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THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.
Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or italicized.
4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:
(1Cor. 13:6).
(RegNB 23:2).
(2Cel 5:8).
(4LAg 2:13).

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The Cord, 47.2 (1997)

Editorial

Spirituality, in Christian terms, is not about some other kind of life but about the *whole of human life at depth*.¹

Perhaps one of the most persistent temptations in the human situation is the belief that we must "escape" our present reality in order to arrive at a more fulfilled or integral way of being. The longing to be truly different from the way we are constitutes a core restlessness in our experience. This phenomenon may simply reflect our recognition that we need to be saved.

In our Franciscan tradition we speak much about conversion—the radical turn-about that sets us "on our ear," so to speak, and truly changes us. We look to Francis's experience with the lepers as a paradigm for this radical turning. After Francis had lived among the lepers and expressed compassion for them, he was able to say: "That which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body" (Test 3). There is no intimation that Francis had been elevated to some other *kind* of life, but that his way of looking at *this* life had changed. Carlo Martini, in describing the conversion of St. Paul, says: "Paul was led to a completely new outlook on everything. . . . Now he judges his life so very differently that the exclamation which best sums up his inner response to Jesus' words on the Damascus road is this: I have got everything wrong! What I thought was of value was *not*. . . ." ²

Conversion then cannot be construed as salvation from one kind of being and insertion into another kind of being. The reality of the Incarnation proclaims quite the contrary. Conversion is rather a fundamental shift in attitude. While remaining firmly rooted in our human being, we look at the world and our situation with new eyes, hear with new ears, discover and humbly accept that we have been wrong, and allow the Spirit to set us right.

It is precisely in our human condition that the Spirit of God is at work and at play (cf. RegB 10:8). We are called to a deeper reflection on the giftedness of our life seen as the playing field of this marvelous Spirit.

In his article, "The Spirit of St. Francis Today," Joseph Chinnici, OFM, points out to us some of the mystical possibilities in our very ordinary daily existence and demythologizes our idealization of Francis. Ramona

Miller, OSF, helps us understand the value of theological reflection as a tool in discovering the revelatory nature of our own experiences. Eric Kahn, OFM, challenges us to go "Deeper Than We Tend to Gaze" in probing our own blessed reality. Gloria Newlin Shriver, SFO, reflects with joy and amazement on how the Spirit has been at work and at play in her life for over seventy years. And Margaret Slowick, OSF, offers us another look at our brother, St. Francis, through the eyes of a poet who wrote a little-known early biography only now becoming available in English.

Each of these articles reminds us of how God has entered into our human situation in a definitive, irrevocable, and amazing way and insists on being one of us.

Endnotes

¹Philip Sheldrake, SJ, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method* (London: SPCK, 1995) 60.

²Cardinal Carlo M. Martini, *The Testimony of St. Paul*, as quoted in *Living Faith* (St. Louis, MO: Creative Communications for the Parish, Jan., 1997) 25.



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The Cord, 47.2 (1997)

The Spirit of St. Francis Today

Joseph Chinnici, OFM

The Death of a Saint

On December 31, 1926, Teilhard de Chardin wrote to his good friend Auguste Valensin:

Oh, how much I would have liked to have met the St. Ignatius or St. Francis of Assisi that our age so sadly needs. What a wonderful dream, to follow a man of God along a free, fresh road, impelled by the full force of the religious life-sap *of his own time*. Very often I pray to God that I may be the ashes from which will arise, for other generations, the great blaze that our own looks for in vain.¹

I hope we might see, in our own times, Teilhard's dream begin to be fulfilled: not only may we be the ashes but also the glowing embers which will enflame the world. There is, however, a passage we must first undergo.

Today, in many of our circles, people speak of the rebirth of myth: feminists often turn to the wellsprings of myth to rekindle a sense of dignity; we find men, following the lead of John Bradshaw and Robert Bly, beating drums, howling around campfires; others in our world are profoundly influenced by the vision of Joseph Campbell to seek the "hero with a thousand faces" within themselves. The popular psychologist and humanist prophet, Rollo May, who first pointed to the underlying anxiety of our times, has most recently analyzed the Western literary tradition—Odysseus, Hector, Dante and Beatrice, Faust, and the liberated women of the playwright Ibsen—to challenge us to internalize a pattern, a myth, which can give meaning to our often scattered lives. The myth we live by, May says,

gives a sense of personal identity; makes people into community; supports moral action; imbibes, as a constant force, the mystery of creation.² In many secular circles, the myth of the family—united, faithful, freed—springs from the deep soil within our hearts. For much of the world, as a single Chinese man stands before a long line of tanks in Tienamen square, the myth of freedom materializes before our very eyes. Lastly, for us as religious, the axe has been laid to the roots of the liberal tree: reweave religious life, we are told; rediscover your myth.

There can be little doubt but that the myth of Francis of Assisi has been one of the most constant and liberating forces of the religious and secular world for over six hundred years: birdbaths and forests, rivers and mountains, wolves and rabbits, brothers and sisters, the earth and the heavens—how can we not turn to this creative explosion of God's own spirit to nourish and guide our own journeys? Which one of us does not have his or her own story: How I met Francis and how my life changed.

Yet, there is also a great shadow which lies over our Franciscan family; it is, as the Scriptures would have it, "a shadow of death," and we have not liberated ourselves through the life of the resurrected Christ. That shadow hiding our own risen life belongs to Francis of Assisi.

We think of him as joyful, spontaneous, ever youthful. Who of us can be that way, at least as he was? We forget his long bouts with melancholy, despair, the anger that boils over in his writings with the frequent use of images evoking an internal cauldron of conflicting emotions. (Cf. the Admonitions.)

We think of him as poor, the Poverello, and his poverty is suffocating, embedding us who must touch money in a web of guilt. We forget that his most faithful companion, Clare, saw no difficulty in using money; or that the Poverello, for all practical purposes, owned a mountain, frequented the most beautiful places in all of Italy, set up regular rounds of begging tours, possessed the riches of a culture which gave his own poverty symbolic meaning, and gave eternal life to those who supported him. He prayed in forgotten places, which, incidentally, were probably owned by his own father. We picture him as young and try to imitate his youthfulness. Yet, it is when he is mature, racked by divorces from his own brothers and aging body and spirit that the greatest images of life come forth from his soul. We think of him as powerless. How is this possible for one who had access to the local bishop, was well known in Rome, and consorted with influential friends?

In all these ways, and in so many others, the shadow cast by the myth of Francis of Assisi is long and deep, even entering into the very marrow of our own souls. I believe it is for us a "shadow of death," one probably of

our own creation. We have, in short, denied Francis his humanity; we have not allowed him to die; we have not given ourselves the freedom to dismiss him, in order that we ourselves might be alive, enflamed not with imitation but with Spirit. We must allow to happen to Francis what in fact happened to the Son of God himself: he died and was buried. And only after the disciples had allowed Jesus to disappoint them, shatter their dreams, become a full human being with them, only then did they become fully aware, fully liberated; only then was the ember of the Spirit enkindled.³

We find the key to the acceptance of Francis's death, the granting to him of his own humanity, imperfections, limitations, vices, voiced right after his *transitus*. The following story occurs in the life of Giles of Assisi. Giles is grieving over Francis's death, and the text narrates:

It was hard for him to resign himself to the certainty that the Poverello would never again come to visit his sons in their hermitages. Then suddenly one night in his sleep, Giles saw the saint himself. Immediately he exclaimed: "Oh, Father, I wish I could have a talk with you." Looking down at him with the kindly severity of saints, Francis replied: "If you want to talk with me, watch yourself."

The message is clear: do not grieve, nor wish for bygone times, nor seek counsel from a dead man. Instead, "stude tibi," "watch yourself." The truth is the same as that expressed in Celano's life. When he was dying, St. Francis made clear to his brothers and sisters the uniqueness of each person's response to Christ.

He covered the wound in his right side with his left hand, lest it be seen [as if to preserve the seal of his own unique response]. And he said to his brothers: "I have done what was mine to do; may Christ teach you what you are to do" (2Cel 214).

The words of Teilhard de Chardin come back:

Oh, how much I would have liked to have met the St. Ignatius or St. Francis of Assisi that our age so sadly needs. What a wonderful dream—to follow a man of God along a free, fresh road, impelled by the full force or the religious life-sap of *his own time*.

That person, my dear friends, for whom Teilhard longed, is each one of us, unique and together. But to allow that one to live, we must allow Francis of Assisi to die. What then will we discover?

The Rebirth of the Mystic

We know that Francis was totally captured by the love of God, that is, the "all powerful, all good Lord's" first love for us. The mere thought of this One "who is without beginning and without end, unchangeable, invisible, indescribable, ineffable" taking flesh in the form of a little human being, drew Francis out of himself in praise, thanksgiving, honor, glory, and blessing. The experience took specific shape when he pondered the Eucharist:

O sublime humility. O humble sublimity. That the Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humbles himself that for our salvation He hides himself under the little form of bread (Ep Ord 27; cf. RegNB 23).

We stand in wonder at God's love—and we see how graced Francis must have been to be so taken up by love. Yet, have we ever stopped to ponder the fact that Francis lived in a Ptolemaic universe, one in which the earth was the center of the heavens? For him, the sun revolved around the earth, and the stars existed to give light to Assisi's evening. He lived long before the moons of Saturn or Jupiter startled Galileo's telescope; long before Uranus appeared on a photographic plate. Francis travelled in and around Assisi long before the Arctic or Antarctica were known or Western people set foot on the dusty roads of China or India; long before the new world extended the horizon of the setting sun. For Francis, Jerusalem, the Lord's own city, the city of the apocalypse, stood at the center of the world. It was here that God chose to take flesh: "O humble sublimity."

But, do we not see that in a strange sort of way, it all made some sense? For Francis, when the sun revolved around the earth and Jerusalem stood at the center and men and women were magnificent actors on the stage of the noble's court, the Incarnation sanctified the obvious. God's flesh-taking made at least some human sense in a world full of meaning. Why not become a human being when a human being is the apex of creation?

We, however, are given the great privilege of having our God take flesh not in the center of the world, nor on an earth around which the heavens revolve, but on the periphery of the entire universe, in a discarded corner which itself revolves around a larger light. If Francis was overwhelmed by God's humility, we can be absolutely stunned. Only love would do this. It makes no sense at all, but it is so beautiful.

The mystic is one who is overcome by this love in a direct experience of God, drawn out of himself or herself in praise, gratitude, adoration, wonder, joy. How good God is! I believe that our times are seeing a rebirth

of this Franciscan mystic; we live in a privileged moment; we are in fact the flames of fire. In conclusion, I would like to give two examples which correspond to some characteristics of this ever so slightly visible "fire on the earth" kindled by the Franciscan mystic.

Recently I was speaking to a young Franciscan who had been a missionary in Japan. He told me the following story:

My conversion happened this way. Once, when I was wandering the streets of Tokyo, I came across a small chapel; curious, I entered and discovered a small group of people sitting in a circle on the ground around an altar, at which a priest was celebrating Eucharist. Everything seemed normal; nothing unusual at all. Yet, when the priest came to the communion rite, he held up the host, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God." As I looked the host came alive; it turned into the globe, flowers and trees, fruits and berries, rivers and mountains, people here and there; all came to life in the bread of the world. Behind it, I saw an image of the Savior, hands stretched out, offering to me: "Take and eat." The people passed the plate around, and I ate.

Such an experience is perhaps startling. It is also true. And a person like you and me saw it. From God's perspective, the food we have to eat is the bread of this world, the lives of our brothers and sisters, united on one globe. The Franciscan mystic is one who can see this vision and, even not seeing it, act from its perspective.

Francis had this insight only at the end of his life; his testament is the *Canticle of the Creatures*. We, my sisters and brothers, know this God of our world at the very foundation of our lives. We know more than Francis dreamed; our God is larger than even Francis imagined, our world smaller and more one, and the Incarnation that much more beautiful. Our relationship to Francis is similar to that of the disciples to Jesus: "I solemnly assure you, the one who has faith in me will do the works I do, and greater far than these. Why? Because I go to the Father, and whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so as to glorify the Father in the Son" (Jn. 14:12-13).

