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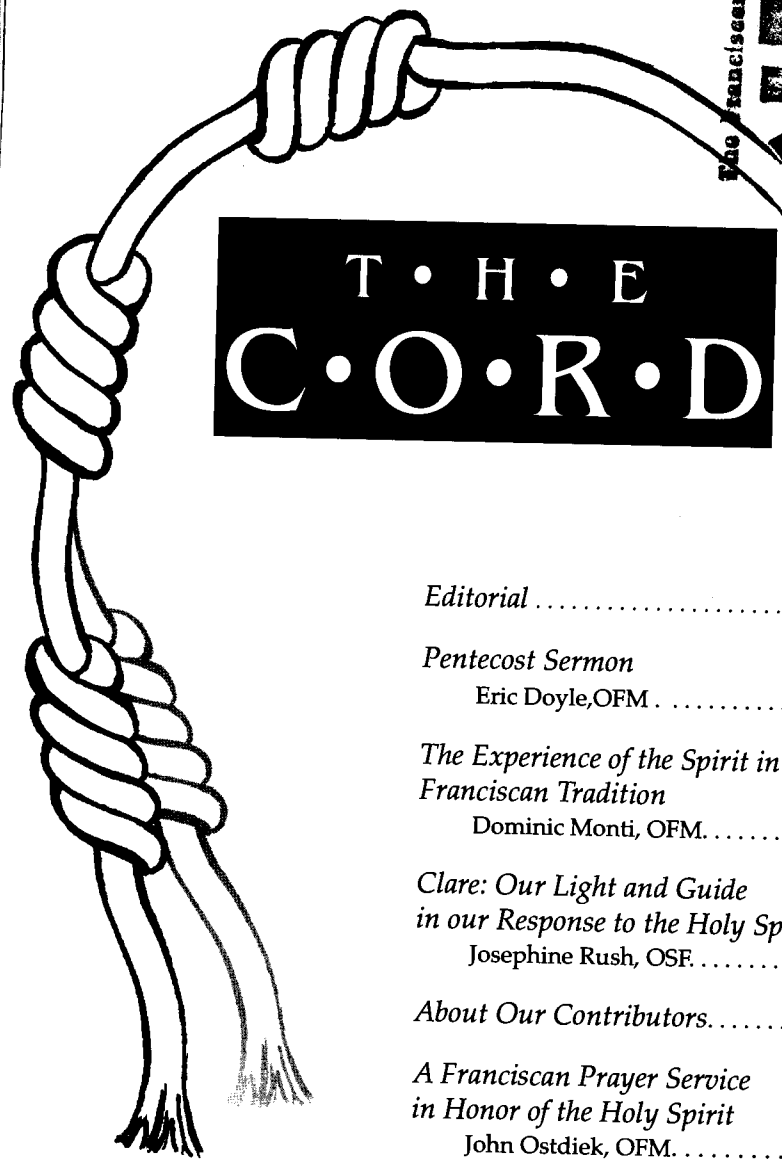
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**THE CORD**  
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1. MSS should be submitted on disk or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced.
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 13 ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. 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).

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

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*The Cord*, 49.3 (1999)

## Editorial

*"Let them pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working" (RegB 10:8).*

*"Let them devote themselves to what they must desire to have above all else: the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working" (RegC 10:7).*

In the Rules of Francis and Clare we find this quite explicit directive that bids their followers to desire one thing above all others—to have the Spirit of the Lord and the Spirit's way of working. Last year the Church celebrated a "Year of the Spirit" in its preparation for the new millennium. And during this year's spring season of Pentecost, the heart of the Church opens anew to the great possibility of the Spirit. Once more we hope against hope that *this time, this year, in this world* we will truly experience, through the anointing by this tender and loving Helper, that definitive "turning" that will set us more precisely on the way of life.

And once more also, as life blossoms and greens around us, we find ourselves bewildered by the workings of war and human atrocities. Pundits reflect endlessly on who is right and who is wrong, who is evil and who is good. Those of us at a "safe distance" feel uncomfortable and wonder what our role is in all this—how it can, might, or should affect our own secure lives. Is this perhaps an invitation to look into our hearts and to find there all the evil and all the good that is being played out in the larger arena of our world? Is this a moment when we recognize our great poverty and need, and desire with our whole hearts the working of God's good Spirit?

Dominic Monti, OFM, on page 16 of this issue, suggests that a "charism" is the distinctive way the Holy Spirit works in the Church and in the world. If this is so, the Franciscan charism is the Spirit's own way of gifting our troubled times. Have we allowed this gift to anoint us, shape us, change us into servants of the Spirit's "working"? Is this what we "desire above all things"?

We offer this issue of *The Cord* in hopes that reflection on the Holy Spirit in our tradition may be a source of life and hope for each of us.

*"How happy and blessed are those men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, since the Spirit of God will rest upon them and . . . will make [a] home and dwelling place among them."*  
(1EpAd 5)

## Pentecost Sermon

Eric Doyle, OFM

[This is a transcription of a tape recording of a sermon delivered in 1984 and preserved at The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, NY.]

“Jesus breathed on them and said: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”

The Holy Spirit of God, who dwells in the mystery of God’s existence for ever and ever as the bonding between the Father and the Son, is probably the most mysterious of the persons of the Blessed Trinity. For the Word of God took our way of life and our existence to himself. Ever since the time of Jesus, humanity can never be separated from God. To think of the best and the kindest, the most mature, the most integrated of people is to think of Jesus, and to think of Jesus is to think of God, for Jesus is in my world as God’s witness. During his earthly life, Jesus used terms of intimacy and indescribable familiarity when he spoke about the one whom he called the Father. We cannot really get an idea of God from an earthly father. But when we go to this man Jesus, we can begin to understand something of what he means by that word. Father is used of the one who is Creator, from whom all is derived, and who, from all eternity, knows the truth of the Son and the love of the Spirit.

But when we come to the Holy Spirit, then there is even more difficulty. We have to use so often analogies which say a *little* about him, but seem in the end rather limp. And certainly, however beautifully the Spirit may be depicted as God, this does little to help us understand the inner workings of the Holy Spirit.

If however there is a way to understand a little of the Holy Spirit, then it surely must be through the Spirit’s workings. How something works will give you a little clue as to what it’s made of, what makes it tick, so to say. The Holy Scriptures associate the Spirit of God, first of all, with bringing order from chaos, from the primeval chaos over which the Spirit brooded, the chaos from which rose the order that we call the cosmos.

But then we meet the Holy Spirit again, depicted so beautifully in the episode of the Annunciation. The Spirit is not only responsible for order, but for the real, true, historical presence of the Word in our world. “How can this come to be since I know not a man?” Our Lady asks. “The Holy Spirit will come upon you,” the angel replies. And there from the Holy Spirit we have that tiny, vulnerable, adorably attractive little child who is the Word of God.

And then the Holy Spirit is the principle author of the Holy Scriptures. Anyone, even with the most cursory acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, knows that here is found the hand of a poet, the hand of creativity. Consider the psalms; consider the prologue of St. John’s gospel; consider the end of the book of revelation—all that is rich and beautiful. Never have words been used so beautifully for such a purpose.

The Holy Spirit also creates power in the Church. What came forth from the side of Christ on the cross, the blood and water, were made manifest in a power that one could hardly believe possible. Not only were the early followers bonded together, but they were bonded together without fear. They could proclaim the presence because they *were* it. That selfsame presence continues until now. And as if this is not enough, then we will hear the priest at Mass call down upon the elements of the bread and wine the Holy Spirit, so that the risen and glorified Savior is made really and truly present in our midst under the tiny form of the little hosts and the few drops of wine in the chalice.

Everything that is beautiful, all our desire for unity, all our desire for identity with the world of our experience, all words we say about almighty God, all poetry and art, all of it has its source in the creative Spirit of God. That is the font from which it is all derived. These workings tell us what the Holy Spirit of God must be like.

The Holy Spirit, then, is certainly the soul of the Church, our common soul, so to speak. It is because of the Holy Spirit that we are here and that there is an ongoing Pentecost. Notice in the reading for today that the disciples were in the upper room. They were afraid. What is the first result of love according to the Holy Scriptures? It drives out fear. Where love is, there is no fear. Where love rules, there is no will to power. And there we see the doors smash open. As Christ himself broke down the gates of hell in his descent to the lower regions, so the Holy Spirit broke open the gates of fear in the hearts of the disciples. What they received in that moment, they were impelled to share fearlessly with others.

Everything is possible through the Holy Spirit of God. First of all, the Spirit will teach us to pray. That is the first act of the true disciple—to worship almighty God. To reverence God’s holy name and to worship—that is the essence of the mission of the Church. It is the essence of the gospel; and the Holy Spirit is the one who teaches how to worship. St. Paul describes the

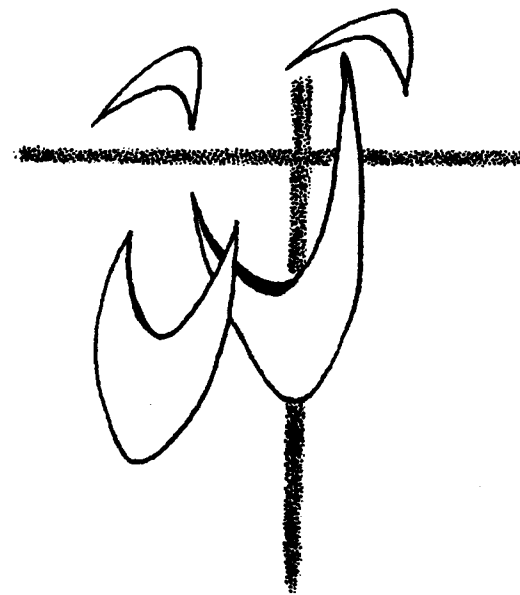
Spirit as dwelling in temples. These temples are ourselves. In the temple in Jerusalem, the high priests entered the holy of holies but once a year on the Day of Atonement. In that holy of holies dwelt the presence of the living God. In *this* temple of ourself, God dwells at the very center of our being. There at the heart of conscience, there at the core of who we are, the Spirit of God dwells and makes us holy.

Then, if we speak of the Church, we have, through the Holy Spirit, the great image of Our Lady. Our Lady has been described as the spouse of the Holy Spirit. She is the mother of God through the Holy Spirit. If she is an image in this regard to each of us as well as to the holy Church, then we may take up the point made seven hundred years ago by St. Bonaventure—that we can also be God's mother. God wishes to be conceived in us through the Holy Spirit, to grow in us as a child grows in the womb, and, then, mystically to be brought forth by our holy lives, by a change of heart and a radical conversion, by words that edify, and by example that spurs people on to what is better and nobler and holier. God wishes us to name this child. And what name shall we give? The name is Jesus. We need to say the name over and over again, for it is the gospel of the name that we preach. And this is the name that was given him from God the Father—Savior. There is no name more holy in heaven or on earth or under it.

