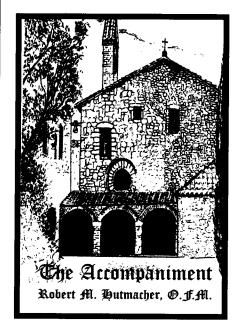
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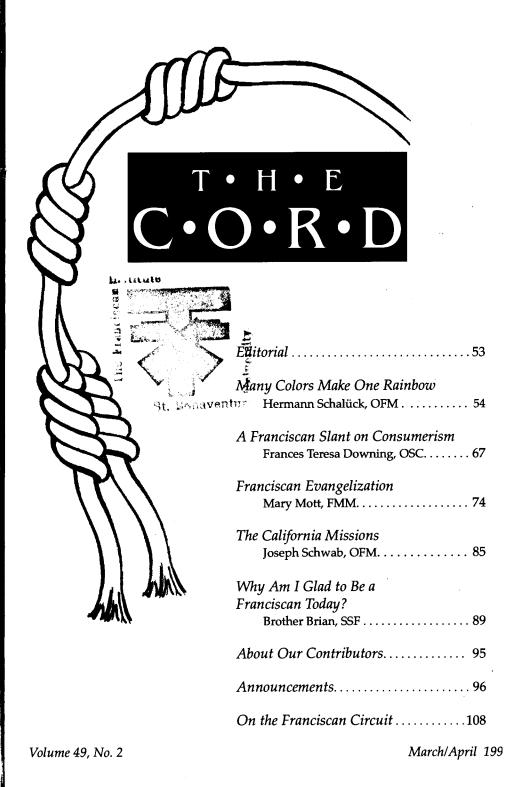


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#### A FRANCISCAN SPIKITUAL KEVIEW



# THE CORD A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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- 1. MSS should be submitted on disk or typed on  $8\ 1/2\ x\ 11$  paper, one side only, double spaced.
- The University of Chicago Manual of Style, 13 ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
- Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.
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- 4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:

(1Cor. 13:6).

(2Cel 5:8).

(RegNB 23:2).

(4LAg 2:13).

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#### **Editorial**

Why do we do it? There are, no doubt, moments when we each ask ourself this question—why do we follow this way of life? In the Franciscan tradition, the answer to this question might be more difficult than in a way of life that enjoys clearer parameters, a more focussed or explicit sense of purpose. To live the Gospel, as our Rule bids us, does not really narrow down the field much. Our reflection on our way of life sometimes gives us a sense of ambiguity. Many of us struggle for a clearer sense of our common purpose.

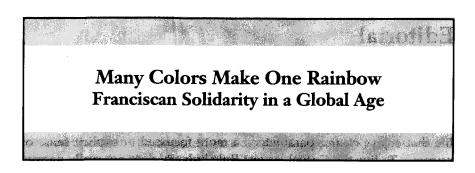
The mission of a group or organization is the reason for its being—why it got organized in the first place. A strong sense of mission carries members through the necessary ups and downs of the organization's history, gives them a sense of identity from generation to generation. The "why" of our existence helps us affirm our value in and to the larger world.

Participating in the Church's mission underlies the reason for being of any recognized religious order or congregation in the Catholic tradition. So we Franciscans are challenged to assess from time to time our own level of participation in the ecclesial mission and our own faithfulness to the reason for being of the Franciscan way of life in the Church.

The articles in this issue of *The Cord* deal, in a broad sense, with this concept—the "why" of our existence. Discussions about "mission" often move quickly into the arena of ministry. For Franciscans, however, ministry does not adequately answer questions revolving around mission. While many of our congregations were founded explicitly to do certain forms of ministry, incorporation into the Franciscan way of life calls us to a mission broader than the ministries in which we engage. Our authors describe the contribution we Franciscans can and do make in our greater world, not only by our ministries but by how we live the basic values of our way of life.

When we can no longer answer the question, "Why do we do it?" we no longer have a mission.

"I have done what is mine to do; may Christ teach you what you are to do."



#### Hermann Schalück, OFM

[This was an address delivered to the Capuchin Plenary Council in Assisi, on September 16, 1998.]

In the first part of my paper, I would like to refer to some experiences I have had in recent years. Part two is a theological reflection on those experiences. In part three, I make some suggestions about how Franciscan sisters and brothers can fulfill their mission to follow the poor Christ even in the global village of today's world.

See: Experiences of a Common Journey

First, the good news: In the last twenty-five years, the Franciscan Family has grown together ever more strongly and visibly. The different component parts of the one Family have experienced the fact that no single one has or lives the entire charism. Therefore, we are called to complement one another and together build a new house with many dwellings: for men and women, clerics and laity, cloistered contemplatives and contemplatives in the midst of the world. The heritage of Francis and Clare, like a rainbow, must span the entire earth, indeed the whole of creation. It must speak of the God of life, who loves the world and loves the poor. A rainbow is a single reality, but made up of a thousand colors and shades. Studying our sources and challenged by the signs of the times, we have come to know one another better. I am reminded of an image often used in ecumenical theology and spirituality: the different Christian traditions are like the spokes of a wheel. The closer they come to the hub, to the center, to Christ the one Lord, the closer they come to one another. We can apply the same image to the Franciscan Family.

The joint structures of the Franciscan Family in individual countries, linguistic areas and continents, and in Rome too (CFF), and many shared projects, witness to the fact that the single house is no mere utopia. For myself personally, these experiences of a common journey made by the first, second, and third Orders are among the finest and most encouraging of my life. We have become more and more conscious that in Church and world we are part of a greater whole, whose wealth of colors and beauty, whose spiritual and social fruitfulness, we have not yet fully exploited. Above all, when we see the challenges and problems arising out of the structural inequalities and injustices of our world order—the need to liberate the poor, to work for reconciliation and peace, to be involved in ecumenism and dialogue with the other great religions of the world—we see that we still have many stages to go through on our common journey into the future.

I would like to give a few examples to show what lies before us, beginning with one that, for me, is close to home. We OFMs, particularly in the years 1991-1997, have tried, together with all the brothers and sisters with whom we live in a particular spiritual communion, to make a world-wide "culture of solidarity" the theme of a deeper spiritual growth and the leitmotiv of our activity. We have tried to remember that each sister/brother, each fraternity and province, should feel part of one great context, sharing one history, one world, as members of one Family. This is not simply an option for the sake of effective management, or a concession to "centralizing" tendencies. Rather, it has everything to do with the credibility of our gospel life. We cannot live, die, love, work, or suffer for ourselves alone; each can give, but each can also receive.

If we are to fulfill the task the Lord has given us, we need to think and pray in wider contexts than hitherto. The new challenges are one way in which God is speaking to us today. The maxim, "think globally, act globally and locally," is one that in my experience points the way for global players in the economy and in politics and has done so for many years. It is also important for the inculturation of the Gospel and of our charism for those who want to follow Christ in today's world. It is vital for evangelization, for the credibility of the religious life, including the Franciscan Family, and to provide long-term, lasting motivation for all in the service of peace and justice.

I am constantly finding how necessary a new "culture of solidarity" is, both among ourselves and with others, but also how difficult it is to transmit this. Many brothers and sisters are fully occupied with difficult local and regional problems, e.g., with the presentation or suppression of houses or buildings, even of Provinces and traditions. How much time and energy are left for the "broader horizons" born of a renewed mentality: for solidarity, for sharing of material and personnel resources, for the creation of new traditions, for

new steps in the evangelization of cultures,—e.g. with regard to China—for the establishment and running of new shared centers of formation and studies? Our situation is similar to Lk. 9, 10: we are so busy burying our dead that we have no time (or energy) left to proclaim God's kingdom.

How much shared, creative imagination, how much mutual encouragement in the faith and in Franciscan living would it take to understand the sins of the times, find answers inspired by the Gospel, carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth? Our concerns to maintain the status quo (houses, Provinces, our "own" missions) are of course inevitable, but they are too costly in terms of energy. If we ask ourselves whether we are living poverty in a credible way today, the important thing for me is not how much money we have in our accounts. Much more problematic is the way we cling to obsolete traditions which we consider as an inalienable "property." First, our lack of courage to face the exodus from decrepit structures that no longer bear Spirit and life; or the way we argue from traditions tinged at times with regional or nationalistic overtones; then, our "appropriation" of convictions that hinder us from being a truly international, itinerant, missionary brotherhood—one that does not constantly and verbally glory in the charism of St. Francis and praise his ideal of poverty, but tries to embody it anew in our complicated world, whatever risks this may involve.

In 1996, at a meeting with representatives of all the Conferences to prepare our 1997 General Chapter, I asked some questions that are relevant to us here: "What is the situation regarding the "new culture of solidarity" between the Provinces/Conferences among themselves, between the Provinces/Conferences with the Order at large, between the Order and the Franciscan Family? What about communication in the Order? Are we as an Order able and willing to set in motion processes of medium and long-term planning (e.g., for the study centers, for a solidarity fund)? It seems to me that at Province level and Order-wide, and at the level of the Franciscan Family, we live too much by improvisation. We are constantly tempted to shrug off this serious lack as a virtue, with the excuse that "Francis was not a man for plans and structures." He lived by intuition."

Here is another example. In 1979, at the peak of the exodus of the boat people from Vietnam, a UN conference on the world refugee problem was taking place in Geneva. I took part in it at the request of Br. John Vaughn, who had just been elected General. Br. John wanted to make our Order more sensitive to questions of justice and peace. At the end of 1979, he wrote a very inspiring document on the refugee question. As usual in our Seraphic tradition, concrete initiatives were left to the Provinces. As far as I could gather, the letter had little impact among us, but it did have another interesting consequence. Sources in Rome, which in this case I consider trustworthy, say that Fr. Arrupe, SJ, then General of the Society of Jesus, was enthusiastic about the

Franciscan letter. It inspired him to found the now world-famous Jesuit Refugee Service. Naturally, this is an excellent result for us too. Yet I wonder why we seem incapable of similarly prophetic action, which would show the vitality of our life, not just in words but in deeds, so necessary today.

Take another example, which at first sight might seem irrelevant to a discussion of world-wide solidarity. It concerns the question of the "mixed" (clericlay) character of the so-called First Order, and complementary relationships within the Franciscan family, especially between the so-called first and second Orders. This is not the place to discuss the problem as such. I would just like to say how urgent it is that we reclaim our self-understanding as a "mixed Institute," i.e. as a true community of brothers, and how necessary it is, too, to restate our relations with the Sisters of St. Clare and to accept women as equal partners in the one life-project. Our world-wide spiritual outreach and evangelical fruitfulness do not depend on the strength of our membership, or on the number of our works and projects. They depend on our obedience to the original charism, on our courage to live it consistently today, and ultimately also on the solidarity that all members of the one family show to one another.

Despite all the committed work done by many brothers, I am not so sure how deeply the question of the "Institutum mixtum" has become a common concern. It has been obvious to me how much individual brothers and Provinces are fixated on traditional roles (e.g. parishes, clerical ministries, clericalized formation) and how little they are in solidarity with the search for a renewed identity. Nevertheless, in most of our General Chapters, nearly all the capitulars have given verbal assent to the concerns underlying the "Institutum mixtum" question. Yet, in the practice of the Provinces, in the process of raising the brothers' awareness, in vocations apostolate, in formation, and in the pastoral apostolate in general, the declared will for the renewal of our charism is still too little in evidence. I believe we need a good dose of conversion and real penance.

It is of course difficult in practice to draw the consequences from the fact that we are a community of lesser Brothers and that in our life-project we accept our sisters as equals. Could it be that in reality many brothers do not want to see "de-clericalization" take place, because it would actually make us less privileged and therefore poorer? If finally we were a brotherhood in the gospel sense, we would be closer to the people of God and to the poor, and we would have greater spiritual potential for works of peace and justice. If we delve deep into the origins of Franciscan solidarity—the experience of the poor, crucified Lord and His commandment of love for all people, which is the genuine form of the Franciscan following of Christ—then we are laying the best foundation for lasting solidarity and reconciliation in the world. By doing this, we ourselves become an important sign of it, in this complex world with its many challenges in the areas of justice, peace, and option for the poor.