And the consequences of being this Franciscan mystic of the globe are vast—we will spend our lives giving witness to its universal birth.

Last year I was privileged to speak with a group of secular Franciscans. A woman came to the meeting, one whom very few knew. She only came to see. She walked with a cane, and fastened on the cane was a flower bud just beginning to blossom. It was an unusual sight, and my eye and heart were captured immediately. An old woman, a cane, a blossoming flower. I asked, and she told me the story of her insight.

As I began to get older, very arthritic and sore, I had to use a cane. Always extremely active, I refused. It was impossible to walk; yet I struggled proudly on. The doctor just laughed at my refusal to bend to the obvious, but I hated the cane. Finally, I had to capitulate. The cane became a daily companion. I still hated it; it made me mad. The struggle continued for months. Once, late at night, I got on my knees and prayed to the Blessed Virgin and Our Lord: I cannot stand this; you must help me, or the bitterness of my sufferings will eat me up. I went to sleep, and when I woke up, I turned over in the bed and looked up to the statue of the Virgin Mary which had always been on my mantle. She held a flower. And it came to me: "Put a flower on the cane, and the wood of the cross will blossom into life."

I do not think this woman's experience is unusual. She has come to understand that love alone can bear the freight of our daily, often dreary plod. This is a truth which Francis realized to its depths only later in his life. Yet for us, who live in a world of violence, chaos, and a questioning anxiety about the fruit of our own small efforts—for us, the flower on the wood of the cross is the daily gift from our risen Lord; the cane, a share in his human life. Our Franciscan mystic is the one who makes this experience alive. Love is the beginning and the end. Once again, history challenges us to begin where Francis only left off.

In conclusion, we might ask, what will happen when we begin to live this mystic life, when Christ comes to rebirth in our world?

In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is,
since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd,
patch, matchwood, immortal diamond
Is immortal diamond.⁴

Endnotes

¹ As cited in Henri de Lubac, SJ, *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin*, trans. Rene Hague (New York: Desclee Company, 1967) 20.

² Cf. Rollo May, *The Cry for Myth* (London: W. W. Norton, 1991) especially pp. 30-31.

³ Cf. Sebastian Moore, *Jesus, Liberator of Desire* (New York: Crossroad, 1989).

⁴ Raphael Brown, *Franciscan Mystic: The Life of Blessed Brother Giles of Assisi, Companion of St. Francis* (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1962) 121.

⁵ G. M. Hopkins, "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection," *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. W. H. Gardner and N. H. Mackenzie (London: Oxford University Press, 1967) 106.

Theological Reflection for Ministry as Franciscan

Ramona Miller, OSF

[This is a revised form of a paper presented at the Franciscan Networking Seminar in Colorado Springs, CO, February, 1995.]

A model for theological reflection on our ministry as Franciscan is timely for local community usage as Franciscans wonder about their mission identity. Jesus' disciples returned to Jesus after being separated from him for ministry. Upon their return they related to Jesus all that they had accomplished (Lk. 9:10). In the same way we come into our local community gatherings to tell our stories. The disciples were bewildered that they could not cure a boy who was possessed by a demon. After Jesus had cured the boy, the disciples questioned why their ministry was ineffective. He replied: "Because you have so little trust" (Mt. 17:14-21). The end of that pericope in Matthew's Gospel states: "This kind does not leave but by prayer and fasting." So too, in our own process, we may come to a moment of awareness that our ministry requires more prayer and fasting. More often, however, the process enlightens us as to how God has been present in our experiences, even when we did not recognize God in the events.

What is theological reflection? According to Rosemary O'Connell Killen and John de Beer, it is

the artful practice of bringing our lives into conversation with our Christian heritage in a way that nurtures insights for us and for the tradition. We are called to engage our lives and our Christian heritage from a standpoint of exploration, willing to trust that God is present in our experience and that our religious tradition has something to give us. Theological reflection offers challenge and

support, frustration and delight, growth and celebration to Christian individuals and communities who persevere in the practice.¹

We prepare for the theological reflection process by recalling our experiences of ministry in order to share them with one another. Much like an artist who studies the specific parts of a beautiful flower in order to appreciate it, we reflect upon the stories of our lives to gain a better understanding of what it is that we are about. The process may enlighten us to recognize the revelation of God that we missed in the initial encounter. We might also become aware that there are certain aspects of our ministry which invite us to further compassion and contemplation. The outcome of regular theological reflection in our local groups has many blessings for our lives together:

1. We see each other's ordinariness with the eyes of faith.
2. We hear how the Spirit of God is alive and ever new in the contexts in which we share our talents, our values, our compassion.
3. We come to understand that our lives are intertwined with God, and this makes us become conscious and faithfully deliberate in our living.²

The potential outcome for Franciscans who regularly do theological reflection is a revitalization of their ministry. We are less likely to become apathetic or stressed out when we regularly process in our local communities the ways in which we perceive God's presence in our lives and the lives of those around us. This theological reflection also leads to more conscious and dedicated planning for improved ministry.

Theological reflection designed to be used by local gatherings of Franciscans has four components:

1. Personal Anecdote
2. Franciscan Tradition
3. Contrasts/Comparisons
4. Conclusion

Participants come with an openness and readiness to share a personal anecdote from their ministry. The group leader prepares a prayer that includes a reading from the Franciscan tradition. Following the sharing of personal anecdotes and a reading from traditional sources, participants name contrasts and comparisons between the Franciscan tradition and their personal anecdotes. A brief conclusion gathers the exchange into a consciousness that nurtures persons as they return to their ministries.

Personal Anecdote

Good theological reflection depends on our clarity in telling the stories of our own experiences. This is really quite easy if we compare it to the type of storytelling we do when we get back a new set of photos that has just been developed. Imagine that you have just received such a set. The delight in remembering incidents that these snapshots bring to mind is such that we find someone in our local group and say, "Look at this!" We comment on whether it is a good picture or not and why we have the facial expressions that the photographer captured. The experience of looking at recent photographs offers an analogy for selecting the personal anecdote for theological reflection. We come to our small group session prepared to share a story of a specific moment from our recent ministerial experience. We prepare ourselves by recalling our ministries over the past few days—like looking at film that has just been developed.

In reviewing the events we might bring to the theological reflection process, three criteria are helpful. First, we select a concrete human experience from our ministry that has affective energy connected with the experience—an energy that engages us at a feeling level when we relate the ministerial encounter. Second, we choose an anecdote that can be told in concrete terms without any religious interpretation or evaluative judgment in relating the incident. It is best not to spiritualize the story at this point. Third, we choose to share some specific moment which we desire to understand better. Perhaps we feel a sense of veiled mystery regarding a ministerial encounter and would like the group to assist us in understanding it better in the context of Franciscan ministry. It is helpful for the reflection process to focus on a specific moment so the concrete details can be visualized by the listeners in the group.

The first part of the communal theological reflection process is to listen to each other's stories without discussion. The very articulation of each one's experience gives the meaning of ministry a new dimension. Listening attentively to our brothers and sisters in this process is an ascetic exercise. We are not to jump in and solve whatever problems we have heard; we are to listen with our hearts and pay attention to how the Spirit of God has been at work. In this we are motivated by the counsel of Francis who directs us to "pursue what [we] desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working" (RegB 10:8). Listening, we become aware of the movement of the Spirit both within ourselves and within others. This awareness leads us to appreciate that God is in the very midst of the apostolic activity that absorbs our full attention and energy during so many of our waking hours. When we tell our own story we often gain

new insights. The new insights about the Spirit of God at work are the expected outcomes of our personal involvement in theological reflection.

Keep in mind that the goal of theological reflection is not discussion for its own sake, nor arrival at a resolution for action. Rather, the first goal is the process itself—to recognize the Divine Presence in a particular situation and to respond to it. The first faith response is walking confidently with the knowledge of the Divine Presence in us and with us in our ministry. We are led to contemplation. Like Mary, the first disciple, the prototype of all Christians, we ponder everything in our hearts as a contemplative act in the midst of our activity. We might even say that a fringe benefit of this process is to become more contemplative, because hearing the stories of the ministerial encounters of others deepens our appreciation that Franciscan ministry is incarnating the actions of Jesus in a new context, moving toward humanity in humility.³

The group leader has a significant role in the process. The leader's first task is to be the timekeeper, guaranteeing that all have an opportunity to share their stories. The leader then helps the group choose an anecdote which will be the focus for the contrast/comparison part of the process. The leader guides the group in discovering insights through comparing the ministry discussed and the Franciscan tradition.

Franciscan Tradition

The story of Francis's encounter with the wolf offers rich symbolic meaning for theological reflection and is a good choice for a beginning experience.⁴ The story has borne the test of time as a significant aspect of Franciscan lore because it captures the heart of the matter of Franciscan ministry:

Francis went to those on the margins to bring help—a word of comfort, material sustenance when it was available, and in the most extreme cases, simply a sharing in their suffering and unhappiness. This was, according to Manselli, what made Francis's so different from other religious movements, both heterodox and orthodox, contemporary to him.⁵ In other words, Francis did not wait for people to come to him for help.⁶

The two theme words for Franciscan ministry, compassion and contemplation, are displayed in Francis's approach to the wolf at Gubbio. Before the Gubbio incident, contemplation had been transforming Francis for some time. A favorite story of the change in Francis, a change from insecurity to confidence, from depression to joy, from guilt to freedom of heart, can be found in Celano's first life of Francis (1Cel 26). There Celano describes a troubled Francis going into a cave of solitude and later coming

forth a completely changed person. It is the continuous faithfulness to contemplation that transforms a person into a peacemaker who lives by the principles of nonviolence. Nonviolence is never passivity, but an assertive, loving activity fueled with courage. Francis exercised the principles of nonviolence in his decision to bring about reconciliation, a peace pact, between the wolf and the people. The love shown toward the wolf required that the wolf's reputation be spared, and the people of Gubbio were brought to a new level of consciousness of compassion for a hungry animal.

Contrasts/Comparisons

Our task in the dialogue session in our local community is to contrast the chosen aspect of the Franciscan tradition with our own lived experience. We are making meaning out of our lives. We are journeying toward insight. Insights lead to significant understandings that strengthen and/or shift our sense of who we are in relation to God, self, other, and the world.⁷

The importance of paying attention to our feelings has already been noted. We want to listen to our feelings during our own self-disclosure, but also listen during the dialog to the voices of the people absent, the people with whom we are engaged in ministry. Leonardo Boff, among other great voices in liberation theology, directs us to listen to the cry of the poor.⁸ The embodiment of our ministry experience is named by our emotional responses that lead us to insights compelling us to praxis. If we read such voices only objectively and give only intellectual assent, we are not moved to praxis. It was Francis's affective experience of overcoming his disgust with the lepers and finding sweetness in the ministry that directed him to continuous ministry with the lepers.

During the time of theological reflection, compare the inner strength of Francis with the witness of your Franciscan brother or sister. Affirm the display of inner truth that reveals the Spirit of God at work. A word of caution—don't hurry past the naming of feelings that are being experienced in the telling of the ministry event. In focusing on an incident, each participant will come to images of the Divine Presence through awareness of feelings. Both the person who introduced the anecdote and the participants engaged in the process of contrast/comparison will benefit more fully from being mindful of the feelings. Are we feeling compassion? anger? fear? joy? These arouse images within us that provide a connection with our experience and direct our reflective attention to it in new ways.⁹

Pondering the image can surprise us and lead us to insights. Images and metaphors convey the energy of common but very profound human experiences. For example, if recounting a ministry experience that has con-

flict in it leads us to naming the wolf image, we can get great insights about how to approach the ministry with the wisdom that Francis exercised at Gubbio. The image itself gives strength and direction. Insights lead to actions. Listening to one another helps us to see what the ministry has been and leads to insights that enlighten us about new actions to be taken toward the outcomes we hope for in the ministry.

One might wonder what obstacles there are to theological reflection. According to Robert Kinast, there are three: reliance on external authority, a lack of imagination, and self-protection.¹⁰

Reliance on external authority: we must learn to trust our own inner voice and our experience and not dismiss it because it is different from the external authority. Jesus' own example of responding to the Jews that his doctrine was not his own, but from the Father, empowers us to pay attention to the inner authority that comes from contemplation.