And when it seems at times that Jesus recedes and does not hear us in prayer, when we feel we've lost him, then we must go with the Magi looking for him, for he will then be found in all the places that we never thought he would be. He is to be found everywhere, lifting the stones, in every nook and cranny, in the little corners, under the cobwebs, in a kind word, in somebody's wink. We find him by looking for him with the Magi. We ask so often: Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen his star in the east; we have seen his splendor shining. We have caught his fragrance and it is of the orchid. We have heard his voice and it is soft and tender. We have felt his embrace and it is irresistible. Where is he? And looking, we find him. And then we can kneel down and offer him the gold of our prayer and the frankincense of our devotion and the myrrh of our sorrow for sin. And then, led by the Spirit, we can take him into the temple of our heart to present him to the Father. Standing before the divine throne, we can offer God the only gift there is.

And finally, by the Holy Spirit, we are made apostles. The Church is apostolic, not simply because there are twelve apostles, but first because God sent an apostle to us from the distant nearness of his eternal life, the apostle Jesus. And when Jesus was glorified and took his place as Lord at the right hand of God, then did he send the Holy Spirit who was the second apostle. And this second apostle is the one who gave the twelve their courage to go out and

proclaim what they themselves had received. And that selfsame apostle, the Spirit of God, is the one who gives *us* the power to do the same, saying to us: There is no one who has not the talent and the gift in Christ. There is nobody who is not an apostle. There is nobody who is exempted from proclaiming the word of God. Everyone receives the Holy Spirit, who has been poured out upon us; and everyone is obliged, because of that gift, to share what was so generously given. It is commonplace, in an accident, that the victim is given the "kiss of life." That is the image that came to my mind as I heard the words of the holy gospel early this morning and now during Mass. "He breathed on them," and in that breathing the Spirit of God brought back to life forever the heart of the whole Church.



Francis X. Miles, OFM

*Everyone receives the Holy Spirit, who has been poured out upon us; and everyone is obliged, because of that gift, to share what was so generously given. "He breathed on them," and in that breathing the Spirit of God brought back to life forever the heart of the whole Church.*

*(Eric Doyle, OFM)*

## The Experience of the Spirit in our Franciscan Tradition

[This paper was presented at the gathering of the Franciscan Family, co-sponsored by the Franciscan Federation and the Friars' Conference, August 18, 1998, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.]

Dominic Monti, OFM

It has been notoriously difficult to try to categorize Franciscan theology and spirituality, but one thing is certain: throughout our tradition we have tended to claim a Christocentric emphasis as our "distinguishing feature."<sup>1</sup> Certainly from the time of John Duns Scotus at least, the characteristic doctrine defended by Franciscan theologians was the absolute primacy of Christ. And so, when in the past we described our spirituality, we most often said that it was founded on a radical imitation of Christ. As Agostino Gemelli concisely expressed this: "Franciscan spirituality is summed up in an absolutely complete imitation of Christ."<sup>2</sup> Or, in Alexandre Masseron's popular introduction, *The Franciscans*, we read: "The ideal of St. Francis of Assisi was the imitation of Christ. . . . Francis desired to imitate Christ as perfectly as possible for our weakness . . .—to identify himself with his divine model."<sup>3</sup>

But almost all of these treatments passed over the role of the Holy Spirit in Franciscan life. In this regard we shared in the general "forgetfulness of the Holy Spirit" which characterized post-Tridentine Catholic thought generally.<sup>4</sup> The typical progression in most theological treatments of the recent past was God, Christ, Church. God sent Christ into the world, Christ established the Church, and the Church possessed the means of salvation: the authoritative teaching about God and the sacraments which communicate the divine life. Yes, we affirmed our faith in the Triune God. But the actual role of the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation was minimized.

We need only to return to the pre-conciliar classics of Franciscanism to see this tendency in our own tradition. All too often they understood the "imitation of Christ" as our attempt to enter into and appropriate certain facets or

virtues of Jesus' human life, almost in the sense of re-producing or copying some idealized model. Indeed, this motif goes back *almost* to the very beginning of our Franciscan tradition. The ideal of "the imitation of Christ" was becoming an increasingly popular one in Francis's own time,<sup>5</sup> and so it was not surprising that early Franciscan authors used it to describe the goal of their founder as well. Thus Francis quickly was portrayed as the perfect imitator of Christ.<sup>6</sup>

The corollary of this is clear: if Francis was viewed as being the perfect imitator of Christ, then Franciscan perfection could only consist in modeling oneself on Francis as closely as possible. This line of thinking tended to emphasize that a good Franciscan should follow the Rule and constitutions "to the letter," as they embodied this plan of perfection. As one typical author, the Capuchin Césaire de Tours, put it:

The dead Francis still preaches to his sons: "Be imitators of me as I have been of Christ in his sufferings." The saintly followers of Francis have kept his image before their eyes and have reproduced it in themselves to the last detail. . . . Each succeeding century has seen a new reform in the Franciscan Order as an ever-renewed protest against the human tendency to lower all ideals.<sup>7</sup>

Such a model of holiness did not change; it was indeed static: "Let us not say that modern times are different than the Middle Ages, that customs have changed. These are specious objections which many Christians are tempted to make in order to escape the precepts of the Gospel."<sup>8</sup> A spirituality of imitation demanded that we simply re-create the past. And the consequences of such a spirituality for the individual were stark indeed. The implication of the Franciscan's "desire to identify himself with his [or her] divine model" was "to abdicate all individual personality in order to assume the personality of Christ."<sup>9</sup>

Needless to say, such spiritualities would have little to say about the role of the Spirit. Certainly many of these authors gave theoretical acknowledgment to the Spirit as the source of the actual and sanctifying graces which enabled us to perform meritorious acts, but they did not speak much—if at all—of the Spirit's role of truly transforming our very selves from within, empowering us to read the signs of our own times and fashion fresh models of Gospel living.

This began to change in the late 1960s, as scholars doing critical interpretations of the writings of Francis—and then Clare—came to discover more and more the vital role that the Holy Spirit played in their life and thought. One of the first concrete results of this new insight was the letter, "To Have the Spirit of the Lord," issued in 1976 by the four General Ministers of the various congregations of Franciscan men to mark the 750th anniversary of

Francis's death. As they stated: "Anyone who reads the writings or lives of St. Francis attentively will easily see that the following elements are of central importance: to follow in the footsteps of the poor, humble crucified Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."<sup>10</sup>

There is no doubt that for the past thirty years we have witnessed a reaction against the formalistic approach of previous Franciscan generations. Under the name of "openness to the Spirit" there has been a tremendous blossoming of truly creative initiatives. Much dead wood has been cleared and new shoots have appeared. And yet I think it is also true to say with Joseph Chinnici that recent Franciscan life in the U.S. has been too often marked by a kind of "religious eclecticism,"<sup>11</sup> rather than drinking deeply from the springs of our own tradition. Perhaps most of us have understood the phrase "the spirit of Francis and Clare" in the weaker dictionary senses of the word "spirit,"<sup>12</sup> that is, an amorphous "prevailing tendency" or "general intent" rather than in the stronger sense of an "activating or essential principle," namely the *Holy Spirit*. Despite all the language of returning to the charism of our founders, we Franciscans have often failed to appreciate the real depth of the thought of Francis and Clare on the Spirit. After all, what is a "charism" but the distinctive way the Holy Spirit operates?

This year, our ministers have written another encyclical, "Above All, Seek the Spirit of the Lord and His Holy Operation"<sup>13</sup> Once again we are offered an opportunity to overcome this "forgetfulness of the Spirit" by retrieving a vital understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in the experience of Francis and Clare, and therefore of the place which that Spirit ought to take in the lives of us, their followers. This awareness is absolutely pivotal to the re-founding of Franciscan evangelical life today. As the greatest contemporary scholar of Francis's writings, Kajetan Esser, observed in one of his last writings: "With St. Francis it is not simply a question of an external following of the life of Christ, but rather first of all that Spirit of Christ must become alive and active in the would-be follower. This doctrine of the Spirit of the Lord . . . may be called the very center of St. Francis's thinking and Christian behavior."<sup>14</sup>

Certainly, few saints have experienced "the invasion of the Spirit"<sup>15</sup> in their life as did Francis. As he looked back at his life in his Testament, Francis singled out several decisive moments in his life in which the Spirit of God had led him to creative action. From the very outset, he recognized that it was indeed the Lord who had moved him to begin to enter upon a life of penance. Particularly, Francis felt that it could only have been God's Spirit who had overcome his natural repugnance to lepers, leading him to work among them and to discover there the sweetness of God's presence.

Then, in contrast to the many sectarian movements of his time which had rejected the institutional Church in their desire to recapture a pristine Chris-

tian community of the apostolic age, Francis credited the Lord with giving him "such faith in churches" that he would enter them and "simply pray there." And despite a clergy that was often ignorant and immoral, Francis acknowledged that it was the Lord who "gave me and still gives me such faith in priests. . . that I discern the Son of God in them." Then decisively, "after the Lord gave me brothers, no one showed me what to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the holy Gospel." And finally, Francis saw that the way in which he and his brothers and sisters were to go about the world—as humble messengers of God's reconciliation—had also been an insight given him by the Spirit: "The Lord revealed to me a greeting: 'May the Lord give you peace'" (Test 1-2, 4, 6, 14, 23).<sup>16</sup>

But when we examine Francis's writings, we come to notice very quickly that he was absolutely convinced that the same Spirit which had moved him was acting in the lives of his sisters and brothers as well. Shortly after Clare and her first companions had come to join him in his Gospel life, Francis came to see that these aristocratic women "had no fear of poverty, hard work, suffering, shame, or the contempt of the world," but that indeed "one and the same Spirit" had led these "poor ladies" as well as himself from the world (2Cel 204). Thus he gave a brief "form of life" to Clare and her sisters which he began with these words: ". . . By divine inspiration you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the most High King, the heavenly Father, and taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse, choosing to live according to the perfection of the Holy Gospel. . ." (RCl 6:2). And his brothers and sisters who had chosen to do penance while remaining in the world were inspired as well: "How happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, since the Spirit of God will rest upon them and he will make his home and dwelling among them" (1EpFid 5).

Certainly the motif of the Spirit permeates the Rules that Francis and Clare composed for their followers. Men and women who desire to enter this way of life must be "welcomed," as this move on their part is of "divine inspiration." Brothers and sisters who join the Order should dispose of their property as "the Lord may inspire" them (RegNB 2, RegB 2, RCl 2). Francis recognized that some of his brothers "by divine inspiration" might request their ministers to go and live among the infidels. This was a decision which the superiors should not oppose—if they saw that they were indeed fit—for such a courageous request on their parts must have been truly the work of the Spirit (RegNB 6:3-4). Indeed, all must recognize that any accomplishments they credit themselves with in their ministry must be attributed to the Spirit of the Lord who "does or says or works these good things in and through them" (RegNB 17:6).