The real source of strength from which to draw new world-wide solidarity lies within ourselves, namely in the certainty that the Spirit of the Lord is the giver of life and that to follow Christ opens our eyes and hearts to show compassion, love, and mutual help, as we walk alongside our brothers and sisters.

#### Judge: Some Clarifications and Reflections

We need to clarify some terms constantly used in this paper. First, the word "solidarity" itself. What exactly do we mean by it? I would like to make three distinctions, necessary also for our discussion within the Franciscan Family.

- 1) Solidarity is often understood as a vague sense of empathy, emotion, and compassion. This feeling can be part of solidarity, but solidarity itself, according to a definition given in *Solicitudo rei socialis*, is much more, namely "the firm and constant resolve to commit oneself to the common good, that is, to the good of all and of each individual, since we are all responsible for one another" (n.38). So solidarity is much more than a feeling. It is the will and the intelligent capacity for organized action in favor of the *bonum commune*, with a readiness for long-term transformations, so that not only the symptoms but also the causes of needy situations can be tackled. Solidarity is being on the side of the weak and excluded. It must reckon with a counter reaction—the pressure to conform. Those who wish to live in solidarity must therefore also be ready for conflicts, which can come from within as well as from without.
- 2) Are we talking of solidarity "within" or solidarity "outwards"? No social group, such as parties, trades unions, and Christian communities and groups, can work in any meaningful way without a certain measure of inner cohesion, which comes from a shared vision and shared goals. It is important to be collectively strong and mutually to strengthen one another, e.g. in moments of confusion or even of external threat. But this, in my view, is not the highest form of solidarity. This kind of cohesion can lead to the rise of group ideologies and collective egoism. In that case, a form of solidarity would arise which no longer deserved the name, because it would be defensive and would set itself up "against" others. Even in our discussions within the Franciscan Family, we should be clear what exactly we are talking about and what we want. Again I want to stress that we need many more common visions "ad intra" and a declared will to be in solidarity, to help and strengthen one another in our following of Christ. Each should be ready to give and to receive. All should freely enter into the shared vision of a "rainbow" of hope, which stands in the heavens as a risible sign.
- 3) The true form of solidarity according to the Gospel and the example of Christ is directed "outwards." It follows the example of the self-giving of Jesus (cf. Phil. 2). It does not seek its own well-being, but seeks to increase the possibility of life in the future for all people and for the whole of creation. It

seeks to share, not to possess. Christian solidarity is, like prayer, an act of faith in the living God, who is life and wishes to give life to all. It is extremely important to the relevance of our Franciscan life-project that we should successfully witness, in common solidarity, to the hope that is in us, both "inwards" and "outwards." We do this not simply in words but in convincing deeds of love, reconciliation, and liberation of the poor. Not only looking inwards at our own Family, but above all outwards, with people of other creeds, religions, colors, and cultures.

Finally, a further word about "globalization." We are witnessing the bewildering phenomenon of a network of systems governing information, communication, finance, and production. We need to find a standpoint that neither uncritically glorifies this development nor fearfully shuns the reality of
the world. There is a growing sense of global interconnectedness and mutual
interdependence. But the number of disadvantaged in the world is not automatically diminishing because of it. The number of Internet users grows daily,
but one cannot claim that this is automatically a step towards overcoming illiteracy. Globalization is proceeding apace according to the standards of the
market and thereby at the expense of a large part of the population. We must
not allow globalization to overtake us like a nameless fate, but should as far as
possible use it in the service of life and evangelization.

The Catholic Church and the large international orders are, from the outset, "global players." Our Franciscan Family also is an international network with the ability to implement shared visions and reach common goals. In contrast to the rules of the global marketplace, I do not see that, with us, there is a danger that our thinking and action in the global network would privilege the strong, further weaken the weak, and on the whole foster a leveling down of cultures and traditions. I believe that many local traditions and forms of the spirituality of Francis and Clare that have grown up throughout history must be maintained. Globalization does not threaten them with its leveling tendency because of their own inherent vital force. There is, however, another danger—that we may not see or use the positive possibilities offered by this global inter-connection and that in the name of regional and group interests we close ourselves off from important tasks which no one any longer can do alone and which today can only meaningfully be done together.

To answer the question addressed to the brothers and sisters of St. Francis about the possibility and durability of (inter-) Franciscan solidarity and about the challenges of the "globalized" world requires a firm faith foundation. Ultimately the question is not concerned with some pragmatic strategy. It is addressed, rather, to men and women who can tell us how the Spirit of the Lord and the Spirit's holy operation is at work in the present and future history of our Family, and how this Spirit helps us to see the signs of the times and un-

derstand them rightly. I am convinced that new forms of world-wide Franciscan solidarity in favor of the poor are long overdue. But, if we do manage to find them, they will only endure if they arise from deep wells, namely from the certainty that the Lord is calling us to this, just as he once confronted a hesitant and reluctant Francis with the figure of the leper.

#### Deep Wells

One last word about those "deeps wells." In recent years I have sometimes heard in my own fraternity the argument that Friars Minor cannot be involved in the struggle for human rights and the liberation of the poor as long as we have wounded and poor brothers in our own ranks. Others said, and still say today, that Francis is first of all about the spirit of devotion and prayer, and not about external "socio-political" goals. And, so it is repeatedly said, we cannot strive for such goals as long as we lack absolute clarity and consensus over methods. I ask myself: was the encounter with the leper only a second step for Francis, less important than praying before the cross? Wasn't it rather the decisive step in the formation of his life-project, i.e. a revelation of the living God? Didn't Francis experience the presence of the living God and the operation of the Spirit with as much intensity in his encounters with the poor as during prayer?

This question about the highest Franciscan priority can only be answered in biblical terms. The commandment is to seek "first" the Kingdom of God. This entails the experience of God as God is revealed to us in Scripture, in prayer, in the sacraments, and in history. But it also includes from the outset, healing the sick, freeing prisoners, seeking peace and justice and greater abundance of life for all. In the words of Francis, the most important thing we have to have is "the Spirit of the Lord and his holy operation" (RegB 10:8).

This, too, is a clear indication of a "holistic" spirituality and ministry of evangelization. We must see the Franciscan commitment to global solidarity as part of Christ's poverty, as a constant encounter with the Lord, an ever-new "mission" in the Spirit of the Lord. But this "holy operation" is anything but "purely internal." It changes the whole of a person, changes the whole world. That is why it is so regrettable that so far we have not managed to overcome completely a "typically spiritualistic temptation." The primacy of the spirit and the world of the spirit—so the argument runs—means that social concerns and the ministry of service are subordinate to true spirituality. Behind such arguments lies a concept of discipleship and spirituality that does not correspond to that of Francis. Neither can it any longer clearly show, in today's complex world, the gospel message of "life in abundance for all." Nor is it convincing to argue that we still need to clarify and define contents and strat-

egies for our international ministry of peace before we start doing something visible and stable together. Contents and strategies are clearly enough defined in our Constitutions and in the documents of the Church. It is time, at last, to make a start.

It was precisely from his spontaneous encounter with the poor that Francis learned what he was to believe and do. For him, the encounter with the poor was not a "second class" priority, needing additional endless clarifications beforehand. He became poor and entered into solidarity with the poor because the Lord "spontaneously" called him to something which, conversely, corresponded to his own inner longing. This encounter was an encounter with God and a new revelation of God's power at work. At the same time it showed him how, through actual experience of discipleship by trial and error, he was to follow the Lord with even greater consistency. Francis learned to believe more deeply, to follow Christ more radically, because he risked something.

Of course, there is always the danger that unenlightened activism will hinder a personal encounter with God. But today there is another danger that is just as great—that we no longer experience how God is revealed in history today and how an encounter with the poor can actually show us how to believe, pray, and follow the Lord. I believe we have enough ideas, words, and lists of priorities. What we lack is the courage to "encounter" the poor Christ in our history, with our lepers, with the lepers of the world.

#### Act: Time for Action

I have no ready answers as to how we should act in solidarity together in the future. However, for your discussion I would like to suggest some possible goals and projects which the Franciscan Family, working together, could implement in future.

#### 1. Be sisters and brothers with a common vision.

It cannot be the goal of lesser brothers and sisters to compete with the neo-liberal project of globalization. Fundamentally this produces power, money, and markets; but unfortunately not all can participate on an equal footing. Our aim cannot be to contribute to the leveling-down of cultural and religious identities, favoring a mechanism by which a minority acquires more and more power and possibilities for life while the majority is more and more radically excluded. With our ways of being interconnected and our common solidarity with others, we ought to live another model of globalization. We are sisters and brothers who know, respect, and help one another. We also have a common vision of God's Kingdom, of the Church, and of what it means to follow

Christ today. This shared vision should spur us on in the future, more than in the past, to transcend regional and historical particularities in the service of the common good, because the values that bind us together are stronger than any factors that divide us. We must counter the logic of the market-place, of power, with the logic of love, respect, and compassion. The Lord wants mercy, not sacrifice (Mt. 12:7).

#### 2. Be dinosaurs or butterflies?

The neo-liberal system of the global society is a project of secular false prophets, promising welfare for all but refusing to recognize that the majority of people thereby lose out on life-chances. Walbert Bühlmann has drawn attention to a book written by a social scientist who speaks of the "mania for dominance," of "mental dinosaurs" in relation to the development of the economy today. Dinosaurs became extinct during the Ice Age, both because of their colossal weight and their minimal intelligence. They simply could not adapt sufficiently to the global atmospheric changes taking place on earth and in the cosmos.

Contrast this with the encouraging example of the butterfly. It develops with a minimum of volume and weight and a maximum of creative, ecologically-geared intelligence, i.e. ever ready for change!—from egg to caterpillar, from cocoon to colorful butterfly. Thanks to its adaptive ability, the butterfly has proved to be a true artist of life, surviving every change in the biosphere and thereby preserving its identity. The moral of the story—dinosaurs are no model for life and survival or for meaningful service in a globalized world. The true model is the butterfly, with its principles of lightness, flexibility, economy, modesty, and creativity. Which are we?

#### 3. Restore old buildings or build a new bouse together?

Regarding the task of theology coday, Jürgen Moltmann has written: "The restoration of old historic buildings flot the sum total of its task. Rather, it is to produce a new architecture for the endangered modern world, in memory of God's Kingdom and in anticipation of the new creation of all things." For our Franciscan mission in today's world discould mean investing many material, spiritual, and personnel research the maintenance of our own traditions of merely useful collaboration on formerly useful collaboration on the specific product of the new creation of the new creation of the new creation of the new creation of all things." For our Franciscan mission in today's world mean investing many material, spiritual, and personnel research the new creation of all things." For our Franciscan mission in today's world mean investing many material, spiritual, and personnel research the new creation of all things." For our Franciscan mission in today's world mean investing many material, spiritual, and personnel research the new creation of all things." For our Franciscan mission in today's world mean investing many material, spiritual, and personnel research the new creation of all things." For our Franciscan mission in today's world mean investing many material, spiritual, and personnel research the new creation of all things." For our Franciscan mission in today's world mean investing many material, spiritual, and personnel research the new creation of all things." For our Franciscan mission in today's world mean investing many material, spiritual, and personnel research the new creation of all things." For our Franciscan mission in today's world mean investing many material, spiritual, and personnel research the new creation of all things." For our Franciscan mission in today's world mean investing many material, spiritual, and personnel research the new creation of the new creation of all things.

coming divisions between men and women, slaves and free, "Greeks and Barbarians," caused by human beings, not willed by God. We must foster new forms of living together between human beings of every tribe, race, and culture, and the peaceful encounter with other religious convictions (dialogue). Such ministries should be taken on structurally by the whole Franciscan Family. So, once again the question is: are we restoring our own old buildings or are we building the Kingdom of God?

#### 4. Understand our poverty as a service to life and to God's Kingdom.

However, even if we moved softly and lightly through this global world like brightly colored butterflies, the new visions of our world-wide ministry would be impossible without financial resources and without structures, which would perhaps require money in their turn. The radical poverty of our brother Francis was the expression of his option for the living God, but also of his fear of being ruled by false gods, namely money and power. This motivation is still valid today. Many false gods and myths inhabit the global village: money, sex, glamour, consumerism, and social prestige, which challenge the prophetic counter-witness of the *minores*. We cannot have the same standards as those who live by size and power (cf. Lk. 22:26). "Having" cannot be allowed to determine our "being." The time has come for us to abandon many myths and schizophrenic attitudes to be found in our own ranks.