Lack of imagination: this is overcome by Franciscans steeped in Franciscan lore. Studying the primary sources of the Franciscan tradition funds the imagination with stories of the experiences of Francis and Clare. The more study we do the more able we are to make the connections between the Franciscan charism in the Church and our own lived experience.

Self-protection: we are humans who are not yet fully redeemed, and so the obstacle of protecting ourselves from exposure of our own weaknesses in ministry can hinder the outcome of a group theological reflection. Prayer for humility is appropriate before attending our local community gathering.

Conclusion

The result of this local community process will be less than a detailed plan for a corporate response to a societal evil. The first outcome of the process is a recognition of God's presence in our human experiences, experiences that deepen in us compassion and contemplation. The entire reflection process trusts the human experience. If the personal anecdote which is chosen for the group process has disturbing elements about it, the participants might ask themselves what they can learn about God through reflecting on this story. For example, if the process leads to a decision to terminate a ministry, it is helpful to recall Jesus' words found in all the Synoptic Gospels: shake the town's dust from your feet and go on (Mk. 6:11; Mt. 10:14; Lk. 9:5).

In our local communities, we would ordinarily allow a maximum of ninety minutes for the entire theological reflection process. The leader begins to draw the sharing to a conclusion about five to ten minutes before the end. The conclusion can take a variety of forms: shared prayer and/or a resolution for action and/or a question for further reflection to be continued at the next gathering and/or blessings of all persons that they may go forth with great affirmation. Of course, in true Franciscan fashion, a celebration follows, with music and food.

Endnotes

¹ Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad, 1994) 143.

² Anthony F. Krisak, "Theological Reflection: Unfolding the Mystery," *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers*, ed. Robert J. Wicks (New York: Paulist, 1995) 309.

³ Michael Blastic, "Contemplation and Compassion: A Franciscan Ministerial Spirituality," unpublished paper delivered at the Franciscan Networking Seminar in Colorado Springs, Feb. 13, 1995.

⁴ For sources from which to paraphrase this story, see "Little Flowers of St. Francis," *Omnibus* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983) 1348-9; Julien Greene, *God's Fool* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985) 218-20.

⁵ Raoul Manselli, *St. Francis of Assisi*, trans. Paul Duggan (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1998) 96.

⁶ Blastic 4.

⁷ Killen 21.

⁸ Leonardo Boff, *Faith on the Edge* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989).

⁹ Killen 28.

¹⁰ Robert L. Kinast, *If Only You Recognized God's Gift* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993) 27-62.

The Incarnation jolts the whole system.

And Francis was deeply aware of one moment in history—the moment that God entered creation and the Word was made flesh. For Francis this event sent shock waves through the whole network of dust and flesh. Not only was human nature made holy by the Incarnation; the whole fabric of creation was also charged with the divine presence.

(Jack Wintz, *Lights: Revelations of God's Goodness* [Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1995] 62.)

Deeper Than We Tend To Gaze

Eric Kahn, OFM

"My brothers/sisters, think what sort of people you are—whom God has called" (1Cor. 1:26). The words are Paul's. The call he speaks of is God's. The response is ours to make—or not. I offer reflections about God's call, particularly as it affects our prayer experience.

Paul's words convey a reality that lies deep in the love relationship between God and us. What reality? That God loves us. That God makes a dwelling place in our heart. That God pours the Spirit of Jesus into our heart and in that Spirit draws us deeper into God's self, deeper into the relationship that exists between God and Jesus. The Spirit, in fact, is that relationship; we are invited to share it. Francis's words have a persuasion of their own: "Let us make a home and dwelling place for Him who is the Lord God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (RegNB 22:27).

Another part of the reality is that, at some point in our existence, God invited our response in a way that matched well the gifts and inclinations God had from birth planted within us. Each of us has, basically, responded with a YES. The continuing fidelity of the YES depends primarily not on anything we do or think or say. It depends primarily on God's fidelity to us; on God's constant, ever-faithful, never-failing love.

Still another element of the reality is that God invites us to enter ever more deeply into a love relationship with God's self. Within that relationship God reveals us more and more to ourselves. Working lovingly within our being and our experience, God transforms us. That is, God draws us away from ego-centered selfishness, ego-centered decisions, ego-centered plans and projects, even thwarts our best intentions in soliciting a trust that empties us. God moves us, instead, toward a more ego-less centering in God and in the things that God is concerned about. Such things may not correspond with our concerns. To the degree that our ego is wrapped up in our own concerns, we are probably not going to like being moved away from them. The usual response is resistance, struggle. And we may not

recognize the full import of God's action within us until long after.

The Assisi General Chapter of 1985 approved the following as part of its final document: "Like Francis, we want to be more and more transformed by our encounter with God in His Word and in Christ, poor and crucified."¹ Unless this assertion is to languish as gratuitous, for use merely as ornamentation assuaging our need to say the right things, we face a personal and collective challenge. Nothing of this transformation can happen without our being receptive. Receptivity to God's transforming action ordinarily occurs best as we spend time regularly, daily, with God in solitary prayer. One way to refer to such time is to call it meditation. However accurate this term might be, it is helpful to understand it as contemplation, as this has long been understood in the centuries-old tradition of Christian experience.

There are precedents. A notable one is Francis, as the above quotation from the 1985 general chapter more than hints. The men who first joined him also epitomize this response. Furthermore, the flavor of the charism that Francis passes on to us in the Franciscan family is such that we will assimilate it all the more surely and reflect it all the more faithfully through being people of prayer—regular, daily, solitary prayer.

The biographical sources report that when Francis was in his early twenties, having survived a debilitating prison experience in Perugia, his life began to change. He became more reflective, more quiet. He purposely took time to reflect, to process what was happening to him. He spent much time, in fact, praying for guidance in the caves scattered on Mount Subasio near Assisi.

Silence, solitude, and prayer—these are three essential elements that accompanied the gradual development of Francis's call. These elements remained strong throughout the rest of his life. They were so important that, at one point, Francis struggled to know more clearly whether the silent, contemplative dimension ought to predominate over the more active. His resolution in the end reflects his option for life as he believed Jesus had lived it: a combination of both the contemplative and the ministerial. Francis combines them in such a way that both are essential, the one flowing from and feeding into the other. Ever since, both these elements have belonged to our Franciscan heritage. Our usual temptation is to emphasize one at the expense of the other.

Granting that life was much simpler in 1215, the picture that emerges from the sources is noteworthy. Once Francis and the brothers had returned from Rome, they lived for a while at Rivo Torto, then at the Portiuncula. It seems they dwelt in small, private huts around the chapel of St. Mary of the Angels. Some manual work close by, or a bit of unpretentious preaching occupied their day. When they gathered at the Portiuncula, especially

upon returning from proclaiming peace and repentance for the forgiveness of sins, they would share a simple meal. Then they would share their experiences and confess their faults to one another. Francis would speak words of encouragement, of affirmation, of support—words based on gospel values, words processed through his own prayer, his own experience (cf. 1Cel 29-30). Some of these words have come to us in what we call his Admonitions. And the brothers would pray together—possibly some common vocal prayer. Most likely, they also gave themselves over to a silent, contemplative, listening, receptive sort of prayer, during which time they just let themselves be loved by God and tried to love God in return. Given the strong affective proclivity in Francis, the prayer of the brothers possibly found expression in utterances of love and adoration and so on, but if they spent any of this time in common, they probably were not too vocal about it.

Nothing is reported in the sources concerning the length of time the brothers spent in quiet prayer. There was no such thing as a schedule. That was a later development. Possibly it reflects a move toward a more monastic way of living as well as an ongoing struggle to remain faithful to common prayer in the face of various ministerial demands.

Nowhere in his writings, including the Rule, does Francis legislate for contemplative praying. He does a bit of legislating for common vocal prayer. In this regard, he seems to value highly the experience of the community that prays together vocally. But for solitary, silent, contemplative prayer, Francis makes no rules.

However, note the tenor of his approach. He says the friars should “not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotedness to which all other things of our earthly existence must contribute” (RegB 5:2); and: “let them pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and his holy manner of working” (RegB 10:8). These directives, together with his own practice, suggest that Francis takes it for granted that his brothers will be serious about and faithful to their own contemplative praying.

The Christian call is a call to belong to God. It invites full surrender of everything into God’s hands, in complete trust. The Christian call, furthermore, is a call to deep prayer. We would risk self-delusion were we to treat this call in a superficial, cavalier manner or to keep running interference by introducing a constant barrage of images into our hearts and minds. Excessive television watching, over-loading the calendar with ministerial commitments, no leisure time for healthy relaxation—these threaten fidelity and commitment to deep prayer. To neglect God’s call in this regard could well be to hoodwink not only ourselves but any others who come asking for guidance on their own spiritual pathway.

In short, our call is to transforming union with God. We need to allow ourselves to be changed by God—to be so loved by God that we patiently undergo the purifying alterations God finds necessary. This is challenging, to say the least. It is often difficult and painful. Why? Because it means we have to let go of our ego and its selfish intents. In gospel terms, this is to lose life in order truly to find it.²

We Franciscans have been attracted by the life and the ways and the spirit of Francis and Clare of Assisi. God planted in our hearts seeds that gradually flowered with blossoms carrying something of Francis’s or Clare’s own original charism. It is not ours to imitate by mimicking either of them. We do not reproduce historically the setting or the furniture of their era. Our responsibility is to be fully open to the workings and the inspirations of the Spirit of Jesus in our hearts and lives for these our times just as Francis and Clare were open for theirs. As a result, we will more truly carry among people of today the spirit and flavor and joy and peace that so characterized Francis and Clare. Such openness to Jesus’ Spirit includes receptivity in solitary prayer.

Whatever happens around us exerts an influence on our lives as Franciscans. There are consequences for the way we address our call and our prayer. I will indicate something of what I see having occurred and what is still going on. You may be aware of other influences as well.

1) Honest attempts at renewal over the years have led us to explore our roots in Francis and in Clare. We have become reacquainted with these two, who are practically-speaking co-founders. The values that inspired them shine more clearly in our hearts and on the path we would walk. Recent chapter-meetings and planning processes have engaged our energies to implement what we have learned.

2) We have a genuine concern among us for the healthy experience of fraternity and, correspondingly, for the leisure that makes the exercise of this concern possible.

3) We have agreed upon priorities that manifest our approach to a world yearning for good news: a) the contemplative dimension of our vocation; b) an option for the poor, to which we join a desire to help the poor achieve justice and peace; c) formation in the missionary spirit, knowing that if we are to evangelize, we must first be evangelized.³

4) The very real demands of ministry seem to increase in inverse proportion to our decreasing numbers. The risk of turning ourselves into social activists is real enough. It can make of us ministerial do-gooders who work energetically, but sometimes without the empowering that

flows only from a deep love-relationship with Jesus. There is risk, also, of simply becoming too tired, burnt out, because there's always too much to do. Needs of ministry sometimes drive ministers to the point of exhaustion, where they need healing themselves.

5) There is an attitude in our culture which promotes the image of "the giver." To do and to be for others is seen as fulfillment. When this attitude is strong, it creates within us an ego that cannot receive, an ego that finds difficulty in genuine recreative leisure, to say nothing of the contemplative leisure which allows us to be simply before God in a listening, receptive stance.⁴

6) The influence of television during these last fifty years or so has gradually created a society of couch potatoes. That is receptivity of a far different sort. It is a kind of "marinating" in values other than those of the gospel. What consequences this has had for Franciscan ministry and community life and prayer I leave to the assessment of the astute observer. It is possible to wonder what would be the effect were fidelity to personal prayer equal to the faithfulness of watching weekend sporting events and to the enduring of countless, mindless commercials.

