilgrimage each time one has to lead, and an ability to work together with a team. Most have also published books or articles dealing with various Franciscan topics.

Staff members have also shared their vision and gifts in other parts of the world, in countries such as India, South Africa, the Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, Ireland, England, Lithuania, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada.

Former staff members are: Aaron Pembleton, OFM, Damien Isabell, OFM, Larry Landini, OFM, Murray Bodo, OFM, Siobhan O'Dwyer, FSP, and Vianney Devlin, OFM. The long standing contributor from this group is Aaron Pembleton who died February 4, 1995. Aaron had been with the programs for twenty-two years and specialized in history and Franciscan saints. He has left his imprint on the staff with his love for history and the Church. His enthusiastic and vibrant spirit continues to be felt in Assisi and Rome as so many of the local people remind us.

Conclusion

The future of The Assisi Experience is dependent on the quality of its staff rooted in a life of faith and prayer, coupled with a dedication to excellence and professionalism. It is also dependent on the spirit of humility and gratitude which each one brings. A high level of administrative and organizational skills has contributed to the development of the program and will be required for its future effectiveness.

In addition to all the above, Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs Inc., the corporate title for The Assisi Experience, has expanded into other areas of

the world: the Holy Land, the California Missions, and Mexico. Drawing upon its twenty-five years of experience, the pilgrimages to these parts of the world include the same quality, dedication, and principles: a highly trained staff, preservation of the pilgrimage character, a focus on the spiritual power of places and maintaining the prominence of the Franciscan dimension.

(For details about up-coming Pilgrimage Programs, see the ad on page 47.)



Sister Clare Ellen, OSC

DISCOVERING FRANCIS IN "SACRED PLACES"

Joanne Schatzlein, OSF

Introduction

During the past twenty-five years men and women of the Franciscan family have made pilgrimages to Assisi for one reason; there remains a deep hunger within them to come to know both Francis and Clare more intimately. Many of them have read numerous biographies about these two saints. Some have studied and researched the lives of Francis and Clare, the history of the Franciscan Order, and the numerous elements of Franciscan spirituality. Others have simply dreamed of opportunities to touch more deeply into the charism. Whatever their background may be, the Pilgrims desire to enter into the "Spirituality of the Places" and come to know Francis and Clare in new and deeper ways.

There are several reasons for this pilgrimage phenomenon. First, scholars and translators have made written source material on Francis and Clare available to us in English.¹ Secondly, many Franciscans attended the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University receiving Masters Degrees in Franciscan Studies and enriching their respective formation programs with Franciscan information unknown to our Brothers and Sisters who made their novitiates prior to 1950. Thirdly, centers for ongoing study continue to emerge. Within my own Congregation, Cardinal Stritch College is creating a Franciscan Center with hopes of providing opportunities to learn more about the life and charism of Francis and Clare.² Finally, during the past fifteen years Franciscans around the world have celebrated two significant events; the eight hundredth anniversary of the birth of Francis in 1981, and in 1993, the eight hundredth anniversary of the birth

of Clare. In conjunction with these events, Franciscan scholars authored numerous books and articles which serve to enlighten us about the richness of our founders and their charism.³

The spiritual lives of the Pilgrims have been enriched, then, with libraries containing Franciscan books and periodicals, formation programs providing intensive introductions to all aspects of the Franciscan charism, and resources available for further study. Yet the hunger within is not satisfied. Thus the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program office receives record numbers of applications each year from people wanting to journey to Assisi in order to be in the sacred place, hoping to meet Francis and Clare in new ways.

Early in the pilgrimage we visit Tagliacozzo, the burial place of Thomas of Celano, a biographer of Francis. In an opening lecture in that place, several traditions through which we come to know Francis and Clare are introduced: written tradition consisting of the many sources alluded to above; pictorial tradition embodied in the frescos and paintings of Francis and Clare which we study on pilgrimage; and oral tradition as handed down through the local people who feel Francis and Clare walked their streets only yesterday.⁴ While these traditions are critically important, the focus of our pilgrimage is to reveal the character of Francis and Clare in the very places central to their lives.⁵ In touching the stones, in imagining and ritualizing the dramas which unfolded for Francis and Clare in these sacred places, these Saints poignantly come alive for us, uniting us with the experiences of the local people.

Four sacred places—Assisi, Poggio Bustone, St. John Lateran in Rome, and LaVerna—make Francis's life become something real and tangible. Francis's personality and temperament emerge through living stones and concrete structures.

Some have speculated that if Francis were assessed using the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory, his temperament would likely be described as extroverted (E), sensate (S), feeling (F) and perceptive (P).⁶ If Francis's personality was indeed extroverted and sensate in his relationship with the world, it seems that the Pilgrims are more likely to discover him in visiting concrete places. If Francis "acted out, dramatically and externally," his inner reality, the Pilgrims remain poised each day to take part in the drama of Francis's life.⁷

Assisi: Chiesa Nuova

Assisi is the place of Francis's birth. In wandering the tiny side streets in Assisi it is not difficult to imagine Francis finding his way through the

town. Piazzas have changed and some houses have been rebuilt, although fragments of the thirteenth century remain, most notably visible in the Rocca Maggiore, the castle standing high above the town. One also sees remains of the wall built to enclose the commune of Assisi and protect it from outside invaders. There are ancient Etruscan wells and a museum where one can visit the ruins of the Roman Forum underneath the Piazza Commune. These places of antiquity remind us that the challenge of the pilgrimage is to pull back continually the various layers built up over time.

One of the first visits we make when we arrive in Assisi is to the Chiesa Nuova, the place many scholars consider to be the site of Francis's birth and the location of his father's cloth shop. In this place we introduce the controversies existing about where his birth actually took place.⁸ Inside the church we see a statue depicting Francis put in chains by his father Pietro. This scene invites us to consider the dysfunctional Bernadone household. In the sanctuary of the Chiesa Nuova, which according to tradition was the location of Francis's bedroom, hangs a depiction of the dream Francis had of armaments he would eventually acquire (1Cel 15). To the left of the sanctuary, steps descend along a thirteenth-century street where Pietro's cloth shop may have existed. Can we suggest to the Pilgrims that Francis actually lived here? Not with the many unanswered controversies. However, in this sacred place we do meet Francis in concrete and tangible ways.

We experience the relationship between Francis's birthplace and the heart of the Assisi commune. We understand why his father Pietro would have wanted his cloth shop closer to the central piazza where folks would have easy access to his merchandise. Surrounded by stores of all kinds, we can imagine Francis engaged in his father's business.

We also see Francis in a neighborhood and realize the closeness of Bernard of Quintavalle's house, allowing us to speculate about their early childhood relationship. We can imagine his escapades down narrow side streets, en route to school or church, or up to the Rocca in his teenage years to participate in its destruction. We come to know Francis who was son of Pica and Pietro and brother to Angelo, and we wonder about the events that might have taken place inside the Bernadone household as we listen to the local townsfolk of today prepare *pranzo*, discipline their children, and chat with fellow Assisians during siesta time.

Finally, in the *piazza* in front of the Chiesa Nuova, as we gaze upon the sculpture depicting Lady Pica holding the chains from which she freed Francis, and Pietro holding the clothes Francis returned to him, we sense the pathos in their hearts. They parented a son who had seemingly lost his mind in God, responding to the confusing dreams which took place in his

own bedroom. Pica and Pietro hold hands in a gesture which communicates powerfully to us that Francis was first and foremost a family member whose actions affected his parents, his brother, and his neighbors. We sense the confusion, the pain, and the disappointment. But we know that God's plans don't always make sense in this world. We touch the chains in Pica's hands and pray that, like Francis, we also may be freed to pursue God's call, no matter what it may cost us to do so.