It is a fact that our Provinces, for a variety of reasons, have money in the bank. In southern countries, we usually live far better than the poor. In the "north," we are not always particularly rich, but not necessarily poor like many of the "new poor." The disturbing thing is not that we have material resources. Things have changed decisively since the time of Francis. Today we must even strongly "un-demonize" money. It is, first and foremost, a means of exchange, designed to obtain goods and services that are necessary for life. It would be schizophrenic to act as if we had other parameters for our social life, our work, and our concern for our aged sisters and brothers. We need money, and in most cases we possess it because we work and because many people place their trust in us. But we should use that trust and those material resources in new ways—not first of all for ourselves and to preserve the status quo, for walls, façades, and maintenance, but first and foremost in order to build the Kingdom of God in peace and justice, for the poor. We do this far too little, and therein lies our infidelity to the life-project of Francis.

Most Provinces of the First Order collect some form of offerings. Increasingly they have some system of professional fund-raising to maintain institutions such as schools and universities, to support the "missions" and the aged and sick brothers and sisters. Some Provinces have investments and finance

particular projects from the interest on the capital. Naturally, professional fundraising requires professional public relations work.

What is reconcilable with the Franciscan life-project of minority? What is incompatible? This is a difficult question. In any case, it is one we have to ask ourselves seriously in this global, consumer, and information society. We are already actors in the money and information market. We have not yet sufficiently attempted to shape these new realities from within according to our Franciscan choices, living our vows not merely in an individual way, but also giving them a "global" significance. We cannot withdraw from the laws of financial markets and insurance schemes. The only way out of the dilemma is if we try to live some fundamental values of our Franciscan spirituality—especially the following of the poor Christ—in the social and political context of a globalized world. Then, discipleship would become the public, visible solidarity of the Franciscan Family with the poor of this world, with people who are robbed of their rights, with "Mother Earth," with the whole of creation deprived of its dignity.

In such a context, our fund-raising becomes "recourse to the Lord's table." While it may be necessary for our own needs, it is done primarily for the sake of our service to the life of the world. Our public relations work would not then be propaganda, but humble, self-critical accountability for our economic situation and projects (missions, development, peace work). In a word, it would support our own life-project as lesser brothers and sisters whereby we give account of the hope that is in us. To the extent that we commit ourselves, visibly and in solidarity with one another, to work for the life of the world—for human rights, the liberation of the poor, the remission of debt in the poor southern hemisphere—to that extent do we make the vital energies of our charism visible in the world. If we are obviously living for others, not for ourselves (collecting money and investments), thereby subjecting ourselves to public debate and criticism, then we can say that Francis and his love for the poor Christ are still alive in us today.

#### 5. Engage in a continual Passover.

We need to move continually from a mentality which looks at our ministry solely as service to the community of the visible Church to one which sees Franciscan ministry also as collaborative service to and within the larger human family with the laity. We need to be open to new movements and manifestations of the Spirit as a consequence of our evangelical life. We need a Passover from a preoccupation with exclusively local concerns to a commitment to the global community, a Passover from self-centeredness to true solidarity. This Passover offers us a new identity as one Franciscan Family. We become Franciscan men and women, lay and religious, sent by the Church

into the heart of secular society to proclaim the Reign of God "by living in this world as builders of justice, heralds and craftsmen of peace, overcoming evil by doing good" (Constitutions OFM, art. 68,2).

#### 6. Accomplish projects together.

At this point I would like to suggest a few projects which could be taken on and accomplished jointly by the whole Franciscan Family, since global questions require global answers which no one can provide alone.

- •The most important and urgent project—to reconstitute "Franciscans International." A Franciscan NGO, sustained by everyone in solidarity, would be a credible, audible voice of Francis and Clare in today's world.
- •In connection with the NGO-FI—to establish bureaus for human rights questions at national and continental levels, not least with international organizations such as the European Union, MERCOSUR, and the Organization of African States(OAS); to establish a specialized international task force for peace and reconciliation in areas of religious and ethnic conflict (e.g. Northern Ireland, Bosnia, the Middle East); to undertake common initiatives to solve the problem of the external debt of poor countries.
- •In parallel with JRS, to set up an international network to combat AIDS.
- •To establish joint structures for ecumenical ministry and inter-religious dialogue.
- •To create a common university, not just of the so-called First Order. This remains a most important challenge which we can no longer avoid.

#### In Conclusion

Jon Sobrino has written that solidarity is not primarily about "helping" or giving. True solidarity arises from a new perception of reality, from a new culture of listening to the Spirit. True solidarity is born from contact with the new reality, from transformation by it. Solidarity does not summon the decreasing reserves in order to keep the world and the Church as they are. It is a

prophetic attitude that wishes to create something new, together. (Jon Sobrino: Solidaridad: Llevarse mutuamente, in Misiones Extranjeras, 157/8, (1997) 71-79). And St. Anthony wrote: "Let words fall silent, and deeds take their place. For words we have in abundance, but deeds are in short supply."

Finally a prayer which I gave to my Sisters and Brothers at the end of my service in Rome:

Lord, make us a rainbow. a visible sign of peace and reconciliation. A rainbon spanning the two millennie A sign from beaven which you you placed there A sign of the promise that ne a sign of bone a sign of your line for si a sign of the Spirit that remens the world Make us, your followers, weeky. Make us uneasy whenever the abundance of the things we possess makes as forget the thirst for your presence, for peace in justice.

Grant us the peace that crown from meeting you. Give us friendfiness, love for all life, for ipanimate creatures. Shake us out of our standen Lord, and give us more courage to his in greater solidarity with one another more sensitive to the error the poor, open to the young generations. May we follow you more faithfully. Yes, Lord, make the Franciscan Family a rainbow, a sign of bope for a new world.

Hermann Schalück, OFM

#### A Franciscan Slant on Consumerism

#### Frances Teresa Downing, OSC

[This article appeared originally in *Priests and People* (February, 1998). It is reprinted here with permission.]

When Francis sent his brothers into the forest to gather firewood, he told them never to cut all the branches from the tree because the tree must be left with hope of resurrection. In the same line of thought, Clare said in her Testament that any land beyond what the sisters needed for vegetables should not be worked or sown but allowed to lie fallow and uncultivated. The land and the tree share their life with us to feed us and keep us warm, but we must not demand too great a sacrifice from this generous growth. Instead, we must leave the land and the tree with what we value ourselves—hope of resurrection. It is a sobering thought that because we have ignored this simple advice, our own life on this planet is becoming endangered. By granting hope of resurrection to the land and especially to the trees, we would enable our lives to continue; by greedily denying that hope, the very elements on which our lives depend are seeping away from us. Yet the few, fundamental insights from which this wisdom flows are available to us all.

#### Care for All of Creation

The basic position of Francis and Clare was quite simple—every living creature is a brother or a sister. The way to this place of insight is taught us by Clare when she tells us:

Study to imitate the ways of holy simplicity, humility, poverty and indeed, the totality of a holy way of life. This is what we were taught by Christ and by our most blessed father Francis from the beginning (TestCl 56).

This advice was not for professional religious only, but the teaching of the Gospel. The Lord taught Francis, he taught Clare, and she teaches us.

As Francis began to experience that life in abundance which Christ came to bring, his concept of brothers and sisters became increasingly inclusive. So Sister Cricket and Brother Worm and many others came into his family, and he realized that every living creature is a unique revelation of God and that it is our privilege to praise God together with them all.

Once when Francis was about to eat with Brother Leo, he was greatly delighted to hear a nightingale singing. So he suggested to his companion that they should also praise God alternately with the bird. While Leo was pleading that he was no singer, Francis lifted up his voice, and phrase by phrase, sang his duet with the nightingale. Thus they continued from Vespers until Lauds.<sup>1</sup>

What would Francis say today about the animals and plants being brought to extinction? Yet there was no sentimentality in his thought. He was utterly pragmatic, good at business, and deeply conscious that the world was created for our delight. He said that every vegetable garden should have a "beautiful, small garden" for aromatic herbs and lovely flowers, which would invite us to praise God for, he added, every creature says and proclaims: "God has created me for you, O man" (LP 51). This is not a license to exploit but a gift bearing responsibilities to be fulfilled. The Song of Creation makes this quite clear. There Francis praises God through His Excellency the Sun our Brother, through our Sister the Moon, and through each Star, through Brother Fire and Mother Earth and Sister Death. Each tells us something of God. Each gives us something essential to life, be it beauty, warmth, light, or food. Each imparts some wisdom to us which would, if we could only learn it, enable us to live at home on Lady Earth.

Let everything you have made be a song of praise to you. Above all, our Sister, Mother, Lady Earth who feeds and rules and guides us. Through her you give us fruits and flowers rich with a million hues. O my Lord, be praised.

#### Growth in Wisdom and Joy

Francis only attained the full simplicity of such vision at the very end of his life when it broke upon his spirit like dawn after a period of deepest darkness and depression. It is one of the most encouraging aspects of Francis that we can actually see him mature and grow, make mistakes and learn from them, change his mind and his opinions and do so often. It also means that his distilled wisdom is placed at our disposal. He offers himself as a giant so that we can stand on his shoulders, for these days are of great responsibility for the human race, and we need to be as far-sighted as we can possibly be—and far more than we hve been to date.

One of Francis's changes of heart was on his death-bed when he had a last minute conversion to his body, apologizing for the harsh treatment he had meted out to it. This is encouraging for us who flinch from his ferocious penance and are only too pleased to find reasons for not imitating him. Leo tells us that Francis's primary concern was always to possess and preserve spiritual joy within and without (LP 97). If we could share this goal, we might be more eager to be a fellow traveler with him. He saw this joy as something to which we can choose and commit ourselves, rather than an adventitious or chance occurrence. Joy is the echo of God's life within us, as Abbot Marmion tells us, and from it we draw insight and discretion.

#### **Fasting**

With regard to fasting and asceticism generally, Francis certainly *preached* a golden mean:

In taking food, sleep and other necessities of the body, the servant of God must act with discretion so the Brother Body has no excuse to complain (LP 1).

He laid down few rules about fasting because he quickly learned that people varied in how much food they needed and, anyway, supply was regulated by poverty rather than demand. In fact, his own *practice* was often harsh in the extreme, but this arose increasingly from his intense longing for God and decreasingly from negative attitudes to the material.

His goal had been spelled out early in his conversion when the crucifix in San Damiano spoke to him and said: "Francis, do you not see that my house is falling into ruin? Go and repair it for me.' Trembling and amazed, Francis replied: 'Gladly I will, O Lord'" (L3S 13). From then on, this was the context of his fasting and his prayer, his asceticism and his generosity. He made a resolution never to accept more in alms than he needed. In fact he often took less than he needed "so that I would not defraud the other poor. To act otherwise would be to steal" (L3S 111). He also made a resolution not to refuse alms to anyone who asked for the love of God and started off by giving an impover-

ished knight everything he was wearing, thus, suggested his biographer, going one better than St. Martin who only gave away half his cloak! (2Cel 5).

How would this work out in practice today? How would these attitudes work for us? What has Francis to offer which would help us rescue our world from desolation, our society from the extremities of surfeit and starvation, our brothers and sisters from that slavery of one sort or another which makes it impossible for them to serve God in joy and freedom?

#### A Contemporary Response

Presumably I have been asked to address this matter out of a supposition that Poor Clares know about such things, but in fact most Poor Clares have to make the same journey as their contemporaries. I, along with others, feel as confused as everyone else. The old reasons for fasting do not impress as they once did; the new reasons lack the powerful punch which comes from long observance. Children of the consumer society, we can find hosts of reasons why fasting is not for us. Often the mind set of our spiritual forebears seems to us too dualistic and punitive; we cannot see our souls as prisoners in our bodies and are more enriched by the Celtic approach which understands the body as the soul in fleshy form. If the body is no longer seen as the prime cause of all our sin and trouble, then we no longer need to punish and tame it. Yet we cannot ignore fasting all together. The Lord himself both practiced it and spoke about the need for it, and our spiritual forebears, Francis and Clare and hosts of others, fasted with such dedication that we would need compelling reasons for abandoning it.