7) There is a spirit of appropriation that creeps subversively into our hearts. Things become "mine" almost without advertence. On the face of it we have vowed not to acquire, but the blatant consumerism of our culture is difficult to resist. We are constantly badgered to get what we honestly do not need. Commercial-makers and advertisers play to our wants, and the attraction is quite powerful. Things that enter the house as community acquisitions, available for the use of all in some common location, seductively multiply, becoming treasures for individual use in the sanctuary of one's own room. Years ago, it was books. The list now bristles with items both unique and somewhat pricey. To suggest contents for the list is perhaps moot. It's no dark secret that individuals possess television sets, VCRs, phones, stereos, CD players, and so on. Legitimate needs do exist; it is a mark of wisdom not to cast stones. In any case, self-assessment is a healthy practice. Still, it is possible to hazard a few questions. What is the impact on fraternity of personal acquisitiveness? How does it affect attempts to build faith-community? How does catering to wants—or even to needs—influence the deep wells of the inner spirit? attentiveness to God? purity of heart, that single-pointedness which is so beneficial—even essential—for a genuine spirit of prayer? "To which," claims Francis, "all other things of our earthly existence must contribute" (RegB 5.2).⁵

8) Finally there are numerous workshops, pilgrimages, retreat experiences, lectures at Franciscan schools, the publication of works by Franciscan mystics—all based solidly on an expertise that itself is rooted in the spirit of Francis and of Clare. These experiences can only promote our familiarity with what drew us to Franciscan life in the first place. A great gift to our times.

I offer now a listing of a different sort: faith convictions. That is, convictions of a reality ordinarily not subject to sense-perception but real nonetheless. These convictions are often the result of personal experience of the Holy and/or communicated by others who themselves have experienced the Holy. The reality in question is rooted in Jesus and in the gospel—a reality, therefore, that once introduced into our hearts, binds us to God.

1) There is power in the Word of God—power to enliven, to energize. Francis's acquaintance with the Word is rightly recognized as legendary. What do we do with it, how do we listen as we hear it read or read it ourselves, how do we treat it once it's planted within us?—all questions that stimulate reflection.⁶

2) God dwells in us. This is simply true. In our center, in our deepest being, God makes a home. In our center, God utters a Word: Jesus. As John of the Cross puts it: "The Father spoke one Word, which was His Son, and this Word He always speaks in eternal silence, and in silence must It be heard by the soul."⁷

3) Renewal, to be effective, must occur at the interior level of personal relationship with God. Such renewal grows best out of contemplative receptivity to God's transforming love. Without that all our meetings, all our continuing education and ongoing formation, all our revamping of liturgical expressions, all our conferences and workshops will mostly fill our heads with wonderful ideas, stimulate our intellects, and probably leave us wondering why we yet remain restless, not truly satisfied deep within. The mind has been tickled, some inspiration perhaps afforded; the deep inner spirit, however, has been left untouched.

4) Paul is right: "The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness. We do not even know how to pray as we ought, the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings" (Rom. 8:26). The upshot is that there is no need to fuss over techniques for getting into prayer. It is not even *our* prayer. Truth to tell, there's only *one* prayer, the prayer that Jesus makes. This prayer is not necessarily words that Jesus addresses to the

Father. Rather, it is prayer that rises out of the living relationship of love that exists between Jesus and the Father. This is the same mutual bond of love which dwells within us--the Spirit. We're invited into the prayer Jesus makes. He is making it within our heart. It is a prayer of adoration, rising up from Jesus within, who is ever receptive, alert, listening, and attuned to God within our heart. "And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:27). It seems to me that we will be an effective witness of the Holy the more we allow ourselves to manifest, as unselfconsciously as possible, this relationship of love between God and us.

John Main, OSB, says:

It has always been the Church's teaching that the spiritual life of the members of a religious community should be their first responsibility. More often the reality has been that the good works in which religious have engaged become supreme. Because the work is given priority, one of the "sacrifices" the religious makes is of his or her personal life of prayer. The crisis facing the Church's religious life has its origin in this radical distortion of the religious vocation.⁸

I am uncertain whether there is much difference now, in our day, regarding the crisis John Main specifies. I am certain of the importance of deep, interior prayer for vital Franciscan living.

Endnotes

¹ *Our Call to Evangelization: Proposals for Action*, n. 22.

² "As Francis, we also experience God's presence through contemplation. By a contemplative stance we free ourselves from our own distortions and from destructive relationships. Thus we are able to know God's presence even in dehumanized situations" (*Our Call to Evangelization*, n.11).

³ Cf. *Our Call to Evangelization and A Message from Bangalore* (1988).

⁴ Cf. RegNB 22:25-26 for some cautionary words from Francis that have a bearing on a receptive stance before the Lord.

⁵ Clare uses the same words when she writes of preserving the Spirit of holy prayer and devotion (RC1 7:2). There are still other dimensions to this formidable challenge. For example: "Each fraternity and each individual friar, in the use of material things, should choose poorer things and refuse to have or to buy superfluous things, in order to provide a prophetic witness contrary to increasing consumerism" (*Our Call to Evangelization* n. 23:3).

⁶ For further encouragement from Francis, cf. RegNB 22:41.

⁷ *Maxims and Counsels* 21, in *The Collected Works*, trans. Kavanaugh and Rodriguez (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1979) 675.

⁸ John Main, *Letters from the Heart* (New York, Crossroad, 1982) 35.

The *Legenda Versificata* by Henry of Avranches: A Poet's Insight into the Mind and Heart of Francis

Margaret Slowick, OSF

The first volume of the new *Omnibus*, presently in preparation, will include the first English publication of the *Legenda S. Francisci Versificata*, the versified legend of the life of Francis by Henry of Avranches. This text is significant for a number of reasons. Dating back to 1231, it is the first life of Francis we have following the *Vita Prima* of Thomas of Celano, appearing just two years after Thomas's text.

It is evident that Henry draws heavily from Thomas's work. The content and the order in which his work appears follow Celano almost exactly. From this we can conclude that Thomas's life of Francis was quickly disseminated and widely read. Henry's reliance on the text also gives us evidence to indicate that the *Vita Prima* was generally accepted as an accurate portrayal of Francis. But the value of the *Legenda Versificata* lies in much more than being an indicator of the rapid and widespread acceptance of Celano's work. Henry interprets and develops the events of the *Vita Prima* with a poet's eye, giving us unique insights into the mind and heart of Francis. In this article I will demonstrate in particular how Henry portrays Francis's inner life during his early years and the time of his conversion.

Commissioned by Pope Gregory IX to write the official *legenda* of Francis's life, Thomas of Celano completed the *Vita Prima* around the year 1229. In the tradition of official hagiographical texts, Thomas presented a portrait of Francis which would cultivate his memory and inspire others to share in his life of holiness. Throughout the text he shows evidence of Francis's sainthood and points to the Spirit of God at work in Francis. Although it is very much in the hagiographical tradition of his day, Thomas's work is not merely the standard saint's hagiography with the names and details tailored to fit Francis. Thomas goes further into the unique aspects

of Francis's life—he uses both Francis's own writings and the facts and witnesses available to him to see to it that this *legenda* accurately reflects the spirit, the tenor, and the actual experiences of Francis's own life. Thomas also includes his own editorial comments and interpretations regarding the events of Francis's life and arranges the work into a masterful theological framework. Throughout all three books of the *Vita Prima*, Thomas emphasizes the fact that Francis was a model of holiness for all his readers. The invitation to participation in holiness, in the communion of saints, is there for each person that reads and is inspired by this text, and it is truly a universal invitation. As God was made manifest in the lives of the saints, so too can God be made manifest in our own lives.

The *Legenda S. Francisci Versificata* by Henry of Avranches offers us additional insights into the life of Francis as we put on the mind of a poet. Very little is known about the life of Henry of Avranches. He was born between 1190 and 1200 and died in 1254. The most recent scholarship seems to indicate that he was a Franciscan friar and a deacon in a southern Netherlands church. As recently as 1935, however, he was believed not to have been a Franciscan.¹ There is no disagreement that he was a poet, however, and in some sources he is referred to as Master Henry the Versifier.² He is especially known for his liturgical texts. Early references to Henry note that he was the author of the *Life of St. Birin*, from which four lines on beer were apparently often quoted.³

With its date of 1231, the *Legenda Versificata* is the earliest text we have on the life of Francis other than Thomas of Celano's *Vita Prima*. Henry's poem falls into the category of versified hagiography, a medieval literary genre. It would have been written to be recited and to be an inspiration to those who heard it. Although it is an invaluable development to have the text available in English, it is of course true that any translation out of the original Latin loses some of the beauty of the original poetry, with its rhythmic meter and plays on words.⁴ One of the most beautiful examples is found in Book IV, lines 139-143 (144-150 in the Latin text), in which Francis is described as being all things to all people, in language which makes him appear to be an image of Jesus himself:

Nam ieiunorum sicut dapifer, sitientum
Sicut pincerna, nudorum sicut amictus,
Desolatorum sicut solamen, egentum
Sicut divitiae, profugorum sicut asylum,
Et pupillorum sicut pater, et viduarum
Sicut sponsus erat generaliter, et fluitantum
Sicut prosperitas. . . .

[He was like a waiter to the hungry,
Like a wine-steward to the thirsty,
like a garment to the naked,
like solace to the lonely,
like riches to the needy,
like asylum to the exile,
like a father to the orphan,
like a spouse to the widow,
and like good fortune to the drifter.]⁵

In passages such as these, it is clear that Henry's genius as a poet enables him to touch the imagination and heart of the reader or listener in a way that prose cannot. The beauty of Henry's poetic images throughout this work helps the reader feel a connection with Francis and the events of his life, a connection which could well inspire one to the hope of imitation. And this was certainly Henry's intent, for he writes at the conclusion of his work, "May we to his [Francis's] company be led by Christ."

In spite of the fact that Celano's and Henry's works are of two different genres, the similarity between the two is obvious. As mentioned earlier, the content and chronology of Henry's text follows Celano's almost exactly. This is evident from the following brief outline:

Content	<i>Vita Prima</i>	<i>Legenda Versificata</i>
Prologue/Purpose	Prologue 1-2	I 1-31
Licentious youth	1-2	I 32-69
Conversion: General; illness	3	I 70-182
Apulia	4-6	I 183-233
Cave experiences	6-7	I 234-II 2
Before his father	10-16	II 205-III 189
Leaving Assisi; lepers	17	IV 1-161
San Damiano: Repairing the church	18-20	IV 162-182
Poor ladies	18-20	IV 183-207
Hearing the Gospel	22	V 1-36
Preaching	23, 36-37	V 37-102
Early brothers	24-54	V 103ff, VI, VII
Fiery chariot	47	II 46-60
Trip to Holy Land	55-57	VII 133-VIII 225

Animals and nature	58-61	IX 1-70
Miracles	62-70	IX 71-198
Virtues	71-83	X-XI 95
Greccio	84-87	XI 96
Stigmata	88-96	XII
Death and burial	105-118	XIII, XIV 1-32
Canonization	119-126	XIV 41-82
Posthumous miracles	127-150	XIV 33-40
Conclusion	151	XIV 83-92

It is likely that Henry worked directly from Celano's text, which was the official document commemorating Francis's life as a saint. When one looks at interpretations and emphases however, it becomes apparent that there are differences throughout the two texts. As a poet, Henry was able to present Francis's inner life, his thoughts and feelings, in a way that Celano could not. Reading the text of Henry the Versifier gives one a feeling of connection with Francis that Celano's text, masterful as it is, does not accomplish.

This is especially evident in passages dealing with Francis's early life. In chapter 2 for instance, Celano refers to Francis as a vain person, "evilly advancing beyond all of his peers in vanities," but nevertheless "a rather kindly person." And in chapter 3, he writes that Francis was "seething with sins out of youthful passion." But Henry uses his poet's imagination to take us further into the inner workings of Francis's mind and heart:

The boy's mother was upright, unpretentious and kind;
His merchant father violent and sly.

