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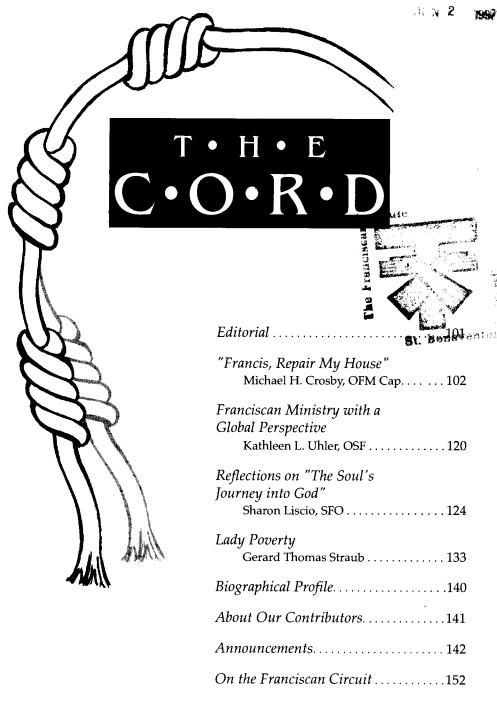
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THE CORD

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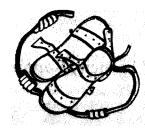
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Editorial

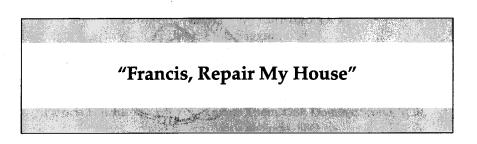


In a talk given some years ago, Eric Doyle described Francis as a medieval man who "saw the need to go back to the only conformity that the Church ... must comply with—the teaching of the Holy Gospel." Francis "brought the Gospel into the heart of the medieval world." For Francis, conversion was a "total shift of meaning—everything took on a fresh meaning through a relationship . . . with the unseen one, Christ the Lord," given to us as a brother. (Eric Doyle, OFM, "A Church in Ruins," unpublished talk, tape at St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, n.d.)

Conversion, change of heart, is at the very center of the Franciscan experience, as it is at the very center of the Gospel. "Repent and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15) is not just a call to some kind of individual moral process; it is a call to personal and societal transformation, an invitation to let the Spirit of God enter our lives in ways that really change us, that turn us around. For some, this change can be sudden and dramatic; for others gradual and seemingly imperceptible, like petals unfolding. But unless it is happening, the Gospel is not alive in our lives or in our societies.

In this issue of *The Cord*, Michael Crosby challenges us as Church to the radical change of disposition that is necessary for ecclesial integrity. He reminds us that Francis and Clare's love for the Church compelled them to seek its Gospel renewal in their very lives and in the lives of their followers. Kathleen Uhler witnesses the power of the Franciscan ministries of contemplation and compassion in an international forum. Sharon Liscio reflects on the power of Bonaventure's *Itinerarium* to stir us to personal transformation. Gerard Thomas Straub describes how sharing the lives of our poor brothers and sisters can be for us an avenue of profound change of disposition.

Each of these writings, in its own way, helps us to understand better the incredible work that God wants to do in us and in our world today. In each we find a genuine account of how the good news is announced to us and through us when we allow ourselves to be servants of the Gospel.



Michael H. Crosby, OFM Cap.

"Francis, go, repair my house, which, as you see, is falling completely to ruin" (2Cel 10).1

In this article I would like to probe what happened to Francis and his partner Clare as a consequence of their embrace of this challenge from the Crucified One. I have discovered that this consideration turns out to be a rationale for my own effort to build up the Church. It provides me the opportunity to verbalize how I, as a Franciscan loyal to the Church, can still dissent and resist.²

Today there is an urgent need for us to examine the approach of Francis and Clare in light of signs all around us that our Church too is falling into ruin. The group calling for "Common Ground" has termed the situation as being "in peril." No matter what words we use, we know there are problems. In this article I'll offer a "Franciscan" way to address them.

I want to begin my comments by describing the conditions in society and the institutional Church in the late 1100s and early 1200s. Then I want to show how Francis's response to "repair my house" never led him to imagine leaving the institution, despite the power of a Pope like Innocent III. Serene in the wisdom of knowing he couldn't change its bureaucracy, he would repair the house by courageously creating an alternative household of brothers. He'd also support Clare in her new household at San Damiano.

I will argue that, while Francis's approach may not have reformed the institutional Church per se, it did breathe into the body of Christ a new expression of the Spirit that represented a life-giving alternative. Then, because her way of dealing with Rome in conflictual situations expressed

itself differently from Francis's, I want to show how Clare of Assisi serves as a model of resistance for us when we find ourselves at odds with the ways of Rome. To conclude my remarks, I will suggest some principles of dissent and resistance flowing from the examples of Francis and Clare that might guide us in our own effort to build up our Church, which we can see is falling into ruin. I share my remarks in thanks for the life of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, whose effort to find "Common Ground" for a "Church in time of peril" reflects for me the powerful witness of just one more among us who has tried to repair the house.

Conditions in Society and Church at the Time of Francis's Call

At the time Francis was born in 1182, popes and emperors were battling for hegemony. Their contests included efforts to win over allegiance from Italy's rising communes, like Assisi. Their internal battles were compounded on October 2, 1187. On that date, after eighty-four years of Christian rule, Jerusalem fell to the Moslems.

Before Francis was a teenager, Conrad Moscaincervelo took over control of Assisi. He ruled it and its environs from the Rocca Maggiore, the fortress overlooking the city and the Umbrian countryside. He governed with the support of the emperor in dependence on the help of the traditional feudal lords. In the emperor's name he acted as their patron, protecting them against the ever-increasing uprisings of Assisi's citizens. However, all these warring social relations changed when Francis was in his sixteenth year.

On January 8, 1198, Pope Celestine III died after a seven-year reign. He was succeeded by Cardinal Lotario di Segni, who took the name Innocent III. One of his first actions was to seek the restoration of papal rule in Italy's central area, including Assisi. The Pope persuaded Duke Conrad to change allegiance from the emperor to himself. However, as soon as Conrad left Assisi to swear his new fealty to Innocent, the people of Assisi's commune laid siege to the Rocca and destroyed it.

The next year (1199), civil war erupted. Assisi's rising merchant class challenged the last vestiges of the feudal families and their interests. The family of Favarone di Offreduccio, was one of them. In 1194 his wife, the Lady Ortolana, had given birth to their first child, a daughter named Clare. Realizing they'd likely lose their lives along with their property if they stayed in Assisi, they fled to Perugia, which had aligned itself with the pope.

In the next years hostilities between Assisi and Perugia increased. After isolated raids and ambushes, destruction of crops and border skirmishes, a great battle occurred in November, 1202. Francis fought for Assisi and

was taken prisoner. He remained imprisoned in Perugia for a year, until his father ransomed him.

Assisi and Perugia signed a peace agreement in 1203, but their conflicts continued until 1209. Although he had returned home, Francis found another battle being waged inside his soul.⁴ The outward manifestation of this conflict got expressed in a kind of lethargy which he could not shake. When he was about twenty-two, however, he was energized by talk of the prowess of Walter of Brienne. Francis decided to join this knight, become knighted himself, and thus give his life some meaning. So in 1204 he rode off to Apulia to join de Brienne.

On the first night, while at Spoleto, another fever struck. He went to bed and had an unexpected dream. As he stood in a room filled with arms and the trappings of war, a voice asked him "who could do better for him, the servant or the Lord." When he answered, "The Lord," the voice responded: "Why then are you seeking the servant in place of the Lord? (2Cel 6).

Francis returned home, but by now he had little interest in Peter's business and in Assisi's military expeditions. Sensing that his future had something to do with a power greater than economics and violence, he began wandering. In the process, (if Celano's Second Life of St. Francis is right), three things occured that set him on a path which would guide him the rest of his life. First he went to Rome. There he changed clothes with a poor man and began to eat with poor people. Upon his return, he had an encounter with a leper. Finally, he experienced the voice from the Cross at San Damiano. Linking the Apulia experience with the call from the cross, Jan van de Pavert notes a deeper call to an ecclesial repair in Francis's mandate. In a Church sustained by a worldly culture:

It was Francis' intention to join the battle in Apulia, to become a knight, a man of war, of armor, of power, of violence. But God summoned him to return and asked him: "Can't you see that my house is being destroyed?" The house of God exists wherever the living God is revealed in the suffering servant on the cross, wherever God's glory is recognized in the broken body of the crucified. A Church preoccupied with war, force and power in order to push through her own "rights" is in self-destruction; the self-understanding of the Church as God's house becomes a delusion. From the Crucified One came the mandate: "Francis, restore my house." He would fulfill this mandate in the way he followed [Christ].6

Francis's Call to Repair the House; Innocent's Dream

At first Francis interpreted his call quite literally. "Though the divine command concerned itself with the Church that Christ had purchased with

his own blood" (2Cel 11), Francis began his rebuilding effort by giving money to a priest for a lamp and oil so the image of Christ Crucified could always be seen. Then he set out repairing the building itself. To aid the work he began soliciting others' help. Hearing about his son's begging, Peter Bernadone flew into a rage. But Francis continued.

After his San Damiano experience other men began to join Francis. He had compiled some gospel passages and linked them together with reflections of his own as a kind of "rule of life." With this in hand, in the summer of 1210, he and his troop journeyed to Rome to seek permission for their way of life. Bishop Guido of Assisi happened to be in Rome when they arrived. According to Arnaldo Fortini:

Innocent III (who intended to restore the complete temporal rule of the Church) could not have had a more faithful executor than the bishop of Assisi. In Guido, strong and energetic, episcopal power was once again linked with old unlimited aspiration for material riches.⁷

Upon learning of the group's plans, Guido feared they might leave Assisi, and so he presented Francis and his followers to the powerful Cardinal Giovanni Colona.

Like Guido, Cardinal John thought their Gospel project to be impossible to implement. While he offered them accommodations, he advised them to join another group of religious. However, after a few days, during which he was able to observe their commitment, he changed his mind. He promised to support their cause before the pope and the Curia, which now was at the "high point in the centralization of ecclesiastical power." Addressing the Curia, Cardinal John's words echoed Francis's earlier San Damiano mandate:

I have found a most excellent man who desires to live according to the form of the Gospel and in everything to observe evangelic perfection. I am convinced that through this man our Lord wills to renew the faith of Holy Church in the whole world (L3S 48).

Impressed with the Cardinal's insight, Innocent asked that the fledgling group appear before him.

Opinions differ as to what happened the next day at the papal audience. While some insist Innocent violently resisted the Franciscan project, a majority of writers say he offered reasonable cautions and considered objections. Whatever the concerns being raised, Francis had a response based on his conviction of the Spirit's calling: the "Most High" revealed he should live this way and God gave him these brothers. The papal audience

closed with Innocent's suggestion that they all pray to know God's will in the matter.