There are, perhaps, two groups of replies, one arising from our own spiritual needs and the other from our wider understanding of the world in which we live. On the personal level, there is a real need to correct imbalances in our way of life. Often this can be done only by letting the pendulum swing, temporarily, through the path of austerity. Many of us habitually eat too much and own too many things and want too many more. The lines defining our lives, therefore, become clogged and fuzzy. Fasting is one excellent way to restore the spare, clean lines of freedom to our spirits, for it is a fact of experience that fasting brings insight, clarity, and inner freedom.

Yet even when we do succeed in fasting as we pitfalls, especially for the Celts among us who seems have an inbuilt fascination with extremes. We can come to feel that if we little less food, a little less sleep, we will step out of the material altogon the floor while we ascend to some higher realmed to the floor while we ascend to some higher realmed to the floor while we ascend to some higher realmed to the floor while we ascend to some higher realmed to the floor while we ascend to some higher realmed to the floor while we are wary of this because we have learned from hunger strikers at the floor warmth, about the quasi-mystical effects of too little food,

and heavenly colors which are solely rooted in the chemical changes wrought by hunger.

We also tend to make rules for fasting which are more severe than we can maintain and then we rapidly give up. Failure is made easy, too, because we are surrounded on all sides by available delicacies, which may be one reason why fasting is traditionally accompanied by some measure of withdrawal from our ordinary lives. We are also uneasy about the boundary between fasting and dieting, and usually, when we fast, have a secret hope of losing weight, which tarnishes the pure spirituality of it somewhat.

All these seem to offer us excellent reasons for not fasting so much or at all, or at least for postponing it while we think about it. Yet I suspect that for many of us, the basic reason for not fasting is that we lack the courage. We do not know how to handle the persistent slight headache, the increased grumpiness, and the tiredness. Although we acknowledge it as a sign of maturity, our culture does not train us for deferred pleasure, even the simple one that when we are hungry the most ordinary food, like bread and water, is suddenly revealed as manna and nectar. Their very simplicity and ordinariness are part of the revelation and delight. Fasting can sensitize our awareness in new and unexpected ways, especially when we have found a sustainable balance between fasting and eating—for Lent is forty days long.

#### A Franciscan Response

However, none of these are particularly Christian reasons for fasting, and we need to look to Francis, that intense lover of Christ, for something which—if we were faithful to it—would move our spiritual lives into new dimensions. When the crucifix spoke to him, Francis found an inner light which he knew he could follow. More significantly, he felt that the wounds of Christ were imprinted in his heart, so much so that his companions considered the later stigmata to be only an externalization of something interior which had happened long before. This caused his love of Christ and his distress at Christ's sufferings to grow steadily (L3S 14). Just as Francis's poverty led him to share in the riches of Christ, so his love led him to share in the sufferings of Christ.

Those to whom it has been given to weep for the pain of the crucifixion say that it is a unique kind of weeping, one which seems to scorch a path out of their most profound depths and yet to leave a track of clear light and joyful love. Surely most of us feel that if we could only come to that light and love, fasting, asceticism, and penance would not just be easy, but would have found an intense and adequate motivation. This is where we realize that our fasting and asceticism will only bear fruit when they grow gently out of our inner silence and time given to prayer.

Again, our culture does not help us, for silence has become hard to find. Yet if there is silence in the vast country within, then the outer noise will not be such a racket, but be transformed into voices, pain, longings. We shall hear the deeper desires of our society, the longings of those who shove us on the subway and push us at the bus stop. We shall begin to hear the unutterable groanings of the Spirit breathing through our world. This will then reflect back on our daily practice, so that through fasting and prayer, we will be led to almsgiving.

#### Almsgiving

If fasting deals with food and how we discipline our intake, then almsgiving deals with the subsequent decision about what we should do with the food, money, and time now at our disposal. One of the unexpected fruits of fasting, we will find, is a shift in values. Certainly Francis had this experience and as a result, went and lived among lepers, something which he previously found bitter and even intolerable. There among lepers, he tells us, the bitter was turned into sweetness for him. He learned to love what he had hated, to embrace what he had feared (Test 1:3).

Almsgiving is this process of the bitter turning into the sweet. It is a consequence of what we learn, without realizing it, when we fast. In essence, almsgiving means giving something to someone else who needs it and cannot repay us. It may be giving money to charity, or food and clothing to the homeless. It may mean supporting or working for the various organizations to get all our young people off the streets by the year 2000 or simply speaking to the homeless we meet as we go shopping, treating them like human beings instead of disasters. It may mean helping them by buying the *Big Issue*<sup>2</sup> regularly. It may also mean something quite different, like giving blood as a donor or calling on neighbors who need help or visiting hospitals. Above all, it may mean seeking out those whom the rest of society avoids.

This is what Francis did when he sought out the lepers and went and lived with them. He was beginning, says his pious biographer, "to think of holy and useful things" (1Cel 17). He then tells us how Francis once did what we can easily do especially if our own life is a struggle—he judged the poor and found them wanting. In recent years we have heard a lot from this judgmental voice, and perhaps we are a little tarnished by it. We can learn from Francis to be ashamed of this. He also made a resolution never to refuse anyone who asked for alms for Christ's sake. It was the beginning of compassion for him. He began to ask the rich, who flocked around him, to give him clothes and furs in the winter, always on condition that they would not ask for their return; and then he gave them to all the poor he met. He said that the poor and hungry

should be filled by the rich. He was a distributist at heart, which is why Chesterton loved him. He believed that if the rich gave as they could afford, at least on Christmas Day, then there would be no more poor. The plight of the poor touched him deeply:

In all the poor he saw the Son of the poor lady, and he bore naked in his heart him whom she bore naked in her hands (2Cel 83).

#### Conclusion

It is this that we want—somehow to bear naked in our hearts him whom Mary bore naked in her hands. Francis and Clare teach us. Without a focus on the poor Christ, fasting and almsgiving tend to become ecological correctives, and that will not see us through Lent. With this ardor, our lives are transformed. "May you always, more and more strongly, catch fire from this burning love" wrote Clare to Agnes of Prague (4LAg 27). Maybe her prayer will expand to include us who also want this intense, imaginative awareness of Christ, especially of Christ in what Clare, later in the same letter, calls the infinite and costly troubles which he took upon himself.

It is this fire which lifts fasting, almsgiving, and asceticism out of the class of being things which we suspect we ought to do but hope to find good reasons for avoiding, and lifts us up into that love which can only be spoken by the tongue of the Spirit. We look to Francis and Clare because they were gurus of the spiritual life, teachers whose teaching transformed the lives of hundreds and can do the same for us, and because their particular approach speaks to our condition. Clare wrote in her Testament that she prayed for those who were to come, that as God has given a good beginning, so God will also give good perseverance. With such prayers behind us, let us say, like Francis on his death bed: "Let us now begin to serve God, for hitherto we have done nothing" (LM 14:1).

#### **Endnotes**

"In all the poor he saw the Son of the poor lady."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Luke Wadding, Annales Minores, vol. II, pp. 24-5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>The Big Issue is a London newspaper dedicated to informing its readers about homelessness. Its sale on street corners provides work for the homeless; its profits are dedicated to relieving homelessness. The Big Issue project is being replicated in many cities on both sides of the Atlantic.

# Franciscan Evangelization

#### Mary Mott, FMM

#### Introduction

Another title for this article might have been "Is There a Franciscan Style in Evangelization?" The concern represented here reaches back into the centuries even as it reaches into the future; it is always a concern and always appropriate because it is the distinguishing character at the heart of the Franciscan vocation. If asked as a question, it never has a definitive answer, because historical configurations defining context are always evolving and changing. Today we pose this question as Franciscans who stand at the end of an old millennium, looking ahead to a new one full of unknown risks and promises, which, in turn, will further shape the Franciscan charism. We are truly persons formed in a time of intense transition.

Responding to the Lineamenta for the 1994 Synod on Consecrated Life, the Sisters and Brothers of the Third Order Regular noted that "in each century Franciscans have tried to read the signs of the times and respond to them appropriately." Yet, in this process of continued renewal and adaptation, there are constants. These include a contemplative relationship with God and all creation, communal life among the people, authority as service, non-violence and insertion in the world for the service of the Gospel.<sup>2</sup>

I would like to approach the question of Franciscan Evangelization from a missiological starting point, one which will examine these constants in their essential relation to communication of the Gospel. This method will stress some points in a slightly different way, with the accent on communication of the Gospel from within the Franciscan experience. Beginning with the consideration of Franciscan evangelization from the perspective of the particular insight Francis had about the Incarnation, I will examine the components of minority, community, and Eucharistic contemplation.

#### Franciscan Evangelization Shaped by Incarnation

At the end of his life, Francis talks about the significance of the leper's embrace for his own turning to God and his leaving this image as a legacy for those who would follow (Test 1). This embrace of a leper, in the actual event, was probably rather spontaneous. It deeply penetrated Francis's memory, however, and became a continuing and deeply formative moment, not only for Francis but also for his followers, for whom Francis was the primary transmitter of the charism. We know that Francis required service among the lepers for those who came to join the Friars.<sup>3</sup>

The horror with which Francis viewed lepers and the sweetness he experienced in this embrace is still present at the end of his life when he writes his Testament:

When I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. The Lord Himself led me among them and I showed a heart full of mercy to them. When I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body (Test 1).

Through this embrace Francis goes beyond venerating the memory of Christ Crucified. Now he grasps intuitively the mystery of God communicated through the Incarnation. Francis did not have the scientific language to articulate his new insight; perhaps he didn't have the kind of intelligence that could have expressed itself in the language of the schools. But in a far more impressive and lasting way, his new vision forged an expression through his way of being and doing, through his poetry and prayer, and in his style of relationships. As Dupré points out, medieval Christian doctrine was in profound conflict with the accepted philosophical principle that gave primacy to the universal:

In the Incarnation God has assumed human nature in one single individual. Remarkably enough, Christians began to challenge the primacy of the universal only after having supported it for centuries. Even then it was not logical consistency but the pressure of a nonphilosophical religious movement that forced speculative thinkers to reconsider it. The major challenge came from a barely educated religious genius—Francis of Assisi. His devotion to Jesus of Nazareth, the individual, opened a new perspective on the unique particularity of the person. Francis upset an intellectual tradition which he hardly understood and which he certainly had no intention of challenging. If the Image of all images is an individual, then the primary significance of individual form no longer consists in disclosing a universal reality beyond itself.<sup>5</sup>

Francis realized in a very concrete way that the Gospel path opened the way for ordinary humans to grasp the depth of a God whose love reached beyond the fullness of life in the Trinity towards every human person and all of creation. We hear this insight also expressed by Clare:

If so great and good a Lord, then, on coming into the Virgin's womb, chose to appear despised, needy, and poor in this world, so that people who were in utter poverty, want and absolute need of heavenly nour-ishment might become rich in him by possessing the kingdom of heaven, be very joyful and glad (1LAg 19-21).

Another meaningful and lovely image comes to us from the life of Francis when he re-enacts the birth of Jesus at Greccio (1Cel 84). He was much concerned that people would understand that in this birth God crossed whatever boundaries separated God the Creator from the intimate experience of creation:

It would be . . . so good, so edifying, to call to mind the birth of the Christ Child on the night of Christmas, to have set before our bodily eyes in some way the inconveniences of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he lay upon the hay where he had been placed.<sup>6</sup>

#### The Image of Embrace

What does this powerful insight about the Incarnation which marks the Franciscan charism have to say to our continuing exploration of Franciscan evangelization? As we think about the images of embrace that Francis left to his followers, we can recognize certain things that continue to challenge us across the centuries. First of all the embrace is costly. Francis remembers its costliness, a difficulty eventually transformed, but not diminished. Called to communicate the Gospel, not only or even especially in oral form, we must keep before us this costliness in the framework of the incarnate love of God. What are the instances in our lives today that pose the condition of costliness if we are to reach out to embrace others or to allow ourselves to be embraced by others? There are no generalities here, for each encounter provides its particular challenge. Let us remember these things:

- There are times when we choose to reach out, and after we overcome our initial discomfort, we can experience the presence of God;
- There are times when we are first of all recipients of an embrace, and

for those of us formed in a culture influenced by personal independence, this can offer some difficulty in letting ourselves be embraced;

• And there are those among us whose apparent despicableness is not in disease or uncleanness or extreme poverty or even in violent crime, but in their power, their wealth, their hidden schemes of violence turned against those without power. In the light of God's justice, what does Franciscan insight about Incarnation have to say to our way of evange-lization in these instances? Where is God? How is God present? How can we see-judge-act with non-violence and as reconcilers without short-circuiting the space demanded by justice?

God is always before us challenging us to encounter the All-Powerful who enters the human condition, accepting its limitations. There are other spiritualities, grounded in the Catholic tradition, which open pathways and insights about the mystery of Incarnation. At times it may seem somewhat futile to attempt distinctions among traditions, since they interact with, and enrich one another. However, the catholicity of our common tradition is at the same time enriched and deepened by the specificity of each contribution. As Franciscans, our communication of the Gospel message requires our arms to be open towards the other, not excepting the other's sin, limitations, evil. Our stance must be an embrace of the other, however limited that other may appear, seeking to discern in the embrace the humanness of God. It can extend to leaving ourselves open to be embraced by God who has assumed our own limited human condition. For some this embrace is the process of a lifetime.

#### Minority—A Choice of Powerlessness

Considering further the insight of Francis into the Incarnation, we recognize that he had an innate sense of littleness, poverty, and powerlessness.

Francis cannot find words sufficiently worthy to extol poverty. He speaks so highly of the most high poverty that the language of the approved Rule reaches the heights of ecstasy. . . . When a person in speaking about a reality is transformed into a poet, then is he totally self-possessed.<sup>7</sup>

But this was not an insight for himself alone. He wanted his brothers to be called *Fratres Minores*, the lesser brothers (Reg NB 5: 12). He also uses this language of littleness in reference to Clare and her sisters: "Listen, little poor ones called by the Lord" (ExhPD 1). Clare, too, employs this language of littleness, referring to herself as the "little plant of the most blessed Francis" (RCl 1:3).

The capacity to move to the edges of society to find one's home and one's roots has marked the Franciscan movement with varying degrees of intensity since its beginnings. Franciscan identification with the marginal is not simply an external act of making an option for the poor; it is a movement from within. At the same time, minority cannot be entirely subsumed under material poverty, for it is more than not having possessions.

Minority in the Franciscan sense is about relationships first of all; it finds its source in the Gospel image of kenosis, that self-emptying that defines the Incarnation as God takes on humanness in Jesus. It is a condition of vulnerability and powerlessness. We see this in the lives of both Francis and Clare. Because it is conceived as a condition of vulnerability and powerlessness, minority frees us to embrace the other, an image that can take many forms. For Franciscans, there will always be the immediate response to the other. Such immediacy overflows from a spirit continually steeped in the wondrous mystery of God who enters the human condition and walks with us. There will also be the ongoing response in many of the situations we encounter. How do we continue to walk with those whom we encounter?

A particular icon of minority that stands out is that of Francis and the Sultan. Francis, with all his gentleness and his medieval understanding, went to encounter and embrace the Sultan in a call to conversion. He returned embraced by the Sultan and influenced by some spiritual practices of Islam. He later wrote to the civil leaders and the guardians of the Order:

And you should manifest such honor to the Lord among the people entrusted to you that every evening an announcement should be made by a town crier or some other signal that praise and thanks may be given by all people to the all-powerful Lord God (EpRect 7).

And you must announce and preach His praise to all peoples in such a manner that at every hour and whenever the bells are rung, praise, glory and honor are given to the all-powerful God throughout all the earth (1EpCust 8).

Further, and perhaps more profoundly, minority is the source for a Franciscan understanding of authority and obedience. Authority is service that seeks to animate and to serve the memory of the community, especially about those matters to which we have together committed ourselves.

Obedience is first of all a commitment to collaborate with those called to the service of authority. The image is circular and communal. In many of our communities we have recognized the inadequacy of traditional terminology to express an ecclesiology of communion. Francis signaled a different way of relationships in choosing ministers and servants to exercise authority. His chal-

lenge came directly from the Gospel. Our challenge also comes from the Gospel, through Francis, and through the Second Vatican Council and its grasp of a vision for an ecclesiology of communion.

Obviously this also concerns those beyond the Franciscan family. But our concentration on living minority in our relationships with one another in community provides a strong image in a church and world struggling through transition. Our missionary relationships, extending outward from our communities, can contribute to the evolution of the ecclesiology of communion set in motion by Vatican II, but yet to be realized. Such an experience of church ultimately queries our presumptions about inclusion and exclusion. Through the Incarnation God radically undermines many of our personal, cultural, and ecclesial images and conceptions.

For Francis, minority meant offering, in the midst of daily events, everything into the Father's hands for the salvation of the world:

In his letter to the Friars Minor, he says: "Hold back nothing of your-selves for yourselves so that He Who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally." Francis now related obedience—the brothers are to remember they gave themselves—to a liability: "They must make themselves vulnerable to their enemies, both visible and invisible." The one who lives the Gospel and proclaims it to others takes on the obedience of the Son expressed in the Incarnation. It is a concept of service in humility, of obedience that extends as far as the offering of one's life—powerlessness.<sup>8</sup>

Evangelization is a missionary activity and therefore requires a situation of obedience. It involves the radical renunciation of both violence and the exercise of power. It involves the choice of "those social ranks in society where one has no right of command; it involves an undermining of social hierarchies through obedience." Here we have an image of obedience shaped by service and collaboration. It is not a question of exercising domination or being dominated. Obedience is a "yes" spoken freely that commits one to collaboration with one's sisters and brothers in community, especially with one's sisters and brothers on the periphery of society. It is a "yes" spoken with discernment and freedom to be at the service of the Reign of God within the church. This "yes" is a word that is constantly being shaped during our lives, forged at times in the midst of pain.

#### Community

Both Francis and Clare evidenced a clear and intentional relationship with those companions who joined them on their journey, the brothers and sisters God gave them. Each of them in their respective Testaments expressed this relationship:

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 (Test 14).

After the most high heavenly Father saw fit in his mercy and grace to enlighten my heart, that I should do penance according to the example and teaching of our most blessed father Francis, a short while after his conversion, I together, with a few sisters whom the Lord had given me, after my conversion, willingly promised him obedience, as the Lord gave us the light of His grace through his wonderful life and teaching (TestCl 24-27).

This concept of community or fraternity in the Franciscan tradition derives also from a foundational insight into the Incarnation. In defining Franciscan community, the word fraternity suggests a quality of relationships. This way of living together within the constraints of different views, different personalities, different ethnic backgrounds, different cultural frameworks—stretching at times to seeming incompatibility—is our first way of proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel. This foundational challenge of living together in the embrace modeled in the Incarnation is, par excellence, our engagement in evangelization. In whatever other ministries we may engage, our inner Franciscan rootedness is in our Gospel communities, our primary location of proclamation and witness.

Community is the place where justice is articulated in our relationships. It is the place where minority and vulnerability are lived first of all with the brothers or sisters whom God has given us. Commitment to just relationships is defined by "respect for the dignity of every human person, loving acknowledgment of each one's fundamental right to freedom of conscience, and respect for the integrity of creation." If, in our missionary stance as Franciscans, we are to pose no conditions but reach out to embrace the other, then the source of that action is lived first of all in community. A true Franciscan community cannot be closed. Communal life among the people is part of the continuing tradition. 12

#### **Eucharist and Contemplation**

Recently I was speaking about the Eucharist with a young Hispanic theology professor who is also a pastor in a Pentecostal church. He told me that in his tradition they understand the Eucharist to be a memorial and not real pres-

ence. He went on to relate with tears in his eyes that one Sunday a woman in his congregation told him that as she held the bread in her hands it was radiant. I shared with him an event in my own life which I think of as an icon of Anna—Anna who received the Child Jesus in the Temple. This was at an ecumenical assembly in which a priest of the Anglican Church celebrated the Eucharist. I was there as part of a Roman Catholic delegation. At the time of distribution of Communion, I noticed a woman whom I had come to know during the days of the assembly. She was from a Christian church which did not have a sacramental tradition. As she received the bread in her hands, tears were streaming down her face. Later that day I met her, and her greeting was: "Mary, today I held God in my hands!"

I do not use these examples to ignore more academic and important ecumenical discussions on the Eucharist. These are extremely important. But the stories here illustrate the sense of mystery which the Eucharist presents to us, as Christians explore together how God is among us. There is a great thirst for the Eucharist today. The search and pain around issues of a common table, the way that Eucharist emerges in conversations among Christians, even when it is not intended—these are all signs of how this tremendous mystery is at the heart of our Christian identity.

We know that this mystery of Eucharist was a central facet in Francis's way of seeing reality. We recall his words:

O admirable heights and sublime lowliness!
O sublime humility!
O humble sublimity!
That the Lord of the universe,
God and the Son of God,
So humbles Himself
that for our salvation
He hides Himself under the little form of bread!
Look . . . at the humility of God (EpOrd 27-28).

Within the Franciscan family, we have different accents on the Eucharist. For some it may be a more pervasive image, an inspiration of a charism within a charism. Nonetheless, what is there for all Franciscans is the call to a contemplative attitude before all creation that finds its source in the reality of the Eucharistic mystery. This Bread, broken and shared, is the intersection of human and divine in everyday life; it is the event above all others that engages us in conversation with the continuity of the Incarnation in our time.

The Orthodox, in their theology of Eucharist, speak of this mystery as bread for the missionary journey. The Eucharistic liturgy

is the full participation of the faithful in the salvation brought about by the Incarnation of the divine Logos and through them [its extension] into the whole cosmos. . . . Through the humble and "kenotic" hiding of the divine word in the mystery of the bread, offered, broken and given, "we proclaim his death and confess his resurrection until he comes again."<sup>13</sup>

Mary of the Passion, a Franciscan woman for whom the Eucharist was central to her missionary understanding, spoke of "Jesus in the Eucharist as the Great Missionary," the one who sends us to the people, who in turn send us back to the Eucharist.<sup>14</sup>

It is perhaps the Eucharist that poses the most difficult question for our understanding of Franciscan evangelization today. We live in a time when good liturgy is sought. We often have to deal with liturgies that are not well celebrated. Questions of priesthood and ministry are profound, painful, disturbing, and diverse. Women are more intensely experiencing exclusion in relation to liturgy. A shortage of priests sometimes leads to eucharistic practices that move away from the central meaning incorporated in our liturgical understandings.

Within the context of a eucharistic and contemplative way of looking at the world, we experience the tragedy of our times. This dissolution of integrated relationships is present in creation, in societal relationships, and in relationships in the church. Can we embrace this tragedy in a eucharistic and contemplative way that can eventually transform the pain, the destruction, and the sorrow? Reflection on the life of both Francis and Clare offers us some hope for a positive answer—Francis at the end of his life at LaVerna; Clare holding the monstrance in the face of the approaching Saracens. These images might seem very far removed from our reality. We need to demythologize them. We are called to summon the eucharistic and contemplative vision that enabled both Francis and Clare in their time and translate it into our hearts in a new and dynamic way. Only as we own the vision can we hope to embrace the tragedy in a redeeming fashion.

What then is the challenge for us? We are within the Roman Catholic tradition. As Franciscans we are called to work from within that tradition. At the same time, our charism for minority places us on the margins, at the periphery, not in loyalty or fidelity, but in our conversations, in our embraces. Those with whom we converse and those whom we embrace are found first of all, though not exclusively, at the periphery. That is where we can experience relationships that are Eucharistic. In the retelling of the stories, new spaces will open.

#### Conclusion

In considering principal elements of the Franciscan charism in relation to evangelization, one realizes that the Incarnation is the framework for all the ways in which the original inspiration of Francis and Clare communicates the Gospel message. Minority, community, and Eucharistic contemplation define the space in which we live out the Incarnation in our own times. Underlying all is a manner of relationship realized by God in entering the human situation. Our reflection, however, would be incomplete without looking at the purpose. The God who embraces all of creation is the God of love. This God, defined within the God-self by a communion among Father, Son, and Spirit, enters into a limited situation in order to bring all to the fullness of communion. The purpose of our efforts as Franciscans is to tell the Gospel story in our lives in such a way that we help bring about communion among all peoples and all of creation.

The implications are tremendous. Many examples come to mind—Franciscans International, which assures a Franciscan presence and input at the United Nations; concern for the ecological situation and for all of creation, including concern for a reconciling presence and for the identifying of injustice; the way in which the image and memory of Francis speak to so many who come from different religious traditions; the multiple little images of relationships lived in ordinary everyday life all over the world.

These are among the significant signposts articulated through a Franciscan conversation with the signs of our times. They challenge us to move forward, seeking paths of communion in the midst of growing experiences of diversity. We are always compelled to move from exclusion to embrace in continuity with our God, who entered creation as a powerless and limited human child.

O marvelous humility!
O astonishing poverty!
The King of angels,
The Lord of heaven and earth,
Is laid in a manger (4LAg 20, 21).

#### Endnotes

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Franciscan Federation, "Response to the Lineamenta," *The Cord*, 44:11 (November, 1994):

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> "Response," 290.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Anton Rotzetter, OFM Cap, et al. Gospel Living: Francis of Assisi Yesterday and Today (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1994), 19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Mary Motte, FMM, "In the Image of the Crucified God: A Missiological Interpretation of

Francis of Assisi," in *The Agitated Mind of God: The Theology of Kosuke Koyama* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 75.

<sup>5</sup>Louis Dupré, Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 38.

<sup>6</sup>Arnaldo Fortini, Francis of Assisi, trans. Helen Moak (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 531-2.

<sup>7</sup>Rotzetter, 67.

<sup>8</sup>Motte, 81.

Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi, 1975: 60.

<sup>10</sup>Rotzetter, 52.

<sup>11</sup>Mary Motte, FMM, "The Purpose of Mission: At the Service of the Reign of God," in *Mission Update* (USCMA 4:2, 1995), 1.

<sup>12</sup>"Response," 290.

<sup>13</sup>Ion Bria, ed., Go Forth in Peace: Orthodox Perspectives on Mission (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 17.

<sup>14</sup>Mary of the Passion, unpublished writings.

<sup>15</sup>Joseph Chinnici, OFM, "The Spirit of St. Francis Today," The Cord, 47:2 (March/April, 1997): 52.

#### Poetry contributions are welcome.

Guidelines for Poetry Submitted to The Cord

Poetry published in *The Cord* should reflect the purpose of the magazine, which is to spread knowledge and appreciation of the Franciscan spiritual tradition. It should have the following characteristics:

- 1) originality
- 2) creativity
- 3) a Franciscan theme
- 4) a sense of unity
- 5) content, form, and purpose

poem may be rhyming or free verse. It should not ordinarily be longer than 25 lines and must not have been previously published. It must not be submitted to another publication at the same time as it is under consideration by *The Cord*.

Each poem must be typed, double-spaced, on a separate sheet of paper with your name and address typed on the right hand side near the top.

We will try to send a response to your poem within six weeks of receiving it. Poems will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Please keep a copy of your poem in case of loss or damage.

Poetry critiques will not be given.

A published poet will receive two free copies of the issue in which his or her poem appears.

All poetry should be submitted to:

Poetry Editor, *The Cord*The Franciscan Institute
St. Bonaventure University
St. Bonaventure, NY 14778



#### Joseph Schwab, OFM

Living in a museum is unexpectedly lively. It is easy to assume that the past is a quiescent object, busy about nothing much more than gathering cobwebs and spiders, but I've found that living as a friar at the Old Mission in Santa Barbara, California, places me square in the middle of a controversy which is very much part of the active, persistent, and sometimes vociferous debate on the role of missionization in the history of the New World. We Franciscan friars have inherited a legacy of relationships with the native peoples of this hemisphere from the 1500s to the present, and our understanding of ourselves as active agents in this history affects the concepts of mission we carry in our present situation of ministry with Native Americans. Do we experience guilt? Openness? Pride? Confusion? In this short essay, I would like to offer some direction for answering these questions.

In my role as administrator of this particular mission, I'm often called upon to "explain" the role of the missions in the development of society on the former frontier of Mexico. What seems relatively simple at first becomes increasingly complex as historic relationships are considered—between native women and Mexican soldiers; between Spanish and Mexican friars; between people of mixed ethnic ancestry and those of purely European extraction. This path in history reminds me of hiking through the Southwestern mountains, which display a bewildering complexity in geological structure along the trails. It is bewildering until one discovers how to read the earth history exposed before one's eyes—finding a direction to take. The cultural setting of mission days was anything but simple. Living here were Indians from Mexico, Blacks, Filipinos, Chinese, Europeans, American-born Hispanics, indigenous people, and numerous mixed ancestry couples. What direction do we take? There are many deadends.

There is a pronounced tendency in modern ethno-historical circles to magnify the faults of the Spanish imperialism under which the friars worked for centuries and to magnify the virtues of the culture of the pre-conquest natives. <sup>1</sup> This is a reaction to older literature, in which Spanish missions were frequently romanticized as a kind of ecclesiastical Shangri-La. This revisionism (present) vs. romanticism (past) <sup>2</sup> is a source of some of the ambiguity we feel as friars concerning our past in California.

Revisionism does not lead to resolution. Ambiguous feelings were certainly prodded with the recent beatification of friar Junípero Serra, one of the best known figures in the history of evangelization in North America. Debate is frequent and sometimes fierce in California over the role of this friar and, by extension, of his fellow missionaries. Despite the fine work of some historians, it is surprising to find an extensive lack of awareness about the theological and philosophical foundations which underlay the relationships of Serra and his companions with the natives. What tools did they use to relate to the people to whom they were sent? How did they conceive of human society?

We should begin with the Franciscan philosophy and theology which gave direction to their ministry. Most notably, this means the work of Blessed John Duns Scotus. Junípero Serra was a professor of Scotistic philosophy and theology at the University of Palma, Mallorca, before coming to Mexico as a volunteer missionary. In the extensive field of Scotistic studies, the concept of communio seems the most applicable as we attempt to understand Spanish Franciscan missiology. Scotus taught the reality of God as community. Through this idea he explored the social dimensions of the human community in the development of a political and economic philosophy. This is most notable precisely because the missions were an experiment in the development of human community as agricultural communes. They were expected to be economically self-sufficient and to function within the larger socio-political context of New Spain.

Certainly no result of missionization can be adequately grasped or evaluated without an understanding of motive. Lacking an understanding of the foundational education which the missionary friars received, it is clearly impossible to arrive at an intelligent understanding of their activity in the New World or their motive for engaging in this activity. Consequently we cannot understand properly our own history as Franciscans. Where does Scotistic theology begin?

Scotus's foundational theological concept is that God is love, this love taking form in relationship—communio. The number of persons is not central, but rather the reality of persons loving each other. In Scotus's Trinitarian theology, a plurality of persons participates equally in loving, and the divine being of the Trinity exists in community. We as humans are called to image the activ-

ity of God through relationships in human society. The ultimate goal of humanity is to live in, through, and with the divine loving community of the Holy Trinity. Knowledge of this reality is necessarily a revealed knowledge which comes through the incarnation of the Son. <sup>3</sup>

For Serra and his followers, the indigenous peoples of the Spanish frontier were not able to know the revealed truth about the Trinity because no one had told them. The friars felt impelled to preach these realities in order to make Christ known. For this reason they left relatively comfortable and well-known positions in Europe to come to America. For Serra, influenced by Scotus, it was important that human persons not only have ideas about God (which the natives already had), but that they come to know God in personal communion. According to Scotus, God gives us the ability to do this; we do not have it in our nature. Happiness is only perfected in the knowledge and experience of the Triune God. Christian theology becomes something very practical. Its goal is happiness in the life of the individual.

In keeping with a practical application of theology, the missionary friars in California developed a system for community living including Scotistic concepts of property, financial gain, buying and selling, restitution, contracts, and many other ideas. A constant surprise to visitors of the missions is to discover that the property (thousands of acres) of each particular mission was considered property of the native community, not of the Church or State. This followed from a Scotistic teaching that before the fall there was no private property. <sup>4</sup> Communal property in a village was a key element in Mexican Hispanic society, where it was referred to as the "ejido." <sup>5</sup> The idea of property as communal also corresponded well with the native concept of property in California. In native spirituality, the goods of the earth were seen as divine gifts benefitting the human community. The human person was understood in terms of the group, whether tribal, clan, or religious order.

And what of the individual in community? The person is not simply an automated individual humanoid, a particular example of one among many, nor is community simply a collection of such types. A human being is characterized by relationships with other humans, just as God in Trinity exists in a relationship of persons. Human persons and human community take on divine resemblance to the degree that they are perfected. This perfection results from living in the source of life and reality, the Trinity. Communities and individuals are to come to love as the Trinity does and to "incarnate" this love in the establishment of a just society.

Much has been written on the justice or lack of it in the mission systems of the Americas. We can and must be aware of the flaws in the missiology of the Tridentine Church and consequently in our friar ancestors. <sup>6</sup> Fixation on the flaws, however, is as inadequate as the romanticism of past historians. As a

modern day friar living in the physical setting of a former Spanish mission founded in 1786, I am attempting to shed a bit of light on a past which is partially shrouded in the obscurity of subjective interpretation, whether romantic or revisionist. With due consideration given to the motivations and concepts with which the early friars were working, I believe that more light can be shed in the future on the study of our Franciscan heritage in the Americas, a heritage founded upon the Scotistic concept of community in love. This is a heritage which gives us a foundation upon which to construct a just society for the future.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>For example, compare Robert Johnson and Edward Castillo, *Indians, Franciscans, and Spanish Colonization* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1995) with Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* (Boston, Roberts Bros, 1884).

<sup>2</sup>A well reasoned discussion of this controversy may be found in Kenneth Brown's, Four Corners: History, Land, and People of the Desert Southwest (New York, Harper Collins, 1995), 157, 207.

<sup>3</sup>Allan B. Wolter, OFM, "Duns Scotus on the Necessity of Revealed Knowledge," in *Franciscan Studies*, 11 (St. Bonaventure, Franciscan Institute, 1951): 241-3.

<sup>4</sup>Duns Scotus' Political and Economic Philosophy, ed. and trans. Allan B. Wolter, OFM (Santa Barbara: The Old Mission, 1989), 33.

<sup>5</sup>Kenneth Brown, 210-221.

<sup>6</sup>For example, see Francis Guest, "The California Missions Were Far From Faultless," in *Hispanic California Revisited*, ed. Doyce Nunis (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library, 1996), 307.



Robert Pawell, OFM

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Brother Brian, SSF

The Inaugural Meeting of The Franciscan Federation of Australia was held in August, 1994. From the outset the Federation welcomed all Franciscans—Anglican, Catholic, Ecumenical. This has been an enriching experience for all. As one Anglican Friar wrote: "The Franciscan Federation Meetings have borne witness to mutual openness and trust, love and concern, faith and hope. For me there is a real sense of belonging to a wider, loving, and more vibrant "family" of brothers and sisters." The current membership comprises four Anglican groups, sixteen Catholic, and two Ecumenical.

At the Annual General Meeting on August 22, 1998, Guidelines for the Federation were finalized and voted on, and the members had the opportunity to view the newly created website for the FFA. The guest speaker on this occasion was a friar from the Anglican Order of the Society of St. Francis, Brother Brian, SSF. Brother Brian lives in the Hermitage of St. Bernadine at Stroud, NSW. It is a place for those wishing to experience quiet and retreat and is located amongst the bush and scrub of the Hunter Valley. The text of his address follows.

Those of us who have to preach sermons or deliver homilies may often ask the question in beginning our preparation: "What shall I preach about?" Fortunately we are helped by the lectionary and by the Church calendar. For we are to proclaim Christ and base what we say on the written Word of God. But when we are invited to be the occasional speaker at the Fourth National Assembly of the Franciscan Federation of Australia, the question: "What shall I talk about?" becomes harder to answer. When I saw on the program that I was to be the occasional speaker, I thought at first that meant I am to speak occasionally, a brief word here and there, and not too often; but then I realised it meant more than that. So what am I going to try and talk about? For in this past year I have been no further south from Stroud than "Francis Haven" (near Guildford), where four of us had a very happy retreat, and Canberra for

a conference of the Three Orders of SSF and our Brothers' Provincial Chapter meeting; and no further north than Kempsey for pastoral visits to a community of Anglican Sisters at a place with the enchanting name of Dandingalong.

What I have chosen to do is reflect on the question, "Why am I glad to be a Franciscan today?" and hope that you are glad to be Franciscans, too. My answers may not be the same as yours. Obviously, some of the things I say may be colored by my peculiar Anglican upbringing and background.

Perhaps I could begin by explaining briefly how I became a Franciscan and a member of the Society of St. Francis. I was fortunate to have been born into a Church family. My parents were devout Christians who had an enormous influence on me. They had six children, three daughters and three sons. I was number five. During WWII, I was called up into the British navy and was in it for three and a half years. During that time the desire I had as a small boy to be a priest became very strong. When I finished with the navy, towards the end of '46, I went through the process of selection to be a candidate for ordination. I entered King's College, London, to read theology in '48 and after that completed my preparation for ordination at St. Boniface College, Warminster. I was ordained deacon in '53 and priest in '54 in Bristol Cathedral and was appointed an assistant in a downtown parish in Bristol.

I mention this because it was during my time as a theological student in London in my mid-twenties that I struggled with two things. One was the whole concept of the religious life, religious orders, and religious communities. You can't live in the United Kingdom (or any other European nation) or read Church history without being aware of the influence religious life has had upon the culture of the nation and its peoples over many centuries, even though there were times when some religious orders and communities failed tragically to live up to the ideals of their founders. Yet despite that historic influence, religious life in the post-reformation Church of England has not rated very high. Anglican religious communities, whose members have taken vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, have had to struggle to be recognized and \* accepted by the Church. Very little is said or taught about the religious vocation being one way by which people may find themselves chosen by God to serve him and his Church. So as a student I discovered the religious life, believing, as I still do, that it is authentic in today's world and Church and will always be so. If it dies it will rise again as it has in the past.

The second thing with which I struggled as a student was the living of the Gospel. I wanted to see the simplicity of the Gospel being expressed clearly without being smothered, as I thought, by the accretions of the ecclesiastical establishment. In my search for the religious life around 1950, two or three communities in the Church of England were suggested. Although they had

good reputations, none was quite what I was looking for. Then one day I was introduced through a friend to an Anglican Franciscan friar, who invited me to a house in a derelict street in Stepney, East London, where he was a Brother.

Over the following months I got to know these Brothers and came to believe that here, more than anywhere else I had experienced, the Gospel was being lived out in flesh and blood. The Incarnation was not just some theological dogma in a text book in a seminary library; it was here in Stepney, expressed by a group of Franciscans living in a very noisy street in which the other houses surrounding them were brothels or providing other forms of suspicious entertainment. On Friday nights I would often go to the house to help teach English to seamen off the ships in the London docks. They came from countries around the world where English was unknown. If they had any religion, it was generally that of Islam. But that didn't seem to worry the men who came or the Brothers. All were accepted and acceptable.

Yet in this there was no compromise of the Christian Faith. Through the grating in the street pavement, passersby could see the chapel in the basement of the house, where a light flickered indicating the Blessed Sacrament. They could see, at the appropriate times, the Brothers and other people with them praying the offices, celebrating the Eucharist, or praying silently. I knew that this was the kind of religious life I wanted. In this experience, and as a result of visiting two other very different friaries in other parts of the country, I was gradually drawn to St. Francis and then to St. Clare and the Society of St. Francis. After ordination and an assistant curacy in a parish, I was able to join the novitiate in 1956 at the age of 31.

From this initial introduction through that house in Stepney (which no longer exists because the street no longer exists) and in subsequent years, I think there are a number of things which have made me glad to be a Franciscan today.

Being a Franciscan means no more and no less than attempting, by God's grace, to live the Gospel to the full in today's world. If society changes, which it has and does, if the Church under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit makes changes (and what better example of this than the second Vatican Council, which has affected us all or we wouldn't be together here today—Catholic, Anglican, and Ecumenical), and if our own Franciscan communities and orders have to make changes and adjustments in order to witness to Christ crucified and risen, be sure that the Gospel does not change and cannot change. As the Epistle to the Hebrews says: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." St. Francis wanted no more than that his followers should be people of the Gospel of love. Simplicity, detachment, humility, love, and joy—all that we mean by poverty—were the ways by which he and his followers lived out the Gospel of love in their day. How are we to do it in our day? For

surely those same notes of humility, love, and joy still apply in this and every generation. How do we express simplicity and practice detachment and poverty both communally and individually? What bold adjustments is God asking us to make as we enter the New Millennium?

That house in Stepney taught me that the Franciscan way is an inclusive one. Those Brothers lived among the marginalized people whom respectable persons would have referred to as the dregs of society. They befriended all who came to them and accepted people of other world faiths or none at all for being who they are. That is never easy. We may be as much nauseated in having to mingle with people of all sorts and conditions as St. Francis was with those who suffered from leprosy. Yet this is living the Gospel of love. It is not producing a report on the computer to present to a meeting of social welfare "experts," who often don't live in the murky districts where their clients reside. But being a Franciscan has taught me in so many ways that Christians are to be "in the world yet not of the world." As Franciscans we are to preach the Gospel not merely by our words but even more by our presence, our example, and our way of life. The poor are all around us. They are not just the beggars and the homeless, but also the yuppies, the alcoholics, the drug addicts, and those for whom suicide seems to be the only way out. I have learned, I hope, or will learn that the Franciscan fraternity is not a private club or a secret society, because Christ is the Redeemer of the world. The Gospel embraces all.

That house in Stepney introduced me to what it means to experience Franciscan fraternity. Not only was I welcomed into their midst when, as a student, I visited the house; but I also sensed the spirit of brotherhood which existed among them. That doesn't mean that they didn't have community problems. I was to learn later that they did, but it appeared that they worked at being a brotherhood. They had care and concern for each other. And on the whole that has been my experience as a friar over the years.

St. Francis stressed fraternity. It was never to be forgotten. In the Rule for Hermitages there must be that loving care and concern between the mothers and the sons. At a time in so-called Western society when there is so much fragmentation and individualism, the witness of brotherhood and sisterhood is so very important for stabilizing society; yet it can only be achieved because we are the brothers and sisters of Christ. He is our Elder Brother. The corporate praying of the offices and Eucharist are the heart and mainstay of fraternity, particularly when we live in community.

There are other things which make me glad to be a Franciscan. In a Church like the Anglican communion, which claims, rightly or wrongly, to be comprehensive, there are often tensions between attitudes that are labeled evangelical or catholic or charismatic or even liberal. When people say to me: Are you a liberal? I usually reply: How liberal do you mean and about what? If they

ask if I am evangelical, I say yes, of course. I have a love of the Lord Jesus as my Redeemer, a high regard for Holy Scripture, and I want others to know their Saviour. If they ask: Are you catholic? I reply: Yes, indeed. I have a high vision of the doctrine of the Church as the extension of the Incarnation, of the laity as the people of God in God's world, of the ordained or sacred ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons, and of the sacraments as the chief means of grace. If they ask: Are you charismatic? I answer: Yes, I am. I was baptized and confirmed (and later ordained), and I pray. I believe God has bestowed on me and on all other members of the Body of Christ a variety of the Spirit's gifts, and in some measure I manifest the fruits of the Spirit. So I am charismatic.

Now Francis and Clare were all these things, in my view, as all these are in the Gospel. Their spirituality transcended the small-minded demarcations which some of us tend to make concerning the meaning of labels. And if I had not become a Franciscan I might have been even more small-minded than I am.

It is good to hear these days a concern about the environment and ecology. There is an increased interest in creation theology. But it seems to me that it is not new, though in some past generations it may have been neglected. Surely the current concern and interest challenges the greed of those who want to rape the land and shatter the natural world which God has created. St. Francis however had a reverence for nature and creation long before the present concern. His Canticle of the Sun symbolizes that. And particularly as Franciscans we are challenged to notice and appreciate the small and the beautiful things of the world, whether animal, vegetable, or mineral. All reflect something of the grandeur of God.

With that goes peace-making. Francis in his day was a great peacemaker. "Pax et Bonum" was his famous greeting. His peace issued from his union with Christ. It flowed from his life of prayer and penance and was conveyed to others and the world around through his presence and his preaching. And to me that is the only kind of peace really worth having. It is the "peace of God which passes all understanding." It is a deep peace which can be caught or felt.

We may be mercifully spared at this time and in the early years of the next century from a global war. But we are not spared at the present time internal wars, violence of a most vicious kind, and attempts at ethnic cleansing. At every level of human confrontation there is need for peace-making, and we Franciscans are called to be peace-makers. How that is done in practical terms may depend on circumstances. At the international level the organization "Franciscans International" is making a bold attempt through the United Nations Organisation. But wherever we are called to live out our Franciscan vocation, we must desire and attempt to be the instruments of peace beginning with our own lives and in our own communities and families. We must get ourselves together.

And with peace is coupled joy. We know that to be full of joy we do not have to be bouncy and happy-clappy (at least not all the time) and driving everyone else up the wall. Joy is a deep inner quality and fruit of the Spirit, which can be known in times of testing and trouble as well as in moments of elation and hilarity. Yet I am glad to be a Franciscan because so often Franciscans are full of laughter and good fellowship. I believe one of the unwritten qualifications for electing a novice for profession is that he or she has learned to laugh at self and reverently to laugh with others.

Last, but by no means least, I am glad to be a Franciscan today because of the synthesis which ideally exists in the Franciscan vocation between the active and the contemplative. Thomas Celano, one of the earliest biographers of St. Francis, described Francis as "personified prayer" (2Cel 95). By that he meant that Francis's life was prayer. Not only did he pray at the liturgy and during his times of prayer, especially in the hermitages, but he carried that prayer over into everything he did and wherever he went. That surely is why he was so good to meet and had such an influence on people and eventually on the universal Church. It was why he could be used by God to fulfill his original mission, which was to rebuild the Church.

Yet I think it can be said that he stressed the contemplative dimension because that expressed his attachment to Christ whom he sought to imitate. Out of that Christ-centeredness, or along with it, came the various works of his apostolate, his itinerant preaching, and his care of the outcast. Thus "being" for Francis was as important as "doing"; and so Celano could say that Francis was personified prayer. The demarcation between the active and contemplative was not that great. How Francis prayed in the silence and solitude of the hermitage we are not sure. What we do know is that nearly all his written prayers begin with exclamations of the wonder of God, so that adoration and praise was the key to his devotion and spirituality. It was through this that he became, by the work of the Holy Spirit, God-centered, Christ-centered. It was not unlike that for St. Clare, whose prayer was described as gazing at the Lord, and who exhorted her sisters to praise and adoration. All this makes me glad to be a Franciscan today. By God's help I have somehow to become personified prayer. Haven't we all? That will do so much more for the world and the Church than busting our fuses by a multiplicity of good works without prayer.

By way of conclusion, I suggest that it is our common spirituality which brings us together in this Franciscan Federation. At a time when there is so much fragmentation, both within the Church on earth and within society, the witness which Franciscans can make to unity in Christ is a vital one. This unity is one of the key themes of the Gospel of love, truth, and holiness. Structures, laws, canons, constitutions, and the rest are important, but only if they enable

the character of Francis and Clare to be relived by their friends and followers today and tomorrow. We may at times become despondent in First, Second, and Third Order Regular communities about the shrinking numbers of members. But I suggest that the quality of our Franciscan life can be much more eloquent than large numbers. We should indeed ask: "What are the young looking for?" and make adjustments while remaining faithful to our way of life. It is quality of life which we need in our various fraternities, fellowships, and communities. We need to be regularly re-examining and reforming, and this, too, makes me glad to be a Franciscan today. And I pray that God will continue to give us all grace to rejoice in the vocation to which we have been called.

#### **About Our Contributors**

Brother Brian, SSF, is a member of the Anglican Order of the Society of St. Francis. He was ordained to the priesthood in Bristol, England, in 1954, where he was an assistant pastor in a downtown parish for some years. He has served his order both as Provincial Minister and as General Minister and is now at the Hermitage of St. Bernadine at Stroud, NSW, Australia.

Frances Teresa Downing, OSC, is a member of the Poor Clare community in Arundel, West Sussex, England. She is the author of Living the Incarnation: Praying with Francis and Clare of Assisi (Franciscan Press, 1996) and This Living Mirror: Reflections on Clare of Assisi (Orbis, 1995). She is a regular contributor to The Way and to The Cord.

Mary Mott, FMM, has been a member of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary since 1955. She did her doctoral studies at Boston College and post-doctrinal specialization in mission theology. She is currently the director of the Mission Resource Center for the United States Province of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary.

Robert F. Pawell, OFM, is a friar of the Sacred Heart Province. While working in New Orleans, he co-founded Project Lazarus, a residence for persons with AIDS and developed retreats for those affected by HIV/AIDS. A self-trained artist, he now serves out of Chicago, employing poetry and the arts in the Ministry of the Word.

Hermann Schalück, OFM, was Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor (OFM), from 1991 to 1997. Presently, he is in charge of the Office of Missions for the German Bishops' Conference. He is author of Stoking the Fire of Hope: Fioretti for Our Times (Franciscan Institute, 1997).

Joseph Schwab, OFM, a member of the St. Barbara Province since 1978, received his master's degree in theological studies from the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley. From 1994-1998 he was Administrator at Old Mission Santa Barbara in California. He is now director of the Mission Renewal Center in Scottsdale, Arizona, and on the board of the California Mission Studies Association.

### From The Franciscan Institute

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FRANCISCAN POVERTY: THE DOCTRINE OF THE ABSOLUTE POVERTY OF CHRIST AND THE APOSTLES IN THE FRANCISCAN ORDER 1210-1323

by Malcolm D. Lambert

The long-awaited revised edition of a work first published in 1961, this book deals with the poverty controversy as it was played out between the Franciscan Order and the papacy from 1210 to 1323. It begins with a description of the nature of the doctrine as it existed in the mind of St. Francis and ends with John XXII's condemnation of one particular form of the doctrine, an action which brought the controversy to an end.

\$16.00 311+xviii pages paper, 1998 ISBN 1-57659-001-1

A COMPENDIUM OF OCKHAM'S TEACHINGS: A TRANSLATION OF THE TRACTATUS DE PRINCIPIIS THEOLOGIAE

by Julian Davies, O.F.M.

The *Tractatus* takes all of Ockham's views and explains them as related to or as consequences of two principles—the Principle of Divine Omnipotence and the Principle of Parsimony. The translator's Introduction offers some helpful hints for reading and explains and illustrates the relationship between the two Principles. A glossary of technical terms and a bibliography are included. Footnotes reference English translations of Ockham's works where such exist.

\$14.00 135 pages paper, 1998 ISBN: 1-57659-129-8

#### AVAILABLE SPRING 1999 . . . .

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Development of the Franciscan Person  Edward Coughlin, OFM	July 12-30
Bonaventure: The Spiritual Journey  Elizabeth Dreyer	June 28-July 9
A Franciscan Theology of Ministry  Margaret E. Guider, OSF	June 28-July 9
Francis: His Life and Charism  Mary Meany	June 28-July 9
Rule and Life of the Third Order Regular  Margaret Carney, OSF	July 12-30

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<u>Tologani ya Namaza </u>

July 18 (5:00 p.m.) - July 24 (6:30 p.m.)

Presenters: JoAnn Haney, OSF, and Joseph F. Schmidt, FSC

During the week of silence, the conferences and guided writing exercises will open doors to meeting God in our own experiences. The journal writing helps us become more conscious of the full dimension of our experience, revealing God's presence at work in our lives. Such revelation deepens gratitude and increases the joy of being fully human, fifty alive.

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Bill Hugo has been a member of the Capuchin Province of St. Joseph in the United States since 1973. He studied theology at St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee and received an MA in Franciscan Studies at The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, NY. He has been teaching the life of Francis to Capuchins and Secular Franciscan since 1984 and in 1996 published Studying the Life of Francis of Assist: A Beginner's Workbook (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press). He is currently writing a companion book, Studying the Life of Clare of Assist: A Beginner's Workbook.

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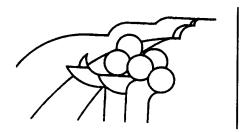
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## Franciscan Spirit and Life Center

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April 1-4, 1999 Thursday, 7:00 PM - Sunday noon

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Cost: \$120.00 Deposit: \$25.00 Register by March 21, 1999.

**DRECTED RETREAT** April 18-24, 1999 Sunday, 7:00 PM - Saturday noon J. Lora Dambroski, OSF, and Vinnie Fortunato, OFM Cap.

Cost: \$275.00 Deposit: \$25.00 Register by April 10, 1999.

**DIRECTED RETREAT** June 6-12, 1999 Sunday, 7:00 PM - Saturday noon Carolyn Bondenschatz, CSJ; Malachy Broderick, FSC; J. Lora Dambroski, OSF; Bernie Tickerhoof, TOR

Cost: \$275.00 Deposit: \$25.00 Register by: May 26, 1999

For further information, please contact:

Mimi DiGregory Franciscan Spirit and Life Center 3605 McRoberts Road Pittsburgh, PA 15234 412-881-9207



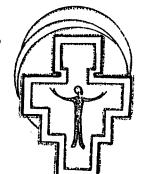
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Content: Contemporary reflection on the Gospel passages that most influenced Francis and Clare; the Rule of Francis and the Synoptic Gospels; Scripture in Francis's Admonitions; the Psalms today, invitation to pray; the influence of John's Gospel on Francis's spirituality with a special reflection on the San Damiano crucifix; the significance of Francis's "Office of the Passion."

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Registration in late January.

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#### New from THE FRANCISCAN FEDERATION

### The Rebirth of a Charism

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For a detailed brochure, please contact:





# FRANCISCAN FEDERATION THIRD ORDER REGULAR

OF THE SISTERS AND BROTHERS OF THE UNITED STATES

# 34th ANNUAL CONFERENCE AUGUST 17-20, 1999 HYATT REGENCY COLUMBUS COLUMBUS, OHIO

THEME:
The Universe: Discovering the Heart of God

#### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Ilia Delio OSF: author, Franciscan theologian and Assistant Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Franciscan Studies at Washington Theological Union, Washington, D.C.

William Stoeger S.J.: Staff Astronomer—Vatican Observatory, Tucson, and Adjunct Associate Professor of Astronomy, University of Arizona, Tucson.

Other Conference Breakout Sessions will be held on:
The implications of Franciscan Spirituality, the Canticle of Creation, and our challenge to be connected with our Universe as sisters and brothers.

August 17: 7:00 p.m. Opens with a Welcoming Social. (Orientation Sessions and pre-meetings will be held the afternoon of August 17.)

August 20: Noon Conference ends

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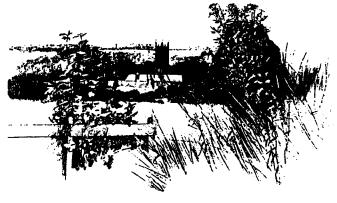
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Phone: 202-529-2334; FAX: 202-529-7016; E-mail: franfed@aol.com Registration brochure will be available in late April, 1999. Watch our Website for more information as well: http://www.franfed.org

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# St. Bonaventure's The Soul's Journey into God A Franciscan Retreat

at the Franciscan Center Andover, Massachusetts

November 5-13, 1999

Josef Raischl and André Cirino, OFM

"I ask you, then, to weigh the writer's intention rather than his work, the meaning of his words rather than his uncultivated style, truth rather than beauty, exercise of affection rather than erudition of the intellect. To do this, you should not run rapidly over the development of these considerations, but should mult over them slowly with the greatest of care." (Bonaventure, Prologue to The Soul's Journey).



This retreat has been designed to do just this. One day is dedicated to each of the eight sections of *The Soul's Journey*. Prayer and Eucharistic celebrations enhance the content of the reflections.

Cost: \$425.00 (includes \$75.00 deposit)
Registration deadline: October 15, 1999

For detailed information contact:

Franciscan Center 459 River Road Andover, MA 01810 Phone: 978-851-3391

# On the Franciscan Circuit Coming Events, 1999

#### Tuesday, April 13-Friday, April 23

GATE Retreat in Mexico. \$700. Contact: GATE, 912 Market St., LaCrosse, WI 54601-8800, ph. 608-791-5283; fax 608-782-6301.

#### Thursday, April 15, 7-9 p.m.

Franciscan Vow Reflection and Renewal. J. Lora Dambroski, OSF and Bernie Tickerhoof, TOR. \$10. At Franciscan Spirit and Life Center. Contact: Mimi DiGregory, 3605 McRoberts Rd., Pittsburgh, PA 15234; ph. 412-881-9207.

#### Thursday, April 15 - Monday, April 19

Franciscan Challenge. Bob Hutmacher, OFM, Ilia Delio, OSF, Mark Balma. TAU Center. Contact: The TAU Center, 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987; ph. 507-454-2993; fax 507-453-0910.

#### Sunday, April 18 - Saturday, April 24

Directed Retreat. J. Lora Dambroski, OSF, and Vinnie Fortunato, OFM Cap. At Franciscan Spirit and Life Center. Contact: see above.

#### Friday, April 23-Monday, April 26

Franciscan Hermitage Experience at the Franciscan Renewal Center with Mary Jo Chaves, OSF, Kathleen Dauses, OSF, and Mary Smith, OSF. \$150. Contact: Franciscan Renewal Center, 0858 SW Palatine Rd., Portland, OR 97219.

#### Saturday, May 1

Rebirth of a Charism, Franciscan Federation, Dubuque, IA (see ad, p. 104).

#### Saturday, May 15

Rebirth of a Charism, Franciscan Federation, Indianapolis, IN (see ad, p. 104)

#### Friday, May 28-Sunday, May 30

Franciscans and Health Care, sponsored by The Franciscan Center of Washington Theological Union. Contact: WTU, 6896 Laurel St, NW, Washington, DC 20012.

#### Friday, June 11-Sunday, June 13

Franciscan Seeds for Fertile Fields, a gathering of Post-Vatican II Franciscans, sponsored by member congregations of upper midwest Common Franciscan Novitiate. With Mary Johnson SNDdeN, PhD, and Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF, In Joliet, IL. Contact Jeanne Bessette, OSF, at 708-771-8383 or Kathleen Anne Copp, OSF, at 815-464-3880.

#### Sunday, June 13-Saturday, June 19

The Way of Francis and Ignatius: Troubadour and Pilgrim. With Dick Rice, SJ, and Rosemarie Whitehead, OSF. \$350. At TAU Center. Contact: (see ad, p. 99).

#### Thursday, June 24-Sunday, June 27

Secular Franciscans All Commissions' Conference. At St. Bonaventure University, Allegany, NY. Contact: Mary Mazotti, SFO, 209-795-3809.

#### **Writings of Saint Francis**

Adm	Admonitions	ExpPat	Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo	FormViv	Form of Life for St. Clare
BenBern	Blessing for Brother Bernard	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.
1EpCust	First Letter to the Custodians	OffPass	Office of the Passion
2EpCust	Second Letter to the Custodians	OrCruc	Prayer before the Crucifix
1EpFid	First Letter to the Faithful	RegB	Later Rule
2EpFid	Second Letter to the Faithful	RegNB	Earlier Rule
EpLeo	Letter to Brother Leo	RegEr	Rule for Hermitages
EpMin	Letter to a Minister	SalBMV	Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
EpOrd	Letter to the Entire Order	SalVirt	Salutation of the Virtues
EpRect	Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples	Test	Testament
ExhLD	Exhortation to the Praise of God	TestS	Testament written in Siena
ExhPD	Exhortation to Poor Ladies	UltVol	Last Will written for St. Clare
		VPLaet	Dictate on True and Perfect Joy

#### Writings of Saint Clare

1LAg	First Letter to Agnes of Prague
2LAg	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague
3LAg	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague
4LAg	Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague
LEr	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges
RC1	Rule of Clare
TestCl	Testament of Clare
BC1	Blessing of Clare

#### **Early Franciscan Sources**

Cel	First Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
Cel	Second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celand
3Cel	Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
<b>A</b> P	Anonymous of Perugia
CL	Legend of Clare
CSD	Consideration of the Stigmata
ior	Fioretti
dV	Witness of Jacque de Vitry
.M	Major Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
.Min	Minor Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
.P	Legend of Perugia
.3S	Legend of the Three Companions
roc	Acts of the Process of Canonization of St. Clare
C	Sacrum Commercium
P	Mirror of Perfection