...
The boy sees his parents' contrasting characters;
From the two ways he decides to follow the wrong one;

...
With no thought for his soul and indulging his flesh,
Judging naught with his head, but all with emotion.⁶

And rather than simply stating that Francis was, in spite of his sinfulness, still "rather kindly," Henry gives us greater insight into his character:

Yet his character, naturally good,
Was by evil unalloyed. . . .
Despite these failings so knavish he maintains
Certain traces of virtue that fail to see practice.⁷

We see the same pattern in the two authors' descriptions of Francis during the illness that precipitated his conversion. Celano simply states that Francis "began to contemplate within himself" (1Cel 3) during his illness, whereas Henry goes into full detail of the mental process Francis was suffering:

. . . Francis, sore pressed
By such troubles, is losing all hope in this life, and all but all
Hope in the next. When in his struggle, the fear of both hits
him,
He knows not what to do. He repents of an ugly past life
And his tears are mixed with sighs.⁸

In fact, Henry goes so far as to reveal to us Francis's very thoughts during this struggle:

He has a kind of debate within himself: Do more things exist in the
mind
Than what he perceives with his sense? There's an unequal strife
In his soul, as sense-perception from beneath assaults the peak of
His reasoning. . . .⁹

Henry gives us further insight into Francis's inner life when he writes of the dream Francis had of a house filled with weapons. He shows Francis reflecting on this dream, and writes:

. . . But the more keenly run
His inner reflections, the more he comes to consider
These gifts to belong, not to laurels mundane,
But rather to triumphs that are true to their name.¹⁰

Thomas, on the other hand, simply writes that Francis wondered what the dream meant and subsequently lost his desire to go to Apulia (1Cel 5). It is not Celano's style, nor his task, to speculate on the thought process Francis went through in regard to his dream.

Both authors relate that Francis spent time in caves for prayer and solitude. Thomas writes that, while inside the caves, Francis received inspiration from the Spirit (1Cel 6), as well as joy (1Cel 7) and strength (1Cel 8). Henry, as we would expect, goes further and describes what was happening inside Francis—for instance, "He makes his prayer that the Lord convert him and not let/ His mind, clinging now to things above, fall back to things of earth."¹¹ He thus gives insight into what Francis may have been struggling with at the time. Henry subsequently launches into a four-page

description of the "monsters" that Francis may well have been facing at this point in his life. This section of the *Legenda* forms more than half of Book II. In it, Henry's description of Francis's struggle with pride, envy, anger, and various other vices is reminiscent of a similar passage in the *Versified Legend* of Clare, in which she struggles to mortify her flesh,¹² which makes one wonder if it were a standard part of versified hagiography at that time.

In their accounts of Francis's break with his father and the subsequent events, Celano and Henry continue in the same pattern, with Celano simply stating Francis's state of mind and Henry delving into the thought process behind it. Celano describes a joyful and purposeful Francis eager to appear before the bishop and return what belonged to his father (1Cel 14). Henry gives us words of eloquence that his poet's mind imagines Francis speaking to his father:

He, devoid of fear, speaks up: "Father, or rather, stepfather,
Why fix me in chains, and why do you threaten me with torture?
Your shackles or your torture instruments I shall not smash;
They are hammers that strike in vain upon ice-cold iron!
O what foolishness in a savage father! Are you trying to fool me,
Hoping to seduce me with dire threats? I cannot be fooled,
Or lured, or yield to your threats. Christ the way, truth, and life
Stands on my right, so that I shall not be moved."¹³

What Celano left to the imagination, Henry spells out for us in Francis's long discourses against his father.

There are many other examples of Henry the Versifier elaborating on what Celano reported. Celano relates Francis's struggle to overcome his repulsion for lepers: "He met a leper one day, and mastering himself, he approached and kissed him" (1Cel 17). It is typical of Celano just to report the incident, letting the facts speak for themselves (except, of course, for the places in the text where he goes on to editorialize and interpret). Henry is more prone to give us insight into the inner Francis. In the incident with the leper, for instance, Henry writes of "the fire of blessed love that flared in him / When by chance he meets a leper on the road."¹⁴ We get a glimpse of the divine love within Francis that motivated him to kiss the leper.

Even in Henry's descriptions of Francis's outward deeds, we often sense that we are receiving a glimpse of the inner Francis. His description of Francis settling in at the Portiuncula, for instance, contains no explicit mention of Francis's state of mind, yet we get the impression that here was a man very much at peace at this time of his life:

Of all places this was his favorite; nor are they frequent
His departures from it. He lingers on, settling there quietly,
Repairing the building, planting the gardens, sustaining life
On meager fare, not clothed in his usual garb,
But in such as hermits wear.¹⁵

Finally, in what marked the beginning of Francis's mission to preach, we come to Celano's and Henry's treatment of Francis hearing the Gospel at the Portiuncula. In this passage Celano does communicate Francis's state of mind, as he "immediately exulted in the Spirit of God" and was "overflowing with joy" (1Cel 22). Again, however, Henry emphasizes even more what Francis must have been thinking and experiencing within himself at that time:

... the Spirit
Of the Lord comes down on him and fills his breast full with the
gift
Of grace, and shows him the secret pathway to heaven. . . .
Nor will he gloss over anything, but follow the text and faithfully
cling
To every word. Allegory may in much prevail; but the literal sense
Surpasses it, when no metaphor cloaks the author's mind
And his words mean what they say.¹⁶

The first two lives we have of Francis, then, are both very similar and very different. While undoubtedly working from Thomas of Celano's text, Henry has a contribution of his own to make to our understanding of the life of Francis. Henry's poetic imagination gives us insight after insight into the inner workings of the mind and heart of Francis in a way that Celano's style does not. The *Vita Prima* is a masterpiece of hagiographical literature, with elements of theological reflection, interpretation, and eyewitness remembrances of Francis skillfully woven together into a whole. The value of the *Legenda Versificata*, however, lies in its ability to take us farther into an understanding of Francis the person. Henry the Versifier's poetic imagination is able to stimulate in turn the imagination of the reader and create a connection between the reader and Francis. Both legends were written to inspire the faithful and give them hope that the Spirit of God, which worked so beautifully and relentlessly in Francis's life, would permeate and direct their own lives as well. Given that these texts retain their power to inspire readers centuries later, it would appear that both authors have succeeded in accomplishing their purpose. Each, in its own way, is a valuable work for deepening our understanding of the simple, poor man of Assisi.

¹ Josiah Russell and John Paul Heironimus, *The Shorter Latin Poems of Master Henry of Avranches Relating to England* (Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 1935) 16.

² Russell, 18.

³ Russell, 15.

⁴ See Regis Armstrong, *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993) 186-187.

⁵ Henricus Abrincensis, "Legenda S. Francisci Versificata," *Analecta Franciscana* 10 (1926-1941) 431-432. This English translation by Gregory Shanahan, OFM, will appear in the new *Omnibus*.

⁶ Book I, lines 32-33, 42-43, 50-51.

⁷ *Legenda Versificata*, Book I, lines 64-65, 68-69.

⁸ *Legenda Versificata*, Book I, lines 109-113.

⁹ *Legenda Versificata*, Book I, lines 151-154.

¹⁰ *Legenda Versificata*, Book I, lines 220-223.

¹¹ *Legenda Versificata*, Book I, lines 238-239.

¹² See "The Versified Legend of the Virgin Clare" in Armstrong, 186-237. This particular passage can be found in lines 561-632.

¹³ *Legenda Versificata*, Book III, lines 87-94.

¹⁴ *Legenda Versificata*, Book IV, lines 130-131.

¹⁵ *Legenda Versificata*, Book V, lines 1-5.

¹⁶ *Legenda Versificata*, Book V, lines 15-22.

The Dynamic of Conversion in a Secular Franciscan Life

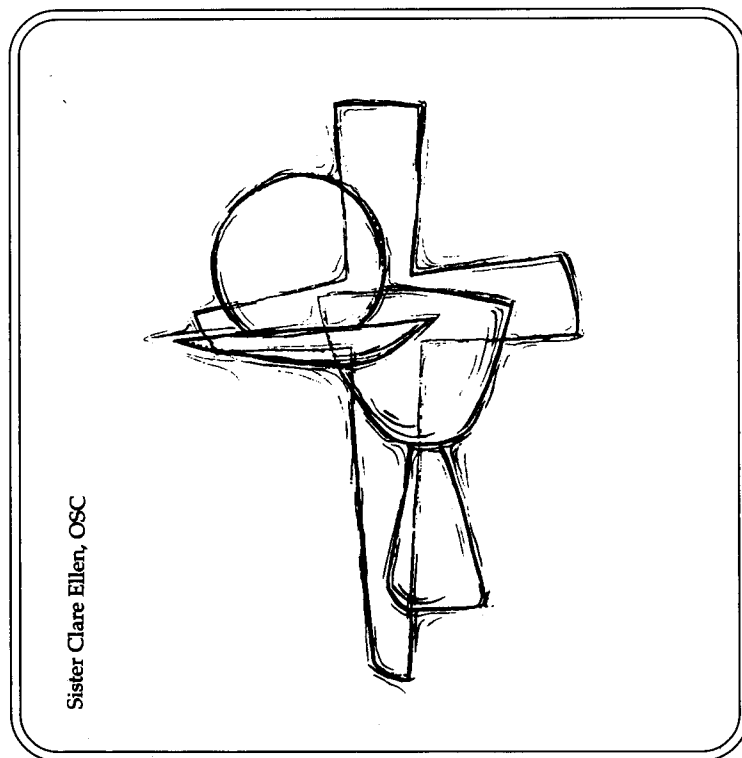
Gloria Newlin Shriver, SFO

Conversion in My Life

While viewing the film, *Schindler's List*, it occurred to me that the author of the novel, Thomas Keneally, was describing a classic instance of personal conversion. This motivated me to reflect on the dynamic of conversion as it has been operating in my own life for the past seventy-four years. This has not been a straightforward process, an upward dynamic, but has often involved muddled periods of regression, doubts, and confusion. Sadly I must confess my life has never been one of heroic struggle to save the world or even the suffering masses in it; but I still have hopes that God, through the death of Jesus, will save me. However, so far it has been mostly two steps forward and one step back—sometimes, even one step forward and two steps back.

To me conversion is change, and God knows, my life has been one of constant change. The story of my conversion is the story of my life, a life that has been a never-ending conversion process that eventually let me stumble across the path of St. Francis of Assisi.

Over the years I learned that conversion, for most of us, is not an easy process and that following Francis can lead us over some bumpy roads indeed. However, for me, walking in the footsteps of Francis assured me that I was following the right path and kept me from losing the way. God took me on a very crooked path and a long way before allowing me even a glimpse of the great saint.



Early Consciousness

My earliest recollection of a consciousness of God is saying my evening prayers at about age two and a half, believing firmly that God was listening to my prayer so it didn't really matter "... if I should die before I wake ..." because God was there to take care of me. Even then I realized that one doesn't have to sit for hours waiting for God to come because God is always there. Long, drawn-out prayers are for our benefit, not God's. God is always there waiting for our response.

I can remember being baptised at age three in a Presbyterian church in Monticello, Florida. I was standing beside my step-mother who was holding my new baby sister, Dolores, in her right arm and holding my right hand in her left hand. I did not understand what was going on, but I knew that the whole churchful of people was watching us. The minister stood facing us with his back to the congregation. He must have sprinkled us, but I don't remember any water being involved at all. I guess you could say that God opened this gateway to life in the Spirit without my having the slightest idea of what it was all about. I don't know whether or not anyone had tried to explain it to me beforehand. If so, I did not understand. I just kept wondering why all those people were looking at us. My father was not present. I don't know if he had been baptised before or if he ever was baptised. I never remember seeing him in a church at all—except in his coffin many years later.

Even though I felt nothing at my baptism, I still believe something did happen to me. God does not always explain; but ever since I can remember it seemed to me there was a holy place within me. Maybe it was the place where the soul lives within each of us. Maybe it's what some call the light within, or maybe it's the seed of Christ just waiting to be awakened. To me it has always been God.

Models of Holiness

Shortly after my baptism, I went to live with my paternal grandmother in Savannah, Georgia. Neither she nor my step-grandfather went to church, although they were a praying couple. I could hear them praying together every night before they retired. Who knows what effect that had on me? Maybe that's how it became even clearer to me that God is always there for us. Their never-forgotten evening prayers impressed me. However, I was much more impressed by the woman who lived next door, whom I will call Mrs. Anderson. She was a Pentecostal who always wore white—even

a white coat in winter! Children couldn't pass her on the street without raising their arms to heaven and repeating after her, "Praise the Lord!" My grandparents thought she was nuts, but I liked her.