Poggio Bustone

It took years for Francis to understand God's call. Most often the call came when he was in seclusion. Francis was captured and isolated as a prisoner of war. Being ill, Francis returned home after Pietro paid his ransom. But Francis would never be the same. He sought out places of prayer and solitude. His mind wandered. When not in the cloth shop Francis would be in caves, abandoned churches, on top of Mt. Subasio, or in the swamp of the Umbrian Valley. It was in these places that God directed Francis to rebuild churches, abandon his present way of life, and call God alone his Father.

Having dramatically stripped himself of his past life, Francis left the comforts of home and began to attract followers. He remained quite unsure of what he was to do and questioned whether in his sinfulness he could carry out God's will.

His search for solitude led him outside of the Umbrian Valley into several sacred places in the Rieti Valley. Our Pilgrims visit four of these hermitages: Poggio Bustone, Greccio, Fonte Columbo, and La Foresta. Beginning in Poggio Bustone, they are introduced to new aspects of Francis's character.

Situated high in the mountains which surround the Rieti Valley, the town of Poggio Bustone clings to the side of a ridge. Oral tradition handed down through the local people recalls Francis's visits and how he would greet the people by saying "Buon giorno, buona gente. . . . Good day, good people!"⁹ The name of the town means "a hilltop (*poggio*) enclosure (*bustone*)."⁹ It is not uncommon to see hikers using a *bastone* or walking stick to aid them in their journey through this hilly region. During Francis's frequent travels to the "enclosures" in this valley, one assumes that he too made use of a *bastone*.

The *bastone* was an object familiar to Francis (2Cel 7, L3S 7). Thomas of Celano and the Legend of the Three Companions tell of a story in Francis's youth where the *bastone*, a symbol of leadership, was passed on to him. It was an honor to receive the *bastone* but it also carried a responsibility. The

leader paid for the feasts!¹⁰ The biographies speak of Francis falling behind his companions and entering into a mysterious and mystical experience which will change his life. His friends note his dream-like gaze and wonder if he has fallen in love with a "lady." Francis responds "You are right: I was thinking of wooing the noblest, richest, and most beautiful bride ever seen" (L3S 7). I've wondered if Francis perhaps recalled these various moments of his youth in his frequent visits to Poggio Bustone.

This hermitage presents a physical challenge. To climb above the Convento of San Giacomo to the cave where Francis stayed is difficult. There is no easy path and steps are steep over boulders and tree roots. It can seem unending. But the view of the mountains is breathtaking. On a sunny day the lush green of the forests, the blue of the sky, and the warmth of the sun lift one's spirit immediately to God. But in an instant fog can roll in and hide it all. Storm clouds can suddenly appear with rolling thunder and pouring rain, drenching the unprepared pilgrim. It is this uncertainty and this rugged environment that reveal Francis to us in concrete and tangible ways.

Francis came to this place with eight young men who were attracted to his new and outrageous embrace of the Gospel life. His way of life did not as yet have papal approval. Knowing the need for such approval, Francis hesitated. Realizing his own sinfulness and unworthiness, he became concerned about the future for his followers. Perhaps he was uncomfortable with this new *bastone* being passed on to him. Whatever the case may be, after praying for God's mercy, "little by little a certain unspeakable joy and very great sweetness began to flood his innermost heart" (1Cel 26).

On the mountain of Poggio Bustone the Pilgrims learn that Francis had doubts, that the road which he trod was full of difficulties. One moment the direction seemed clear and in another instant it was as if future dreams were hidden in a dense fog. The Franciscan way of life includes moments of mystical communion with God and at the same time the harsh realities of life on this earth. Murray Bodo describes this dual experience in, *Francis, the Journey and the Dream*:

All his life [Francis] had known the tension between the vertical ascent to God and the horizontal journey of love reaching out to all on earth. He knew that without prayer, true love was impossible, and he learned from living that without love prayer became self-centered and barren.¹¹

When one puts sticks of wood together vertically and horizontally, one can see the symbolic form of a cross. The Pilgrims discover the implications of the Cross in the visit to Poggio Bustone. The radical realization is

that the Cross was Francis's *bastone*; the Cross was his guide on the journey. As followers of Francis, this *bastone* passes on to us! Believing in everyone's unconditional salvation through Jesus Christ who died for us on this Cross, we have a deeper appreciation for Francis's greeting given to the people living in the town of Poggio Bustone, "Good day, good people!"

Rome: St. John Lateran

Any visitor to Rome is amazed at the congestion of people, the erratic and constant traffic, the frenzied pace and the ever-present risks of being robbed (as has happened to Pilgrims and staff alike!). In the midst of this Roman chaos, one could rightly ask how the Pilgrims ever come to know Francis in this city. It is certainly one of the most physically and emotionally exhausting places. Yet a visit to Rome remains an essential way of discovering Francis, a man of the Church. Through visits to significant places in Rome, his spirituality begins to unfold.

The center of Catholic Rome is the Basilica of St. Peter. The centers of tourist Rome are the Spanish steps, the Trevi Fountain, and the Piazza Navona. None of these sites would have existed as they are in Francis's time. Francis did visit a small shrine which is now St. Peter's Basilica, where the apostle Peter was believed to be buried. It was here that Francis exchanged clothing with that of a poor person (L3S 10). And Francis may well have wandered past the ruins of the Roman Forum and the Coliseum. But our most fruitful search for Francis leads us to an open field of grass directly in front of the Church of St. John Lateran. I call it the "field of dreams," "for here the audience hall once stood where Francis visited Pope Innocent III to receive affirmation of his rule (1Cel 32-33, L3S 46-53). In the course of this visit both Francis and Innocent sensed in dreams what God was leading Francis to do (1Cel 32-33, 2Cel 16-17, LM 3:9-10).

The building where Francis had his papal audience is gone. All that remains is a mosaic apse from that ancient papal dining room. Today the Church of St. John Lateran stands in magnificent splendor at one end of the grassy field. Innocent dreamed of Francis holding up a much simpler church than what the Pilgrims see today. On the opposite side of this "field of dreams" stands a statue of Francis with his companions. This statue was commissioned by Mussolini and placed opposite the Church of St. John Lateran in 1926 in an attempt to make peace with Italy. And so between an imposing church and a statue built in an attitude of reconciliation, the Pilgrims meet Francis of Assisi.

For many of the Pilgrims this grassy field between church and statue is

a most fitting place. On the one side, Franciscan religious men and women are intimately connected with belief in and loyalty to the Church of Rome. On the other side, an ongoing search for reconciliation exists, particularly for women who long to have their voices heard by Church authority. In Rome Francis somehow models for us the importance of being authorized for mission in the name of Jesus Christ, while at the same time making choices faithful to that mission. In his dreams, Francis understood that ultimately it is God who authorizes and that if the motive for mission is truly Gospel-directed, Church authority cannot challenge. Indeed, Francis experienced Innocent's approval of his way of life despite the fact that Francis stood in total contradiction to the clerical lifestyle of his time.

Putting all these pieces of the story together brings many of the Pilgrims to the point of reconciliation with the Church. As they stand behind the statue of Francis and see his arms raised as if holding up St. John Lateran, they also see themselves in the companions depicted with Francis—some forging straight ahead with Francis, seemingly undaunted; others with faces covered in fear; and still others looking back, wondering if they ever should have left Assisi.

But our final gaze in this place returns to the grassy field between the Church and the statue. For here it was that over eight hundred years ago Francis stood filled with dreams and visions, audacious enough to test them in the papal chambers and simple enough not to recognize the challenges to the Church represented in his utter poverty. His dream was to live the Gospel life. How could that dream not come true?

La Verna

Throughout the years following papal approval of his way of life, Francis visited many towns throughout Italy. We know he also traveled to Spain and to the Middle East in hopes of enduring martyrdom, always eager to identify himself ever more closely with Jesus Christ. He continued to preach penance but would find himself more and more frequenting hermitages in order to remove himself from the dissatisfaction growing among his brothers. Those within the Order questioned the wisdom of his harsh lifestyle, disagreeing with the severity of the Rule and the itinerant lifestyle. Those outside the Order considered him a saint and made provisions for his needs.

One person who came to know and love Francis was Count Orlando of Chiusi.¹² Orlando knew of Francis's love for solitude and his preference for places of incredible beauty. In the Tuscan Valley, well north of Assisi, Orlando owned a mountain which was treacherous and isolated. He knew

Francis would appreciate its solitude. And so on May 8, 1213, "Orlando, Count of Chiusi . . . freely gave, donated, and conceded without any obligation to Friar Francis and his companions and Friars both present and future . . . the mountain of La Verna, today sacred, so that the aforesaid Father Francis and his Friars might be able to dwell there." This donation was confirmed in writing by Orlando's sons on July 9, 1274.¹³

This place contrasts sharply with the Rieti and Umbrian valleys. There is a roughness and wildness about it. The weather here is totally unpredictable. Pilgrims have arrived at this site in the cold frost of a winter-like morning and by noon the sun has burned off the chill causing one to work up a sweat while climbing the mountain. On some days the view stretches over the hills to the sea beyond, and on other days the fog is so pervasive that one can barely see three feet ahead. Journeying up the mountain of La Verna on such a day is dangerous, with precipices and crevices unknown to the uncertain climber. In fact, a story is told of a group of ten novices who lived in the friary at La Verna who went up the mountain during the night to pray. Only nine returned in the morning. One had fallen to his death.

It is in this rough and rugged place that we encounter Francis in the midst of some of his most difficult battles. Each boulder with its craggy edges must have typified the Brotherhood whose attitudes had become an obstacle to living Francis's ideals. Francis's life continued to hold mystery and uncertainty. Though viewed as a saint, Francis felt far from worthy, and the mists of Poggio Bustone followed him to La Verna.

The movie, *Francesco*, directed by Liliana Cavani, portrays this time of Francis's life most poignantly. Having argued to retain key values in his Rule of 1223, much to the chagrin of articulate and educated friars, Francis goes to La Verna, ill, depressed, and feeling very much alone. Leo is his only companion. On top of this mountain Francis cries out to God, "Parlami. Parlami. Speak to me."¹⁴ In this most turbulent time of Francis's life, God indeed has compassion for Francis and speaks, blazing the Stigmata into Francis's hands, feet, and side. Bonaventure vividly describes this event as divine wisdom being "ploughed into the flesh of Francis" (LM 13:10) by the "finger of the living God" (LM 13:5). Through his suffering and continued faith in God, Francis has been transformed into an *Alter Christus*.¹⁵

The climb up the Penna of La Verna is a long and arduous one. The Pilgrims pause often to catch their breath, to reflect on the ruggedness of this place. They have to choose constantly which path to take, and after an hour of climbing they often wonder if they will ever arrive at the pinnacle. In this climb they understand the difficulty of Francis's journey. Francis is no longer the gentle saint depicted in the movie *Brother Sun and Sister*

*Moon.*¹⁶ Rather, Francis is a human being; sometimes a warrior and at other times depressed. One feels close to this man who came to La Verna in utter distress. In that bonding with Francis, the Pilgrims realize with awe that in the midst of all these difficulties, Francis still finds time to see his brother Leo's distress. Francis writes in his own hand a Blessing for Leo, piercing a red Tau through the middle of Leo's name, compassionately reminding Leo that he too has been saved by the Cross.

Leaving the mountain, the journey back into the world is filled with mixed emotions. There is the desire to remain immersed in the challenge of the place and a reluctance to leave. Yet there is a need to "go home" to the world awaiting the Pilgrims' return. After Francis's peak encounter with God, which has been likened to Richard of St. Victor's third moment of perfect burning love, Francis immersed himself into the world for two more years, moving into the fourth and most perfect moment of burning love.¹⁷ Francis needed to communicate God's compassion to his world which was also distressed and in need of God's love. During those two years Francis would write some of his most loving thoughts to Leo (Letter to Brother Leo, Blessing for Brother Leo), summarize his vision of his life in the Testament, and compose his most famous work, the Canticle of Brother Sun. The Pilgrims are directed to do the same; to leave the mountain and to blaze the Cross of Christ compassionately through a world awaiting their return.

Assisi: The Tomb of Francis

Toward the end of the pilgrimage, the Pilgrims visit one of the most sacred places on the Franciscan journey. Hidden beneath two floors of the Basilica of St. Francis, which houses art treasures from the medieval period, lies the tomb of St. Francis. As one enters into this sacred place there is a quiet, subdued presence, and a mixed fragrance of lilies and beeswax candles which decorate the altar, above which lies Francis's coffin. The quiet is broken by the footsteps of the thousands of people who visit this tomb each day. Some come in silent awe; others come out of curiosity, chatting their questions to their neighbor. Some whisper the story of Francis to their children whose eyes are open wide, seeing a burial place and perhaps encountering the mystery of death for the first time. Others just move around the tomb, blessing themselves or perhaps kneeling on the step of the altar, directing their prayers in silent petition to the Saint. If the din gets too loud, a friar promptly "shushes" the crowd and silence returns.

Some of the Pilgrims find the tomb, with its constant movement of people, distracting and difficult to pray in. Those who visit the tomb dur-

ing the Feast of St. Francis on October 4 find it nearly impossible to get to the tomb unless they are willing to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in the massive crowds, inching their way a mini-step at a time toward the entrance to the tomb.

In the five years I have journeyed with Pilgrims to Assisi, I have spent countless hours at the tomb of St. Francis and find it to be one of my favorite places. Perhaps I am feeling the privilege of living in a time during which the Tomb is visible to the public. Perhaps it is because it is one of the few sacred places of Francis which remains open during siesta time. But the main reason I sit in this sacred place so often is that I find myself identifying with all the different persons visiting the tomb, realizing that I have been one with them in their curiosity, their awe, and their prayerful petitions.

I explain to the Pilgrims an imaginative prayer which I do at the tomb. I ask them to place themselves inside the coffin with Francis and listen to the prayers and comments of the people as they process past, kneel, and venerate the spot. How would they, the Pilgrims, respond to each supplication? How does Francis in his everlasting glory intercede for these countless faithful?

If the Pilgrims are lucky enough to find some quiet time at the tomb, for what do they pray? Do they consider that Francis is buried here surrounded by his Brothers Leo, Rufino, Angelo, and Masseo, with Lady Jacoba at the entrance to the tomb? Is it not fitting that in this most holy resting place of Francis, we too should be surrounded by the people of God who are our companions on life's journey?

Death continues to be a mystery and we ask many questions. Answers seem few. But perhaps like Francis, we come to embrace the final moment of life as "Sister Death" when we visit his tomb. Perhaps the gift of being in this place is to understand that with the reality of death, we can begin to associate the peaceful hush, the fragrance of lilies and beeswax, and the assurance that even in death we are never alone. In the tomb we encounter Francis the Saint, who, after a lifetime of walking through Assisi's streets and journeying to distant places like Rome, Poggio Bustone, and La Verna, is now at rest, making intercession to God for us and wishing us "pace e bene" one last time. Here at the tomb the Pilgrims perhaps know that the hunger that has brought them on pilgrimage is finally satisfied through union with Jesus Christ who has transcended death and will bring each of us, like Francis, into the joy of everlasting life.

Written in the Rieti and Umbrian Valleys, June 1996

¹ The most significant text is the *English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis*, ed. Marion A. Habig (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

² Cardinal Stritch College, sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, is expanding a Franciscan library, establishing a series of lectures on Franciscan topics, increasing the number of Franciscan courses available for credit, preparing a program of faculty development in Franciscanism, and establishing a Franciscan Chair. Cardinal Stritch College is located in Milwaukee, WI.

³ Books produced during this time include *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. Regis Armstrong and Ignatius Brady (New York: Paulist Press, 1981); Margaret Carney, *The First Franciscan Woman: Clare of Assisi and Her Form of Life* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1993); Ingrid Peterson, *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1993); *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, trans. Regis Armstrong (New York: Paulist Press, 1988).

⁴ In 1992 I visited Isola Maggiore on Lago Trasimeno. While walking along a path which borders the lake, I met an older woman named Irene, seated on the step of a small chapel which shelters an ancient wooden statue of Francis. The chapel commemorates the spot where, according to tradition, Francis arrived for his retreat on the island. Irene brings her lace crocheting and sits at this spot for one reason; she wants to share this Franciscan story with all who pass by. She leads people to a stone and points out the places where Francis's arms, hands, and knees left their imprint upon his arrival in 1211/12. She is fully convinced of the truth of this tradition.

Another woman who shares oral tradition with the Pilgrims is Vittorina Penacchi Sbaraglini. She lives in Bernard of Quintavalle's house and retells the moments of Francis's visit there. She is not a practicing Catholic and does not intend to speak authoritatively. She simply shares what has been handed down to her through her family history.

⁵ Eric Doyle, *St. Francis and the Song of Brotherhood* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981) 33.

⁶ Chester P. Michael and Marie C. Norrissey, *Prayer and Temperament: Different Prayer Forms for Different Personality Types* (Charlottesville: The Open Door, Inc., 1984) 69-78.

⁷ Sister Frances Theresa, *Living the Incarnation: Praying with Francis and Clare of Assisi* (London: Darton, Longman, Todd, 1993) 10.

⁸ Three sites are referred to in the scholarship of Omer Engelbert and Arnaldo Fortini: 1) the San Nicolo site, located behind the Post Office in the Piazza Comune; 2) the Francescuccio site, the "stable" located on the ground floor of Francis's nephew Piccardo's home where, like Jesus, Francis would have been born; 3) the Chiesa Nuova site which several medieval documents designate as the location of Pietro's cloth shop. For further discussion see: Omer Engelbert, *Saint Francis of Assisi* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1965) 407-419, and Arnaldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, trans. Helen Moak (New York: Crossroads, 1992) 88-9, footnote q.

⁹ For many years the phrase, "Buon giorno, buona gente," could be seen inscribed on a white stone in a wall of the city. It was just recently removed during renovations.

¹⁰ Fortini, 129-37.

¹¹ Murray Bodo, *Francis, the Journey and the Dream* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1988) 46-7.

¹² Fortini, 547.

¹³ Translated from Saturnino Mencherini, *Codice Diplomatico della Verna e delle SS. Stimata* (Firenze: Tipografia Gualandi, 1924) 38-39.

¹⁴ *Francesco*, 155 min. Karol Film/Royal Film co-production. Munich, 1989. Also reproduced by Istituto Luce/Italnoleggio, Rome, 1989 for RAI T.V.

¹⁵ The mysticism of this historical event is presented in an article by Ilia Delio, entitled "Toward a New Theology of Franciscan Contemplation," *The Cord* 46 (May-June, 1996):136-9.

¹⁶ *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*, 16mm, 120 min. Paramount Pictures Corp. Hollywood, CA: 1972.

¹⁷ This moment in Francis's life was powerfully described in a talk entitled "The Transitus: From Cherubim to Seraphim," given by Wayne Hellman in 1986 at the Franciscan Gathering in Tampa, FL. See also Richard of St. Victor, "The Four Degrees of Passionate Burning Love," in *Selected Writings on Contemplation*, trans. Clare Kirchberger (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1957).

Pilgrimage, Spirituality of Place, and Clare of Assisi

Thomas Barton, OSF

As religious were called to renew and refound in the spirit and charism of the beginnings of their institutes, very many gifts have been presented to us in the years following Vatican II. One of these significant gifts has been the development of the concept of pilgrimage to the Franciscan holy places, especially those which specifically relate to the persons of Francis and Clare of Assisi. In this writing I will focus on the person of Chiara di Favaron, known to us as Clare of Assisi, and those places especially associated with her life.

Pilgrimage has been described in many ways. The definition which best explains pilgrimage to me is "extroverted mysticism, prayer of the feet."¹ In his initial letter to prospective pilgrims, Roch Niemier, OFM, Director of the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program, explains that pilgrimage is "a moving out of one's known environment into another and at the same time a moving out of one's ordinary mind set into another in order to 'know the mind of Christ Jesus.'" I would add—"and to participate in the experiences of Francis and Clare."

Pilgrimages take on many forms and can be done for any number of reasons. "We do not choose to make a place sacred. A sacred place chooses us."² In fact, an ordinary trip may in time take on the dimensions of a pilgrimage because of what the person experiences. Any place may have something to offer, may teach us its own spirituality.

Early in my own life I became aware of the spirituality of a place through my own parish church. The family home was a mere thousand feet from the Church of Our Lady of Angels, Brooklyn, New York. Every evening I had a wonderful experience. At precisely 8:45 the bells of this enormous house of worship would begin to strike the melody, "Holy God We Praise

Thy Name." My mother would turn down the volume of our black and white TV so we could listen and join the other parishioners in prayer. In later years, whenever I passed that church, I always recalled the bell tune and offered a prayer. (What I regret is that the bells are no longer rung at this hour due to the desire of a changing neighborhood not to be disturbed!)

Clare was a person to whom places spoke. She knew the spirituality of places. In this writing I will concentrate on her experience of pilgrimage and the spirituality of those places which she visited and in which she lived.

The Parental Home

Clare grew up in an Assisi caught in the turmoil of change. The family itself was prominent. They could boast of having seven knights. The family home was located on the Piazza San Rufino, the new cathedral of the city. We know that the family was a devout one. Clare's mother, Ortolana, was herself a pilgrim to both the Holy Land and to Rome. Such pilgrimages were almost always dangerous activities at that time. If we ponder briefly the spirituality of a home, thoughts of love and familial devotion might surface. If we ponder the type of home that Clare created at San Damiano, we might conclude that she learned much of what she fostered there from her own home near San Rufino. In the historical sources we see glimpses of the love that Clare learned in her family home. This is evident in the correspondence she had with her sister, Agnes, who was sent to the Benedictine Monastery of Monticelli in Florence to preside and lead it into the Poor Clare family.³ It is evident, also, when Clare sent a child to her mother, Ortolana, to be healed. Ortolana was then a nun herself at San Damiano. This shows Clare's trust and faith in her mother's love.⁴

Today it is no longer possible to indicate clearly and precisely where the family home was. We have only a general idea. I was pleased to see groups of children playing soccer in the Piazza. Certainly a place where children play in safety is a place of spirituality. Also, I happily noticed that the child retrieving the soccer ball was a boy with Downe's syndrome. Would Clare not be pleased at that?

The Cathedral of San Rufino

Palm Sunday, 1212, was a day that Clare would never forget. It was a defining moment of her life. The entire course of that day set her on a pilgrimage, praying with Francis: "May we be able to follow in the footprints of Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ."⁵

While Clare attended the Palm Sunday Mass with her family, her body was in Assisi, but her heart was in Jerusalem. Clare entered into the gospel story in such an affective way that she literally followed the Lord as he entered Jerusalem. Having placed the fabric of her life before him in this very place, Clare's life changed forever. In a mystical way Clare began to cry out: "Draw me after you; we will run in the fragrance of your perfumes, O Heavenly spouse! I will run and not tire" (4 LAg 31-32).

The historical sources tell us that, after her family's exile in Perugia, Clare's behavior demonstrated a very penitential character. On that Palm Sunday Bishop Guido went to where Clare was sitting in the cathedral and gave her the palm branch. What did that mean? Was he consenting to her abandonment of her familial home? The palm branch is a sign of martyrdom. Was Clare being given the sign to begin her life anew?

Pilgrims today find much to quiet their spirits in the Church of San Rufino. It is a quiet place where one may escape the bustle of the two great basilicas. It is not heavily adorned so that art seekers do not darken its doorways. San Rufino is a place for prayer. On pilgrimage the participants are offered the chance to renew their baptism at the same font where both Clare and Francis were brought to the faith.

The Portiuncola

Having abandoned her place in medieval society, as well as her family and friends, power and prestige, Clare fled into the cold dark night. How she managed to pass through the locked gates remains a question. Spiritually, almost literally, she became "nudus nudum sequi Christi" (naked following the naked Christ).⁶ Friars came with torches to meet and escort Clare to the Portiuncola. There she was betrothed to Christ and vowed to follow his footprints for the rest of her life. There Clare cut her hair as her definitive act of embracing the penitential life, and there she donned the Franciscan habit of penance.⁷

Those privileged to visited the Portiuncola today do not see what Clare saw. At that time the vicinity was a marshy and treacherous swampland. In addition to mosquitoes and scorpions there might also have been outlaws, mercenary soldiers, and outcast lepers. Any one of these might have endangered her journey from the city.

Francis had received the Portiuncola on loan from the Benedictines. The Portiuncola, the Little Portion, was a place Francis prized above all others. He wanted only the most devout and observant of his brothers to live there. Above all else the poverty of the place was to be the model for all other houses. Clare met Francis at the Portiuncola and relinquished her

place in feudal society forever. Having received the habit she truly had no earthly place to call her own. Today the Portiuncola has been preserved by constructing the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels over it. Pilgrims celebrate the Eucharist inside the Portiuncola chapel itself. Once, at communion time, I went to the rear of the chapel to try to contain others who literally rushed the place in order to receive communion. Persistently one elderly woman pulled at my habit sleeve whispering something. One of the friars translated for me that she had received communion there every first Friday for the past sixty-three years! The woman was elated that she could receive there that very day, too.

The Portiuncola remains one of my personal favorite places for prayer. One late Sunday afternoon I walked there from Assisi for some time in solitude. Sitting on the floor by the open side door, I witnessed quiet groups of pilgrims, religious and laity alike, approaching to pray. One group particularly impressed me. They prayed the entire rosary and the angelus and listened to some few words of exhortation from their priest while kneeling on the hard rock floor. They had just come from Eastern Europe, perhaps Poland. Today the Portiuncola remains as it was for Clare, a place of refuge and spiritual quest.

San Paolo Delle Abbadesse

Having been received at the Portiuncola, Clare was brought by Francis to the Benedictine Monastery of San Paolo at Bastia. Francis believed that Clare would be safe there, it being a place of sanctuary. Certainly Clare was protected when the family discovered her location. Francis left Clare in Bastia; neither he nor any other Franciscan remained with her there. Pilgrims ask the question all the time. Where was he? We only know he was not there. In the confrontation with her family she was all alone. Only by exposing her shorn head and grasping the altar was she saved from being carted back to Assisi and the family home. At Bastia we see Clare face concretely the beginnings of the cost of discipleship. At Bastia she learned the sting of separation and the beginning of her following of the Rule. It was most likely at Bastia with the Benedictines that Clare learned to pray the Liturgy of the Hours.

Hedy Amati, OSF, a member of the Franciscan Pilgrimage Staff, believes that Clare experienced in this house of noble ladies the full effect of what it meant to be a poor, dowerless woman with neither power nor influence. Yet, for Clare, it was a place of safety and refuge.⁸

All that remains of San Paolo today is the church which now serves as a mortuary chapel. The rest of the monastery is gone. In its place is a ceme-

tery. In recent years the Friars Minor from St. Mary of the Angels have begun to maintain the church. In June 1994 we celebrated the Eucharist there. I observed that two Poor Clare sisters were gazing intently at the altar. I invited them to come and touch the altar; they sprang from their seats and held onto the altar for the remainder of the liturgy.

In the place where Clare suffered persecution from her family, where she learned to pray the office, experiencing the beginnings of the cost of discipleship, people can once again come to pray for their departed. The Poor Clares today rejoice that this place, so significant to their own history and Clare's journey, is now open to pilgrims.

While Clare remained at San Paolo, and briefly at Sant' Angelo, Francis was rebuilding San Damiano to receive Clare and Agnes. It was at San Damiano that Clare began the interiorization of her pilgrimage, having left Assisi for good.

San Damiano

San Damiano is a place where people have come to worship from time immemorial.⁹ It was a place of worship even before the Christian era. In the crypt of the present church one can find the area where cultic worship, predating even Roman worship, took place.¹⁰ Francis stumbled into San Damiano and experienced there the Lord claiming him and giving him the task: "Repair my house." Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap., dates Francis's prayer for enlightenment from this place: "Most High Glorious God enlighten the darkness of my heart."¹¹ Can we wonder then that Francis brought Clare to this place? For forty-two years Clare gazed upon the Christ of the crucifix that spoke to Francis and developed her own style of Franciscan life, following his footsteps.

Within San Damiano there are four places of importance for Clare's spiritual journey. They are the refectory, the choir and church, the oratory, and the dormitory. In her lifetime there were as many as fifty nuns, from all classes of society, living the primitive Franciscan life in this place.

Refectory

Clare's place in the refectory is today marked always by a bowl of flowers. This place is closest to the kitchen. We have been told that Clare preferred to serve rather than to be served. Here in the refectory we see evidence of one who could have had others at her beck and call but instead chose to serve the entire community with her own hands.

As we peer into the refectory as pilgrims, we can reflect together on Franciscan service in society today. How do we serve others? How do we serve those with whom we live? Do we allow others to serve us?

Choir and Church

Daily life at San Damiano was punctuated by the praying of the liturgy of the hours and the celebration of the Eucharist. Seven times daily, every day, the nuns gathered to praise God through psalms and canticles. In time the nuns began to remember events only in respect to the liturgical calendar. Joseph Doyno, OFM, of happy memory, was fond of claiming that they had "Christified their memories."