That night the Pope had a dream. Fully vested, he walked into the Basilica of St. John Lateran, the Mother Church of Catholicism. As he strolled, the colonnades seemed to extend on and on forever. All of a sudden a great rumble thundered through the edifice. Everything began collapsing. The whole building seemed headed for ruin. As it started falling apart in front of him he closed his eyes. When he reopened them, the Basilica had returned to its previous state. It was being singularly supported by a little man. The Pope recognized him as the beggar from Assisi who had just visited him. "Surely," he said, "this is that man who, by his works and by the teaching of Christ, will give support to the Church" (2Cel 17).

At this point, it is important to find links among Francis's San Damiano experience, the wording of Cardinal Giovanni Colona's recommendation favoring the fledgling movement, and the dream of Pope Innocent III. All three accounts depict images of the Church related to ruin and repair. In many ways they reflect notions contained in the messianic promise of the one[s] anointed to be Servant[s] of God in the Prophet Isaiah: "They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations" (Is. 61:4).

Francis's Call in Innocent's Church

In order to recognize how Francis's call might have an echo in our present and future Church, we need to examine more deeply the entrenched and institutionalized power system within the "house" which Francis felt mandated to repair. Innocent III firmly believed the papacy's role was to rule theocratically. He was to be the supreme power at the head of a hierarchy of vassal states. In fulfilling this goal he proved to be very successful. Fortini, writes:

His success had exceeded his every aspiration, since kings and emperors were now coming to prostrate themselves humbly at his feet, receive their crowns from him, renounce their secular prerogatives, and obey him without argument. In truth, he was by now able to consider himself the lord of all, who at will controlled the world [the world, of course, being the world known to Europeans at that time].9

He demonstrated this power by humbling Otto IV on October 4, 1209. He forbade the Emperor to go any further into Rome than the Tiber. The Emperor obeyed the Pope.

With such all-embracing control defining papal power, it is not surprising that a sense of worldliness characterized Innocent and his court. Politics, economics, and military concerns dominated. Anything considered "spiritual" would serve a religion whose god seemed far from the gospel's terrain. A historian of the era, Jacques de Vitry, described the scene:

While spending a short time at the [Roman] Curia, I encountered several things which I did not like. There is so much occupation with temporal and worldly things, with kings and kingdoms, processes and recourses, that it was almost impossible to speak, even briefly, of things spiritual.¹⁰

Obsessed with controlling the world outside through domination and the Church within through orthodoxy, Innocent was suspicious of any new movement claiming to be under a higher power, even if that other power might be the Holy Spirit. It wasn't that Innocent had no grounding in the Spirit or opposed the establishment of new groups. He just wanted to be sure they would operate under his control. With this agenda he approved the Humiliati in 1201 and the Poor Catholics of Durandus of Huesca. In the same year that he confirmed Francis's way, he also confirmed that of the Poor Lombards of Bernard Prim. Two years later he sanctioned another group connected to the Poor Lombards.

However, alongside these groups many other reform movements had arisen. They too appealed to gospel values, especially poverty. Yet they had become heretical and anti-clerical. Chief among these groups were the Waldensians and the Cathari, or Albigensians. These two popular heretical movements both responded to the growing sense of independence characterizing Italy's communes, as well as the peoples' frustration with a greedy, grasping, and controlling clergy. They also rejected any notion of salvation in which the Church, especially, its clergy, mediated between God and human beings.

Given this background, Francis's movement seemed different from these others as he stood before Innocent. The Pope was intrigued with the beggar. He detected no rebellion in him. On the contrary, Francis appeared desirous of operating within the institutional structures. How could this be? As Mico notes:

While Francis's attitude to poverty was similar to that of the other radical movements, his view of obedience could not have been more different. In the eyes of the hierarchy, the other groups were simply rebels because they gave all their allegiance to the word of God and did not acknowledge that the Church had any authority over them, a view to which Francis was totally opposed.¹¹

The Church controlled by Innocent III had reached what was quite possibly the highest level of secular power in its history and, as a consequence, what might have been her lowest degree of fidelity to the Gospel. The institutional Church organized itself on the model of the empire, after the pattern of feudalism. Despite the Gregorian reforms, more than half the land in Europe belonged to clerical benefices. One of the priests just outside Francis's district, who held the investiture all during Francis' lifetime, was continually before the consuls, quarreling with neighbors and seeking to insure his control over the households in his jurisdiction.¹²

Once known as havens from avarice, most monasteries seemed little different. They too had joined the race for wealth and control. Corruption ruled. Indeed, as Celano wrote: "Showing forth in themselves nothing of the Christian religion either in their lives or in their conduct" people took "refuge under the mere name of Christianity" (1Cel 1). Religion had succumbed to the "deadly disease," which had come to infect everyone.

Since this institutionalized decadence was so pervasive, it was probably beyond Francis's imagination even to consider operating outside its dynamics and structures. Francis's whole life revolved around the Catholic faith. It had been reinforced by his bishop, who had been wise enough or political enough to remain on the side of the people as they liberated themselves from the feudal lords and grew together as a commune. Mico notes:

This historical background gave Francis a vision of the Church such that, no matter how problematic and painful the institutional element in it might turn out to be at times, he was not deterred from putting into practice his decision to follow Christ in poverty and humility. From this we can deduce that, for Francis, the Church, even as a structured institution, was something which formed part of his origins and which he could not regard as a purely external society that had nothing to do with him. Instead, he saw the Church as a loving family into which he had been born and which had cared for and sustained him and in which he hoped to realize his Gospel plans.¹³

If the institutional element of the Church was sick, was it possible for Francis to nurse it to health? In this sense, we face today the same dilemma which Francis faced. Could Francis be faithful to his San Damiano mandate within an institution fallen into decay?

Francis Offers a Life-giving Alternative

Some scholars insist Francis never set out to reform the Church. According to Giovanni Miccoli:

However paradoxical it may seem, there is no more subtle distortion of Francis's religious experience than to interpret it as a plan for the reform of the Church and thus the renewal of pastoral activity and Christian life and society.¹⁴

Engelbert Grau extends this thought to Clare as well when he writes:

Francis and Clare [did not] have a program to counter the contradiction between the teaching of Christ and the practice of Christians; they have no program to reform the Church seeking power and earthly possessions.¹⁵

Others feel Francis did dream of reforming the institutional Church but was co-opted by this same Church. Scholars like Paul Sabatier, who wrote a controversial life of Francis in 1894, explain that Francis originally rebelled against the institutional Church but gradually got tamed by the Roman Curia in a way that forced him to live within its self-defined boundaries. Those of the Sabatier school say that the dream got domesticated in a way that made the revolutionary a conformist.

A third interpretation comes from "the German School." This is represented by such scholars as the Franciscans Englebert Grau and Kajetan Esser. In their view Francis was totally obedient and never had any conflicts with the Curia. Furthermore, they argue, even if Francis had experienced conflicts, he would have gone immediately to the Curia to have them resolved.

In a way all three positions hold some truth, but none hold enough of it. As to the first opinion about Francis never envisioning reforming the Church, it may be true that he never explicitly used the word. But it is also true that he spent his whole life trying to fulfill what he considered a divine mandate to "repair my house" and to live with his followers in such a way that the repair of the Church might occur.

As for Sabatier's argument about Francis's being co-opted by the Curia, it seems too simplistic. Rather than repeating Francis's oft-repeated words on the need to be obedient and submissive to Rome and its representatives (down to the most despised cleric), we need to ascertain the subtle ways he continually and non-violently resisted being co-opted by offering an alternative way of life to that of the institutional Church in that particular milieu.

Within the institution's world of power where people were divided between the haves and the have-nots, the *maiores* and the *minores*, even higher and lower clergy, Francis adopted the name "minor" for himself and all his followers. In the world of wealth, which required armies to

preserve Church property and privileges, Francis explained to a bishop who tried to persuade him to mitigate his approach toward poverty:

My Lord, if we had any possessions we should also be forced to have arms to protect them, since possessions are a cause of disputes and strife, and in many ways we should be hindered from loving God and our neighbor. Therefore in this life we wish to have no temporal possessions (L3S 33; cf. AP 16d).

In the world of the institutional Church's *modus operandi*, where form followed function, part of its ruin could be traced to the way so many men coveted and clung to prelacies. Francis resisted these for his brothers. Responding to a bishop who suggested his followers would make good members of the hierarchy, Francis reportedly declared:

Lord, my brothers are called minors so that they will not presume to become greater. Their vocation teaches them to remain in a lowly station and to follow the footsteps of the humble Christ, so that in the end they may be exalted above the rest in the sight of the saints. If . . . you want them to bear fruit for the Church of God, hold them and preserve them in the station to which they have been called, and bring them back to a lowly station, even if they are unwilling. I pray you, therefore, Father, that you by no means permit them to rise to any prelacy, lest they become prouder rather than poorer and grow arrogant toward the rest (2Cel 148).

Most of the examples I've used describing Francis's alternative way of living within the institutional Church were addressed vis-à-vis members of the hieararchy who had different assumptions about the Christian life. These examples do little to support Sabatier's contention about Francis's Curial cooptation. If any seduction did take place, we need to ask ourselves how the Curia could have gotten the upper hand without the support of some members of Francis's own community. Clearly there were those who were so monasticized and clericalized that they couldn't grasp the uniqueness of Francis's return to evangelical itinerancy and fraternity. When some of his followers grew tired of his austerity and tried to change his direction, they sought help from the hierarchy, especially Cardinal Hugolino, the future Pope Gregory IX. Together they tried to persuade Francis to join one of the traditional religious orders. Francis resisted. Holding his ground before the Cardinal and his brothers, he declared:

"My brothers, my brothers, God called me to walk in the way of humility and showed me the way of simplicity. I do not want to hear any mention of the rule of St. Augustine, of St. Bernard, or of St. Benedict. The Lord has told me that he wanted to make a new fool of me in the world and God does not want to lead us by any other knowledge than that. God will use your personal knowledge and your wisdom to confound you; he has policemen to punish you, and I put my trust in him. Then to your shame you will return to your first state, whether you like it or not!" The cardinal, dumfounded, kept silence, and all the brothers were gripped by fear (LP 114).16

As to the third point raised by the German Franciscans, it does seem that Francis never showed evidence of any serious problem with the institutional Church in fulfilling his dream. But such a possibility cannot lead us to conclude that Francis was clerically co-dependent or did not resist when church leaders insisted on something against his or his followers' consciences. In fact such a conclusion is contradicted in his own Rule. There he establishes line-authority in the Order squarely within the Roman system:

The rule and life of the Friars Minor is this: to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without anything of their own, and in chastity. Brother Francis promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Honorius and his canonically elected successors and to the Roman Church. And let the other brothers be bound to obey Brother Francis and his successors (RegB 1:1-3).