It was depression time, and I liked to watch the beggars get off the streetcar on Waters Avenue and walk the block and a half to Mrs. Anderson's house to ask for help. A few stopped at every house on the way, but most of them went directly to her home. They never left without help. One Thanksgiving she even had her cook bring out the turkey she was preparing for the family's dinner and give it to a family that had no turkey. I never saw Mr. Anderson more irate than that day, except the time she put a strange, dirty man who had just had a seizure on her front porch into her own (and Mr. Anderson's) bed. It turned out that the poor man had pneumonia, and since this was before the day of miracle drugs, he had to stay for six weeks before he was strong enough to go out and face the cruel, winter world of the depression-struck city.

The neighbors all thought she was crazy, but I thought she was wonderful. She made a lasting impression, but I never gave poor Mr. Anderson any thought at all. He was just a man who gave the neighbors something to laugh about. In hindsight, maybe he was a saint, too. He lived with Mrs. Anderson for over fifty years. It might also be a sort of martyrdom to live with a saint, night and day, for fifty years.

Church Experiences

Although my grandmother never went to church, she allowed me, when I was about eight, to walk the four blocks to the Baptist Church alone so that I could go to Sunday School. It was there that I learned such basics as the names of the books of the Bible, the usual children's Bible stories, little lessons on the acts of mercy, and the Ten Commandments. I went alone many Sundays to attend the Sunday School, but I never thought of it as a religious experience. I liked the people and enjoyed the lessons. To me, it was just going to another school. It was there I learned about Jesus, so I guess it was an unconscious step toward my conversion. (All conversions are not like St. Paul's!) However, I never considered joining that church.

When I was eleven, I went to live with my Aunt Josie in Ridgeland, South Carolina. She was an ardent Methodist who read her *Upper Room* (the Methodist magazine containing a Bible quote and short message for the day) every morning before she got out of bed. I went to Sunday School and church with her every Sunday and, at age twelve, joined the Methodist Church, then called the Methodist Episcopal Church South.

This was a real conversion. It was as if I had been emptied and completely filled with the love of God and because of that love was filled with

the desire to love others. For a short time, I persuaded a little friend to save up our allowances and buy groceries for some of the poor Afro-Americans who lived in the shanties on the outskirts of town. We felt so grown-up and so good when we walked the mile out of town to deliver them. God was good enough not to let us see how proud we were of our good deeds. No one else seemed to notice either.

Aunt Josie was quite upset because I had joined the church without discussing my desire with her first, but when the pastor opened the doors of the church, I just walked up. She was afraid that I didn't realize what I was doing, but I really did and have never been sorry for the years I spent in the Methodist-Episcopal tradition. Since I've always liked to read, I read many of Wesley's writings when I was only about twelve. Much of what he wrote was very Catholic. If I remember correctly, he frequently quoted some of the early Church fathers, or at least reiterated their ideas. Some in the church thought I would make a good missionary and tried to talk me into that career, but somehow I knew that wasn't for me.

At thirteen, I went back to live with my father and step-mother out in the country, and so my church-going days were over for awhile. Occasionally we went to funerals, weddings, or big church picnics with friends, but going to church was something that other people did, not us.

In college, I went to the Methodist Church fairly regularly, but I sometimes went to the Episcopal Church with my roommate. I was a class officer and vice president of the University Christian Service Club, which was involved with such things as visiting the Civil-War Veteran's Home. Of course, by that time—the early 1940s—there was only one veteran left in that home in Columbia, but there were quite a few of their wives still there who welcomed our visits. We also visited high schools and helped to encourage the seniors to come to the university. We tried to reassure their parents that the university was not a den of Satan.

My closest friend in high school had been Catholic. Her father was a doctor, so I was allowed to associate with her although usually my family thought Catholics were the very bottom of the social barrel. I never really understood Betty's religion, and in hindsight, I doubt if she did either; but it fascinated me. I was particularly drawn to the nuns who were so mysterious with their starched headdresses and hidden hair. And there was something compelling about a religion that could put a teenager into a true panic for taking a bite of hot dog on Friday!

Somehow, I ran across St. Teresa of Avila in the college library. She and St. John of the Cross let me know that someday I would join the Catholic Church, but I had no idea of how to go about it. I guess that's why God let me marry a Catholic. However, although he was a good Catholic and a good man, he didn't know anything about Christianity except what the

Baltimore Catechism told him. He never suggested that I either go to church with him or join his church, so I joined it without even telling him I was taking instructions. I don't think he cared much one way or the other.

The Catholic Church

My instructor was a young curate who was wonderful and wise far beyond his years, but he had the craziest ideas about what the Protestants believed. I still think I taught him more than he taught me.

During my conditional baptism, I went into a sort of hysterical laughing fit that I was completely unable to control even though I considered it a very serious and holy moment. Afterward, I apologized to the priest and tried to tell him how sincere I was about joining the Church. His only comment was: "The Holy Spirit works in curious ways. It is much better to laugh than to cry. I'm sure he understands that." He refused the donation I tried to give him by saying: "I can't take it. I promised God that if he would let me convert you, I wouldn't take anything." Evidently to him, as it did to most Catholics in those days, conversion meant joining the Catholic Church. To me, even then, it was only a step in the right direction.

One would think that once I had found the Church, that would satisfy my life-long search for my religious home. It could have been the end of my search for the God that had been beckoning to me since I was two years old, but there was one happening that had enticed me to find something more. Like most things in my life, it seemed like a chance encounter.

A Franciscan Invitation

During my stay in Huntington, Indiana, I had joined The Daughters of Isabella, now called The Catholic Daughters. One evening after our meeting, I heard one of the members laughing about her grandmother being such a "holy" person, about how much she prayed and the way she was always talking to God. When I questioned her more about it, my friend said: "O, Gramma belongs to the Third Order of St. Francis. They're all a bunch of religious nuts. They say loads of prayers every day and try to follow in the footsteps of St. Francis on his way to heaven."

Because of my Bible-Belt upbringing, I knew that saints were the people in heaven, but I had never heard of any officially recognized saints who were still here on earth. I was immediately filled with the desire to be a follower of this saint. I had never even heard of St. Francis, but I was drawn to the prospect of following a real, live saint here on earth like a starving person is drawn to a loaf of bread. I don't think it mattered to me at that

time what kind of saint he was. My friend wouldn't believe that I could be interested in such a group. "They're all old folks, at least forty," she assured me. I wouldn't fit in at all; I was only twenty-three. But this idea of following St. Francis held a great fascination for me. I decided immediately that someday, even if it meant waiting until I was forty, I would become a member of this Third Order and follow St. Francis all the way up to the pearly gates.

I didn't quite make that goal of finding him by the time I was forty, but once during my fortieth year, as I was walking along the sidewalk in downtown Cincinnati in a pouring rain, the wind blew a small leaflet into my path. In spite of the wind and rain, I stooped and picked it up. It was a leaflet about the Third Order of St. Francis, but it had neither an address nor telephone number on it, and I could find no one who could help me find the fraternity. However, the leaflet did explain a little about the life of a Third Order Franciscan, and it also contained a few paragraphs about the life of St. Francis. What I read excited me no end and made me feel as if I were just a few steps away from my goal. My desire and enthusiasm soared.

Everywhere we lived: South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Kansas, Ohio, and Santiago, Chile, I tried to find a Third Order of St. Francis Fraternity. I found people who had heard of the Order, but no one who knew where I could find a fraternity except for a friar in Santiago whom I stopped on the street to ask for directions to a fraternity. He decided that my Spanish was not good enough to "grasp all the theological explanations" that I would need in the Spanish-speaking group that he was familiar with. So I joined the Maryknoll Guild, most of whose members spoke English, and served as its treasurer while I continued my unsuccessful search for St. Francis.

We guild members raised money for the Maryknoll sisters and priests, helped the poor in the unbelievably poor section of the city, and accompanied the religious sisters on their rounds since, in those days, a sister could not go out on the streets unaccompanied.

All of this was probably good training and a conversion of sorts, but I never once stopped trying to find someone who could lead me to St. Francis. By this time I knew I was not searching for a real, live man, but an ideal, a way of life. I was more determined than ever to find it. I knew that St. Francis was the missing thing in my life. Interestingly enough, I later discovered that one of Maryknoll's two founders was a Secular Franciscan.

Franciscan Incorporation

In my forty-seventh year, after we had returned to the States and were living in New Jersey, I got a small Franciscan calendar in the mail from the

Franciscan Associates in New York State. I can't remember if I sent them the offering they asked for or not, but I wrote and asked them where I could find a Third Order of St. Francis Fraternity. It was at least six, long months before I got a reply from someone in Chicago, who wrote that the fraternity nearest me was in Red Bank, New Jersey. The note even told me which Sunday of the month they met and at what time in the afternoon. I was ecstatic. I could hardly wait for the slow-moving minutes to drag by so I could hasten to meet some real, live Franciscans.

When the day finally came, I drove the fifteen miles to Red Bank and probably shocked them all by walking in and announcing that I was ready to join. I had no idea that after all these years of searching, I would have to convince them that God had really called me to share their beautiful way of life. I, like everyone else, had to study for about a year and a half before they allowed me to make my profession.

At the time, I thought all that waiting and searching was wasted effort. However, it actually served a good purpose. A few years later, I was on the National Secular Franciscan Committee organized to locate the various Franciscan provinces in the United States, to compile a list of their secular fraternities, and to make a map of them. Until that time, the provinces of Franciscan priests and brothers had been keeping good records of the fraternities they had established, but there had been little or no sharing of information among the provinces. Because of the work of that small committee, there is no problem today with finding a fraternity. Our National Fraternity can be called at any time at 1-800-Francis; and it is on the internet.

However, on that Sunday afternoon when I walked into St. Anthony's Fraternity in Red Bank, I was convinced that God had called me to join the brothers and sisters gathered there, even though I had no idea exactly what it was all about or what would be expected of me. I soon learned that this was a group of Catholic men and women who lived in the world and fulfilled all the obligations that entails. At the same time they aspired to Christian perfection under the direction of the brothers and sisters who not only "talked the talk" but "walked the walk" on the way to perfection. In that fraternity, I saw a close-knit group of St. Francis's lovers from many backgrounds and occupations who were following that saint to a personal union with Jesus.

During the early months of my training, I realized that for the postulants and novices (which we now call inquirers and candidates), the most impressive thing was the development of a strong, personal love of Christ and the ensuing practice of the presence of God. During all the years I had been searching for God and Francis, I think God had been taking me on a solo journey. I had found out long ago that God in Jesus was a very dear,

personal friend—as real to me as any of my other friends.

It was only later that I realized that these people in my fraternity, like all Franciscans all over the world, were united in the practice of penance. In Franciscan terms, practicing penance means living a life of on-going conversion. We Franciscans are constantly aware of sin and are also constantly seeking God's grace and forgiveness; but in the beginning, the promises I would be asked to make if I wished to continue life as a Franciscan concerned me more.

The thought of promising chastity didn't bother me, for our promise of chastity is based on one's state in life. Since I was married, my promise was only concerned with adultery or fornication. However, the promise of poverty gave me a lot more trouble. I found it hard to believe that possessions can eventually possess you. I am, by nature, a collector—what some call a pack-rat—and it tears me apart to throw anything out, even if it's an old piece of string or excess coat hangers. I don't mind giving things away, but I hate to pitch out an old and faded dress that I could someday use for some useful purpose known only to God. After all these years I'm still having to remind myself of that promise every day of my life. Those who can be completely detached from the attraction of the goods of the world are truly blessed.

Our promise of obedience to lawful authority can sometimes be hard, but I have always been fortunate enough to be in fraternities with kind and understanding brothers and sisters. My promise of obedience, then, was hardest only as it referred to obedience to God. That is extremely hard for most of us. It is so easy to convince ourselves that God doesn't really mean exactly what God says, or at least that God would understand any of our particular circumstances and agree with our own interpretations or misinterpretations of God's rules. Slowly, with the help of my brothers and sisters, I realized that God means what God says, not just what we would like for God to have said.