While only a portion of the choir exists today, we see there the hard choir stalls and plain walls. We come to appreciate the difficulty of the road chosen by these servants of God.

On the altar side of the choir is the church. We expect that Clare and the sisters knelt there in prayer before the crucified Christ for hours each day, year after year. There Clare prayed and taught her sisters to "gaze upon Him, consider Him, contemplate Him, as you desire to imitate Him" (2LAg 20). This was her life-plan, which she laid out before the community. In her own Testament, she reminds the sisters that it was Francis who focused her attention on the Lord.

Today San Damiano is a thriving place. Besides a resident community of friars, there are always novices from various Italian provinces. San Damiano serves as an oasis of prayer and formation.

Remarkably, any time you visit San Damiano you can find groups praying silently or celebrating Mass. Youth groups walk in pilgrimage, often from great distances, with their friar or sister leaders. They invariably find their way to the church which Francis repaired and in which Clare resided for over four decades. It is a place of welcome.

Oratory

Accessible only by a staircase directly above the choir is an oratory. This area is a tiny place for personal prayer. In a private visit there in October 1992, Salvator Butler, OFM, indicated a niche in which he claimed the Blessed Sacrament had been reserved. We know that Clare spent the night hours here in vigil. Here she wrestled with the Evil One¹² and overcame. There is in the floor a rectangular hole which overlooks the altar. On those days when she was unable to go down to Mass or to pray with the community, Clare would attend listening from above.

Dormitory

On cold nights the infirm lady Clare would pass through the dormitory and cover the nuns against the cold. When it was time to awaken for the first hour of prayer, Clare often went among them to call them gently. She spent days propped up on her bed making altar cloths and altar linens for those churches which Francis had repaired or otherwise cleaned. It was in this dormitory where the pope visited Clare and where she finally received his approval of her Rule. It was here that the nuns heard her speaking to her soul shortly before her death: "Go without anxiety for you have a good escort for your journey."¹³

When we gather for prayer in the dormitory we do so in the context of a healing ritual. Using readings from Clare's writings and a song, the leader gifts us with a few words of reflection and then invites all to come to be anointed with blessed oil. Slowly the pilgrims come, some eager, others hesitant, some with tears. The dormitory at San Damiano is a place of passage from illness to health, from death to life. It is a portal to eternity.

San Giorgio—Basilica of St. Clare

After Clare's death her remains were taken to Assisi for protection. She was buried in the Church of San Giorgio, where Francis, too, had originally been buried. In time her basilica was built there and San Giorgio was incorporated into the new structure. The Poor Ladies eventually moved to this place, where they remain to this day. They continue to live the enclosed life, devoted to contemplation and liturgical prayer, gazing upon Christ.

The San Damiano crucifix has only recently been revealed to the world. Having been taken from San Damiano, it remained in the enclosure at the Basilica of St. Clare until Pope Pius XII himself requested, in 1957, that it be made available for public veneration.

Today the chapel of the cross is visited by thousands of people. Pilgrims pray, tourists take pictures. At the altar rail Francis's prayer for enlightenment is available in several languages.

Assisi Streets

A ritual is celebrated by the pilgrims in the streets of Assisi, commemorating Clare's departure from her home on Palm Sunday night. Following a large Christ candle, the pilgrims listen to the questions which Clare might

have been thinking as she left her parental home and fled to the Portiuncola. A few Assisians stop, stare, and walk on. One young woman, somewhat fluent in English, seems startled at what she is hearing. She hovers at the back of the group and eventually engages a friar in conversation. He happily explains in Italian what we are doing. Her eyes fill with tears and she expresses happy gratitude. She has come that very day to Assisi to reflect upon her desire to enter religious life. After the prayer ends she cries "grazie, grazie, grazie!" So it seems the streets of Assisi are once again an instrument of God's grace, as they have been for centuries from the time of Francis and Clare.

Endnotes

¹ Joseph Doino, OFM, class notes taken during his course "Franciscan Spirituality," St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, Spring, 1989.

² Ramona Miller, OSF, at a planning meeting for the staff of the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program, Chicago, January, 1995.

³ *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993) 109.

⁴ *Early Documents*, 135.

⁵ *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, ed. and trans. Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap. and Ignatius C. Brady, OFM (New York: Paulist Press, 1982) 61.

⁶ This quotation is attributed to St. Jerome. It is taken from *The Pilgrim's Companion to Franciscan Places*, the section devoted to Santa Maria Maggiore, Assisi, published by The Assisi Experience, The Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

⁷ See Luigi Padovese, OFM Cap., "Clare's Tonsure: Act of Consecration or Sign of Penance," in *Greyfriars Review*, 6/1 (1992): 67.

⁸ Ramona Miller, OSF, *In the Footsteps of Saint Clare* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1993) 38.

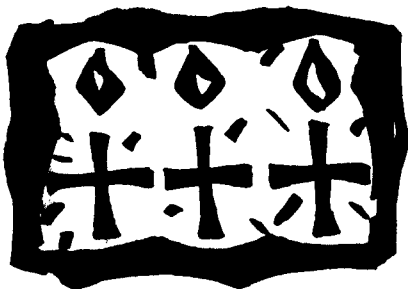
⁹ *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, 103.

¹⁰ See Marino Bigaroni, OFM, "San Damiano—Assisi: The First Church of St. Francis," *Franciscan Studies*, 25 (1987): 45.

¹¹ *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, 296.

¹² *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, 207.

¹³ *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, 296.



Francis X. Miles, OFM

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Book Reviews

At Last a Third Order Women's History, and not One, but Two!!

Pazzelli, Raphaele, TOR. *Franciscan Sisters: Outlines of History and Spirituality*. Trans., Aidan Mullaney, TOR. Steubenville: Franciscan University Press, 1993. 229pp. ISBN 0-940535-52-1. \$15.00.

Péano, Pierre, OFM. *Bearing Christ to the People: Franciscan Sisters, their Origins, History and Persisting Characteristics*. Trans., Aidan Mullaney, TOR. Steubenville: Franciscan University Press, 1996. 92 pp. ISBN 0-9490535-89-0. \$6.95.

Every Third Order congregation deserves to have access to the most recent scholarship tracing its development and place in the Franciscan movement. The first attempt to describe the history and spirituality of the Third Order by Raffaele Pazzelli, TOR, was translated and published as *Saint Francis and the Third Order* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982), elucidating the Biblical and historical meaning of Third Order members as brothers and sisters of penance. In doing this, Pazzelli helped Third Order members to identify their unique role in the Franciscan tradition.

When the Italian version of Pazzelli's book was completed, he began writing *Le Suore Franciscane* (Padovi: Edizione Messaggero, 1989), which accounted for the development of Third Order women's congregations. This work, translated by Aidan Mullaney, TOR, was published in English as *Franciscan Sisters: Outlines of History and Spirituality*. Pazzelli defines the subject of his book, "Franciscan sisters," as the followers of the Rule of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis, a Rule which has its own history and development. He reserves the term "Franciscan nuns" to describe those religious who follow the Rule of the Third Order Regular and are contemplative with a strict cloister and those Second Order women who follow the rule for the Order of Poor Sisters of St. Clare and who are contemplative with a strict cloister.

Pazzelli traces his history of the Third Order from the *Memoriale Propositi*, the Tertiary Rule in the time of Saint Francis. One branch of these

tertiaries, known as the "Order of Penitents," followed the gospel direction of Francis while pursuing their occupations and living in the world in family households. Another branch of early tertiary began to live together in communities. In 1289, both branches, called the Third Order Secular and the Third Order Regular, promised to follow the Rule of Pope Nicholas IV, which reformulated the *Memoriale*. In 1521, Pope Leo X promulgated a new Rule specifically for those living in community and under religious vows. Following the 1917 revised Code of Canon Law, Pope Pius XI in 1927 published yet another new Rule for all active Franciscan congregations of women and men. After years of effort by Third Order Regular women and men, a new Rule was written more accurately reflecting the Franciscan charism; it was approved by Pope Paul John II in 1982. The new Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) was approved by Paul VI in 1980.

Franciscan Sisters reviews events and attitudes in the church and civil society throughout the centuries that either helped or hindered the development of congregations of active Franciscan sisters. It also traces Church legislation on the cloister which has affected sisters in the active life, such as the dramatic ecclesial policy in 1563 when the Council of Trent decreed that the monastic cloister be imposed on all contemplative and active religious women. Because there are four hundred congregations of Franciscan sisters today, Pazzelli notes the impossibility of providing a particular history for them all. Nonetheless, he identifies common elements in the history and spirituality of Third Order congregations of women.

This book is impossible to read hurriedly because of the complexity of historical events affecting the growth of active religious congregations in the last eight hundred years. It is peppered with names and stories that are becoming increasingly familiar as Third Order members discover their role in Franciscan history: Elizabeth of Hungary (1207-1231), Clare of Montefalco (1268-1308), and Angelina of Montegiove (1357-1435). Pazzelli's original work concluded with a survey of typical nineteenth-century Italian congregations. Chapter XI of Mullaney's translation substitutes the stories of influential congregations that were founded in the United States. Mullaney also adds footnotes from English language publications.

One of the difficulties facing the working group who drafted the 1982 Rule was the absence of any historical overview to help identify core values of the Third Order Regular. Pierre Péano's 1983 address, "Sisters of the Franciscan Order: Origins, History, and Persisting Values," was an early attempt to supply a brief history of the development of Third Order women. An elaboration of Péano's seminal work, newly translated by Aidan Mullaney, is a companion piece to Pazzelli's book on Third Order women.

Péano's work does not attempt to be as detailed and, for that reason,

may make the story of Third Order women more accessible to some readers. Péano grounds his history in the experience of Francis and the penitential movements and then traces the roots of the female Third Order Regular. He clusters the history of the Third Order around key events—*Supra Montem*, the Tertiary Rule of 1521, the impact of the imposition of cloister by the Council of Trent, the effect of the Protestant Reformation, and the Rule of 1927. Péano illustrates the corresponding growth of male Third Order congregations while showing the influence of the Friars Minor of the Observance. He brings their history to the time of his writing in 1983 and includes the effect of the Second Vatican Council, the development of the Rule, and the establishment of the international office for Franciscan Congregations.

Pazzelli draws from Péano's work, expanding and updating it. Consequently, Pazzelli's work is more extensive than Péano's initial attempt to present a concise history of Third Order women. Pazzelli has compiled another manuscript on the *Third Order Regular of Saint Francis through the Centuries*, which details the history and development of Third Order men's congregations. However, that Italian work is currently under revision and has not yet been published.

Although the Third Order was founded for lay persons, a common life and the profession of religious vows was added, and a communal Third Order life quickly evolved. Despite enormous diffusion, opposition, and conflict, Third Order congregations persisted, scattered, and burst forth in the nineteenth century. Contemporary United States congregations of Franciscan sisters and brothers are rooted in this history. Becoming knowledgeable about the recent ground-breaking work of Péano and Pazzelli is an important step for Third Order women who seek to know their identity and roots. The translation work of Aidan Mullaney and the commitment of Franciscan University Press to the Third Order bring these recent histories to the English-speaking world.

These two books mark a historic moment for Third Order women, whose ministerial contributions have been enormous, but who have not been commensurately represented in Franciscan publications. Each house should have these two books in its library. Third Order members and associates will profit from taking chapters of these books as topics for group discussion or individual study in order to claim ownership of their contribution to Franciscan history.

Ingrid Peterson, OSF

In Anticipation of Clare's 900th Birthday

Fonck, Benet, OFM. *To Cling with All Her Heart to Him: the Spirituality of St. Clare of Assisi*. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1996. 78pp. ISBN 081990-0971-8. \$10.95

Frances Teresa, OSC. *Living the Incarnation: Praying with Francis and Clare of Assisi*. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1996. 136pp. ISBN 081990-0934-4. \$12.95

Just when it seemed as if the eighth centenary of Clare of Assisi exhausted the contemporary imagination, Franciscan Press has added two valuable books to its publications on Clare: *Living the Incarnation: Praying with Francis and Clare of Assisi* by Sister Frances Teresa, OSC, and *To Cling with All Her Heart to Him; the Spirituality of St. Clare of Assisi* by Benet Fonck, OFM.

Living the Incarnation, originally published by Darton, Longman and Todd in London, is now co-published by Franciscan Press. Since Sister Frances Teresa translated Bartoli's *Clare of Assisi* into English (1993) and wrote this reflective book on how Francis and Clare lived the gospel call, she has also completed *The Living Mirror* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), which was reviewed as a "refreshing book" by Elise Saggau, OSF, in *The Cord* 45.4 (1995). Both books explore themes of contrition, conversion, and communion, for Sister Frances Teresa views these as the three modes of prayer of Francis and Clare. She writes *Living the Incarnation* for contemporary persons who search for spirituality in times of stress and who believe in a world equally accessible for all. She describes these three themes as ways in which, again and again, we attempt to look upon Christ who is the way.

Clare's Letters to Agnes of Prague are often interpreted as letters of spiritual direction to Agnes. The conversational quality of Sister Frances Teresa's writing also merits description as spiritual direction, in which she turns to the Franciscan tradition for spiritual models of encouragement. In the midst of conflict, Francis and Clare provide outlines of goodness into which we can step with our lives and feel at home. This book is not as much about the events chronicled in the lives of Francis and Clare as it is about the universal experience represented through those human events. Sister Frances Teresa writes: "In general, the spirituality of Francis and Clare was so loving and encouraging and full of light because it was rooted in the great deeds of God" (36). Such passages make this is a generous, hope-filled book.

Yet Sister Frances Teresa does not ignore the difficulties faced by Francis and Clare as they maneuvered their way through pain they did not seek. She contends that, for both Francis and Clare, the path to supernatural life

was through death. Francis, the extrovert, had to face his inner demons, and Clare, the introvert, was confronted with the external conflicts of leaving her home and establishing herself at San Damiano. Such examples illustrate how conversion engages the parts of ourselves that we would rather not face. This book is all the subtitle claims in portraying Francis and Clare as companions for prayer. What is remarkable is the gentle way that this becomes a book about ourselves and the way that we, too, are incarnations of God. If Francis and Clare are not readily accessible guides for us in prayer, then Sister Frances Teresa can easily take their places. It is her spiritual authority that makes this book triumph.

While Sister Frances Teresa's book is dense and thought-provoking, Benet Fonck's *To Cling with All Her Heart to Him* is simple, but equally reflective. Fonck chooses six phrases from Clare's Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague as launching points for his practical meditations on the six topics of discernment—conversion, contemplation, evangelical poverty, union with others, remembrance, and evangelization.

Fonck's meditations slip easily from the events and words of Clare into our own lives. For example, in discussing contemplation, Fonck explains: "Contemplation has three goals: to make evident and to make happen a) the knowing of God intimately, b) self-knowledge in God's presence, and c) life with God before the world" (30). Each of these points is examined as it applies to the reader's life in God. The entire book is filled with succinct, memorable points from which to explore the meaning of Clare's words and her union with God.

This book is self-contained in that it demands little knowledge of the Franciscan story or medieval life. It is complete with text, context, and practical guidelines to take personal assessment of the way each of us tries to cling to God. Added charm comes from the line drawings of Sister Kay Frances Berger, OSF, which illustrate Fonck's text about Clare. Her drawings are both delicate and elegant, a perfect match to Fonck's inviting tone. The illustrations provide a supporting visual text for response and reflection. In *To Cling with All her Heart to Him*, Clare is portrayed through word and image as a faithful representative of the graciousness of God. The question asked is: are we? The response can profitably be explored by individuals or faith-sharing communities.

Ingrid Peterson, OSF

About our Contributors

Thomas Barton, OSF, a Franciscan Brother of Brooklyn, is a graduate of The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University. He has served on the staff of The Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs and has most recently been engaged in HIV ministry in New York City. He has now returned to India to resume his teaching of Franciscan Studies.

André Cirino, OFM, a contemporary Franciscan itinerant, is a member of the Immaculate Conception province, New York. André lectures on a variety of Franciscan topics and is actively involved in developing Franciscan retreats. He annually collaborates with the Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs in conducting The Assisi Experience in Italy. He has recently co-authored with Josef Raischl *Franciscan Solitude*, St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1995.

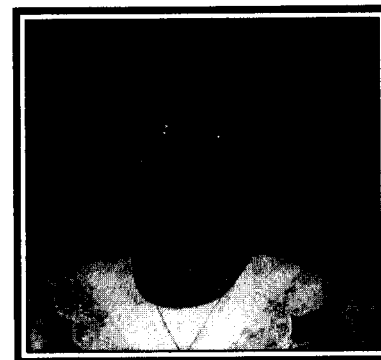
Roch Niemier, OFM, is a member of the Assumption province, Pulaski, Wisconsin. He was, for a number of years a formation director for his province and a retreat director in the United States and in various other parts of the world. Roch made The Assisi Experience in 1974 and has been connected with the Pilgrimage Programs ever since. He took over as director of the programs in 1981, a position he still holds today.

Ingrid Peterson, OSF, a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Rochester, Minnesota, is on the staff of the Franciscan Sabbaticals Program at Tau Center in Winona. She is author of *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study*, Quincy, IL: The Franciscan Press, 1993, and editor of *Clare of Assisi: A Medieval and Modern Woman: Clarefest Selected Papers*, Clare Centenary Series, VIII, St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1996.

Joanne Schatzlein, OSF, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi of Penance and Charity, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She holds a nursing degree from Marquette University and a Master's in Franciscan Studies from The Franciscan Institute. She presently serves in congregational administration and is a staff member of The Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs. She wrote "Illness and Fasting in the Life of Clare of Assisi," in *Clare of Assisi: A Medieval and Modern Woman: Clarefest Selected Papers*, Clare Centenary Series, VIII, St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1996, and co-authored with Daniel P. Sulmasy, OFM, MD, "The Diagnosis of St. Francis: Evidence for Leprosy."

A Biographical Profile of

Patricia Hutchison, OSF
Sisters of St. Francis
Philadelphia, Aston, PA



Patricia Hutchison, OSF, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Aston, PA. She did her undergraduate study at Neumann College in Aston and earned a Master of Education in Administration and Supervision from Loyola College in Baltimore. From 1970-1987 she worked in elementary education in schools in Delaware, Maryland, and South Carolina. She then served a term on the general council of her congregation, assisting in developing plans for strengthening the ongoing life and mission of the community. From 1993-1995, Pat served as Administrative Assistant for the Franciscan Federation in Washington, DC, performing the innumerable tasks that are demanded in a national office.

Today, Pat serves as Director of Sponsorship for the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Aston. In this role she oversees the sponsorship ministry of the congregation.

Over the years, Pat has contributed significantly to the Franciscan direction of her congregation and of United States Franciscans. She co-authored congregational material on the evangelical life, specifically reflection/discussion guides on *Our Relationship as Sisters and Brothers* and *Our Manner of Working and Preaching*. In addition she participated in the North American *Build with Living Stones* program in Aston in 1987 and as follow-up did a piece on *Inculturation* for the congregation. She helped develop a guide for Franciscan Values in Education for use in the schools in which her sisters minister.

Pat holds an intense belief that the Franciscan world view and the theology and spirituality on which it is based have the power to transform the twenty-first century into a more just, peaceful, and loving society.

She very generously brings her many talents and fine insights to the advisory board of *The Cord*.

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For more information please contact:



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A pilgrimage of faith and discovery, as together with companion pilgrims you explore the FIFTH GOSPEL of Jesus Christ—the Places of the Holy Land. As custodians, Franciscans bring centuries of spirit and dedication to these holy places.

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ON THE FRANCISCAN CIRCUIT COMING EVENTS 1997

Sunday, February 2-Friday, February 7

Franciscan Gathering XVII. "To Desire One Thing Alone." Edward Coughlin, OFM, and Margaret Guider, OSF. Franciscan Center, Tampa. Contact: Jo Marie Streva, OSF, Franciscan Center, 3010 Perry Ave., Tampa, FL 33603, ph. 813-229-2695, FAX 813-228-0748.

Thursday, February 20-Sunday, February 23

The Enkindling of Love. Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap. Contact: Tau Center, 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987, ph. 507-454-2993, FAX 507-453-0910.

Friday, February 21-Wednesday, February 26

Crucifix of San Damiano. André Cirino, OFM. Contact: Sr. Barbara Zilch, OSF, Spirit and Life Center, 3605 McRoberts Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234-2340, ph. 412-881-9207, FAX 412-885-7210.

Friday, March 14-Sunday, March 16

"Facing the Christ Incarnate." Franciscan Federation at St. Joseph Renewal Center, Tiffin, OH. Contact: Franciscan Federation, PO Box 29080, Washington, DC 20017, ph. 202-529-2334, FAX 202-529-7016.

Friday, March 21-Saturday, March 22

Meeting Myself in Christ. William Short, OFM. The Franciscan Center, 2500 Grant Blvd., Syracuse, NY 13208, ph. 315-425-0103. Contact: Franciscan Experience, Franciscan Center, 2500 Grant Blvd., Syracuse, NY 13208-1713, ph. 315-425-0103.

Saturday, March 22-Sunday, March 30

Holy Week Retreat. Tau sabbatical staff. Contact: Tau Center (see above).

Monday, March 31-Saturday, April 7

Retreat on the Cross of San Damiano. André Cirino, OFM. \$175. New Beginnings Retreat Center, near Amarillo, TX. Contact: Celine Thames, OSF, 4305 54th St., Lubbock, TX 79413-4617, ph. 806-793-9859.

Thursday, April 4-Saturday, April 6

"Facing the Christ Incarnate." Franciscan Federation at Avila Retreat Center, Durham, NC. Contact: Franciscan Federation, Washington, DC (see above).

Thursday, April 17-Monday, April 21

The Franciscan Challenge. Contemporary Franciscan spirituality, art, music, and dance. Contact: Tau Center (see above).

Friday, May 2 - Saturday, May 10

A Franciscan Retreat. André Cirino, OFM and Josef Raischl. Franciscan Center, Andover, MA (see ad p. 46).

Writings of Saint Francis

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

Writings of Saint Clare

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

Early Franciscan Sources

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