This passage makes it clear that Francis's First Order followers must obey the head of the Order, who, in turn, must obey the Pope. With this hierarchical form of obedience, any obediential response we make to the Pope as Franciscans comes through our obedience to our superiors. However, Francis writes in the same Rule (approved by Rome): "I strictly command them to obey their ministers in all those things which they have promised the Lord to observe and which are not against [their] consciences and our Rule" (RegB 10:3).

The above prescription for our life shows how Francis institutionalized a way of resistance to "all those things" that might undermine the Franciscan way of "repairing the house." However, as we've already seen, Francis's way to repair the house cannot be characterized as one of direct resistance but as one which offers a way of life within the excesses of power, property, and prestige. Above all, he offers an alternative "house," modeled on that family we know as the Holy Trinity.

Within the house, falling into ruin because of its seduction by the world, Francis envisioned a new household seduced by the Spirit. So defined was he by this Spirit and so desirous of having this Spirit be the core of his

community of equals, he viewed this most basic element of his life encapsulated as the soul for his entire Order.

"With God," he said, "there is no respect of persons, and the minister general of the order, the Holy Spirit, rests equally upon the poor and the simple." He wanted this thought inserted into his rule, but since it was already approved by papal bull, this could not be done (2Cel 193).

In the context of a Church and society defined by *maiores* and *minores*, Francis immersed himself in the Holy Spirit as the great equalizer. He also found in the relationships within the Triune God the model of equality that he envisioned for his new household within the old "house" that was falling into ruin. In one of his most-used references to John's Gospel, he showed eloquently and clearly how his followers—indeed all the faithful—must be grounded in the Triune God. For instance, in his Letter to All the Faithful, he wrote:

Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and perservere in doing them, since the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and He will make His home and dwelling among them. They are children of the heavenly Father whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined to our Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. We are brothers to Him when we do the will of the Father Who is in heaven. [We are] mothers, when we carry Him in our heart and body through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and [when] we give birth to Him through [His] holy manner of working which should shine before others as an example (1EpFid 5-10).

Probably the most radical way the future Church will be built up from its ruins will be when its structures and dynamics reflect the trinitarian community of God. Therein all persons are equal; all relationships among those persons are defined by the passion each member has that the other have full access to all the resources held by one's self. In such a "household" all relationships are defined by meeting each other's needs. A most beautiful exemplification of this community of equals sharing all things in common is found in the words Francis used to exhort his brothers to be continually available to each other:

And wherever the brothers may be together or meet [other] brothers, let them give witness that they are members of one family. And let each one confidently make known his need to the other,

for, if a mother has such care and love for her son born according to the flesh, should not someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit even more diligently? (RegB 6:7-8).

In her writings Clare also sought to establish her Order in trinitarian groundings. She linked her sisters' very identity with their participation in the household of God. Invariably she refers to her followers as "sisters," "spouses," and even "mothers." Such images are also found in her Rule. In one place therein she quotes from the "Form of Life" Francis gave her and her sisters:

Since by divine inspiration you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the most high King, the heavenly Father, and have taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse, choosing to live according to the perfection of the holy Gospel, I resolve and promise for myself and for my brothers always to have that same loving care and special solicitude for you as [I have] for them (RCl 6:2).

Resistance—Clare's Way of Repairing the House

Like Francis, Clare always insisted on being submissive to Roman authorities and being loyal to the Pope and his representatives. Yet we know from her history that her way of being submissive and loyal expressed itself in non-traditional ways, especially when the hierarchy tried to persuade or pressure her to shift from what she believed to be her divine calling.

Clare would not likely have resisted the hierarchy without Francis's support. Although she didn't need it, it seems he lent her his full support when she discerned the need to dissent. Also, possibly expecting she'd have trouble from the hierarchy after he died, Francis seems to have anticipated this in the "Last Will" he wrote for Clare toward the end of his life: "Keep most careful watch that you never depart from this by reason of the teaching or advice of anyone." (UltVol 3).

While Francis may never have given evidence of any significant differences with Rome, the words in his "Last Will" to Clare and Clare's own life make it clear that room exists for a "Franciscan" model of dissent and method of resistance. This could serve us well in the present and future Church as long as we define ourselves as Roman Catholics.

In this regard we might examine in greater detail the actions of Clare of Assisi. One cannot consider Francis isolated from Clare. The two mirrored each other. They were co-dreamers and collaborators. They both aspired to concretize in their worlds the gospel, especially its way of poverty, in order to fulfill the mandate of the Crucified One at San Damiano. In-

deed, Clare's first foundation and perpetual residence took place within the confines of this very church.

Two years after Francis received, with the patronage of Bishop Guido, formal approval from Innocent III for his way of life, Clare, again with Guido's support, went to Francis and began to translate his vision into a feminine form. Before her family could discover what she had done and insist on her return, Francis escorted her to the sanctuary of a nearby Benedictine convent. She soon moved to San Angelo di Panzo near the Carceri, a favored place of Francis. There, just sixteen days after Clare had stolen away from her family, her sister Agnes joined her. Shortly after that they moved to San Damiano, where Clare remained for the rest of her life.

Three years after the foundation of Clare's community, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) decreed that any new religious communities not yet approved must adopt the rule of an established Order. Because the "form of life" written for her by Francis lacked official approval, the "Ladies of San Damiano," as they were called, were given the Benedictine Rule.

Thus began a series of conflicts between Clare and Rome. The Benedictine Rule allowed monasteries to own property. Clare wanted the "privilege of poverty" which the brothers enjoyed. This meant her sisters could neither individually nor collectively claim ownership of property. Clare appealed to Innocent III to grant her this privilege, which he did, issuing a decree declaring: "by the authority of this letter . . . no one can compel you to receive possessions." 18

Innocent died in 1216. At this time the Cardinal Protector of the Order was Cardinal Hugolino. In 1218, following the Lateran Council's decree, he once more confirmed for the Poor Ladies the Benedictine Rule; to it he added a "form of life." But since this did not include the privilege of poverty, Clare sought it again. Hugolino did not want to reinstate it, but Clare remained steadfast. The "Most High," God's Spirit, had revealed to her that she should live evangelically in poverty. Her arguments prevailed; Hugolino acceded to her request.

Upon becoming Pope (Gregory IX), Hugolino again tried to pressure Clare to change her course. He believed that corporate poverty might prove too difficult for the community. Again he urged her to accept possessions. Again Clare resisted his proposal. Once more he relented. In 1228 he reconfirmed the privilege of poverty.

At the surface things seemed to go well. However, Clare still chafed under the Benedictine Rule. Having prevailed when Cardinal Hugolino tried to impose on her a way of life foreign to her vision (1218-1219), Clare faced another hurdle in 1245 when a new Pope, Innocent IV, unilaterally repealed the privilege of poverty and imposed another Rule on the San

Damiano group. Clare found this Rule unacceptable. In conscience she could not obey a papal rule that undermined what she considered a mandate from "the Most High." Even as she lay on her deathbed, Clare persisted in this conviction of conscience. In the face of her persistence, Innocent blinked. He journeyed to San Damiano and gave verbal acceptance to the Rule she herself had written. The Bull making legal his order was issued on August 9, 1253. It was hand-delivered by a friar on August 10. Clare died the next day.

What happened that Innocent converted rather than Clare? From the start, it seems that Clare wanted her Rule to reflect the Later Rule of the friars. Innocent's Rule having been rejected, the Cardinal Protector, Rinaldo Segni, offered her another. Again she resisted. Finally, in September 1252, a year before she died, the Cardinal gave approval to Clare's own Rule with its privilege of poverty. Still Clare lacked papal approval. This finally came when the Pope discerned not only Clare's adamant position, but the Spirit's power behind it.

In her Rule Clare promised "obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Innocent and to his canonically elected successors, and to the Roman Church" (RCl 1:3). One might ask how she could have been so adamant in resisting the earlier rules the popes and their representative tried to force on her. The answer seems simple if you read what she wrote just one sentence above. This sentence opens her Rule: "The form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters which the Blessed Francis established, is this: to observe the holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity" (RCl 1:1-2). The Gospel's mandate came before the fiat of the Pope. In her mind, the way she and her sisters would "repair the house" could only be by radical observance of the evangelical poverty of Jesus.¹⁹

While Clare's dissent over the rule defined much of her life, especially its latter years, she resisted Rome's encroachments at other times as well. In 1230, her friend Gregory IX issued a decree making it practically impossible for the friars to preach God's word to the sisters. Upon receiving the decree, Clare became so angry that she "fired" the friars. Defiantly, she decided to do the only thing women of her era could do in the face of brute male power: she began to pray and fast. Clare's mode of fasting was not just a pious activity; it was an act of resistance, a "holy anorexia." Her form of resistance demonstrates that hunger strikes did not begin with Ghandi. As he had done earlier in response to Clare's resisting the undermining of her privilege of poverty, Gregory changed his mind.

At that time in the institutional Church, the forms of debate and dissent and the kind of "disobedience" evidenced by Clare were not seen as

signs of "disloyalty." Instead, they were considered concrete manifestations of fidelity to the Spirit working in one's life despite institutional differences. Indeed, the resistance Clare showed to popes and protectors on the matter of the privilege of poverty, as well as to Gregory's decree about the friars' preaching, was considered in her beatification process as concrete evidence of her spirit-based grounding and holiness.²¹

Principles for Repairing the House Falling into Ruin

Having offered all these reflections, and aware of how our contemporary Church is "in peril," we might now ask: "What can we learn from the response of Francis and Clare to the "deadly disease" that afflicted the whole Church?" (1Cel 8). First, we must realize that a Franciscan style places much greater stress on modeling alternatives of what it means to be "house" than on ways of direct dissent and resistance. But what happens when it comes to the point when dissent and resistance seem to be the only recourse people of integrity can take? First of all, it is very important to be sure this point has been reached. Could we be wrong? When we are not open to consider the possibility that we may be wrong, an equal possibility exists that ideology may have taken over our search for truth. However, given this caution and, having worked on contemporary alternative forms of community based on the trinitarian model, if events find us at a point where we discern no alternative but resistance, Francis and Clare offer us some guidelines.

There are eight principles for dissent and resistance which will keep us faithful to the non-violent, ecclesial way of Francis and Clare. Four of these flow from their common charism, two arise from what Francis himself can teach us, while the final two can be learned from Clare.

The four which come from Francis and Clare's common charism are as follows:

1. In what refers to the very nature and identity of our life, no humand authority on earth can undermine what must reflect our trinitarian grounding in the Holy Spirit. Where human authority is to be part of decision-making in the essentials, it must also be willing to be grounded in what this Spirit authenticates. Thus Francis wrote in his Testament: "And after the Lord gave me brothers, no one showed me what I should do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel. And I had this written down simply and in a few words and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me." (Test 14). For her part Clare wrote to Agnes of Prague, at the very time Agnes was resisting the Pope's efforts to mitigate her understanding of poverty: "If anyone would tell you something else or suggest something which would hinder your perfection or

seem contrary to your divine vocation, even though you must respect him, do not follow his counsel" (2LAg 15).

- 2. We must be convinced that whatever we do is grounded in the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's operation, not our own. Our goal should be to strive always to be under the same "Spirit of the Lord" which guided Francis and Clare and the Spirit's "holy manner of working." (RegB 10:8; cf. 1EpFid 21).
- 3. Where these two principles converge, another flows as a consequence: an ecclesially-informed personal conscience must be the ultimate norm which characterizes our obedience to all legitimate authority. As Francis wrote in his Rule, the individual member of the Order is under the jurisdiction of the Minister General, who, in turn, is under obedience to the Pope. "Therefore I strictly command them to obey their ministers in all those things which they have promised the Lord to observe and which are not against [their] conscience and our Rule" (RegB 10:3).
- 4. The fourth principle results from all the above: where differences exist between leaders of the institutional Church and the members, any dissent must be grounded in authentic discernment. It is up to all involved to make sure their process of discernment serves as a real check against ideology, delusion, deception, distortion, and self-righteousness.

Building on these principles which Francis and Clare shared, we can find in Francis's own way two more principles that may guide us as we try to repair the house, especially when some of our leaders do not see it falling into ruin:

- 5. When dissent is deemed necessary, our approach should be respectful and courteous as we never stop asking for dialog about our differences. Persons whose positions we feel are doing harm to the Church, especially if these are members of the clergy, are deserving of our courtesy. Aware that the clergy might be sinning, Francis pointed to what they represented rather than to their failures. He wrote in his Testament that his faith in priests was such that, even if they persecuted him, he would keep coming back. He did not want to consider the sin that might be in them because he saw himself subservient to them. He did this because of their role in making present the eucharistic presence "of the Most High Son of God in this world" through "His Most holy Body and Blood which they receive and which they alone administer to others" (Test 6:10).
- 6. With respect and courtesy, we should never hesitate to speak our understanding of truth clearly and charitably to our authorities. This should be done in the power of the Holy Spirit under whom both of us should be subservient.

Finally we consider Clare's unique approach to building up the Church in its institutional expression when we see it falling into ruin:

- 7. In the event that decrees and decisions critically undermine our life and the life of the body, and we discern the need for resistance, this resistance should be grounded in the Spirit and nourished by prayer and fasting. In the face of overwhelming power, prayer and fasting may be the only resort left. These manifestations of our resistance may also represent a clear and concrete sign of the conviction of our conscience.
- 8. Finally, we should be willing to bear joyfully any costs that might be incurred by our act(s) of resistance which result in other's counter-resistance. In this we have no greater example than Clare of Assisi herself. She was willing to go to her death convinced of the Spirit's support for her decision.

In conclusion I can only say with Francis, as he wrote to us in the final words in his Testament:

And whoever shall have observed these [things], may he be filled in heaven with the blessing of the most high Father and on earth with the blessing of His beloved Son with the most Holy Spirit the Paraclete and with all the powers of heaven and all the saints. And I, little brother Francis, your servant, inasmuch as I can, confirm for you this most holy blessing both within and without (Test 40-1).

Endnotes

¹All biographical references are from Marion A. Habig, St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972).

⁵There has been much speculation as to why the event before the Crucifix at San Damiano was not recorded in Celano's First Life of St. Francis of Assisi. Some of the points offered can be found in Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., "Clare of Assisi, the Poor Ladies, and their Ecclesial Mission in the First Life of Thomas of Celano," *Greyfriars Review* 5 (1991): esp. 389-94.

⁶Jan van de Pavert OFM, "Stell mein Haus wider her," Wissenschaft und Weisheit 54 (1991): 116.

⁷Fortini, 253.

⁸Julio Mico, OFM Cap., "The Spirituality of St. Francis: Holy Mother Church," trans. Paul Barrett, OFM Cap., *Greyfriars Review* 8 (1994): 28. Mico continues; "The Church's policy of organization required an active bureaucracy as well as a general tightening up on morality, and that entailed a proliferation of rules of every kind to facilitate government with authority. The Church's desire to make herself the arbiter of social and political, as well as of religious conduct, presupposed that she had some means of enforcing her laws. And she had: she linked her laws with the truths of faith and eternal salvation; the threat of an interdict or excommunication by the Pope was enough to make the other part surrender or at least revise its proposals."

⁹Fortini, 295.

¹⁰Jacques de Vitry, quoted in Engelbert Grau, OFM, "Saint Clare's *Privilegium Paupertatis*: Its History and Significance," trans. M. Jane Frances, PCC, *Greyfriars Review* 6 (1992): 332.

¹¹Mico, "Obedience," Greyfriars Review 9 (1995): 230.

¹²Fortini, 146.

¹³Mico, "The Spirituality of St. Francis," 4. Later in his life Francis would depend on ecclesiastical endorsement of his way of life when the friars would go to new areas with new bishops (as in *Cum dilecti filii*, June 11, 1219, and *Pro dilectis filiis*, May 29, 1220). Francis also declared in his approved Rule that no friar should preach in any place without permission of the local authority, nor should friars seek to overturn such when local authorities would not give permission.

¹⁴Giovanni Miccoli, "Francis of Assisi's Christian Proposal," trans. Edward Hagman, OFMCap., Greyfriars Review 3 (1989): 158.

¹⁵Engelbert Grau, OFM, "Saint Clare's Privilegium Paupertatis: Its History and Significance," Greyfriars Review 6 (1992): 333.

¹⁶For an elaboration on this event in a context that reinforces some of the overall points raised in this paper see Miccoli, especially 153ff.

¹⁷Some say the "privilege of poverty" was not the only conflict experienced by Clare with the Benedictine Rule. Others say she had difficulties with a form of authority that stressed the superior to the detriment of the Spirit working among the members and from an overly-restrictive approach to the enclosure. See Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSF, "Clare and Conflict," *The Cord* 33 (1993): 51-5.

¹⁸Innocent III, quoted in Grau, 329.

¹⁹I find it interesting that these same sentiments seemed to undergird the famous intervention of Cardinal Lecaro during the Second Vatican Council. In his mind, only when the Church would become poor and in solidarity with the poor would it be transformed. His words, we know, fell on deaf ears.

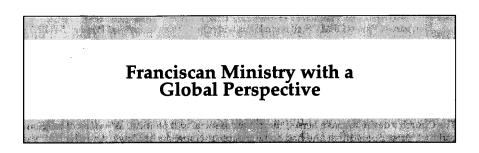
²⁰For more background on this notion, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1987).

²¹For a good elaboration on the dynamics of Clare's resistance, see Gigismund Verhij, "Personal Awareness of Vocation and Ecclesiastical Authority as Exemplified in St. Clare of Assisi," trans. Ignatius McCormick, OFMCap., Greyfriars Review 3 (1989): 35-42.

² I do so aware that I have changed from previous thoughts on this subject (and may change again). In my first book, based on what "modern" popes have said of the Franciscan life and mission in the church (which I wrote while still a student in theology), I said: "In certain places it may seem the popes emphasize points not usually stressed. It may also seem they overstress particular points or stress things which may even appear alien to our spirit. If this seems to be the case, let us not jump to the conclusion they have been wrong. As Francis did regarding studies, let us rather look to our genuine spirit. If we do, we can only deduce that our life is to be lived at the feet of these popes, not only listening to their words of counsel for us; but eager to put them into practice." Jeremiah Crosby, OFMCap, Bearing Witness: The Place of the Franciscan Family in the Church (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1965) 12.

³The Common Ground Project, convened by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, issued a paper August 12, 1996, "Called to Be Catholic: Church in a Time of Peril," noting the differences that are dividing the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. It was reproduced in *Origins* 26 (1996): 165ff.

⁴Cf. Arnaldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, trans. Helen Moak (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 166.



Kathleen L. Uhler, OSF

This paper was presented as a reflection on the keynote presentation, "Contemplation and Compassion: A Franciscan Ministerial Spirituality" by Michael Blastic, OFM Conv., given at a Networking Seminar on Franciscan Ministry, Feb. 11-14, 1995, Colorado Springs, CO.

Sometimes it takes a lot of humility to allow one's resume to be read. It provides me with a mirror for regarding my own human condition: my resume tells the tale of an incarnational, messy, and, if the truth be told, checkered career. I find Michael Blastic's paper to be instructive for my own self-understanding as a Franciscan woman, whose enclosure is the world and, Clarelike, whose ministry lies within that enclosure.

Blastic's thesis is about the proper Franciscan use of power. The dyad—compassion-contemplation—reminds me of Plato's use of the word *dynamis* or power: the ability to act and to be acted upon. But it also tells us that, in a very un-Platonic move, Francis found God in sensible things, directly. Creation is not a ladder from least to most perfect. It is not even Teilhardian, from Alpha to Omega. Franciscan reality is rather the transference of energy and power in active and passive moments found in both contemplation and compassion: in relationship, through personhood, in communion. Considering this, I feel as though I see with new, unclouded eyes, through the lenses of contemplation and compassion, the Franciscan view of the world.

I am involved in a ministry with global parameters—the world is our field of action. Franciscans International, a non-governmental organization (NGO) at the United Nations, is about systemic change in the broadest possible sense of the term. Governmental organizations and NGOs are in a vital tension. And, within the 185 member states of the UN, there is a tension between countries aligned with the five nuclear powers of the Secu-

rity Council and the non-aligned majority of nations, mostly of the Southern hemisphere, the developing countries. The tension exists among all these entities to create a new world order, to repair Christ's house, Christ's earth.

Through reflection, I have come to know Francis as one who understood how to change the system by going through the system. ("the system" being people or "focal points," in the jargon of the day, whether pope or bishop or sultan). Francis was a natural-born diplomat; he knew how to make deep changes while remaining in the system or, as the case may be, in the Church.

Francis understood that it takes relationship-building, coalition-building, eyeball-to-eyeball contact, conversion of hearts, and localized efforts to make a people-centered change in the structure, to allow space, for example, for an experiment in Christian living, as Francis anticipated from Pope Innocent III.

Francis would be at home at the United Nations. Franciscans *are* at home at the UN, and we are universally accepted. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, of South Africa, an Anglican Third Order Regular Franciscan, says that Franciscans have a vital contribution to make at the UN in the ongoing debate on issues of peacemaking, the environment, and the poor.

I would like to touch on three topics treated in depth in Blastic's paper: contemplation, humility, and compassion, and a topic of my own, hope. How have I experienced each of these within my own ministerial spirituality as a Franciscan? When have these things happened to me?

Contemplation

In January 1995, I and other members of Franciscans International attended a two-week meeting at the UN in preparation for the World Summit for Social Development to be held in Copenhagen in March of that year. At a values panel held during this meeting, we were privileged to hear the spiritual guru of the UN, Robert Muller, speak. Robert Muller served as Under-Secretary-General to three UN Secretaries-General: U Thant, Dag Hammarskjold, and Kurt Waldheim. He related that the three secretaries-general came into the position as economists or political scientists and left the position as mystics. The overwhelming problems, the lack of solutions and answers, eventually wear one down to where one drops to one's knees.

When has this happened to me? A recurring meditation for me has been the Temptation in the Desert. The highs of being part of an NGO can lead me to pride, to saying: "Yes, I can change stones to bread for you."

The prestige of an NGO can induce me to expect the angels to hold up traffic so that I can get to a meeting on time. The global scope and world-wide contacts can produce a mirage of false power over people in many lands.

Being part of an NGO is not like commanding an army, but it is true that with a little effort, the earth may be moved if, like Archimedes, one stands in the right place.

The contemplative moment for me comes when, in humility, I request of God access to her or his place in the deepest part of my being so that I may balance there and steady the images of all that is swirling uncontrollably by in my ministry world.

Humility

In an NGO, I can't help but take somewhat personally the humiliation of the failure of UN peacekeeping initiatives in Bosnia, Angola, Somalia, and all the rest. On top of that, along comes Jimmy Carter, a journeyman diplomat, pre-empting the vast web of relationships carefully built and maintained which is the UN, first and foremost. He assumes the peace negotiations which are the highest mission of the United Nations.

It is humbling to know that the major moves in UN negotiations on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and steps taken that would de-nuclearize the world were made possible by Bill Clinton's willingness in 1993 to talk about them on the world stage at the UN. In both of these instances, the idealistic NGO runs smack into *Realpolitik*. Yes, in Franciscans International I have experienced humiliation with the UN and the apparent failure of a more interdependent, Franciscan way.

Compassion

How have I practiced compassion in my ministry? In experiences of humiliation, if I am not to succumb to bitterness, then I must be like a poor person who is grateful to anyone from whom real help comes. Our NGO must relate to the broadest meaning of the suffering of humanity, of the condition of "man in the Seraph" at La Verna, of the global beggar looking for solutions, of lepers despised and displaced from their rightful roles in brokering peace.

Experiencing the sufferings of others, I can be moved to compassion and to contemplation by walking with them in the footprints of Christ, by bearing in myself the image of the poor Christ. Like Francis, hopefully, I am coming to understand the vision as I become what I see.

Hope

With Francis and Clare, I appreciate the opportunity to create a pattern of seeing the sinful world in solidarity with my sinful self. I look with Clare into her mirror and see the poverty of the Incarnation in the messiness, and I discover the truly human without disguise. When have I done this in my ministry?

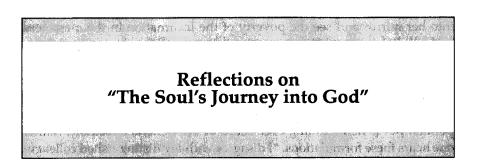
The UN, in its Charter and in its basic structures, is egalitarian. There are, however, many more brothers there than sisters! I can relate readily as a Franciscan to the required non-judgmental behavior: fingers are never pointed nor is name-calling ever heard in the General Assembly. Rather, one hears these formulations: "I disagree with my distinguished colleague from North Korea." Or, "I am wondering if the distinguished representative from the Holy See would consider the suggested word change of the distinguished representative from the United States?" The ambassadors, too, are icons of Christ.

Ambassador Juan Somavia of Chile, the Secretary-General of the World Summit for Social Development, at the same values panel which I mentioned earlier, pleaded with us who represent NGOs to encourage leaders like himself in their tasks by greeting them in the halls, by offering words of affirmation for statements or positions taken. These are some of the uses of power—to act and to be acted upon; they are basic, ordinary human behaviors within everyone's grasp to bring about more good in the world.

I have often heard it said at the UN that, since the Cold War ended, the realization struck hard that the old solutions had failed and that the ambassadors are searching for a solution which will transcend the old totalitarian structures. They are humbled, open, and ready for a spiritual solution. We Franciscans were present a year ago at a preparatory meeting for the Social Summit when Slovenia called for a global ethics. As a result of that, there is now a values caucus, to which Franciscans International belongs. This values panel is just one of the events sponsored by the caucus. The new UN emphasis on values and spirituality is surely a sign of hope.

In conclusion, it is a great happiness to make connections between Franciscanism and UN deliberations. Contemplation and compassion can be exercised at the United Nations through the use of NGO status and power.

By Your grace alone, may we make our way to You, Most High. (EpOrd 52)



Sharon Liscio, SFO

One of the discoveries I have made since joining the Catholic Church is an ancient tradition known as the Stations of the Cross. As we travel along on this prayerful journey with Christ, we have the opportunity to pause and reflect on Christ's supreme sacrifice for us, opening up ourselves to God through the special insights of each station.

St. Bonaventure invites us to journey "to the groans of prayer, through Christ crucified" (Itin. Prol.: 4), ascending on a path into God which can only be through the "burning love of the Crucified." It is a love which so transformed Paul when he was carried up to the third heaven (2Cor. 12:2) that he could say: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross. I live now not I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20) (Itin. Prol.: 3). Paul leads us along a Way of the Cross that comes from within the heart rather than from an orderly outward procession. I would like to share six such "inner stations" that I am led to within the *Itinerarium*. I call them Awakening, Enlightenment Speculation, Affirmation, Submission, and Ecstasy.

Awakening

Since happiness is nothing other than the enjoyment of the highest good and since the highest good is above, no one can be made happy unless he rise above himself not by an ascent of the body, but of the heart. But we cannot rise above ourselves unless a higher power lift us up. No matter how much our interior progress is ordered, nothing will come of it unless accompanied by divine aid. Divine aid is available to those who seek it from their hearts, humbly and devoutly; and this means to sigh for it in the valley of

tears, through fervent prayer. Prayer, then, is the mother and source of the ascent (Itin. 1:1).

My academic background is steeped in mathematics and the physical sciences. Moreover, I was raised within a tradition that holds fast to "sola scriptura," with its tenacity for precise definitions and a literal interpretation of biblical text. On entering the Catholic Church and discovering the wealth of the Church Fathers and the depth and richness of its tradition, a part of the scientist in me was once more awakened. Scientists enjoy an enlarged vision of the world. They become aware of a wider range of unusual animals, crystals, flowers, sounds, and all kinds of natural wonders. They approach the world with a sense of wonder and awe, seeing the beauty in creation and in the objects all around us. To see a drop of pond water or a crystal through a microscope is a unique chance to praise God. When I think of all the intricate reactions that must occur, all in harmony with each other, just to maintain life, I am struck with amazement.

Scientists are trained to tune their antennae to be sensitive to a wide range of images and signals. We are constantly in a sea of signals. We know they are there, because if we turn on the TV or radio, suddenly they become visible in sight or sound. It's a lot like prayer. Constantly we are bathed in and blanketed by the overwhelming immensity of God. Our normal "antennae" are generally quite weak and not too adept at picking up God. We go through our day for the most part unaware of God's presence, sometimes catching only a glimpse as the wind of the Spirit blows through our senses. Thus, we are faced with choices: one is to reject the data and close our hearts to a large part of what is real; the other is to accept the data and, as St. Bonaventure tells us, "rise above ourselves, not by an ascent of the body, but of the heart" (Itin 1:1).

Prayer is the base of our ascent because only by praying are we able to "receive light to discern the steps of the ascent into God" (Itin 1:2). For me prayer is much like a flow of energy, not so much from me to God, but rather from God into my soul. As I quiet myself, I experience a deep sense of peace and comfort and a conviction that I am exactly where I am supposed to be. And I know that this is a sign of God's grace, flowing into my heart and energizing me. But in responding to God's voice and love, the energy which is imparted to us by God cannot remain locked up inside. Energy is not static but must be released, transforming us into channels of God's grace into our surroundings.

St. Bonaventure opens our eyes, and in awakening, we become energized for life, nudged into action by the power of the Spirit. We find a way to see life through the Cross of Christ within the love of the Trinity.

Enlightenment

Whoever, therefore, is not enlightened by such splendor of created things is blind; whoever is not awakened by such outcries is deaf; whoever does not praise God because of all these effects is dumb; whoever does not discover the First Principle from such clear signs is a fool. Therefore, open your eyes, alert the ears of your spirit, open your lips and apply your heart so that in all creatures you may see, hear, praise, love and worship, glorify and honor your God lest the whole world rise against you (Itin 1:15).

Bonaventure reveals what is known in science as "Complementarity." Complementarity came about when early scientists were trying to explain the nature of light. Some held to a particle theory, some held to a "wave" theory. It wasn't until 1927 that a physicist named Louis de Broglie proposed that it could be either, depending on the type of experiment. His hypothesis that two mutually exclusive situations could both be correct was confirmed within a year by two Americans. Soon it became clear that the reality of the situation far exceeded our capacity to describe it. It is important for us to realize that our descriptions of reality can only be approximations. In reality, things are rarely what they seem to be on their surface. They are almost always either more complex or more simple than we at first think. We must stand in wonder and awe before the Creator, not simply Creation or the theory.

Bonaventure reminds us that prayer is a quest to see the face of God. Just as it is true in science, our limitations get in the way of the awesome immensity of God, who is far more than we could ever begin to describe. So often we are led to grapple with questions like how can God, who is always with us, sometimes seem so absent from our life? How can God be both all-merciful and all-just? Like the early scientists, we are often too bent on insisting that the truth be on one or the other of the sides of these seemingly exclusive pairs. But in so doing, we begin to shift away from communion with God, and into the construction of a picture of God. I think it's even more important in prayer than in science not to confuse a theory of reality with the truth and to be humble in the face of both the immensity of God and the vastness of creation.

To see the invisible things of God and to see the shape of reality in the form of the Cross is for me to see a dynamic world. God is always moving about, among and within us, to contradict the darkness and despair of the world, no matter how strong the opposition might be. There seems to be much indifference and hate in the world around us, but each time we experience God's love, we can live in the power of that moment and make it multiply.

Speculation

Wonder that in Christ personal union exists with a trinity of substances and a duality of natures; that complete agreement exists with a plurality of wills; that mutual predication of God and man exists with a plurality of properties; that coadoration exists with a plurality of excellence, that coexaltation above all things exists with a plurality of dignity; that codomination exists with a plurality of powers (Itin 6:6).

Prayer opens our eyes, and we begin to see the invisible attributes of God in all things. We are soon forced to recognize that contradictions seem to be apparent everywhere, reflected through "the burning love of the Crucified." The mirror we are looking into reflects the way that the world contradicts God. Gazing into the Cross, with its arms reaching to left and to right, to the sky and the earth, we are pulled between the human and the divine, between the conflicting claims of one people against another. Our eyes come to rest where the arms all converge at the center, and it becomes obvious that God can unify the opposition, overcome the conflicts and the contradictions, and someday bring peace to earth and good will to all. We find that no matter how hard we seem to reject God's touch, no matter how often we say "no" to the offers of love and peace, God is always there to bring hope out of despair, life out of death, light out of darkness. Today it sometimes seems foolish to stand committed to peace against the apparently incessant evolution of war. Yet, as we stand in what appears a futile place, are we not contradicting the course of this evolution? And by living this contradiction, are we not participating in the power and hope of the Cross of Christ?