Besides these promises, we form the habit of saying the Office of the Church every day and attending daily Mass when possible. We use one of several shorter offices if we cannot say the Prayer of the Church, but whichever one we choose, it is a great way to increase the habit of prayer and grow closer to God. I'll be forever grateful for that wonderful stipulation of the Order.

Life as a Franciscan

In our fraternities we study the life of Francis and try to follow Christ as he did. Francis had been changed from a fun-loving teen-ager, who as-

pired to the nobility by going so far as to try to win his knighthood in battle, into the leader of a group of poverty-stricken *Lesser Brothers*.

One of the most wonderful things I learned about Francis's way of life is that it is a community effort. We travel the way together, help each other, and hopefully reach our goal together. Clearly, it is a community effort to follow the Gospel. As anyone who has ever tried to do that knows, it isn't an easy way of life; but it brings peace and joy that surpass all understanding, an experience that is hard to put into words. For this reason, it is difficult to explain it to someone else; but it is important for us to try to articulate it, not only for others, but for ourselves.

St. Francis always had great love and respect for the Church and its authority and wanted his followers to share that love. It is very painful for me that my own children, who lead good lives, who are kind and considerate, and who are rearing lovely little ones of their own, don't seem to feel the need for the Church (or any church) in their lives. My greatest comfort is to remind myself that if God could lead me by so many devious paths that have so many detours on the way, God can take care of my four children, too. That realization, and my acceptance of it, is probably my last conversion and my greatest test of faith: to realize, at last, that God's will is truly my own.

Maybe God has finally answered the prayer that I was told to memorize in the early days of my walk with Francis. It is the prayer that he wrote and prayed before the great crucifix in the San Damiano Chapel in Assisi:

Most high and glorious God,
Bring light to the darkness of my heart.
Give me right faith, certain hope, and perfect charity.
Lord give me insight and wisdom
So that I might always discern your holy and true will

To that I can only say: "Amen," and continue to pray it every day.

Therefore let us desire nothing else, let us wish for
nothing else, let nothing else please us and cause
us delight except our Creator and Redeemer and
Savior, the one true God.

(Reg NB 23:9)

Book Reviews

Patti Normile. *Following Francis Of Assisi: A Spirituality For Daily Living*. St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1996. 123 pp. \$7.95 paper.

Saint Francis, one of the most loved saints of the Church calendar, lived the Gospel in such a heroic manner that ordinary Christians may find him a hero to be admired rather than a model for their own lives. Patti Normile, in her book, *Following Francis of Assisi*, clearly shows that the Franciscan Gospel way of life is indeed a feasible way of finding happiness in the midst of a complex, technical culture. She is herself a follower of Francis in the Secular Order of St. Francis.

Reviewing some of the significant events in Francis's life, the author presents him as a man freed by his austere simplicity rather than restricted by it. He does not impose a life of squalor upon us, but invites us to detachment from the gifts which created things truly are. Words like surrender, sacrifice, or conversion were no more appealing to Francis Bernadone than they are in our ordinary vocabulary, but are a challenge. The author states well:

Had Francis refused to make God his all, the world would have had for a few decades a successful business man in a small town in Umbria. But it would not have had a St. Francis of Assisi. If you refuse to make God your all, the world will have an individual who was inspired by the Holy Spirit to explore the possibility of making God her or his all. But if you refuse, the world will not have a new saint (even with a small s) from your home town.

Ms. Normile's message has an authentic ring as she explains and gives examples from real life experiences. With Francis she has discovered that the cultural cravings for wealth, control, and immediate pleasure cannot promise lasting joy in life. She has discovered the freedom attained by uncluttering life from non-essentials.

Anyone interested in St. Francis or Franciscan spirituality will find this little book a joy to read. I would highly recommend it to Secular Franciscans and Franciscan Associates.

Sara Lee Jobe. *Footsteps in Assisi*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1996. 86 pp. \$6.95 paper.

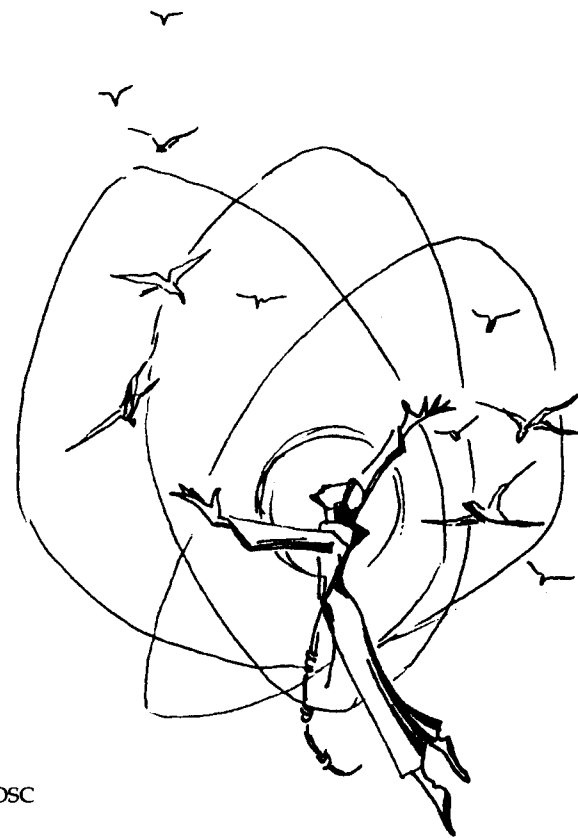
In her little book *Footsteps in Assisi*, Sara Lee Jobe skillfully brings to life two beloved saints of the thirteenth century. With the imagery of a poet she shares her reflections as she moves about the city made famous by St. Francis and St. Clare and recalls the significant events in their lives.

Woven into her reflections are the Saints' own words expressing their responses to God's call and their counsel to neighbors.

Ms. Jobe's pen and ink drawings decorating the pages add to the light and joyful atmosphere of the reflections.

The contents of the book cover the homes and haunts of St. Francis and St. Clare, an insight into the spirituality of the Middle Ages, and a description of the town of Assisi as recorded by a devout pilgrim.

Venard Niehaus, OSF



Sister Clare Ellen, OSC

Contributors

Joseph Chinnici, OFM, has just completed several years of service as Provincial Minister for the Province of St. Barbara, Oakland, California. He is a professor of history at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley and author of *Living Stones: the History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United States* (Macmillan, 1988).

Eric Kahn, OFM, is a friar of the Sacred Heart Province. A former seminary teacher, he has been in retreat ministry for more than twenty-five years. Presently he is at Cordis House, a house of prayer in Republic, Missouri.

Ramona Miller, OSF, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Rochester, Minnesota, and is Program Director at the Tau Center in Winona, Minnesota. A graduate of The Franciscan Institute, she also serves as a staff person for the Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs. She is the author of *In the Footsteps of Saint Clare: A Pilgrim's Guide Book* (Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993).

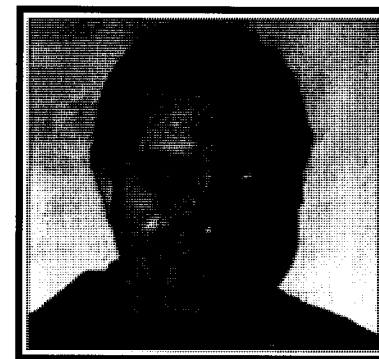
Venard Niehaus, OSF, is a Franciscan Sister of Little Falls, Minnesota. A former history teacher and librarian, she presently resides at her Motherhouse in Little Falls.

Gloria Newlin Shriver, SFO, is a Secular Franciscan, currently living in Ahoskie, North Carolina. She has served the Secular Franciscans in many leadership positions, both locally and nationally, and is now formation director for the Brothers and Sisters of the St. Francis Region, which includes five southern states.

Margaret Slowick, OSF, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Tiffin, Ohio. She serves as a campus minister at Heidelberg College and Tiffin University. As a Master's candidate at The Franciscan Institute, she is researching the origins of Franciscan Third Order Regular congregations in the United States.

CATHOLIC CAMPUS MINISTER wanted: Saint Francis College seeks a Catholic priest with collaborative leadership skills and, preferably, some experience with young adults. Primary duties include liturgical and sacramental ministries, pastoral counseling and spiritual direction, and other shared responsibilities with team of assistant director, peer ministers, volunteer members of faculty/staff. Compensation includes salary, room and board, and excellent benefit package. Send letter of application, resume, and 3 references to; Sister Felicity Dorsett, Saint Francis College, 2701 Spring Street, Fort Wayne, IN 46808. EOE M/F/V/H.

A Biographical Profile of Dominic Scotto, TOR Brooklyn New York



Father Dominic Scotto, a native of Brooklyn, New York, is a longtime board member and contributor to *The Cord*. He entered the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis of Penance in September, 1958, after four years of military service with the United States Air Force, during which time he served a tour of duty in Korea. He made his solemn profession on July 1, 1964, and was ordained on May 20, 1967.

He holds S.T.B. and S.T.L. degrees in Theology from the Catholic University of America, a Master of Arts degree in Liturgical Research from the University of Notre Dame, and S.T.L. and S.T.D. degrees in Liturgical Theology from the Pontifical University of Sant'Anselmo, Rome.

From 1969 to 1979, Father Dominic taught theology at Saint Francis Seminary and at Saint Francis College, Loretto, Pennsylvania. He was involved in the religious formation program of his province for seven years, six of which he served as Master of Professed. From 1980 to 1988 he served as Provincial Definitor for his Province.

In the area of liturgical theology he has authored two books: *The Liturgy of the Hours* and *The Table of the Lord* (St. Bede's Press), as well as numerous articles on religious life.

Father Dominic continues to be excited by the challenges presented to Franciscans by a world which is making such gigantic strides in so many different aspects of human development. He believes that we have a unique opportunity to live and exemplify Gospel values in a pure and simple manner and that the Franciscan message is as meaningful today as it was when Francis conceived it and lived it.

Currently he is stationed at St. Anthony Friary, Fairless Hills, Pennsylvania, while primarily attending to the care of his aged mother.

The Franciscan Institute Summer Session, 1997

Course Offerings

Aesthetics and Asceticism: The Franciscan Search for God
Xavier Seubert, OFM (June 23-July 24)

To Live the Gospel: Franciscan Interpretations
Robert Karris, OFM (June 23-July 24)

Franciscan Leadership
Anthony Carrozzo, OFM, and Jack Zibert, OFM (June 23-July 11)

Development of the Franciscan Person
F. Edward Coughlin, OFM (July 14-25)

Foundations of Franciscan Thought
David Flood, OFM (June 23-July 11)

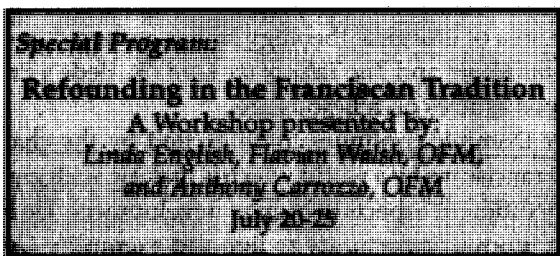
Clare and Franciscan Women
Margaret Carney, OSF (July 14-25)

Introduction to Franciscan Studies
Anthony LoGalbo, OFM (June 23-July 4)

Franciscan Theology of the World
Michael Blastic, OFM, Conv. (July 7-25)

Francis: His Life and Times
Mary Meany (June 23-July 4)

The Franciscan Movement
Dominic Monti, OFM (July 7-25)



for more information:



School of Franciscan Studies

*The Franciscan Institute
St. Bonaventure University
St. Bonaventure, NY 14778
(716) 375-2105 • (716) 375-2156

NATIONAL FRANCISCAN FORUM

Sponsored by The Franciscan Institute

June 10-15, 1997

Franciscans Doing Theology

- Our Assumptions
- Our Questions
- Our Challenges

What: A unique opportunity for Franciscans to gather and explore the implications of our theological tradition as a resource for contemporary Franciscan life and ministry. This program will attempt to dialogue with some of the key figures from the tradition such as **Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, and Scotus**. We look to them in search of insight which might guide us in our life and ministry today. An introduction to the thought of these individuals can be found in *The History of Franciscan Theology*, edited by Kenan Osborne, OFM, 1994, a primary resource for this conference. (Order from The Franciscan Institute.*) This will be the first of five such gatherings.