Finally, both Francis and Clare tried to safeguard the primacy of the Spirit by including a "strikingly original" formula in their Rule: that the brothers

and sisters were to obey their ministers in all things that were not contrary to their own inner spirit (RegNB 5:1-2, RegB 10:1-2, RCI 10:1-2). This passage, which was to be the justification of many a reform movement in Franciscan history, was based on Francis and Clare's recognition that every brother and sister had "an indefeasible right" to follow their call by the Spirit to lead a Gospel way of life. For it was the "divine inspiration" in the heart of each Franciscan which was the very source of his or her vocation and thus ultimately had to take priority over the command of a superior.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the clearest testimony of Francis's conviction that the Spirit of the Lord was leading his brothers and sisters is his famous letter to Brother Leo, in which he advises: "In whatever way it seems best to you to please the Lord God and to follow his footprints and his poverty, do this with the blessing of God and my obedience" (EpLeo 3). Leo had to be open to the Spirit's workings in his own life, for this was the command of God to which an earthly superior's will had to bow. This is why we often say that what Francis and Clare founded was not so much an organization as it was a movement, an inclusive brotherhood and sisterhood of equals whose true General Minister was the Holy Spirit, who dwells within all and works as much in the poor and simple as in the educated and the noble (2Cel 193). If the brothers and sisters are thus attentive to the Spirit's command in each and all, the Seraphic Order will surely move into the future kingdom which God is creating.

But how are we to understand this emphasis on all Franciscans being led by this free breathing of the Spirit? In the mood of the late 60s and 70s version of renewal, are we to simply say that Francis and Clare are telling us all "to do our own thing"? To understand correctly Francis and Clare's emphasis on the Spirit, we must realize that it is rooted in a simple but very profound theology of the Trinity. For them the "Spirit" is not simply an impersonal force or a vague inner whim of the moment, but a *person*—the Spirit of the Lord Jesus who now dwells within us. This Spirit, who is the very bond of love between Jesus and *Abba*, his Father and Lord, creates the same bond within us—between each of us and our God and between one another as brothers and sisters. The fact that there is indeed one Person dwelling within many persons is the guarantee of unity amidst diversity and of true personalism, not libertarianism.

Perhaps the best way to understand what Francis and Clare mean when they speak of the oneness of the individual brother or sister with the Spirit of God is to examine Francis's truly profound image of the Christian as "spouse" of the Spirit. We have already alluded to the primitive form of life which Francis gave to Clare and her sisters, in which he reminds the poor women of San Damiano that, in embracing the Gospel as a way of life, "you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the heavenly Father and taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse" (Rcl 6:2). This metaphor of "spouse of the spirit" was highly

unusual—indeed it seems to have been created by Francis. The ascetic tradition had previously referred to consecrated women as being spouses of *Christ*. For an example of this, we have only to contrast Francis's imagery with that employed by Gregory IX in a letter he addressed to Clare's community: "God the Father . . . has mercifully adopted you as his daughters. Through the working of the grace of the Holy Spirit, he has espoused you . . . to his only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>18</sup> I believe that the difference in the metaphor here—between being called spouses of the Spirit instead of spouses of Christ—is not purely a semantic one. Francis undoubtedly was aware of the traditional imagery, but his seizing upon this unique expression instead tells us that he wanted to say something absolutely foundational about the role of the Spirit within us.

Let us look at the image more closely. According to the Scriptures, what happens when one person espouses another? Is it not that "the two become one flesh"? (Cf. Mt. 19:5, Mk. 10:8.) Two persons in a very real sense become one—not in the sense that they lose their individuality, but that these two become one movement of love. Is not Francis trying to say that when a person is completely open and responsive to the workings of the Spirit, that person in fact "becomes one" with the Spirit of the Lord? Does not Paul say as much? "Anyone united with the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (1Cor. 6:16-17). The Spirit of the Lord penetrates and permeates the deepest reality of what the person is. Therefore, just as Jesus was one with his Father in the bond of the Spirit in such a way that their wills were completely one, so too the disciple is drawn into this oneness of persons through the same Spirit. To the person who is open to the transforming power of the Spirit, what God wills and what that person wills become one and the same; and such a union bears good fruit.

Francis sees this dynamic perfectly exemplified in the person of the Virgin Mary. He praises her:

Holy Virgin Mary, . . .  
there is none like you born into the world:  
you are the daughter  
and the servant of the most high . . . Father of heaven, . . .  
you are the spouse of the Holy Spirit (OffPass, ant).

Francis sees Mary's total response—"Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Lk. 1:38)—as uniting her own will with God's, thus enabling her to bring Christ into the world. But what Mary embodies perfectly Francis sees happening in all "faithful souls" who "repent" of their self-centeredness and center their lives on God—they too become "spouses" through the Spirit who dwells within them, enabling them to become brothers and sisters of Christ by "doing the will of his Father in heaven." They become, also, Christ's "mothers" by giving birth to him through the

holy working” of the Spirit in their lives of witness and service (1EpFid 8-10). Indeed, Francis already described himself as a spouse and a mother when he went to Innocent III to have his Rule approved (2Cel 16). Through this striking imagery, Francis was trying to say that his radically innovative evangelical movement was not simply a human contrivance but truly the working of God. The metaphor is indeed a powerfully “pregnant” one—those who are “wedded to the Spirit” have the capacity of re-incarnating Christ afresh in every age.

If we reflect further on this truly profound understanding of the indwelling of the Spirit in the disciple who is “espoused” to Him/Her, we can see that it is impossible to distinguish what is the “working of the Holy Spirit” and what is the truly personal decision of the disciple. On the one hand, I as a disciple “give myself up” to the Spirit of the Lord, but in so doing my own personality is not “annihilated” (to use the phrase of Masseron cited in the beginning of this article). I do not “assume the personality of Christ” or of Francis or Clare. Rather, I become fully, completely, uniquely myself.

Each thing does one thing and the same: . . .  
*Myself* it speaks and spells,  
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*<sup>19</sup>

This is the basis of the attention to the individual person that we so often singled out as a feature of our Franciscan tradition. Not only is each individual a precious creation of God, but when people are open to the working of the Spirit of the Lord within them, they can embody and enact God’s working in the world in a truly unique way. Only *they* can do the things they do! We see this so well in Francis’s famous description of “the perfect friar” (SP 85). He did not give an abstract definition of Franciscan perfection. He did not hold himself up as the exemplar of Franciscan life. Instead he pointed out those unique qualities the brothers around him embodied: “the perfect faith of Brother Bernard,” “the simplicity and purity of Brother Leo,” “the courtesy of Brother Angelo,” “the patience of Brother Juniper,” and so on down the line. He saw a group of individuals—not copies coming from a cookie-cutter assembly line of “perfection”—but irreplaceable persons who enfleshed the working of God in their own unique way.

Francis and Clare recognized a basic paradox—it is precisely in surrendering to the working of the Spirit that a person actually become more his or herself. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2Cor. 3:17). This Gospel truth, which they intuited, Thomas Aquinas expressed some years later in more scholastic language:

The free person is one who belongs to him [or her] self. The person who acts spontaneously acts freely, but whoever receives their impulse from another does not act freely. Thus the person who avoids evil . . . because it is a law of the Lord’s is therefore not free. On the other hand, the person who [spontaneously] avoids evil . . . is free. It is precisely here that the Holy Spirit works, inwardly perfecting our spirit by giving it a new dynamism, which functions so well that a person spontaneously [does what is right] through love. That person is therefore free . . . because his [or her] own inner dynamism leads [him or her] to do what God [wills].<sup>20</sup>

Thus, it is just as accurate for us to say that Francis *decided* to go among the lepers, that Clare *chose* to follow the path of evangelical poverty, that Anthony *wanted* to go and preach among the infidels, as to say that it was God who “inspired” or “led” them to do these things. I think that, as they looked back at their lives, they knew that these spontaneous decisions on their part were due to the working of the Holy Spirit precisely because in these critical moments they had somehow freely discovered and expressed their own deepest selves.

What are the implications of this fundamental Franciscan tradition of the Holy Spirit for us American Franciscan men and women in the process of re-founding our evangelical life? As our ministers asked us earlier this year: “How are we to rediscover this powerful spiritual lymph which was there at our origins?”<sup>21</sup> I think we all have to admit that the experience of the Spirit I have just described is very difficult to embody in any institutional structure, because this kind of “renewal” cannot be legislated or programmed, even though legislation and programs can assist or hinder it. As Yves Congar said so well: “The gift of the Spirit [to the Church] . . . involves certain attitudes that are called for and even demanded by what we are. This [gift] is both extremely strong and at the same time terribly fragile.”<sup>22</sup> We have seen that Francis had a great trust in the power of the Spirit’s working in the lives of his brothers and sisters, but he also was very much aware that their human weakness could frustrate that Spirit’s operation. Perhaps the best way to continue our discussion at this point is to examine briefly the two obstacles which Francis saw as impeding us from becoming truly “wedded to the Spirit.”

## Some Obstacles

The first barrier which Francis believed blocked the working of the Spirit was “the letter.” Following St. Paul, he strongly believed that “the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2Cor. 3:6).<sup>23</sup> This perspective on Francis as a person



who exalted the Spirit over the letter is something that has been a rediscovery of the scholarship of the past twenty years, and it has indeed come as a revelation for an older generation of Franciscans drilled on the motif of Francis's literal conformity to Christ and a literal interpretation of his Rule.

There are indeed a number of references in our Franciscan sources which claim that Francis expressed a strong desire that his Rule be followed "to the letter" (e.g., LP 113 and SP 1). These references came to play a very prominent role in the history of Franciscan spirituality. But when we track down their context, we soon discover that they are drawn from later thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century accounts which were highly colored by the polemics of the Spiritual controversy.<sup>24</sup> Demoralized by what they saw as a sell-out of Francis's ideals by the majority of friars, zealots in the Order sought to create a bulwark against liberalizing tendencies by emphasizing "the letter of the law." This is certainly understandable. Nevertheless, their attitude is a striking contrast to that of Francis and Clare themselves, for when we examine their writings, we find that nowhere do they propose such an ideal of literal interpretation.

Yes, Francis did command his brothers in his Testament to observe the Rule "without gloss"—that is, they should not construct rationalizing and evasive commentaries on it as if it were a *law*. Rather, in the Rule itself he emphasized that the brothers must observe it "spiritually."<sup>25</sup> In fact Francis gives a considerable amount of discretion to his followers to follow their own conscience in whatever situation they happen to be, "for necessity knows no law" (RegB 9:16). What Francis and Clare meant by observing the Rule "spiritually" is that the friar or sister must be attentive and responsive to the *workings of the Spirit of the Lord within their own spirit as they attempt to lead a Gospel life*.<sup>26</sup> The Spirit is after all the "inner law" of the Rule, and this is what the brother or sister must desire to have above all things. This Spirit may liberate us from "the letter," but it is also extremely demanding. The Spirit continually calls its "spouses" to open and empty themselves to others in loving service, separating themselves from the wealth and power of "the world," identifying instead with its "lesser ones." But at the same time, the way that this demand is lived out must be a creative response of each generation to its own world, not to a thirteenth-century one.

Francis and Clare's approach here avoids two evils which so often plagued us in our past Franciscan tradition: "glosses" on the Rule which reduced its demands to a bare minimum and the type of pharisaic nit-picking which insisted on a literal reproduction of a way of life from the past. Both approaches viewed the Rule simply as "letter"—a written law. Thus when I entered the Order I noticed the bizarre situation which resulted when friars interpreted absolutely literally Francis's command that "they should not ride horseback"

(RegB 3:12). Some friars would categorically refuse to ride a horse at all for fear of committing mortal sin, while at the same time seeing nothing wrong with driving a luxury sedan even though they ministered in a working-class neighborhood. After all, the Rule did not address the issue of motor vehicles!

Connected with this question of the interpretation of the Rule is the way in which the Franciscan reads Scripture. Contrary to what many in the past thought, Francis and Clare did not feel impelled to take the Gospel "literally." Rather, hearing the stories of Jesus' radical obedience to the Spirit in his life and suffering gave them "signals" for the path they should take in their own life. It did not mean that they felt called to re-enact actually and necessarily the same stories.<sup>27</sup> Théophile Desbonnets has convincingly demonstrated that even in the famous episodes when Francis discovered a "life according to the Gospel," he did not literally follow everything he read in those accounts—he selected certain elements as he read the Gospel story in a kind of intuitive grasp of where the Spirit was leading him. In other words, Francis *chose* certain texts as central for himself. Under the Spirit's inspiration, Francis creatively re-appropriated the Gospel, focusing on certain elements as especially critical for his own situation.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, one can appreciate the truly free and creative nature of Francis and Clare's understanding of the evangelical life<sup>29</sup> when one compares it with many of the other "apostolic movements" of the time which attempted to copy meticulously Biblical norms.

Furthermore, so often in the past we have tended to remain with the initial biographical episodes, totally identifying Francis's desire to live a "Gospel life" with certain facets of the Gospel story, such as poverty and itinerant preaching. But as careful studies of Francis's use of the Scriptures have shown, he came to understand the "Gospel life" in a much broader sense. Francis did not attempt to limit his life to a literal reproduction of the historical Jesus. As time went on, he paid much less attention to the details of the life of Christ and more on the dynamic of that life as a whole. In fact, when we examine Francis's writings, we discover that his favorite Gospel passages were not those which referred to the literal descriptions of the earthly life of Jesus, but the Johannine ones which emphasize a relationship to Jesus in the Spirit.<sup>30</sup> As Thaddée Matura has put it: "For [Francis] the Gospel life is not limited to external actions, such as 'selling everything' or 'carrying nothing for the journey.' Instead, it means receiving the message of the Gospel as a whole."<sup>31</sup>

As Francis and Clare viewed it, the "Holy Gospel" is "the words, the life, and the teachings . . . of Him who humbled himself . . . for us" (RegNB 22:41). The Gospel message is thus crystallized into the self-emptying of God for our sake. This is why Francis and Clare focused so much on the stories of the nativity and the crucifixion. These episodes are the most vivid expressions in

the Biblical text of its central message—that the humble God has become one of us in order to love us to death.<sup>32</sup> Thus, it is clear that the central theme of the Franciscan way of life consists in surrendering oneself in faith to the working of God's Spirit of love, holding back nothing of self, but giving oneself totally to the Most High God who has become most low, even unto death—surrendering all to us (cf. EpOrd 28-29).<sup>33</sup>

These insights should enable us to gain a better perspective on the ideal of the "imitation of Christ" in the Franciscan tradition. Although this imagery of "imitation" was used within the thirteenth century to describe Francis's spirituality, Francis himself never uses the phrase. Rather, he sees his goal as "following in the footsteps of Jesus."<sup>34</sup> The difference is not just semantic, but leads to two quite different emphases in the life of the disciple. Indeed, perhaps it yields two distinct spiritualities of the Franciscan life.<sup>35</sup> The spirituality of "imitation" focuses on external behavior—the re-presentation of discrete pieces or aspects of Jesus' life. The spirituality of "following," however, focuses on the newness of the disciple's faith journey. As our ministers put it in their recent letter on the Spirit:

The ultimate explanation of Francis's "conformity with Christ" was not in a self-imposed programme of methodical imitation of Christ in this or that virtue, but in having in himself the Spirit of Christ and the same sentiments which were in him. His was an imitation of Christ which was "pneumatic" before it was ascetic.<sup>36</sup>

In other words, Francis did not so much seek to model himself on an image of Christ "out there," as to possess the Spirit of the Lord Jesus within. He could in this way spontaneously "follow in the footsteps of Christ"—not slavishly copying the details of a first-century Palestinian Jesus, but creatively living out Jesus' obedience to the Father in a radically new way in thirteenth-century Italy.

The Spirit is likewise calling us to follow the trail blazed by Jesus, but the journey must be our own. Jesus has left us his parting gift of the Spirit with which he made his journey. If we are open to its working, it will replicate in the lives of us contemporary disciples Jesus' faithful obedience to God and loving service to others as we travel the journey in our new historical situations. The journey can only be our own; but the fact that the same Spirit who once led the Lord Jesus, Francis, and Clare now leads us will assure that the basic patterns of Gospel meaning will remain the same. We must never forget Francis's parting words: "I have followed my road. May Christ teach you yours" (2Cel 214). This is the charter of creative but faithful novelty among Franciscans and even assumes a certain pluriformity of responses among us.

Having said all this, I must sound a cautionary note and mention the other great obstacle which Francis recognized could block the working of the Spirit in the lives of his followers—"the flesh." Once again Francis is deeply Pauline in this emphasis. There always is that unconverted, unspiritual self within us that has not surrendered to the Spirit of the Lord. Despite Francis's confidence in his brothers and sisters, he was fully aware that they could still be "living according to the flesh and not according to the Spirit" (RegNB 5:4-5). None of us is ever totally "spouse of the Spirit" in this life. For this reason both Francis and Clare urged their followers to "pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working" (RegB 10:8, RCl 10:7).<sup>37</sup> They realized that there are many counterfeits of the work of the Spirit, and in many ways we can delude ourselves into thinking we are already being totally led by the Spirit. The work of conversion never ends but must always be taken up anew. This is why Gospel freedom cannot simply mean that I am able to do whatever I want. Many times it is our inauthentic selves doing the wanting. Like Paul, who in a classic passage in the Letter to the Galatians (5:16-26) contrasts the "fruits" of the Spirit of God with "the works of the flesh," Francis and Clare give us principles of discernment to see if we truly possess the Spirit of the Lord.

## Principles of Discernment

The best place to look for these principles is in the very context in which they speak of seeking the Spirit of the Lord. Francis and Clare begin the sentence with: "*Instead*, let them pursue what they must desire above all things." Francis is contrasting "the working of the Spirit" with "pride, vainglory, envy, avarice, the cares and worries of this world, detraction and complaining." Clare adds "dissension and division" to this list. They perceive that the longed-for fruits of the Spirit's working are a willingness to serve others humbly, the "unity of mutual love," perseverance in prayer to God "with a clean heart and a pure mind," and patience in the face of opposition and human weakness—our own and that of others (RegNB 22:26, RegB 10:8, RCl 10:7). This list of the Spirit's fruits reads a little differently from the virtues of the ascetical tradition many of us older Franciscans were presented with. The life described by Francis and Clare demands sacrifice but does not hem us in; rather, it liberates us for God and one another.

How are these gifts of the Spirit in fact achieved? Simply by each brother and sister separately "working on" their own spiritual life? Our Franciscan sources do not believe that is enough. The fact that we can all fool ourselves points to the need for a deep sharing of the Spirit among us. For example, Francis and Clare both assumed that those brothers and sisters who were living "according to the flesh" would find other brothers and sisters who would

“humbly and charitably correct them” (RegNB 5:3-5, RegB 10:1). And the accounts of the early movement emphasize how the early brothers and sisters rejoiced in sharing with one another what God had accomplished through them and, yes, even candidly admitting their failures (e.g., 1Cel. 30, 40, 43). In many ways, Francis and Clare envisioned their communities as providing a “group spiritual direction.” We must look again at the shared contemplative elements of our life. Simply bringing people together to work on a common project or because of human attraction is not Franciscan community in the Spirit. As brothers and sisters we live in the constant tension of being converted to Jesus and the kingdom. We must develop the structures and disciplines that assist that task. The focusing of our communities on prayer, developing the trust and openness that brings about a sharing of faith and values, and mutual encouragement and correction are all essential to a true “life in the Spirit.”

This brings us to a final point. What might this consideration of the experience of the Spirit in the Franciscan tradition be saying to us American Franciscans today? This is not for me to say, but for all of us to discern among ourselves here and, more importantly, when we go home to our own communities. But let me just suggest two things. First of all, it is obvious that the role of the Holy Spirit is absolutely central to what our Franciscan charism is all about. “As has been said by eminent scholars, the movement set in motion by Francis was perhaps the greatest charismatic movement in the history of the church.”<sup>38</sup> We must always keep the Spirit in the forefront. If anything, we Franciscans stand for evangelical freedom. Living this conviction out will place us in some tension with many elements of a Church which is still “forgetful of the Spirit.” The observation Congar made twenty years ago rings true today:

We are still a long way from opening the life of the church, its parishes and organizations to the free [working of the Spirit's] charisms. Do we not suffer too much even now from a spirit of security and rigidity? . . . The church is an institution, but it is also and even primarily the “we” of Christians [in whom the Spirit dwells].<sup>39</sup>

We Franciscans are called to be a freeing presence in the Church, who recognize and unleash the gifts of all its members. Our approach should be that of the Franciscan pastor who was asked at a diocesan meeting why his parish was flourishing. The friar responded: “We treat people with dignity and we don't put obstacles in their way.”<sup>40</sup> But we cannot act in the larger Church in any self-righteous manner. We have to ensure first that our own communities are places of this Gospel freedom, and we must accomplish this “freeing” in the true spirit of the Lord as taught us by Francis, as people who build up and reconcile, not tear down and divide.

My second observation is that it is perhaps harder than ever for us to take the time to listen truly to the Spirit in our lives, so that we can indeed follow the Spirit's lead. Our contemporary American society gives precious little value to contemplation. Our Franciscan commitment to generous service can all too often mean that we end up being totally controlled by the demands of a job (or in these days, several jobs!). Overly-stressed people have little time for reflection and all too often find outlets in unhealthy addictions or mindless leisure activities that actually numb the spirit within rather than being truly recreating. We Franciscans are not immune to these pressures. It is difficult to make the time for real prayer—that “space” necessary to hear the Spirit moving in our lives. But this is essential. If we are listening to today's young people, we are finding out more and more that they are not going to join our Franciscan religious communities simply to find a position that will provide job security for full-time ministry. There are plenty of opportunities for fulfilling lay ministry in our church. But contemporary men and women will come to our congregations to discover sisters and brothers with whom they can create a space for the Spirit in their lives and share the experience of the workings of that Spirit in a context of affirmation, challenge, and mutual support. This new situation poses a tremendous crisis for existing models of apostolic religious life, but it should offer a promising invitation for us who espouse a model of evangelical life. Evangelical life is a “life in the Spirit of the Lord.” May we discover the disciplines and structures which foster it! Let us conclude by joining Francis in prayer:

Almighty, eternal, just, and merciful God, grant us poor wretches to do for You alone what we know' to be Your will, and always to will what pleases You, that inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened and aflame with the fire of the Holy Spirit, we may follow the footsteps of Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and by your grace alone, make our way to You, Most High! Amen! (EpOrd, 50-52).

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Eric Doyle, OFM, “St. Francis of Assisi and the Christocentric Character of Franciscan Life and Doctrine,” in *Franciscan Christology*, ed. Damian McElrath (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1980), 2: “If there is one word which does complete justice to Franciscan theology and spirituality it is ‘Christocentric,’ and they have this as their distinguishing feature. . . .”

<sup>2</sup>Agostino Gemelli, “Franciscan Spirituality,” in *The Message of St. Francis*, trans. Paul Oliny (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1963), 84.

<sup>3</sup>Alexandre Masseron and Marion Habig, *The Franciscans* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1959), 311.

<sup>4</sup>On the tendency in Catholicism to “forget” the Holy Spirit, see Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 1, trans. David Smith (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1997), 159-64.

<sup>5</sup>For a magisterial treatment of this topic, see Giles Constable, “The Ideal of the Imitation of Christ,” in *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995), 143-248.

<sup>6</sup>Probably the earliest such reference is in the *Sacrum Commercium*, which calls “Blessed Francis . . . a [the?] true imitator of the Savior.” Cf. *St. Francis of Assisi: Omnibus of Sources*, ed. Marion A. Habig, 4th edition (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983) 1531-1596, cf. especially 1551. All references to the early sources are from the *Omnibus*.

<sup>7</sup>Césaire de Tours, *Franciscan Perfection*, trans. Paul Barrett (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1956), 180.

<sup>8</sup>Césaire de Tours, 181.

<sup>9</sup>Masseron and Habig, 311.

<sup>10</sup>Cited from Optatus von Asseldonk, OFM Cap., “The Spirit of the Lord and its Holy Activity in the Writings of Francis,” *Greyfriars Review*, 5 (1991): 106. This exhaustive study (pp. 105-158) and its companion, “The Holy Spirit in the Writings and Life of Clare,” *Greyfriars Review*, 1 (1987): 93-104 are essential reading for this topic.

<sup>11</sup>See Joseph Chinnici, OFM, “The Prophetic Heart: The Evangelical Form of Religious Life in the Contemporary United States,” *The Cord*, 44 (1994): 297.

<sup>12</sup>*Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G. and C. Merriam Co., 1971), 843.

<sup>13</sup>“Above All, Seek the Spirit of the Lord and His Holy Operation: Second Letter of the Conference of the Franciscan Family on the Occasion of the Jubilee 2000, in the Year of the Holy Spirit,” *The Cord*, 48.3 (May/June, 1998): 102-108.

<sup>14</sup>Kajetan Esser, OFM, “Studium und Wissenschaft im Geiste des hl. Franziskus von Assisi,” in *Wissenschaft und Weisheit*, 39 (1976): 28, cited in von Asseldonk, 106.

<sup>15</sup>The phrase is from Lazaro Iriarte, *The Franciscan Calling* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), 9.

<sup>16</sup>All quotations from the writings of Francis and Clare are from *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. Regis Armstrong and Ignatius Brady (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

<sup>17</sup>The truly innovative nature of this idea of Francis in this history of the vow of obedience is highlighted in the classic study of David Knowles, *From Pachomius to Ignatius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 83-85, from which the above quotations are taken.

<sup>18</sup>“Letter of Pope Gregory IX,” in *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. Regis Armstrong (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993), 103.

<sup>19</sup>“As Kingfishers Catch Fire,” *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. W. H. Gardner and N. H. McKenzie, 4th ed. (Oxford: University Press, 1970), 90.

<sup>20</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *In Cor.*, c. 3, lec. 3, cited by Congar, 2: 125 [trans. alt.]. This brief chapter (pp. 124-130) is an excellent discussion of “evangelical freedom.”

<sup>21</sup>“Above all, Seek the Spirit of the Lord and His Holy Operation,” 104.

<sup>22</sup>Congar, 2:126.

<sup>23</sup>Francis cited this text in Adm 7:1.

<sup>24</sup>The oldest manuscripts of the two sources mentioned in the preceding note date from the early fourteenth century. Although a good deal of the material in these stories is undoubtedly much earlier, their final redactions reflect the harsh judgments of the Spiritual controversies.

<sup>25</sup>There are two references to “without gloss” in the Testament. Francis uses the term “spiritual” nine times in his Rule and “spiritually” eight times. See Thaddée Matura, *Francis of Assisi: The Message in His Writings* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1997), 85-86.

<sup>26</sup>See the references in von Asseldonk, “The Spirit of the Lord . . . in Francis,” 108-09.

<sup>27</sup>This is a play on a memorable line in Patricia Hampl’s *Virgin Time: In Search of the Contemplative Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1992), 120: “Franciscans read Francis and Clare not for stories but for signals.”

<sup>28</sup>Théophile Desbonnets, *From Intuition to Institution*, trans. Paul Duggan and Jerry du Charmé (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1988), 3-10. For a further discussion of Francis’s alleged “literalism” in reading the Scriptures, see the important article by Alfonso Marini, “*Vestigia Christi*

*Sequi*” or “*Imitatio Christi*”: Two Different Ways of Understanding Francis of Assisi’s Gospel Life,” *Greyfriars Review*, 11 (1997): 331-58, esp. 339-51. “Francis . . . understood his Gospel life in a way that was not mechanically imitative, made his choices from within the Gospel and the Bible in general, and interpreted in his own way the sacred text proposed to him” (350).

<sup>29</sup>Marini, 350-351.

<sup>30</sup>Optatus von Asseldonk, “Favored Biblical Teachings in the Writings of St. Francis of Assisi,” *Greyfriars Review*, 3 (1989): 287-314.

<sup>31</sup>Matura, 156.

<sup>32</sup>Illustrative here is the story in which Francis at the end of his life declared he had no need to hear the Biblical stories read to him “for I have already made so much of Scripture my own that I have more than enough to meditate on. I know Christ, the poor, crucified one” (2Cel 105).

<sup>33</sup>See also Matura, 158.

<sup>34</sup>Constable makes this point well in the definitive study of the theme: “This type of absorption in the life and body of Jesus was characteristic of the spirituality of the late Middle Ages, and especially of Francis of Assisi and the so-called Franciscan school.” Yet he quickly is forced to admit that “Francis himself nowhere in his writings specifically proposed the imitation of the humanity of Jesus or mentioned the Pauline passages concerning imitation, but he referred frequently to the teachings and the steps of Christ. . . . The literal imitation of Christ was advocated in works by his followers” (Constable, 192-93).

<sup>35</sup>This is the thesis of the important article by Alfonso Marini cited in note 28.

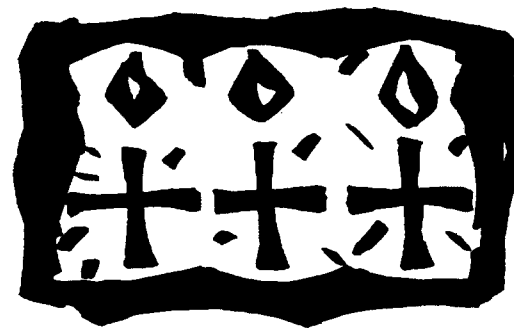
<sup>36</sup>“Above All, Seek the Spirit of the Lord . . .” 103.

<sup>37</sup>The counterpart to this passage in Francis’s earlier Rule is the whole of chapter 22, a critical passage for understanding what he means by “possessing the Spirit of the Lord.”

<sup>38</sup>“Above All, Seek the Spirit of the Lord,” 103.

<sup>39</sup>Congar, 2: 128-30.

<sup>40</sup>Cited by William McConville, “Contemporary Ecclesiology and the Franciscan Tradition,” in *Franciscan Leadership in Ministry, Spirit and Life Series*, Vol. 7 (1997): 122.



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*Almighty, eternal, just, and merciful God, grant us poor wretches to do for You alone what we know to be Your will, and always to will what pleases You, that inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened and aflame with the fire of the Holy Spirit, we may follow the footsteps of Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and by your grace alone, make our way to You, Most High! Amen!*

(EpOrd, 50-52).

## Clare: Our Light and Guide in Our Response to the Holy Spirit

Josephine Rush, OSF

### Introduction

My first meeting with Clare was as "Our Holy Mother St. Clare," a title that left her rather distant even though somewhat to be admired. I knew a good many facts about her life—that she was of the nobility of Assisi, that the Bishop presented her with the palm on Palm Sunday 1212, that late on the evening of that same Palm Sunday she secretly left her family home to follow Francis and subsequently founded the monastery of Poor Ladies at San Damiano. Yet even so I didn't know Clare as a person. Thankfully this changed later when I began reading the writings of Clare and came to see her with new eyes.

I am very happy to have this opportunity of reflecting with you on Clare and the Holy Spirit. After an introductory perspective on her life, we will look at the signs that reveal the work of the Spirit in a person's life, our own as well as Clare's. Then we will consider Clare's response to the working of the Spirit; and finally we will examine the challenge this offers to each of us.

Clare's life was framed by two prophecies. One was spoken to her mother Ortulana. The other was spoken by Francis himself. Before Clare's birth, when Ortulana prayed before the Cross that the Lord would help her through the dangers of childbirth, she heard a voice that told her she would give birth to a light which would greatly illumine the world (Proc 6:12).<sup>1</sup> Some years later, shortly after his conversion, when Francis was engaged in repairing the Church of San Damiano, he climbed the wall of that church and

shouted in French to some poor people who were standing nearby:  
"Come and help me in the work [of building] the monastery of San

Damiano, because ladies are yet to dwell here who will glorify our heavenly Father throughout his holy universal Church by their celebrated and holy manner of life" (TestCl 12-14).

Both of these prophecies indicated the shape of things to come in the life of Clare—that she would be a great light that would illumine the world and that she would build up the Church by her holy manner of living at San Damiano. Eloquent testimony to the fulfillment of these prophecies was given by Pope Alexander IV in the *Bull of Canonization*, when he proclaimed:

O the wonderful brilliance of blessed Clare! . . . She gave light in life; she is radiant after death. She was brilliant on earth, she is resplendent in heaven! O how great is the power of this light and how intense is the brilliance of its illumination! (BC 3).

Just as it was the Spirit who was the author of the prophecies to Ortulana and to Francis, it was the same Spirit who led Clare in the footsteps of Christ and fashioned her into a model of gospel living. The Conference of the Franciscan Family confirmed this in the letter sent to us this year in preparation for the Jubilee of 2000. What it says of Francis can equally be said of Clare: "The Holy Spirit is the real secret which explains the life of Francis [and Clare] and the hidden spring from which flowed every intuition and initiative of his [hers]."<sup>2</sup> We might ask though: What do we look for when we want to uncover the work of the Spirit in a person's life?

### Signs of the Spirit

As I reflected on this question, I considered the Acts of the Apostles, the witnesses of the many people I have met and have read about who have been touched by the Spirit, and finally the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. They all have something in common. They all speak of an outpouring of the life-giving Spirit of God bringing about what might be called "an awakening of the heart"<sup>3</sup>—a new awareness of God's love, mercy, compassion, and forgiveness; a desire to pray, to read the Word of God; an awareness of God's love being poured out on all peoples, indeed on the whole of creation; and a desire that all peoples might know God's love and mercy.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we see Peter right after Pentecost proclaiming the Good News with great clarity and conviction. But Peter wasn't always like that. Peter was the daring and presumptuous one who walked on the water; he was the one on whom Jesus conferred headship in the Church; he was one of the chosen three to witness the Transfiguration. Yet

in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter, for the first time, saw Jesus overcome by sorrow, fear, and weakness. This challenged his way of thinking, as it was quite the opposite of his vision of who Jesus was and of who God was. When to Peter's utter dismay Jesus was arrested, his whole idea of God was shattered. He sank into great confusion and darkness. In the midst of his inner turmoil, he was asked three times if he was one of Jesus' followers, and three times he denied that he knew Jesus. Scripture tells us that "while he was still speaking the cock crowed, and the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter, and Peter remembered the Lord's words. . . . And he went outside and wept bitterly" (Lk. 22:60-62).

Suddenly the veil was torn away from Peter's eyes. Like Paul on the road to Damascus or Francis after embracing the leper, a radical change took place. Peter realized that, in all the ups and downs of following of Jesus, he had lacked a true knowledge of Jesus and a true knowledge of himself. Through this shameful humiliation Peter now saw God as "unlimited, boundless Love, offered freely and purely with a mercy which neither condemns nor accuses nor reproves."<sup>4</sup> Till now he had been the one out there in front, self-sufficient and ready to dare and to do all things for Jesus. He saw nothing as impossible for him. "Now he understands that with God he can do nothing but let himself be loved, let himself be saved, let himself be pardoned."<sup>5</sup>

On Pentecost morning we see a new Peter, not the presumptuous Peter or the Peter plunged in sorrow, but a Peter confidently proclaiming the Gospel. He was empowered to preach what he himself had experienced, as he proclaimed to the Jews: "You must repent and everyone of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). And we are told that on that day three thousand were baptized! It was the experience of God's love that gave new life to Peter, transforming him and empowering him to preach the Word and build up the Kingdom of God.

You, I am sure, have met people in our day whose lives have been changed by the transforming work of the Spirit. In my own life I have experienced this outpouring of the Spirit. Before that time I would have described myself as a "good religious" in terms of external observance, yet I was self-righteous, judgmental and critical; I was faithful to daily prayer yet with little understanding of a personal relationship with God; I was committed to living the gospel yet I was very hazy and confused as to what that meant; I was committed to a life of conversion yet my life was not changing.

The Lord intervened in my life and in his great love and mercy opened my heart to experience his love in a very real way. As I prayed, it seemed to

me that all my life I had been praying in the half dark and now someone had turned on the lights. I knew the reality of the presence of God and so real was God to me that I would have preached it from the housetops. I was able to speak to God from my heart and expected to hear from God. I delighted in praising God. I began to understand that the basis of living the gospel is to love, to love others without finding excuses for withholding my love from anyone, and I was convinced of my need to forgive and to ask for forgiveness. Scripture became a living word that had meaning for my life here and now, resulting in a new zeal for bringing the knowledge of God's love to others. In short, I experienced "new life."

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that the source of this "new life" is God's love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, giving us the ability to love others because we have received power from the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup> By this power of the Spirit, our lives can bear much fruit, the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.<sup>7</sup> Again the Spirit is visible in the gifts and ministries by which the Church is built up.<sup>8</sup>

This work of the Spirit, this "awakening of the heart," is what St. Paul prayed for in Ephesians 1:18—that "the eyes of our hearts would be opened. . . ." He was praying that our hearts would be awakened, that the grace of baptism would be actualized in our lives in a special way. This work of the Spirit changes and deepens our relationship with God, our relationships with others, and equips and empowers us to bring the Gospel to those we meet and with whom we live and work. It helps us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

## Clare's Response

As we read the early documents which relate the life of Clare, we see her drawn by the love of God to follow him unreservedly. The love of God filling her heart overflows not only to her sisters but to all in need. In examining Clare's response to the Spirit, I would like to focus on five areas:

- as she breaks with the conventions of the society of her time
- as she follows a new path for religious women
- as God's transforming love brings her into an ever deeper union with Jesus
- as she lives her life with her sisters at San Damiano
- as she becomes a light to the world.

## Breaking with Conventions

One of the early documents giving details of Clare's life is *The Legend of St. Clare*.<sup>9</sup> This legend, in describing Clare prior to her meeting with Francis, tells us:

From the mouth of her mother she first received with a docile heart the fundamentals of faith and with the Spirit inflaming and molding her interiorly she became known as a most pure vessel, a vessel of graces (CL 3).

Clare was a docile yet a daring disciple of the Spirit. She was taught to value things according to the inspiration of the Spirit, from the perspective of faith,<sup>10</sup> a faith receptive to a more radical living of the Gospel. Francis's preaching the Gospel to her led her "to place a worthless price upon worthless things" (CL 4). Even while still in her own home, she disciplined herself by fasting, prayer, and willingly giving alms as much as she could (Proc 18:3). Such was her love for the poor that she would share with them the food that she herself was supposed to have eaten (Proc 17:1). She sold her inheritance, giving all the proceeds to the poor (CL 13). By selling her inheritance, Clare was making a decisive break with her family, declaring that she had no intention of getting married and that her inheritance belonged to the poor.<sup>11</sup> According to her noble status, she should have married magnificently and thus multiplied the wealth her family already had. But like St. Paul, once Clare met Christ, everything else counted for nothing. She wanted nothing to get in the way of her freedom to love;<sup>12</sup> she wanted only to run after Christ (CL 13).

Clare, we know, belonged to one of the noblest families of Assisi (Proc 18:4), of the urban aristocracy, for whom land, possessions, and property were of great importance, setting them apart in society. Yet the Spirit taught Clare to see these things as worthless. To understand fully the struggles which Clare had in making the decisions inspired by the Spirit, we must consider that, by the definitions of the society of her time, she should have taken the conventional path of marriage or she should have entered a monastery. Clare refused to accept these definitions. Furthermore, her social position hindered her from contact with those belonging to different social classes. Clare was thus someone to whom "the itinerant and uncertain life led by Francis and his companions was absolutely forbidden."<sup>13</sup> For a woman to act in this way in the Middle Ages was to bring shame on her whole family, and, in the case of Clare, we know it provoked a violent reaction. The Legend tells us that her Uncle Monaldo and other relatives

employed violent force, poisonous advice, and flattering promises, trying to persuade her to give up such a worthless deed that was unbecoming to her class and without precedent in her family. But, taking hold of the altar cloths, she bared her tonsured head, maintaining that she would in no way be torn from the service of Christ (CL 9).

## A New Path

Not only did Clare break with the conventions of her time but the Spirit led her on a new path for religious women. In giving up her inheritance, in turning her back on temporal security and establishing her Gospel way of life at San Damiano, Clare opened a new road for women. The Rule of Clare is the first known example in the history of the Church of a rule for religious life written by a woman for women.<sup>14</sup> She broke the traditional pattern of the monastic life, a life of status with securities from land and papal privileges and, despite "the potential conflict between the aspirations of the Poor Ladies and accepted forms of female monasticism,"<sup>15</sup> "lived her life in response to the movement of the Spirit within her."<sup>16</sup> In fact Clare obtained from the Holy See a document called the Privilege of Poverty. This proposed a way of life with no possessions so that members could more freely and readily follow in the footprints of Christ. It was a privilege which guaranteed a life with no privileges, a life of total dependence on God. This single document sanctioned the originality and validity of life at San Damiano.<sup>17</sup>

## Drawn by God's Transforming Love

It was God's transforming love that drew Clare. Clare recognized the work of the Spirit in Francis and so desired to see and hear him (CL 5). We are told that when she responded to the Spirit inspiring her to follow Francis, "immediately an insight into the eternal joys was opened to her at whose vision the world itself would become worthless" (CL 6). As she embraced her new life, she and her sisters "had no fear of poverty, hard work, trial, shame, or contempt of the world, but, instead, regarded such things as great delights" (RCl 6:2). Clare had enclosed herself in the convent of San Damiano where, through the Spirit, "she gave birth to a gathering of virgins of Christ . . . and showed her footprints to her followers by her own manner of walking" (CL 10).

As she responded to the Spirit working in her life, Clare grew in intimacy with God so much that "she held the pursuit of prayer as a friend"

(CL 4). Just think what this means. If we had to say how we held prayer, would it be as a friend or more as a duty? something we know we "should do," maybe to some extent desire to do—but as a friend? Do we cling to prayer as we would to a friend, particularly in times of great joy or need? Clare clung to prayer, for it was in prayer that she could pour out the love of her heart for Jesus.

Her sisters tell us what this means as they testify that she was vigilant in prayer and that

when she returned in joy from holy prayer, she brought from the altar of the Lord burning words, that also inflamed the hearts of her sisters. In fact they marveled that such sweetness came from her mouth and that her face shone more brilliantly than usual. . . (CL 20).

Does this ever happen to us when we pray? What kind of a change takes place?

They say also that she showed spiritual joy with her sisters, admonishing and comforting them with the words of God (CL 20). The work of the Spirit in her heart was revealed as she urged her sisters to "pray always with a pure heart" (RCI 10) so that they might feel "what his friends feel as they taste the hidden sweetness that God himself has reserved from the beginning for those who love him" (3LAg 12-14).

Perhaps more than in any other source, the Letters to Agnes of Prague reveal the depth of intimacy with Jesus characteristic of Clare's prayer. Agnes was a Princess of Bohemia who wished to follow Clare's way of life. In her first letter to Agnes, Clare described Christ as the Spirit had revealed him to her:

Whose power is stronger, whose generosity more abundant  
Whose appearance more beautiful, whose love more tender  
Whose courtesy more gracious.  
In whose embrace you are already caught up (1LAg 9).

### Life with Her Sisters

Clare's life with her sisters at San Damiano is related for us in the Acts of the Process of Canonization where we hear the living voices of people who had actually known Clare, among whom are sixteen sisters who lived with her. All testify to and underline the human reality that is Clare—sensible, tender, caring, discerning. The Canonization Process describes a domestic holiness where we see the fruits of the Spirit flourishing in ordinary interactions on a day to day basis. We hear of Clare's love and kindness in

covering up her sisters at night, being attentive to their needs; her gentleness and patience in consoling those who were tempted and depressed; her mercy and care for those not able to endure the harshness of some of their penitential practices. Three of the sisters gave witness to the humility of Clare in washing the feet of the sisters, while others testify to her curing their illnesses by marking them with the sign of the Cross.

In her life at San Damiano the emphasis was on humble service.

In the great Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries there were two categories of nuns. The choir nuns were from aristocratic families and devoted themselves primarily to prayer. Then there were lay sisters who looked after all the practical aspects of monastic life. It was not this way at San Damiano. Here all the sisters were called to serve . . . and there were no separate categories in terms of communal life.<sup>18</sup>

This is reflected in the story of the door falling on Clare. The door, at the entrance to San Damiano, was too heavy for the sisters to lift from her. It took three brothers to lift it; yet there was no harm done to her. She said it was as if a mantle had been placed over her (Proc 5:5). This story is set within the everyday activities that Clare was engaged in. The door would have to be closed at night. Though it was within two years of Clare's death, she was still performing a duty so ordinary.

Her prayer engaged her on a new level of life with her sisters. She saw each sister as a gift, and like Francis she "took the simple everyday paradigm of sister/brother and made it the heart of her vision of religious community."<sup>19</sup> In her Testament she says:

May the love you have in your hearts be shown outwardly in your deeds, so that, compelled by such an example, the sisters may always grow in love of God and charity for one another (TestCl 59, 60).

One can only love in this way if she has allowed the love of God to be poured into her heart by the Holy Spirit.

### A Light to the World

This love was destined to be a light to the world. The sisters sought to live their life of prayer apart from the world. However, led by the Spirit, Clare's vision of enclosure was not Benedictine in character.

Clare thought of San Damiano as being an open community, a community so open as to be without boundaries, with an horizon as wide



as the whole world. . . . Though an enclosed community, their enclosure was unconfined, without limits.<sup>20</sup>

She was not cut off from the real problems of the world. Others saw, heard, touched, and were able to be in contact with her. Clare encountered people who came—touched them—a picture of a real human exchange. In addition to the recorded miracles of healing and multiplication of food which happened inside San Damiano, we also have records of people coming to Clare in times of sickness and need to be prayed over, most usually with the sign of the Cross. Over half of these healings were for children<sup>21</sup>—a baby with a high fever, a young boy who had a pebble caught in his nose.

Popes sought her prayer and counsel (CL 27), and Francis himself sent Brother Stephen to San Damiano so Clare would make the sign of the Cross over him. Stephen departed cured of his mental illness (Proc 2:15). We know of her concern for the city of Assisi and how she came before the Saracens with the Eucharist as her only protection. Not only was San Damiano saved by her intercession, but the whole city as well. The Legend of Clare records for us: “. . . how many and how great were the souls who came to Christ through her. . . . Remaining enclosed she began to enlighten the whole world” (CL 10, 11).

## Our Challenge

We may know Clare's story; “yet we must rehearse it again and again for ourselves, not to know the facts, but to love and imitate her example,”<sup>22</sup> to allow the Spirit which was so alive in her to awaken our hearts too. For as the Letter from the Conference of the Franciscan Family reminds us: “where have the Christian faithful more right to find the ‘dwellings of the Spirit’ than in our Franciscan communities or fraternities?”<sup>23</sup> Can we use Clare as our mirror, bringing before her the desires of our hearts? Do our hearts hold within them the desire to love others as God loves us? Do we yearn to bring the good news of God's love and mercy to others? Is the presence of the Spirit visible through our love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control?

This awakening of the heart is gradual—a lifetime process. Francis recognized that it is the penitential heart that is the dwelling place of the Spirit, that is, a heart that is always turning to the Lord. Both he and Clare encourage us to have a clean heart, i.e. a heart for God alone,<sup>24</sup> and it is the Word of God that will continue to purify and cleanse us. The major theme in the life and writings of Clare—that which holds everything together and creates a context for her form of life—is to have within us a great desire to

love as Jesus loves. In the letter which the General Minister of the SFOs wrote to mark the “Twentieth Anniversary of the Rule,” she points out that

the Holy Spirit alone can lead Secular Franciscans to let “prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do.” Without the Spirit, all apostolic activity would be translated into a sort of sterile activism, and dedication to the needy and marginalized would become nothing more than philanthropy.<sup>25</sup>

Bonaventure tells us that the Spirit comes in “where he is loved, . . . where he is invited, . . . and where he is expected.”<sup>26</sup> As the Word of God makes its home within us, our hearts will overflow with joy, thanksgiving, and gratitude. Praise and prayer will bubble up, will flow and run like living water. The more we come to know the heart of Christ, the more will our hearts be awake, beating with the rhythm of the Spirit.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>References to basic sources are from *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. and trans. Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993).

<sup>2</sup>“Second Letter of the Conference of the Franciscan Family on the Occasion of the Jubilee 2000 in the Year of the Holy Spirit, *The Cord*, 48.3 (May/June, 1998), 102. This Conference consists of the Ministers General of the Friars Minor, the Capuchins, the Conventuals, the Third Order Regular friars, the President of the International Franciscan Conference of the Third Order Regular, and the General Minister of the Secular Franciscan Order.

<sup>3</sup>Andre Louf, *Teach Us To Pray* (Boston: Cowley Publications, 1992), 34.

<sup>4</sup>Carlo Martini, *Ministers of the Gospel: Meditations on St. Luke's Gospel* (England: St. Paul Publications, 1995), 73.

<sup>5</sup>Martini, 74.

<sup>6</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church* Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, U.S.C.C., 1994), 735.

<sup>7</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 736.

<sup>8</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 688.

<sup>9</sup>In medieval usage, the word “legend” meant simply “an account to be read publicly,” not today's connotation of “a popular story regarded as historical but not verifiable.”

<sup>10</sup>Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSF, “Clare and Intimacy with the Lord,” *The Cord*, 45.5 (Sept./Oct., 1995): 46.

<sup>11</sup>Marco Bartoli, *Clare of Assisi* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1993), 46.

<sup>12</sup>Karecki, 33.

<sup>13</sup>Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSF, and Sergius Wroblewski, OFM, *Franciscan Study Guides for the Life and Times of Francis and Clare* (Franciscan Institute of Southern Africa, 1997), 6:9.

<sup>14</sup>Bartoli, 2.

<sup>15</sup>Ingrid J. Peterson, OSF, *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), 357.

<sup>16</sup>Peterson, 17.

<sup>17</sup>Karecki and Wroblewski, 6:18.

<sup>18</sup>Karecki and Wroblewski, 6:17.

<sup>19</sup>Marie Beha, OSC, "St. Clare of Assisi Teaches about Formation," *Human Development*, 17.3 (1996), 31.

<sup>20</sup>Bartoli, 85-86.

<sup>21</sup>Bartoli, 168.

<sup>22</sup>Ignatius Brady, OFM, "Clare of Assisi: Our Model," *The Cord*, 45:4 (July / Aug., 1995): 3.

<sup>23</sup>Second Letter, 104-5.

<sup>24</sup>Regis J Armstrong, OFM Cap., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings for a Gospel Life* (New York: Crossroads, 1994), 42.

<sup>25</sup>Emanuela De Nunzio, SFO, "The Twentieth Anniversary of The Rule: A Letter from the General Minister, SFO," *The Cord*, 48.3 (May/June, 1998): 112.

<sup>26</sup>Cf. St. Bonaventure, "Dominica IV, Post Pascha, Sermo II," *Opera Omnia*, 9 (Quaracchi: Ad Claras Aquas), 311.

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## A Franciscan Prayer Service in Honor of The Holy Spirit

John Ostdiek, OFM.

[Note: this non-liturgical service is designed for use by those who wish to gather in prayer and reflection in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.]

### Gathering/Opening

**Presider:** (In own words, welcomes those gathered and then begins:)

We gather in the presence of our God who is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**All:**

Amen.

**Presider:**

Gathering to pray and to share after the example of Francis, we make visible the body of Christ Jesus. And in doing so, we, as Francis did, show a deep trust and loving respect for both the human and the divine presence in our gathering.

We see ourselves "at home" with each other and with God. We want to come closer to the Holy Spirit, to understand better the Spirit's urgings in us, and to give sincere witness to the Spirit's work in our world. Let us now pray that we may be open to the Spirit and to each other.

**All:**

All-powerful, most holy, most high and supreme God,  
All good, supreme good, entire good.  
You alone are good.  
We give you all praise, all glory, all thanks,  
All honor, all blessing and every good.  
So be it. So be it. Amen. (LaudHor 11.)

## Readings with Reflection and Prayer.

**Reader 1:** Jesus promises the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said: "When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. . . . I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him. . . . When he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. . . . He will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you" (John 15:26-16:15).

(Reflection/Sharing. Take some time, at the discretion of the group, to meditate quietly for a while, then share thoughts on this reading. Suggested: What does this promise of Jesus mean to me/us? How do I/we look to the Holy Spirit? Any other thoughts?)

**Presider:**

We pray: We have seen the true Light; we have received the heavenly Spirit; we have found the true faith. We adore the indivisible Trinity, who has saved us. Amen (Byzantine Liturgy for Pentecost).

**Reader 2:** Jesus prays for unity—among ourselves, with Jesus, with the Father. The Holy Spirit helps and guides us to that unity.

Jesus prayed: "I pray . . . so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us. . . . So that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me. . . . Father, I wish that where I am they also may be with me" (John 17:20-24).

(Reflection/Sharing. What is the nature of the unity for which Jesus prays? What is the basis of unity? How does unity differ from uniformity? How can we be united, yet retain our individuality? What can I/we do to promote the unity for which Jesus prayed?)

For which Francis worked? In myself? Among those we meet? Consider: The Spirit makes present the mystery of Jesus to us. The Spirit gives us help/grace. The Spirit prepares others to see and accept our witness.)

**Presider:**

We pray:

**All:**

You are holy, Lord, the only God.  
You do wonders.  
You are strong, you are great, you are the Most High.  
You are love, charity.  
You are wisdom; you are humility; you are patience.  
You are beauty; you are meekness.  
You are all our riches; you satisfy all our needs.  
You are our protector; you are our defender.  
You are our strength; you are our refreshment.  
You are our hope.  
You are our eternal life,  
Great and wonderful Lord,  
God almighty, merciful savior. Amen. (LaudDei. Adapted.)

**Reader 3:** Charisms of the Holy Spirit today.

The Holy Spirit raises up new ministries in the Church through the promptings of grace called charisms. As Paul explained to the people of Corinth: "To one . . . wisdom, to another . . . knowledge, to another . . . faith, to another . . . healing, to another . . . etc." (1 Cor. 12:7-10).

Paul saw these various ministries as charisms, gifts from the Holy Spirit to be used in ministry to people. The operative word is "gifts." Today, we are convinced, the Spirit is just as active, just as concerned as in the time of Paul and the early Church. And the Spirit is just as generous to us as in Paul's time.

These charisms, carried out in various ministries today are a rich source of God's presence to and for the Church, the people of God. (John Paul II, *Christifidelis laici*.)

(Reflection/Sharing. What are God's gifts to me? Which do I think is the strongest? How am I using it? What are the gifts we receive from being followers of Francis? How am I/we doing with these gifts? What in Francis can we apply to today's world?)

**Presider:**

We pray:

**All:**

Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God,  
 Help us in our weakness to do for your sake  
 What we know you want us to do  
 And always to want what pleases you.  
 Inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit,  
 May we follow in the footsteps of Jesus,  
 And so come to you by your grace—  
 You, who live in perfect Trinity and simple Unity,  
 And are glorified, God almighty,  
 Forever and ever. Amen. (EpOrd 50-52. Adapted.)

**Prayers of Intercession****Presider:**

Francis appeals to the heart. He found inspiration in a healing, touching, and caring Jesus. He found hope in a kind and gentle Father-God. So we, followers of Jesus in the pattern of Francis, open our hearts to that same caring God in these intercessions. I now invite you to voice your petitions.

(Suggest an appropriate response which the group can say at the end of each petition. Such a response might be, "Lord, hear our prayer.")

**Closing Prayer****Presider:**

In his writings, St. Francis often associated the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son, showing that the Spirit is always at work with the Father and the Son. Let us now pray together the hymn in which Francis asks the Spirit, with the Son, to offer thanks to the Father.

**All:**

All-powerful, most holy, most high, supreme God,  
 Holy and just Father,  
 Lord, King of heaven and earth,  
 We thank you for yourself.

By your holy will  
 And through your only Son  
 And with the Holy Spirit,  
 You created every spiritual and corporeal being;  
 And, after making us in your own image and likeness,  
 You placed us in paradise.  
 Through our own fault we fell.  
 We thank you for redemption.  
 Through your Son you created us,  
 And you willed to redeem us from bondage  
 Through his cross, blood, and death.  
 We thank you for the second coming.  
 Your Son will come again  
 In the glory of his majesty.  
 All of us have sinned.  
 We humbly ask that our Lord Jesus Christ,  
 Together with the Holy Spirit, the Consoler,  
 Would give you thanks for everything  
 As it pleases you and him,  
 And through whom you have done so much for us.  
 Alleluia. Amen.

(Reg NB 22:1-5. Prayer of Thanksgiving. Adapted.)

**Presider:**

Let us now go in the peace of Jesus.

**All:**

Thanks be to God!



## Book Review

*Resource Manual for the Study of Franciscan Christology.* Edited by Kathleen Moffatt, OSF, and Christa Marie Thompson, OSF. Washington, DC: Franciscan Federation TOR, 1998. 440 pp., paper. \$28.00.

The production of this resource Manual is a tremendous gift and challenge for the Franciscan family both nationally and internationally. As a gift, it is a compilation of well-organized and carefully selected primary and secondary sources. As a challenge, the Manual requires Franciscans to acknowledge that, when it comes to understanding the primacy of Christ in Creation, we no longer have an excuse for not knowing the fundamental insights and distinctive characteristics of the Franciscan theological tradition. With wisdom and grace, the editors of this volume have provided the Franciscan family with the resources needed to grapple with a number of christological questions that are consequential for our lives and ministries. Among others, the following three questions are foundational to the aims and objectives of this volume. As Christians, what response do we give to the question "why did God become human?" As Franciscans, how does our understanding of the primacy of Christ distinguish our lives and action in the Church and in the world? As individuals and communities, how does our familiarity with the defining insights of the Franciscan theological tradition enable us to live the evangelical life with fidelity and creativity?

The Resource Manual is divided into six sections. The section headings include basic considerations, Franciscan sources, contemporary reflections, the christology of St. Clare, supplementary sources, and selected bibliography. Basic familiarity with the writings of Francis and Clare is assumed. Classic texts from the tradition include excerpts from the works of Bonaventure, John Duns Scotus, and Alexander of Hales. Included among recent and contemporary sources are selections from the writings of Philotheus Boehner, Ignatius Brady, Ilia Delio, Eric Doyle, Edith Van Den Goorbergh, Margaret Guider, Zachary Hayes, Michael Higgins, Nguyen Van Khanh, Michael Meilach, Daniel Migliore, Kenan Osborne, Ingrid Peterson, Margaret Pirkel, William Short, Gabriele Uhlein, Jack Wintz, and Allan Wolter. Helpful appendices include documents of the Church and the general ministers that focus on the life and legacy of John Duns Scotus.

The texts are characterized by a variety of scholarly interests, methodologies, and perspectives. Each text is prefaced by an outline that serves as a helpful guide for study and reflection. These readings have broad appeal to a variety of audiences ranging from the theologically sophisticated to any Franciscan moved by the desire to do meaningful and substantial theological reflection. Overall, the selected texts have in common a clarity of purpose, a definite rigor, and styles that are informative, engaging, and persuasive. Grounded in scholarly research and attuned to exigencies of Franciscan life at the threshold of a new millennium, this collection of writings represents a noteworthy accomplishment on the part of the editors to guarantee that the necessary resources for doing christology in the light of the Franciscan theological tradition are made accessible to interested readers within and beyond the Franciscan family.

As a promising resource for theological education and spiritual formation in the Franciscan tradition, the volume merits the attention and consideration of individuals and communities. To those who, on the basis of past experience, may have questions and hesitations about the adequacy and appropriateness of a compendium approach to any topic in theology, it is worth noting that the theological value and enduring relevance of the selected texts have been verified by the receptivity and enthusiasm of the readers and audiences for whom the articles and presentations were originally intended.

In conclusion, the Manual represents the very best in visual design, solid theological content, and a user-friendly format. The vision, dedication, and expertise of Kathleen Moffatt, OSF, coupled with the talents and skills of her many collaborators, is in evidence from cover to cover. Though not intended as the *first* in a series of resource manuals on the Franciscan theological tradition, I have no doubt about this volume's potential to cultivate ongoing interest and desire.

Margaret E. Guider, OSF

*Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God,  
Help us in our weakness to do for your sake  
What we know you want us to do  
And always to want what pleases you.  
Inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit,  
May we follow in the footsteps of Jesus,  
And so come to you by your grace—  
You, who live in perfect Trinity and  
simple Unity, And are glorified, God almighty,  
Forever and ever. Amen. (EpOrd 50-52. Adapted.)*

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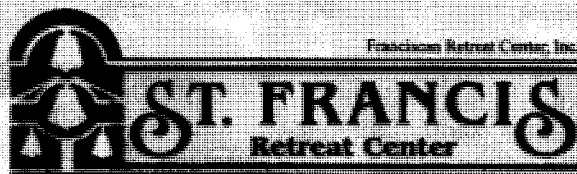
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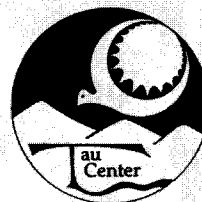
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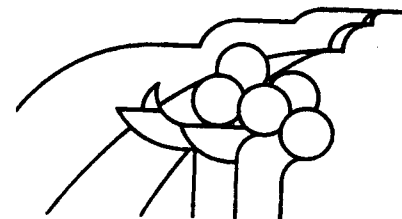
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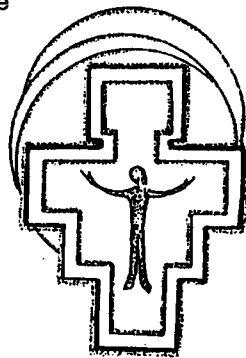
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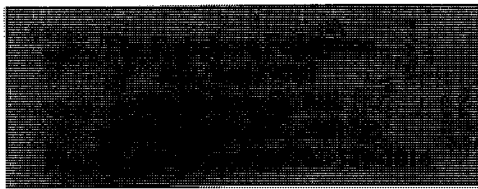
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### Friday, May 28-Sunday, May 30

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

### Tuesday, June 8-Sunday, June 13

**Franciscans Doing Scripture**. National Franciscan Forum. See ad, p. 155.

### 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. See ad, p. 151.

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

**The Canticle of the Sun: Franciscan Retreat**. With Dominic McGee, OFM Conv. and Francis Agnes Ryan, OSF. \$185. At Stella Maris Retreat Center, 130 E. Genesee St. Skaneateles, NY 13152-1330; ph. 315-685-6836.

### Saturday, June 19

**Rebirth of a Charism**. Washington Theological Union. See ad p. 156.

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

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

### Sunday, July 4-Saturday, July 10

**A Retreat with Black Elk**. Marie Therese Archambault, OSF. At TAU Center, 511 Hilbert ST., Winona, MN 55987; ph. 507-454-2993.

### Sunday, July 11- Sunday, July 18

**Franciscan Retreat on the Vows**. With Pat Forster, OSF and Jean Schwieters, OSF. At St. Francis Convent, 116 8th Ave. SE, Little Falls, MN 56345. Contact: Lillian Kroll, OSF, 320-632-2981.

### Sunday, July 11- Sunday, July 18

**Franciscan Directed Retreat**. Directors: Poor Clare Sisters, supervised by Tom Speier, OFM and Marilyn Joyce, OSF. \$260. At Marycrest Retreat and Conference Center, 2851 52nd Ave., Denver, CO 80221; ph. 303-458-6270. Contact: Elaine Feldhaus.

### Monday, August 2-Friday, August 13

**LIFE Program**. See ad p. 154.

## 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
RCI	Rule of Clare
TestCl	Testament of Clare
BCI	Blessing of Clare

## Early Franciscan Sources

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