Through the plurality of persons in God within the unity of the Trinity we find our salvation. When I look around, I see much in our society centered on a "me first" kind of philosophy, insulating people from each other. It generates relationships that are "safe," "comfortable," and "complacent." The way of the world tends to pull communities apart. I believe it is only in community that we can experience the joy that comes from embracing God as our "all in all." People who seem to have the deepest sense of community are those who have been able to share their "crosses" with one another. In presenting ourselves to others as someone totally in control, with no problems or faults of our own, we close the door allowing no one to enter. It is only when we are willing to share our brokenness with others, and in turn allow them to share theirs with us, that we present an opening within ourselves where community can occur.

As we allow Christ to move in and through our lives, sharing His cross

with each other, we become free to give ourselves to others and to God. United in Christ, we embrace each others' crosses with confidence and joy. It is only in community where our paths come together in the center of the cross. Here we are able to go beyond the world's contradictions and enter into the wholeness of life that is found in the Spirit. It is here that we are finally able to acknowledge the cross as our way of life. Life on the cross becomes one of freedom in the Spirit where we are free to serve God. We are able to live the contradictions of the cross, knowing we are all held together by the bond of community. We are able to walk together with freedom and in love all over the face of the earth, knowing that God is with us no matter where we go. It is in finally realizing that just as the plurality of God is something beyond our understanding, the contradictions of the cross are conquered through the mystery of God's power and love. Coming together in the center of the cross we find God, our all in all, the One who created us, to make us whole again.

Affirmation

The intellect can be said truly to comprehend the meaning of propositions when it knows with certitude that they are true. . . . Here it is that, now . . . we enter into our very selves; and, as it were, leaving the outer court, we should strive to see God through a mirror in the sanctuary, that is, in the forward area of the tabernacle. Here the light of truth, as from a candelabrum, glows upon the face of our mind, in which the image of the most blessed Trinity shines in splendor. . . . When the soul considers its Triune Principle through the trinity of its powers, by which it is an image of God, it is aided by the lights of the sciences which perfect and inform it and represent the most blessed Trinity in a threefold way. . . . All . . . sciences have certain and infallible rules, like rays of light shining down on our mind from the eternal law. And thus our mind, illumined and flooded by such brilliance, unless it is blind, can be led through itself to contemplate that Eternal light (Itin 3:3).

It is when we are able to see God in all things, when we know deeply within our souls that God is "all in all" and that the visible things of the world are nothing, that we are able to move forward.

St. Bonaventure tells us that "the function of the power of choice is found in deliberation, judgment, and desire" (Itin 3:4). For several years prior to my conversion, I had been attending Mass occasionally at St. Francis on the way to work. Even though I found the beauty and reverence for the Mass very appealing and constantly drawing me back, I would always sneak out the door before the Eucharist. Resistance is strongest when we feel "comfortable" where we are. I think my Protestant training still had

me convinced that the Catholic Church was really not much more than a "cult" of sorts, and to be truly Christian, one could not be Catholic. When a couple of my friends converted to Catholicism, I was determined to save them. I soon learned that God certainly does work in mysterious ways! One day in the church lobby I saw a flier for a class during Lent on "What it Means to be Catholic." At the time I hadn't even considered the question of the validity of Catholicism.

I was driven by a need to "prove" the puzzle, much like one of my mathematical proofs. This involved solving the unanswered questions with as much logic and objectivity as I could muster with God's grace. So, I laid out my premises. First I asserted that, given my prior education, any Catholic doctrine would appear false so I would have to make a conscious effort to remain as objective as possible. Next, I asserted that a rational choice can be made only between known alternatives. Thus, I would need to learn as much as I could about this "cult" that was claiming the lives of some of my friends. "In judging, our deliberative power touches the divine laws if it reaches a solution by full analysis" (Itin 3:4).

And so I began the classes. I had strenuous objections to almost everything I was being taught. But one by one my objections were answered by a gentle friar who kept saying, "No, not for you necessarily, but for me. I'm Roman Catholic and for me. . . ." On and on I was led, unable to uncover any flaw in the doctrine I was learning. The Church he was revealing to me wasn't the dry, lifeless entity I had been taught that it was, but a rich, deep, living Church—full and exquisitely beautiful. I even had to admit that perhaps the Catholic Church was the church Christ told Peter to found and build. And if I accepted the "sola scriptura" argument, then I would have to accept the canon of the New Testament. And if I accepted that, it seemed obvious that I had to admit that at one time in history the Holy Spirit had been guiding the Catholic Church. Could I now accept that the Holy Spirit had a change of heart? Even more critical to me—how could I now avoid, as long as I was still accepting "sola scriptura," the Bread of Life discourse in John 6?

The experiences of that first class reminded me of some of the stories in the Old Testament where we constantly see people trying to outmaneuver, outwit, and trick God—resisting all the way! I see God as someone who will argue with me occasionally, like Jacob wrestling with the angel. I see a God who is willing to be brought down into our human struggles to grapple with us. Often I find myself trying to bargain with God. I struggle, arguing about other demands that I feel on my time and energy. I become hesitant, fearing the possible consequences of the total surrender to God's will. This resistance slowly forces us to look at ways our witness can give a

"yes" to life. It forces us to examine carefully all that God has opened up to us and to discover exactly how we can use our gifts in bringing Christ's love to others.

Submission

After our mind has beheld God outside itself . . . within itself . . . above itself . . . insofar as this is possible . . . our mind reaches that point where it contemplates, in the First and Supreme Principle and in . . . Jesus Christ, those things whose likenesses can in no way be found in creatures and which surpass all penetration by the human intellect, it remains to pass over not only this sense world but even itself. . . . In this passing over, if it is to be perfect, all intellectual activities must be left behind and the height of our affection must be totally transferred and transformed into God (Itin 7:1,4).

We seem to resist the new and hold tightly to the familiar and the comfortable. We spend our lives carefully constructing a "world" in which we can live. The prospect of change challenges us, insisting that some of our life's work may need to be undone. There is so much over which we feel helpless, over which we have no control. We didn't choose the family into which we were born and had no control over our inherited characteristics. We can't control changes in the lives of those closest to us. Individually, we have little control over things that threaten our environment, our cities, or even our neighbors. We can't stop the creeping advance of age and death. Sometimes the promise we hear in Corinthians—"We shall all be changed"—sounds rather like a threat. Will the gain from any change exceed the loss? I feel the desire to respond as St. Augustine did to God's persistence as he cried: "Let me wait a little longer."

Bonaventure makes it clear that we need not face the challenge of transformation unaided. The Spirit is always with us, nudging us along the path to greater freedom. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2Cor. 3:17,18). Stripped of the illusions of our own accomplishments and self-worth, we can begin to perceive the true glory of the crucified Lord. As our eyes are slowly opened to His glory, we begin to receive its impression upon our lives as we are conformed to the image of Christ. We begin to see God's invitation to change and promise of transformation as the ecstatic invitation of lover to beloved: "Come unto me. . . ." The process of drawing into God becomes an ecstatic, and sometimes painful, unfolding from within.

Ecstasy

God not only outside us and within us but also above us (Itin. 6:1) . . . to lift you up in wonder . . . for Being itself is first and last; . . . eternal and most present; . . . utterly simple and the greatest; . . . most actual and most unchangeable; . . . most perfect and most immense; . . . supremely one and yet all-inclusive (Itin 6:7) . . . all-powerful, all-knowing and all-good, and to see him perfectly is to be blessed. . . (Itin. 6:8).

Carl Sagan, the astronomer, once said, "We are an intelligent species and the use of our intelligence quite properly gives us pleasure. . . . Understanding is joyous." Yet, St. Bonaventure brings us further. With Dionysius he reminds us that we need to "leave behind our senses and intellectual activities, . . . and in this state of unknowing be restored, insofar as possible, to unity with him who is above all essence and knowledge" (Itin 7:5). We pause at each station to pray and to meditate on the wonders of God, and as we come into the center of the Cross we stop in awe.

St. Bonaventure gives us the example of St. Francis, who "... passed over into God in ecstatic contemplation and became an example of perfect contemplation as he had previously been of action ... so that through him ... God might invite all truly spiritual men to this kind of passing over and spiritual ecstasy" (Itin 7:3). Following then in the footsteps of St. Francis, we come full circle and find ourselves back at the beginning of the journey in prayer. St. Bonaventure tells us:

If we wish to know how these things come about, ask grace not instruction, desire not understanding, the groaning of prayer not diligent reading, the Spouse not the teacher, God not man, darkness not clarity, not light but the fire that totally inflames and carries us into God by ecstatic unctions and burning affections. This fire is God.... Let us, then, die and enter into the darkness; let us impose silence upon our cares, our desires and our imaginings. With Christ crucified let us pass out of this world to the Father (Itin 7:6).

It is in the unity found within God that we become one with our brothers and sisters, dying to ourselves and entering joyfully into the cross. Gently nudged open by the power of the Spirit, the community we have found here on earth bursts apart and blossoms. The beauty we are able to see becomes one with the fragrance that we cannot see, lifting us up in harmony with each other and in awe before the incredible reality that is God.

The Cord, 47.3 (1997)

¹All quotations from the *Itinerarium*, or *The Soul's Journey Into God*, are taken from *Bonaventure—The Soul's Journey Into God*, *The Tree of Life*, *The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewart Cousins, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

²St. Augustine, Confessions (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1961) 165.



Francis, repair my house!

(2Cel 10)

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Gerard Thomas Straub

The cornerstone of Franciscan spirituality is poverty. Francis took Lady Poverty for his bride. Of course, for us moderns, poverty is a strange choice for a mate. The goal of our lives is to escape or avoid poverty. We chase after Sister Porsche or Brother BMW. When we look at the millions of indescribably poor people around the world, people living in unthinkable squalor in far off places such as India or in the shadows of our own cities (such as in the Kensington section of Philadelphia), we can not even remotely begin to picture poverty as an ideal.

The Meaning of Poverty

For Francis, a life of poverty didn't just mean living a simple, uncluttered life. Francis knew that, at its core, poverty was a condition of being perpetually deprived, of being in a state of constant need. The virtue of poverty is that it leads one to recognize that God alone can provide us with what we truly need. Francis believed that to travel down the road to God required him to rid himself of all possessions. Buddha understood the same thing. He was born a prince—Prince Gautama—and was raised in a luxurious palace. When he was around age thirty, he left his father, his wife, his son, the palace, and his fortune and set out to solve the problem of human suffering. He knew that the road to enlightenment was paved with detachment and that he had to break free from all desire and karma. Down through the ages, mystics of all faiths have claimed that God speaks in the quiet of our hearts and we can hear the voice only when we silence the noise of our selfish desires. Francis turned his back on all the things of the world which might turn his heart away from God. With the help of Lady Poverty, Francis

gladly gave up all his desires except one—to do the will of God. Joy, he discovered, was in giving, not in having.

I understand the spiritual concept of poverty, too. Or do I? Heck, even though I'm drawn to Francis's ideal of poverty and have no consuming desire for riches, nonetheless, the last thing I want to be is poor. I don't want to have to beg for food or not be able to buy a book I want to read. Yesterday, I had no trouble spending \$15 for the latest recording of Gregorian Chant by the Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos. I can't help but think perhaps Francis took the idea too far, and his impetuous literalness which demanded he own nothing but one ragged, old, brown robe was a mistake. Mahatma Gandhi didn't think it was a mistake. Gandhi said that Francis's renunciation of every conceivable human consolation was so complete and profound that he "made himself zero."

In effect, Francis created a void in his life, a void which could only be filled by God. Francis's understanding of poverty didn't even leave room for him or his followers to live in the security of a sturdy building or to have the assurance of daily food. Francis wanted his friars to live from moment to moment, trusting completely in God, and giving "no thought for the morrow"—just as the Gospel said. He called money dung, and became angry when a friar even touched a coin. This is hard to understand or appreciate.

Poverty in Action

Recently, I had the opportunity to see Francis's concept of poverty in action. In the fall of 1996, my friend, Fr. Reginald Redlon, OFM, asked me to do him a favor: to talk with a friar from Florida who wanted to start a TV ministry. This, to me, sounded like an impossible dream because the friar had no experience in the field of television. Because I'm a former television producer, Fr. Redlon thought I might be able to offer the friar some advice on how to get started. I was happy to help, although I only anticipated answering a few questions without ever leaving my home in Los Angeles.

In a typically Franciscan fashion, where logic and order play second-fiddle to inspiration and spontaneity, the few questions quickly evolved into my agreeing to write and direct a documentary on the work being done by a team of Franciscan friars, nuns, and lay volunteers who minister to the poor and homeless in the Kensington section of Philadelphia. The area, known as "The Badlands," is one of the worst slums in America; the soup kitchen the Franciscans operate is called "St. Francis Inn." Besides the soup kitchen, which feeds three to five hundred people a day, they also run a men's shelter that accommodates ten men a night, a women's center

that offers counseling during the day to prostitutes and drug addicts, and a thrift shop that provides clothing for the poor. In order to write the script, I made two trips to Philadelphia and lived at St. Francis Inn for a total of nine days. What I saw shocked me, saddened me, and, eventually, inspired me as I slowly gained insight into the spiritual wisdom of poverty.

I went to Kensington expecting to find a soup kitchen. What I found was a community of remarkable yet very human people offering not just a hot meal to the poor and homeless but also love to all those who were hungry and hurting. The staff gave their all to those who had nothing. As I observed them, I saw people who saw Jesus in people most of us do not even see. They looked at the broken, dirty, and disheveled people who live on the margins of society and saw a spark of divine beauty and goodness. The drug addicts, the prostitutes, the mentally ill, as well as the poverty-plagued elderly and families who live each day without hope or enough to eat, come to St. Francis Inn and are treated with dignity and respect.

One young Franciscan Volunteer Minister told me that when she goes home and hears people talking in a condescending manner about drug addicts and prostitutes, she gets angry because they are talking about "my friends." That was the amazing and unexpected part—the staff doesn't just feed the guests, they enter into a relationship with them. They listen to them. They laugh with them. They cry with them. They hug them. They encourage them. They pray for them. In short, they give themselves—completely and without reservation—to the guests. And what is even more unexpected, the staff claims it is the guests who give to them, enriching their lives in innumerable little ways each day.

New Insights in Tent City

Before spending time in Kensington, the plight of the homeless had always troubled me. The problem, however, was beyond not only my comprehension but also my ability to do anything about it. It's hard to care about the homeless when you don't know anyone who is homeless. My time in Kensington helped me put a face on the homeless—the face of Sheila from Tent City, whom I came to care about very much. Tent City is not a campground. Located on an empty, corner lot, it consists of collection of small, ramshackle dwellings made of cardboard, scraps of discarded wood, and large pieces of plastic. A dirty mattress, standing on its side, forms a wall of one of the dwellings. Perhaps a dozen people live in the four or five huts. I tagged alone with one of the friars who was delivering some left-over food that had to be eaten before it spoiled.

It was a damp, cold night. As we loaded the van, the light drizzle in-

tensified. I began to shiver as we drove, which made me wonder how the homeless endure the winter nights. I don't think I could. As we pulled up to the lot, we could see a group of people gathered around a fire. Some were standing, warming their hands over the bright flames; others, bundled under blankets wrapped around their heavy coats, were seated on the old junk furniture which encircled the large barrel in which scraps of wood were being burned. The friar introduced me to his friends, who were thrilled by the surprise, late-night food delivery. "Hey, we got some good stuff here. It came from a gourmet Japanese restaurant. It was left over from their Sunday brunch. It won't last long. Gotta eat it quickly."

No need to worry—starving people do not need to be told to eat quickly. Sheila asked me to sit on the tattered couch with her. I did, though it felt awkward sitting on a couch which sat in the middle of a vacant lot. The friar sat down on a wooden crate. As they ate, we talked about all kinds of things. Perfectly normal conversation. I couldn't help but feel as if we were in their living room, except it was raining in this living room, and the occasional loud truck that passed made it difficult to hear each other. The main topic of discussion was the coming winter. The temperature at night will regularly get well below freezing. Some of the people were going to try to find an abandoned building in which to squat. They needed to get their hands on a kerosene heater, which would be instrumental to their hopes of surviving the winter.

I don't know why, but I was attracted to Sheila. Perhaps it was her broad, infectious smile and hearty laugh. If that littered lot were my living room, could I manage to smile or laugh? But beyond her smile, Sheila's eyes told a different story. In them, I could see deep sadness. The sadness of someone who couldn't break the addiction to drugs. The sadness of a mother who had her daughter taken away by the state because she was not able to care for the child. The sadness of a woman who confronts relentless suffering and violence on a daily basis. The sadness of a woman whose home was a cardboard hut in a lot off a busy street. In the distance, through the drizzle and over the roofs of the boarded-up buildings, I could see the skyline of Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love. Sheila and her friends experience very little brotherly love. Rejection is their lot; hopelessness, their brother.

During my two visits to Kensington, I ran into Sheila a number of times. She often came to the Inn to eat. Whenever I drove past Tent City with one of the staff, I asked to stop for a few minutes to visit Sheila. I asked if I could photograph her. She let me. She was a large woman. Her face was round, and her smile made her cheeks look puffy. Her skin was weathered by constant exposure to the harsh winter. Her teeth were crooked. Her thrift shop clothes fit her poorly. Yet, she was beautiful in her openness.

Personal Tragedy

One morning, during my second visit, I saw her waiting by the side door of the Inn. The poor are always waiting; they are powerless to do anything else but wait. When I approached, I could see she had been crying. There were no smiles that morning. She was clearly troubled by something, so I asked her what the problem was. I wasn't ready for what I heard. Sheila and a couple of other people from Tent City had moved into an empty building to escape the bitter cold nights. It was a "crack house." One of the women living there had a young baby, whom Sheila had grown very fond of. She missed her own daughter very much, and so Sheila showered her motherly affection on the infant. The baby's mother was a "crack" addict. Sheila made it her business to look after the child when the mother was stoned. Sheila heard the baby crying in the middle of the night, but she didn't get up to see what the problem was. She said, "I was cold and tired. I thought about getting up, but I couldn't. I fell asleep."

When Sheila came downstairs that morning, she made a horrific discovery. The mother and child had been sleeping on the couch. During the night, the mother had rolled over on top of the child. The child must have cried. But to no avail. Under the weight of her drugged mother, the child suffocated. Sheila and the mother screamed as they shook the baby. Someone ran to a pay phone a few block away and called for an ambulance. The paramedics said the infant had lapsed into a coma. They rushed the child to the hospital, where she was reported to be in critical condition.

Sheila blamed herself for not responding to the cries in the dead of the night. I tried to comfort her, but there was little I could do. I expressed the hope that the hospital could help the baby and everything would end up OK. Sheila needed some change to take a train to a clinic where she had an appointment. She had been troubled by pains in her stomach for over a month. I gave her the money. As she walked towards the train station, I thought about just how tough her life was. If living in a "crack house" in order to escape some of winter's bite wasn't tough enough, now she had the added burden of guilt over a child's tragic accident, not to mention the chronic stomach pains.

Later that night, Sheila was in the courtyard of the Inn, waiting her turn to come in and get a hot meal. They were serving turkey soup that night. I noticed a woman come up to Sheila and say something to her. Sheila began crying. A couple of homeless women surrounded her and tried to comfort her. I went over to see what the problem was. One of the women whispered in my ear, "The little baby from the crack house died."

I backed off in order to give Sheila and her friends space. Besides, what could I say? After a few minutes, Sheila left the courtyard and began to walk alone under the Kensington Avenue elevated train. I ran after her. As I approached her, a train roared by overhead. I just looked at her. Her eyes were filled with tears. She said, "The baby died." I could hardly hear her. I said, "I know. I'm sorry." The train passed. Stillness suddenly filled the dark night, as we stood alone looking at each other. I gave her a hug. And as I did, I said something that was so unplanned it caught me by surprise as the words punctuated the cold stillness of the night: "I love you." She hugged me even tighter and said, "I know. Thank you." There was a brief pause as we both looked at each other. "I'll be OK," she said. We parted. I stood watching her as she walked alone under the elevated tracks as another train loudly rumbled passed. It was a moment I shall never forget. I felt a real, vital connection to a homeless, black woman who was a drug addict. Before spending time with the friars in Kensington, I would have considered such a person to have been repulsive.

Miracles of Discovery

By embracing the lepers whom he found repulsive, St. Francis of Assisi was able to discover their beauty. That same miracle of discovery happens every day in Kensington.

The staff at St. Francis Inn thought I was doing them a favor, offering my time and expertise to produce a TV documentary about their ministry. No way. It was the community of St. Francis Inn who did me a favor, showing me the true meaning and beauty of Lady Poverty. By becoming poor themselves, the staff depends completely on God for everything. They are fed each day at the altar, where they receive the strength in turn to feed the poor. The spiritual poverty Francis espoused for himself and his followers recognized that there was nothing wrong with material things, but he did not want the friars to appropriate anything for themselves. Not owning anything meant they had nothing to defend. Francis did not want to cling even to his own ego—that was Adlam and Eve's mistake. During a homily, Fr. Charles Finnegan, OFM, a former Provincial of the Holy Name Province, quoted the martyred bishop of El Salvador, Oscar Romero: "Without poverty of spirit there can be no abundance of God."

During my stay at St. Francis Inn, I learned that I needed to empty myself in order to be filled by God. Creating that void isn't going to be easy. I'm still clinging to my own understanding, my own ideas; I want to be in control of my life, which, I now see, means God can't be. The friars, nuns, and lay members that form the community at St. Francis Inn showed

me a better way, a much richer way, the way of Lady Poverty. While they were feeding the poor, they also were spiritually feeding me—and for that I'm very grateful.

No Potatoes

St. Francis of Assisi would feel very much at home at this island of hope in the midst of a sea of despair. He would be glad to see his followers depending on God for everything and living simply so others might simply live. St. Francis would have smiled had he been in the kitchen the day a volunteer asked Br. Xavier de la Huerta, OFM, "What are you making, Brother?"

"Potato soup," Brother Xavier answered without hesitation.

The volunteer looked around the kitchen for a few seconds and then asked, "Where are the potatoes?"

"We don't have any potatoes," responded Brother Xavier.

A perplexed look crossed the volunteer's face. He asked another question: "How can you make potato soup then?"

Brother Xavier's answer reflected his faith: "The Lord knows what we need, and He will provide."

Within twenty minutes, there was a knock on the side door. The volunteer opened the door, and standing before him was a man who said he had been to a farmer's market, adding, "When I saw the potatoes I had this sudden thought that I should pick up a couple of fifty-pound bags for the Inn. I hope you can use them."

Embracing Lady Poverty means learning to admit—we don't have any potatoes. It also means letting go of self and entrusting ourselves to God. The essence of Lady Poverty is fulfillment and inner freedom. Lady Poverty is rich not because she has given up much but because she has found

I consider you a co-worker of

God Himself

and a support of the weak members

of His ineffable Body

(3LAg8)

A Biographical Profile of Frances Ann Thom, OSF Syracuse, New York

Frances Ann Thom is a Sister of the Third Order of St. Francis of Syracuse, New York, and is on the General Council for her religious congregation. She visits sisters in New York, Pennsylvania, South Jersey, and Texas.



Sister Frances Ann has an M.A. in English from Catholic University of America and an M.A. in Franciscan Studies from The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University. She has been active in literary organizations and has also served as Vice-Chairperson for Region I of the Franciscan Federation

In the 1970s, Sister Frances Ann was a steady contributor to *The Cord* and collaborated with a Dominican sister on a book of poetry honoring St. Francis, *Two Prayers for Two Stones*, (Franciscan Herald Press, 1976). She also contributed a chapter to *Medieval Religious Women: Peaceweavers*, entitled "Clare of Assisi: New Leader of Women" (Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1987). During her twenty-five years as a teacher of English, drama, speech, and journalism, she wrote and produced with her students several plays, including *A Certain Trumpet*, on the life of Mother Marianne of Molokai. *The Cord* ran a series of her articles on Mother Marianne.

She also founded a House of Prayer for her community, introducing Francis's Rule for Hermitages. For five years she was the resident hermit, spending much time in prayer and offering hermitage experiences to others.

She has published many poems, articles, and reviews over the years and continues to write, lecture, and give retreats on Francis and Clare. She speaks enthusiastically about our Franciscan way of life:

Today I am extremely energized by the Franciscan spark which has so visibly burst beyond all boundaries as is evidenced in the thrust for refounding in religious communities. We . . . are con-

tinuing to move into ministries of greatest need while renewing and repledging ourselves to the needs of the times and of the Church. I am further energized by the Franciscan Federation of which I was a member of the Research Committee in the '70s. The development of regions has greatly increased the possibility of touching each Franciscan individually. In our own area we are beginning to work on sub-regions. Imagine how many fires can be lighted in this way! Soon the whole world will know the meaning of what it is to be a Franciscan.

We are grateful to Sister Frances Ann for her generous support of *The Cord* for so many years.

Contributors

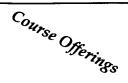
Michael H. Crosby, OFM Cap, is a member of the Midwest Province of the Capuchin Franciscans. He has written a number of books, including *The Spirituality of the Beatitudes, House of Disciples* (both published by Orbis Books), and *The Dysfunctional Church* (AveMaria Press.)

Sharon Liscio, **SFO**, was formerly an Elder/Minister in the Dutch Reformed Church. Some years ago, she was received into the Catholic Church at St. Francis of Assisi Church in New York City and became a Secular Franciscan. She holds terminal degrees in math and science from Stanford University and is presently a controller for a law firm in New York City.

Gerard Thomas Straub, a former network television producer, taught special courses in television writing and directing at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy. He wrote and directed a feature length documentary, We Have a Table for Four Ready, which tells the story of a soup kitchen run by Franciscan friars in Philadelphia. He is the author of two books, Dear Kate, a novel (1992), and Salvation for Sale, a nonfiction look at the world of televangelism (1986), both published by Prometheus Books.

Kathleen Uhler, OSF, a Franciscan Sister of Allegany, New York, has a doctorate in philosophy and has taught medical ethics and political philosophy. While on the faculty of St. Bonaventure University, Sr. Kathleen developed the Peace Studies program. At present, she is Associate Director of Franciscans International.

The Franciscan Institute Summer Session, 1997



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)

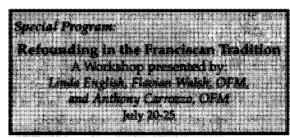
Clare and Franciscan Women Margaret Carney, OSF (July 14-25)

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:



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Sponsored by The Franciscan Institute

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Program Coordinator: Kathleen Moffatt, OSF Program Facilitator: Edward Coughlin, OFM

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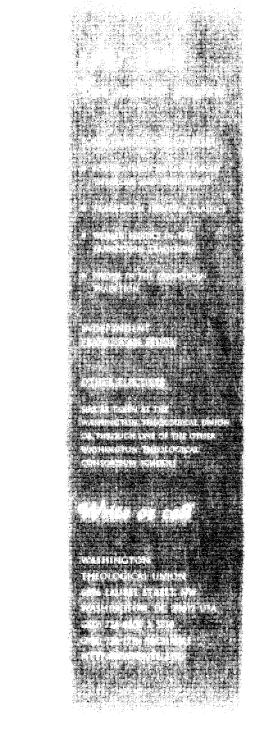
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Summer Retreats 1997

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.

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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 Renewal Center, sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, seeks to share its Franciscan heritage in an atmosphere of hospitality, simplicity and joy.



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Coordinated by a team of Spiritual Directors including Mary Smith, osf, Mary Jo Chaves, osf, Kathleen Gannon, osf, and Patricia McCrann, snjm.

This will be an opportunity to encounter Christ as we prepare for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

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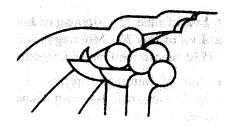


in
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March 29-June 20, 1998 (Deadline: December 15, 1997) 29th Session

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OF THE SISTERS AND BROTHERS OF THE UNITED STATES

32nd FRANCISCAN FEDERATION CONFERENCE

August 18-21, 1997

Encountering the Human Face of God: Franciscans, Everywhere at Home, Everywhere Connected

Keynote address by *Elizabeth Dreyer*, *Ph.D*, focusing on Bonaventure's theology of the cross and its implications for us as twentieth-century Franciscans.

Reflections: Thomas Bourque, TOR and Joanne Schatzlein, OSF

Interwoven with the presentations will be the important work of participants looking at the past year, imaging what has been accomplished in regions, in congregations/provinces, and what still needs doing in the future.

The peacemaker award will be given to a nominee from Region One.

At: Sheraton Four Points Rochester Riverside Hotel 120 East Main Street Rochester, NY

From Monday evening to Thursday noon.

Contact: The Franciscan Federation 817 Varnum St. NE PO Box 29080 Washington, DC 20017 Ph. 202-529-2334 Fax: 202-529-7016

e-mail: franfed@aol.com

ON THE FRANCISCAN CIRCUIT COMING EVENTS 1997

Sunday, May 17-Friday, May 23

The Beatitudes and Discipleship. Michael Crosby, OFM Cap. At Living Waters Catholic Reflection Center. Contact: Jane Schmenk, OSF, 1420 Soco Road, Maggie Valley, NC 28751, ph. 704-926-3833.

Sunday, June 1-Saturday, June 7

Admonitions and Scripture. Giles Schinelli, TOR. Spirit and Life Center. Contact: Barbara Zilch, OSF, Spirit and Life Center, 3605 McRoberts Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234-2340, ph. 456-881-9207.

Tuesday, June 10-Sunday, June 15

Franciscans Doing Theology. Sponsored by The Franciscan Institute at The Franciscan Center, Colorado Springs (see ad p. 143).

Sunday, June 15-Sunday, June 22

The Gospels as Foundation of Franciscan Life. Jude Winkler, OFM Conv. Cost: \$350. Contact: Tau Center, 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987, ph. 507-454-2993, fax 507-453-0910.

Sunday, July 6-Saturday, July 12

Right Relationships as a Franciscan. Madonna Hoying, SSF. At Mount St. Francis. Contact: Marilyn Uhing, OSF, 7665 Assisi Heights, Colorado Srpings, CO 80919, ph. 719-598-5486.

Sunday, July 13-Sunday, July 20

The Form of Life: The Gospel Call to Ongoing Conversion. Clare A. D'Auria, OSF. Cost: \$230. Shalom Retreat Center. Contact: Marie Therese Kalb, OSF, Shalom Retreat Center, 1001 Davis St., Dubuque, IA 52001.

Thursday, July 17-Sunday, July 20 (or Tuesday, July 22)

Franciscan Contemporary Living. Ramona Miller, OSF. At Pilgrim House. Contact: Pat Meyer, OSF, Pilgrim House, 321 Clay St., Carey, OH 43316, ph. 419-396-7970.

Friday, August 1-Saturday, August 9

"The Soul's Journey Into God." André Cirino, OFM, and Josef Raischl, SFO. Cost: \$425. Contact: Tau Center, Winona (see above).

Friday, August 29-Friday, September 5

A Family and a Rule. Margaret Carney, OSF. Cost: \$240. Contact: Shalom Retreat Center, Dubuque (see above).

Friday, September 26-Sunday, September 28

Facing the Christ Incarnate. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation at Madonna Retreat Center, Albuquerque, NM. Contact: Franciscan Federation, PO Box 29080, Washington, DC 20017, ph. 202-529-2334, fax 202-529-7016.

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 Mar
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	UltVoI	Last Will written for St. Clare
-		VPLaet	Dictate on True and Perfect Joy

Writings of Saint Clare

1LAg	First Letter to Agnes of Prague
2LAg	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague
3LAg	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague
4LAg	Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague
LEr	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges
RCl	Rule of Clare
TestC1	Testament of Clare
BC1	Blessing of Clare

Early Franciscan Sources

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