Where: Franciscan Center, 7665 Assisi Heights
Colorado Springs, CO 80919 (719)598-5486

Cost: \$425.00 (including \$25.00 non-refundable deposit)

Program presentors and readers include:

Michael Blastic, OFM, Conv.	Margaret Carney, OSF
Anthony Carrozzo, OFM	Edward Coughlin, OFM
Margaret Guider, OSF	Zachary Hayes, OFM
Kenan Osborne, OFM	William Short, OFM

Program Coordinator: Kathleen Moffatt, OSF
Program Facilitator: Mary Arghittu, OSF

For more information please contact:



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TAU CENTER

A Place for Franciscans
to nurture and strengthen their charism.

Retreats:

June 15-22, 1997

THE GOSPELS AS FOUNDATION OF FRANCISCAN LIFE

Jude Winkler, OFM Conv., will offer a look at the four Gospels from the point of view of what the sacred authors wanted to say to their communities and what they have to say to us today. *Cost: \$350.00.*

August 1-9, 1997

THE SOUL'S JOURNEY INTO GOD

Conferences led by André Cirino, OFM, and Josef Raischl, SFO, explain St. Bonaventure's classic, *The Soul's Journey Into God*. Rituals, common prayer, music, and Eucharistic celebrations lead the retreatants toward a profound experience of God. *Cost: \$425.00.*

November 16-22, 1997

PRAYING WITH FRANCISCAN MYSTICS

Ramona Miller, OSF, and Ingrid Peterson, OSF, present the lives and writings of some of the active and contemplative Franciscan women and men who followed Clare and Francis. A daily conference, liturgical prayer, and optional afternoon activities will provide a rhythm for this unique opportunity to pray with Franciscan mystics. *Cost: \$325.00.*

SABBATICAL PROGRAM:

January 20-April 13, 1998

SABBATICAL FOR CONTEMPORARY FRANCISCANS

A twelve week time of study and personal renewal in a community setting with lectures on the Franciscan sources, dialogue exploring the Franciscan charism in the world today, and an emphasis on living a wholistic lifestyle. The sabbatical culminates with a Holy Week Retreat and the celebration of the Easter Triduum. *Cost: \$4,200.00.*

For further information contact:

TAU CENTER
511 Hilbert Street
Winona, MN 55987
PH. (507) 454-2993 FAX: (507) 453-0910

*Summer Retreats
1997*
Franciscan Spiritual Center

609 S. Convent Road
Aston, Pennsylvania 19014

May 12-18 *Contemplative Retreat* Cost: \$240
Retreat Team: Helen Budzik, osf, Celeste Crine, osf, Ellen Duffy, osf,
Andrea Likovich, osf, and Cyprian Rosen, ofm cap.

Directed Retreats

June 16-23 Cost: \$315 July 11-17 Cost: \$240

Retreat Directors:
Celeste Crine, osf
Ellen Duffy, osf
Virginia Spiegel, osf
Rev. Paul Mast
Thomas Hartle, ofm

June 25-July 1 *Guided Retreat* Cost: \$240

Retreat Guide: Peter Chapaitis, ofm

July 21-27 Private/Liturgical Retreat Cost: \$200
Liturgists: Nicholas Terico, o. praem. and Andrea Likovich, osf

Arrival: 6:30-7:00 PM on the opening day.

Departure: after Liturgy of the Eucharist and breakfast on the closing day.
Liturgy of the Eucharist is celebrated daily.

The Franciscan Spiritual Center is situated in the newly renovated southeast wing of Our Lady of Angels Convent, the motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. Located about 20 miles south of Philadelphia and just north of the Delaware state line, the Center consists of 21 rooms with private bath, two lounge areas, spiritual direction rooms, reading area, kitchenette, and elevator. The Center is fully air-conditioned and is handicapped accessible. Quiet, shaded grounds provide ample space for walking and solitude. Reservations are requested and there is a \$45 non-refundable deposit for each retreat.

For more information and/or to register,
write to the address above
or call (610) 459-4077.

**THE FRANCISCAN & MONASTIC HERITAGE FOR
DAILY LIVING**

A RETREAT WITH JOHN MICHAEL TALBOT

JULY 10-13, 1997
7:30 Thursday Evening through 12:30 P.M. Sunday

The early monastic movements were the "renewal" movements of yesterday and, as such, they are vitally important to our understanding of renewal, both communal and personal, in a world increasingly hostile and indifferent to Christian standards.

In this three-night event, John Michael Talbot will, in particular, draw from his book, "Hermitage", the monastic developments from the Desert Fathers, Celtic monasticism, and Benedictine and Franciscan traditions as they apply to our daily lives.

DIRECTOR: John Michael Talbot, BSC, is an internationally known musician, composer and performing artist as well as an author of several books. He has presented numerous workshops and retreats. He is founder and General Minister of the Brothers & Sisters of Charity, a Catholic-based community and integrated Monastic expression of celibate brothers, celibate sisters, families and singles, and a domestic expression of those who outside their homes.

SUGGESTED DONATION: \$165

A deposit of \$50/person, \$75/couple is requested for registration. Deposits are normally NON-REFUNDABLE and are placed in our scholarship fund.

REGISTRATION FORM

Name _____

Address _____

Program _____ Dates _____

Phone _____

Please mail with deposit to:
LITTLE PORTION RETREAT & TRAINING CENTER
RT. 4, BOX 430
EUREKA SPINGS, AR 72632
PHONE: 501-253-7379

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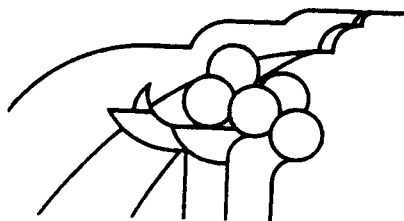
**FRANCISCAN
INTERNSHIP
PROGRAM**
in
**Spiritual Direction
and
Directed Retreats**

1998

March 29-June 20, 1998
(Deadline: December 15, 1997)
29th Session

A three-month ministerial and experiential program born out of the conviction that our Franciscan charism enables us to bring a distinctive Franciscan approach to our ministries.

Helpful to religious and lay formators, retreat directors, parish and hospital ministers, contemplatives, missionaries, community leadership, personal renewal.



For more information contact:

Marilyn Joyce, osf; Tom Speier, ofm
St. Francis Center
10290 Mill Road
Cincinnati, OH 45231
Phone (513) 825-9300 • FAX (513) 825-1083



The Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, a ministry outreach of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, is located on 33 acres of rolling hillside in the South Hills of Pittsburgh. The Center, with 23 private bedrooms, has meeting space available for groups of various sizes. Three hermitages in the secluded wooded area on the grounds are available for day, overnight, or extended stays.

The Franciscan Spirit and Life Center offers programs, workshops, and retreats on Franciscan spirituality, holistic development, evangelization, reconciliation and peace, the Enneagram and dreams.

The following Franciscan programs will be offered at the Center:

North American Franciscans and a New Century

April 4, 1997 (7:00 PM) - April 6, 1997 (Noon)
—Margaret Carney, OSF

Flesh to Spirit — (Jung and Francis)

Transformation in the Life of St. Francis of Assisi
April 18, 1997 (7:00 PM) - April 20, 1997 (Noon)
—David Cordisco, PhD

Admonitions and Scripture

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

Directed Retreat

June 8-14, 1997 — Sr. J. Lora Dambroski, OSF
Bro. Malachy Broderick, FSC
Fr. Timothy Fitzgerald, CP

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

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

Mission Statement

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

ON THE FRANCISCAN CIRCUIT COMING EVENTS 1997

Friday, March 21-Saturday, March 22

"Meeting Myself in Christ." William Short, OFM. The Franciscan Center, Syracuse, NY. 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 511 Hilbert. St., Winona, MN 55987, ph. 507-454-2993; fax 507-453-0910.

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, PO Box 29080, Washington, DC 20017, ph. 202-529-2334, fax 202-529-7016.

Thursday, April 4-Saturday, April 6

"North American Franciscans and a New Century." Margaret Carney, OSF. Spirit and Life Center, Pittsburgh (see ad p. 99).

Thursday, April 17-Monday, April 21

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

Friday, April 18-Sunday April 20

"Flesh to Spirit (Jung and Francis)." David Cordisco, PhD. Spirit and Life Center, Pittsburgh (see ad p. 99).

Monday, May 12-Sunday, May 18

Contemplative Retreat. Helen Budzik, osf, Celeste Crine, osf, Ellen Duffy, osf, Andrea Likovich, osf, Cyprian Rosen, ofm cap. Franciscan Spiritual Center, Philadelphia, (see ad, p. 96).

Sunday, June 1-Saturday, June 7

"Admonitions and Scripture." Giles Schinelli, TOR. Spirit and Life Center, Pittsburgh (see ad p. 99).

Saturday, April 26-Sunday, April 27

"Facing the Christ Incarnate." Franciscan Federation at Our Lady of Angels Convent, Aston, PA. Contact: Franciscan Federation, Washington, DC (see above).

Friday, May 2-Saturday, May 10

"The Soul's Journey Into God." A Franciscan Retreat. André Cirino, OFM and Josef Raischl. Franciscan Center, 459 River Road, Andover, MA 01810, ph. 508-851-3391.

Tuesday, June 10-Sunday, June 15

"Franciscans Doing Theology," sponsored by The Franciscan Institute at The Franciscan Center, Colorado Springs (see ad p. 93).

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
1Er	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges
1Cl	Rule of Clare
1Cl	Testament of Clare
1Cl	Blessing of Clare

Early Franciscan Sources

1st	First Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
2nd	Second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
3rd	Third Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
4th	Fourth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
5th	Fifth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
6th	Sixth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
7th	Seventh Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
8th	Eighth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
9th	Ninth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
10th	Tenth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
11th	Eleventh Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
12th	Twelfth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
13th	Thirteenth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
14th	Fourteenth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
15th	Fifteenth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
16th	Sixteenth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
17th	Seventeenth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
18th	Eighteenth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
19th	Nineteenth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
20th	Twentieth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
21st	Twenty-first Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
22nd	Twenty-second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
23rd	Twenty-third Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
24th	Twenty-fourth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
25th	Twenty-fifth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
26th	Twenty-sixth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
27th	Twenty-seventh Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
28th	Twenty-eighth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
29th	Twenty-ninth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
30th	Thirtieth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
31st	Thirty-first Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
32nd	Thirty-second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
33rd	Thirty-third Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
34th	Thirty-fourth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
35th	Thirty-fifth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
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37th	Thirty-seventh Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
38th	Thirty-eighth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
39th	Thirty-ninth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
40th	Fortieth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
41st	Forty-first Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
42nd	Forty-second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
43rd	Forty-third Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
44th	Forty-fourth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
45th	Forty-fifth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
46th	Forty-sixth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
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56th	Fifty-sixth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
57th	Fifty-seventh Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
58th	Fifty-eighth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
59th	Fifty-ninth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
60th	Sixtieth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
61st	Sixty-first Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
62nd	Sixty-second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
63rd	Sixty-third Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
64th	Sixty-fourth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
65th	Sixty-fifth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
66th	Sixty-sixth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
67th	Sixty-seventh Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
68th	Sixty-eighth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
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70th	Seventieth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
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78th	Seventy-eighth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
79th	Seventy-ninth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
80th	Eightieth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
81st	Eighty-first Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
82nd	Eighty-second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
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84th	Eighty-fourth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
85th	Eighty-fifth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
86th	Eighty-sixth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
87th	Eighty-seventh Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
88th	Eighty-eighth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
89th	Eighty-ninth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
90th	Ninetieth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
91st	Ninety-first Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
92nd	Ninety-second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
93rd	Ninety-third Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
94th	Ninety-fourth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
95th	Ninety-fifth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
96th	Ninety-sixth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
97th	Ninety-seventh Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
98th	Ninety-eighth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
99th	Ninety-ninth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
100th	Hundredth Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano