

the heavenly festivity where there is always joy, brightness, and the like. And when you are thus prepared for the Lord you will be presented to him in glory and happiness by the angels whom the Lord shall send for you at death.

Let him who wishes to be cooked quickly, strive after the three points mentioned above. That this may happen very quickly and that a man may also very quickly come to perfection and may beat easily all difficulties as though they were very small, let him do as good cooks do: let him put thick glass next to the meat, that is, the clean Christ who suffered much hotter and more violent things for us. Further, let it be a clean and beautiful glass, that is, let him always have in mind the things of the spirit and the rewards of heaven. Let him always remember that for one day of tribulation we will have thousands of years of consolations; for one difficulty, infinite joys. *For our present light affliction, which is for the moment, prepare for us an eternal weight of glory that is beyond all measure* (II Cor 4:17). So John in the Apocalypse says that the heavenly fatherland is pure gold and pure glass and that its streets are the same: *The city itself was pure gold, like pure glass, and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were, transparent glass, and I saw no temple therein* (Apoc. 21:18, 21:22). Therefore he calls it glass because it is transparent. Metals are not transparent because in them there is too much earthiness, but in glass there is little although more in one than in another. Therefore one is clearer than another. Such is that glory, in which are none of the miseries and difficulties which are here on earth. No hunger, thirst, or any other affliction; and John also teaches that he who here has less earthiness will be more brilliant there: *And I saw no temple therein* (Apoc. 21:22). That is a place of petition and sacrifice—as the Gloss explains—which will have no place there. For there we shall not make petition, but everyone will receive what he wishes, and there we shall not offer sacrifice to God but He will offer to us everything that we wish, these and many other things as well. This is for us. Amen.

Frs. Fintan Warren, O.F.M. and Marian Douglas, O.F.M.

THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE

THE GRACE AND THE GRACE OF THE INCARNATION

We have meditated on what penance must mean for us, and we have discovered that it means loving ourselves that we may gain ourselves in the Lord. It also means, as a necessary consequence, that we must learn to regard the things of this world as valueless apart from God, and to make God our one and only value—our God and our all. This was the Gospel message that Saint Francis, in all simplicity, heard and lived. He found the exhortation to penance in every word of the Good Tidings, for every word revealed to him the *Magnalia Dei*, the great things God has done for us. But he was overwhelmed by one of these Great Things above all others—the Incarnation of the divine Word, the truth that God became man, that the love of the Father gave us the Son as our brother. This overwhelming goodness of our Father and the utter humility of his Son irresistibly forced Francis to answer the call to penance with all the strength of his ardent young soul.

1. Christ Is the Incomprehensible Gift of Our Father

In his *Letter to All the Faithful*, our holy Father Francis wrote: "The Most High Father announced through his holy Archangel Gabriel to the holy and glorious Virgin Mary that this Word of the Father, so worthy, so holy, so glorious, was coming from heaven; from her womb he received the true flesh of humanity and our frailty."

When Saint Francis experienced in his heart and mind the incredible mystery of the Incarnation, he did not think primarily of the lovely Infant lying in the arms of his Virginal Mother and surrounded by all the tender and jubilant poetry that adorns the Feast of the Nativity. These are but accidentals—and although Francis by no means despised them, neither did he center his devotion on them. What he really experienced, and what he wanted to see and hear and even to feel with his bodily senses, as one overwhelming fact, so simple yet so incomprehensible: God became man, God took upon himself the weakness of our flesh, was born a helpless child,

grew up like one of us, dwelt among us, spent his life doing good us, and finally sacrificed himself on the Cross for us. It was this fact as Francis repeated in the words of Saint Paul and Saint John (*Admonitiones*, 1.), that the Father who dwells in inaccessible light who cannot be seen by man, nevertheless made himself visible among us. *Philip said to him: 'Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us.'* *Jesus said to him: 'Have I been so long a time with you and you have not learned who I am? Philip, whoever sees me, sees my Father.'*

Why did the Father leave his inaccessible light to manifest himself, to show us his love? Indeed, why does he love us at all? From the human point of view, we are utterly unworthy of any love, much less of the love of our Creator against whom we are in constant rebellion. Truly, no man can understand this love of God for us, it is simply beyond human comprehension. God certainly has no need of us poor miserable creatures. He is total bliss, he is eternal joy, abundant delight, supreme satisfaction and rest—all in himself. What need can he have of our poor love? Nevertheless it is a revealing truth that God does love us, that he wants others to love with him—*vult alios condiligentes*, as Scotus expressed it. He loves us as a human father could ever love, for he gave himself to us in his only begotten Son, clothed him in our flesh, humbled him to our lowliness, and made him our brother that in him we might be made his children. And all this for us, contemptible wretches that we are who have turned away from our good Father, who have gone our own way, despising him who made us, preferring our own little man-made gods and idols.

It was this mystery of God's love in Incarnation, this incomprehensible—humanly speaking, impossible—love of our Father in heaven, that touched the heart of Francis. How great must be the love of such a Father, to give us his only Son as our brother. How humble and meek must be the Son of God, who did not disdain to become our equal. With headlong exultation Francis cried out: "O how glorious, holy, and great it is to have a Father in heaven! . . . O how holy and dear, how well-pleasing and humble, how peaceful and sweet and amiable and desirable above all things is it to have such a Brother!" (*Leter to All the Faithful*, 12).

2. Christ Is Our Truth

Once Saint Francis understood with the simplicity of his soul this overwhelming truth of Christ's Incarnation, it wrought a complete change in his mind and heart. It effected in him a true *metanoia*. This truth struck his soul like a bolt of lightning and in its wake he heard the thunder of the Word, saying: *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of heaven is near. Do penance* (Mk. 1:15).

Thus Saint Francis became the penitent of the Incarnate Word. How completely had he once filled his mind and his heart with the things of this world. How greatly had he cherished earthly ideals and honors. How much had he enjoyed the glamor and gaiety of the world. Even his generosity had been more or less guided by human considerations. Of course he had been a believing Christian, firmly rooted in the Faith; but religion had been more or less an accidental thing in his life; it had been a comfort to him, as long as it did not demand too much. But how he had filled his life with dreams of earthly fame and glory! Then came the realization of Christ's Incarnation. The Eternal Word, the Son of God, God from God, Light from Light, through whom all things were made, deigned to become our brother solely for the purpose of winning our love and binding our hearts close to his. This tremendous truth, crashing through the mind of Francis, shattered his pretty dreams of worldly glory and left his heart bereft of all earthly desires. With an ardent heart and an eager mind he then set about unlearning the past and learning the new things of the Good Tidings. Celano tells us: "In untiring meditation he pondered the words of the Incarnate Word and in penetrating contemplation considered his deeds" (*Vita* I, 84). "Above all his mind was filled with the humility of the Incarnation and the love of the Passion of Christ, so much that he could hardly think of anything else." (*Ibid.*).

Thus our Seraphic Father found his ideal, the life of Christ, the *vita Evangelii*. He was filled with Christ who is the Wisdom of the Father. Christ, therefore, the Son of God clothed in our humanity, the Word that dwelt among us, is the ideal of every Franciscan in a special sense. We have not yet done that penance that characterized the penitents of Assisi if we are not truly filled with the words and

deeds of the Incarnate God. This lack, if we are aware of it in ourselves, will not be remedied by any sentimental devotion to the Child Jesus nor to the Passion of Christ, nor to the Sacred Heart (the truly Franciscan form of spirituality which unfortunately has been reduced to the empty emotionalism expressed in so many sentimental prayers and mawkish pictures). It is rather for us to find the true Christ, the Christ of the Gospel; we must find him in his own words and actions, as he actually was, according to the testimony of the Evangelists, and not as he appears in our emotional dreams, must he enter our mind and heart. The Evangelical life must become our ideal, our food, our very life..

Let us be honest. There are so many meditation books in this world, many of them in English. There are also many so-called Franciscan meditation books. To be sure, none of them contain anything against faith and morals. But how many of them contain the Christ of the Gospels? Much of the misery we suffer through the prescribed daily meditation, much of the time wasted in reading or listening to human words rather than to the Word of God, could be remedied if we could find our way back to the Christ of the Evangelists. There is no better meditation book for a Franciscan than Sacred Scripture. Saint Francis needed no other book. Why cannot we make the Scriptures our meditation books as well? But we must read as Francis read. We must meditate on this holy Book with a penitent heart, that is, with a heart that longs to be filled with the words and deeds of the Incarnate Word. And that means we must meditate with the heart and mind of a lover. What we read in Sacred Scripture must be so dear to us, so precious, that it will cause us to sell everything we have and are, all the faculties and powers of our body and soul, to gain him who is our only Treasure. Such meditation requires no theological training, no specialized education; but it does require a loving heart and an eager mind. We must approach the Gospel with the simplicity of our Seraphic Father; then our meditation will bear abundant fruit.

Perhaps some of us, as we begin to grow wiser in the way of Franciscan living, wonder why better training was not given to us when we were young. We look back across the years and feel somehow that they were wasted. How much more fruitful our religious life could have been if we had been taught right from the start how

to find and follow Christ according to our Franciscan vocation. Such feelings are natural, and perhaps not entirely unjustified. But let us not blame others for what they omitted; it behooves us rather to begin now to fill our mind and heart with the Incarnate Word. Let us begin to do the true penance of the Gospel and forget all other things; for us but one thing is necessary—to know Christ and him crucified. He is our way, our truth, and our life.

3. Christ Is Our Form of Life

It would not be enough only to read the Gospel and to meditate on the words and actions of Christ. Our Seraphic Father knew that quite well. He had read the Scriptures avidly; he was filled with Christ; he so loved to meditate on the Gospels that once he tore apart a copy and distributed the sacred pages among his brethren so that each one might read a little. Yet we know that at the end of his life Francis refused to read any more because he felt bitterly how far short he had fallen from doing all that he had read. Mere reading and meditating is not the end; our life in Christ is the end. If the Franciscan finds his ideal in the Gospel, in the words and deeds of the Incarnate Word, he finds his life in the practice of this ideal. The penitents from Assisi preached the Gospel not so much by their words as by their lives. And so it must be for every true Franciscan; his life is to be the *imitatio Christi*, the representing of Christ or the re-living of Christ. It is Christ brought down from the world of words and ideals to the world of actual human society. There is no other Order in the Church that has this special task of living the Christ of the Gospel in the most literal sense. For this reason the Popes have expected, and still expect, so much from the Franciscan movement, especially in our times when society is torn between capitalism and communism, and has been poisoned with the deadly poison of a secularism that has placed millions of people beyond any need of religion. Against this background of a money-mad world, we Franciscans have to live the poverty of Christ; against the background of a world torn by social strife and unrest, deadened soulless relief action and legislation, we must live the simplicity of Christ and his selfless, humble charity—charity open to all and radically cutting through the boundaries of race and nation and religion; charity that never asks how worthy a person may be, but how needy he is. We

Franciscans have to live the Gospel message of Christ our brother who made us children of the Father. We have to show to this world of ours that is so wise, that has planned everything so cleverly, insured us against practically every mishap, and is nevertheless at the very hour being shaken to its deepest foundations—to this world we have to show the Gospel of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air which are the special concern of the Father in heaven. And we must not only preach the Gospel, we must first live it. This is a grave obligation, as grave as the obligation to re-live the life of Christ.

In the coming conferences we will go deeper into this. Here only a few hints must suffice. There is, however, another aspect of the life of the Gospel as the ideal of Saint Francis that needs a word of clarification. If Christ, radically re-lived in our own time, is the essence of the Franciscan ideal, then our life cannot be a mechanical routine prescribed by a legal machinery. Christ, whose every step was guided by the will of the Father, who lived the example of humble obedience, uttered his devastating "woes" one after the other against the Pharisees' external observances of man-made regulations (cf. Matt. 23). Not less in danger of Christ's condemnation will be the rigid exterior practice of certain exercises or an exact observance of the Rule and constitutions, held up as the fulfillment of the Franciscan ideal. We are not imitating a book, we are following Christ. He has not asked us to observe the Law; he presupposes that we are observing it; and he was pleased when he heard from the young man who wished to follow him that he had observed it from his youth. But Christ expects much more from us. He demands that we give everything, always, and follow him everywhere—the *sequi vestigia Christi*—in every respect; he expects that we re-live him and re-present him to our own age.

Hence the Franciscan way of life is not so much an observance of certain regulations as it is a forming, or rather a transformation into the life of the beloved Master who is our brother. For us, there cannot be any question of what is prescribed or not prescribed, of what may be allowed or forbidden, of what is mortal and what venial sin. Such casuistry was against the very heart of Francis. He wanted his ideal, as laid down in the Rule, to be understood simply: "And I strictly command all my brothers, both clerical and lay, in obedience, not to put glosses on the Rule nor on these words

saying: They are to be understood thus. But, just as the Lord has given to me to speak and write the Rule and these words simply and purely, thus simply and purely are you to understand them and with holy practice to observe them to the last" (Testament, 10). As life is destroyed when it is analyzed and separated into parts, so an ideal is killed when it is codified and restricted to precepts. Saint Francis was aware of this, and it seems to be true, as has been pointed out by historians, that it was perhaps the greatest sacrifice of his life when he had to write his Rule—not so much the first Rule, which was more or less a compilation of Gospel texts, but the final official Rule, where he had to submit his ideal to the judgment of an experienced canonist and was forced to press it into legal formulas.

We should learn from this at least that we must not restrict our ideal and life to that which is laid down in legal documents. Every Franciscan worthy of the name will be a faithful and loving observer of the Rule and Constitutions; but he will never be satisfied with that. His real Rule and his final and ultimate regulations will come from the life and words of the Incarnate God himself. There he will find the impetus to realize daily life in poverty, chastity, and obedience, in patience charity and humility.

But all this must come from a grateful and enthusiastic heart. It is love, it is gratitude, and as such it is true penance, that turns our heart and our whole life away from ourselves and toward the One who is our Way, our Truth, and our Life.

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.

MOTHER MARY ANGELA TRUSZKOWSKA

FOUNDRESS OF THE FELICIAN SISTERS
(Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix)¹

I. The Portrait

Sophia Truskowska was born on May 16, 1825, in Kalisz, Poland, then under Russian rule.² Her father, Joseph Truskowski, was a lawyer trained at the University of Warsaw. Her mother, the former Josephine

¹Official name: Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice, Third Order of St. Francis.

²Main sources for this biographical sketch are S. Maria Bronisława Dmowska, *felicjanka, Matka Maria Angela Truskowska, Założycielka Sióstr Felicjanek*, 1825-

Rudzinska, educated by the Visitandines, was a God-fearing woman whose main interest lay in the virtuous upbringing of her four girls and three boys.

The deeply cultural and religious atmosphere of the Truskowski home exerted the first beneficial influence on young Sophia. Her soul further matured and mellowed under the private tutorship of Mrs. Anastasia Kotowicz and later during her four years of training at Madame Lemmann's exclusive private school in Warsaw, whither the family had moved in 1837. Also influential in the growth of her inner life were the wise spiritual directors to whose guidance she showed unfailing docility ever since her adolescent years.

Sophia, eldest of the Truskowski children, though not externally attractive, was richly endowed with gifts of mind and heart. Her rather severe and melancholic features were compensated for by keen intelligence, genuine piety, and tender sensitivity to the needs of others.

But she had her faults and weaknesses, too. Impulsive of temperament, she would once be domineering and impatient and at other times diffident and secretive. In her spiritual life she was frequently given to fears and to exaggerated self-analysis. Yet despite frequent emotional disturbances and bitter interior trials, she steadily trod the path of God's Will.

Sophia was attracted to religious life from early childhood. A year's stay in the Swiss Alps for her health further intensified her desire for solitude and contemplation. She frequently spoke of religious life with her cousin Clothilda Ciechanowska, who also longed to dedicate her life to God. The thought crystallized in Sophia's mind during long hours of prayer before the tabernacle and in the quiet of her room.

Finally convinced that she was called to the contemplative life, she determined to enter the Visitandines. Her plans were crossed by the illness of her father, whom she had to accompany to the mineral springs of Salzbrunn. On their return trip they visited the cathedral of Cologne where in silent prayer Sophia understood that God was not calling her to the Visitandines—yet where, she did not know.

Back in Warsaw, Sophia now in her twenties enrolled in the St. Vincent de Paul Society, where she could satisfy her growing desire to do good to others. Her days were spent in visiting the poor and sick in the

1899 (*Mother Mary Angela Truskowska, Foundress of the Felician Sisters* (Buffalo, 1949) and *Historja Zgromadzenia SS. Felicjanek na Podsta Rekopisow (History of the Congregation of the Felician Sisters Based on Manuscripts)*, (Krakow, 1924, 1929, 1932), Czesc I, II, III.

homes, to whom she brought renewed hope as she ministered to their needs. On her daily errands of mercy through the poorer districts of the city, she became painfully aware of the sad plight of orphaned and neglected children whom she met so often in the street. She realized that these children would be lost for God unless they were withdrawn from bad companionship and given the religious and moral training which their homes could not provide.

After fervent prayer and deliberation, encouraged by the president of the Society and aided materially by her father, Sophia gathered a number of the poorest children and provided for them a rented two-room flat in Warsaw. During the day she instructed them in religion and in the common branches of knowledge and attended to their needs; for the night she entrusted them to the care of an elderly woman. Sophia's cousin Clothilda soon joined her in this work of charity. Thus in 1854 came into existence the "Institute of Miss Truskowska."

When the Institute was transferred to larger quarters the following year, Sophia and Clothilda decided to leave their homes and to live permanently with their charges. On November 21, 1855, the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the two young women, kneeling before an image of Our Lady of Czestochowa, solemnly dedicated themselves to Her service. This is considered the founding date of the new religious community. Soon a number of other young women joined the charitable undertaking.

The provincial superior of the Warsaw Capuchins, Father Benjamin Szymanski, observed this growing group of women with keen interest. Knowing of their desire to lead a life consecrated to God, he undertook the task of formally organizing them into a religious congregation. After having obtained the necessary ecclesiastical approval, he appointed one of the friars, Father Honorat Kozlowski, to be the director of the young community and to guide its formation. Father Honorat thus became the co-founder of this new religious family.

After a year's trial of communal life, the first ten novices were invested with the Franciscan habit on April 10, 1857. Sophia Truskowska became hereafter known as Sister Felicia.

The sisters gave no thought to the naming of their Congregation. They were called the Sisters of St. Felix or briefly the Felician Sisters, by the interested inhabitants of Warsaw who, frequently saw them praying with the orphans at the altar of St. Felix of Cantalice in the Capuchin church. The sisters accepted the patronage and adopted St. Felix as their patron. They were especially fortunate in this choice, as St. Felix, a six-

teenth century Italian Capuchin, was considered the special patron children.

During the first years, Mother Angela declined the office of superior in the Congregation. She remained only the directress of the Institute, which capacity she revealed remarkable pedagogical ability and special aptitude for organization.

In 1858, however, through obedience she accepted the duties of superior general and mistress of novices. With the aid of Father Honorat she now began to mold the spirit of her young Congregation. She trained her daughters in Franciscan humility, poverty, and seraphic love, stressing self-denial and obedience so necessary for the life of prayer and active charity. The external activities of the Congregation also expanded at this time beyond the confines of the Institute. The sisters began to undertake social work, teaching, and catechetical instruction both in the city and in rural districts.

At the urgent request of many sisters, a strictly contemplative group was formed with the Congregation. On October 4, 1860, the twelve sisters chosen by ballot were solemnly enclosed and began an austere life of prayer and penance according to the primitive rule of St. Clare. In obedience to Father Honorat, Mother Angela spent two years in the cloister, then returned to active life as superior general of both choirs: the contemplative and the active.

The young Congregation wanted the firm hands of its Mother, for it was to live through trying times. In the year 1863, marked by the blood of insurrectionists, the Felician Sisters opened their institutions at rural centers to wounded soldiers, making no discrimination between their countrymen and enemies. This participation in the patriotic movement served as a pretext for the suppression of the Congregation by the Russian government on December 17, 1864.⁸ The cloistered sisters were transported to the Bernardine convent in Lowicz, while the others were ordered to remove their religious garb and to return to their families.

Outwardly the Congregation did not exist. Yet, like the crucifixion of which it was part, it lived in spirit. The disbanded sisters lived the life of the catacombs, gathering for community prayers whenever possible and performing works of mercy in obedience to Father Honorat and to Mother Magdalen Borowska, whom he appointed as superior of the active group. The spiritual vitality of this "underground" congregation

⁸S. Maria Bonawentura Szlezek, *felicjanka, Początki Zgromadzenia Sióstr Felicjanek (The Beginnings of the Congregation of the Felician Sisters)*, (Unpublished M. A. thesis, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, 1951), 153.

clearly manifested itself, when in 1865 the novices that were invested the preceding year came to Warsaw and secretly made their first profession.

Mother Angela, who had accompanied the cloistered choir, stood bravely beneath the cross and sustained her daughters in loving submission to God's Will. But her heart was transfixed with pain. Her moral suffering was so great that it undermined her health, leaving permanent effects.

In this dark night of sorrow a new hope dawned on September 8, 1865, the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Late in the evening of that day Mother Angela was notified that, through the intervention of Bishop Galecki, the Ordinary of Krakow, the Austrian Emperor had granted permission for the establishment of the Congregation in Austrian Poland, where the sisters were already conducting a nursery. Although Mother Angela had to remain yet for some time in Lowicz because of ill health, she summoned the sisters from all parts of Russian Poland, ordering them to gather in Krakow.⁴ On November 21, 1865, the first Mass was celebrated in the provisional motherhouse in Krakow, thus marking the date of the second founding.

When her health had improved somewhat, Mother Angela set out for Krakow in May 1866.⁵ Once again as superior general she shouldered the burden of reestablishing the Congregation. Nurseries, orphanages, and schools were soon entrusted to the sisters, and new vocations swelled the numbers of the community. In the meantime, Father Honorat had begun to formulate the constitutions and was submitting them in parts to the sisters for their criticism and suggestions. On November 21, 1868, Mother Angela made the profession of her perpetual vows, the first in the Congregation to do so.

⁴Several sisters remained in Russian Poland and under the direction of Father Honorat continued to lead their religious life though dressed as seculars (*skrytki*). They taught catechism to children, directed tertiary groups and other religious organizations and performed works of mercy. Outstanding among these hidden Felician Sisters was Mother Elizabeth Stummer, who remained in Russian Poland until her death in 1902. Cf. *Ojciec Honorat z Białej Kapucyn (Father Honorat, Capuchin from Biala)*, (Warszawa, 1938), 214-20.

⁵The cloistered sisters remained in Lowicz until 1871. In that year they moved to Przasnysz, where the only house of the Order exists today. Known as the Capuchin Sisters of St. Clare, they maintain contact with the Felician Sisters, whom they consider as their "elder sisters," since both choirs claim Mother Angela and Father Honorat as their founders. Cf. S. Maria Bronisława, *op. cit.*, 285-9; also Letters of the Capuchin Sisters to Mother Mary Simplicita, superior general of the Felician Sisters, dated November 6, 1952. Archives of the General Motherhouse.

Aware that her ever-growing deafness and general ill health handicapping her efficiency, Mother Angela begged to be relieved of duties of superior in 1869. These last thirty years she had led a hidden life, leaving an eloquent example of the virtues which she most desired to see in her daughters. She conceived it to be her mission "to pray for the sanctification of the Congregation that it might fulfill God's desire and to entrust it unceasingly to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary."⁶

She spent her days in the choir at prayer, or in the garden tending flowers for the altar, or in the community workroom sewing church vestments. Her humility prompted her never to interfere with the government of the Congregation which she founded. But with the prayerful interest of a true mother she followed all the events of the subsequent years, of which these especially gladdened her heart: the decree of commendation issued by the Holy See on June 1, 1874; the opening of the first mission in America on November 21, 1874; the privilege of daily exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the Krakow motherhouse chapel granted in 1881 or 1882⁷; and the decree of final approval of the Congregation with a temporary approval of its Constitutions, issued July 1899.⁸

Mother Angela's days were drawing to an end. The illness, diagnosed finally as internal cancer, had been progressing steadily and confined her to the infirmary in the summer of 1899. Physical pain was augmented by inner desolation, but Mother Angela suffered in silence, pressing the crucifix of her rosary to her heart. The holocaust was complete. Tuesday, October 10, 1899, shortly before one o'clock in the morning she quietly breathed her last sigh and went to meet her God.

She who for thirty years was hidden from the eyes of all, now at death was honored by bishops, clergymen, sisters and seculars from all parts of Austrian Poland. By special permission her body was laid in the mortuary chapel at the motherhouse in Krakow. The governor of Galicia extended this unusual privilege to Mother Angela as to one "distinguished in the service of the country, because Her Congregation served the good of society in an exceptional way."⁹

⁶Letters of Mother Angela to Father Honorat, December 18, 1870, quoted in S. Maria Bronislawka, *op. cit.*, 182.

⁷Exact date uncertain. Cf. S. Maria Bronislawka, *op. cit.*, 200, 290, 322.

⁸The Constitutions were finally approved on March 22, 1907, and again on December 17, 1920, after revisions were made in accordance with the new Code of Canon Law.

⁹*Historja Zgromadzenia*, III, 386.

On October 28, 1949, fifty years after her death, the ecclesiastical authorities of Krakow initiated the informative process as the first step in the cause of her beatification. All persons knowing Mother Angela directly or indirectly were examined, her writing and letters were collected and scrutinized, and her body was publicly exhumed on May 23, 1950. This stage of the process was formally concluded on January 12, 1951.¹⁰ The following January, despite many difficulties, the documents were transported to Rome where they have been committed to the Postulator of the cause by the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

While we await the decision of the Holy See, the life and heroic struggles of this humble Servant of God can illumine our way toward peace and happiness. To those engaged in the apostolate of charity, Mother Angela carries a special message. By word and example she teaches that souls can be gained for Christ only by those who themselves seek intimate union with God. The good accomplished by Mother Angela through her own works of charity and those of the Congregation can be traced to the virtues which adorned her soul and which she impressed on her spiritual daughters.

The radiating and converging point of Mother Angela's spirituality was a very pronounced devotion to the Will of God. She conceived the whole of life as a service to this Divine Will. Continually referring to it in her letters and writings, the Foundress exhorted her daughters to cherish the least sign of loving conformity to God's Will above spiritual consolations and ecstasies.

From this fundamental concept flowed an all-embracing humility, which in the life of Mother Angela reached the very depth of self-annihilation before God and men. The spiritual edifice of the Congregation likewise rested on this bedrock. It took genuine humility, especially for the first members recruited mainly from the Polish aristocracy, to minister to the simple peasant or the neglected child.

Flourishing from the roots of humility was obedience, the virtue most dearly prized by Mother Angela, because of its direct relationship to God's Will. She kept her own dominating personality under reserved obedience to her spiritual director through a special vow. Unquestioning obedience, too, she demanded of her daughters and considered it a test of fitness for life in the Congregation. She did not destroy initiative but required that individuality be expressed within the frame of obedience.

Clearly and ever more painfully feeling her insufficiency, Mother

¹⁰The informative process in the cause of beatification of Father Honorat Kozminski, co-founder of the Felician Sisters, was also concluded that very same day in Warsaw.

Angela leaned on God in prayer. This need of communion with God is seen in her early desire of contemplative life, a disposition that found an echo in her first spiritual daughters and created the cloister. How jealously she guarded the prayer life of the active sisters is seen from her repeated warnings that spiritual exercises, especially mental prayer, should never be neglected because of work.

But on the other hand, she regarded an exaggerated desire for the contemplative life as a temptation. The Felician Sister was to lead a mixed life of contemplation and action. Intimate converse with God was to overflow into active charity embracing the poor, the infirm, the little ones, and the morally derelict—that all might be won for Christ.

To many sisters in these formative years—and even later—the sacrifices imposed by a life dedicated to charity were a greater death to self than the austere penances of the cloister. Hence arose the need of continual self-abnegation, which both Mother Angela and Father Honorat considered as the distinctive feature of Felician asceticism. The sisters were to maintain a holy indifference to the place or the type of work assigned, ready to suffer privation, strenuous physical exertion, uncongenial surroundings, and wearying responsibilities. At the continual service of others, they were to disregard their own comfort and their personal likes and dislikes.

However, this self-immolation was not to rest merely in humanitarian aims. It was to return to the source whence it came. The Felician Sister was to offer her life of sacrifice through the Immaculate Heart of Mary to the Eucharistic Christ in loving reparation for the ingratitude of the world. This expiatory spirit, which was the outgrowth of Mother Angela's tender devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, became the specific characteristic of the Congregation.

Truly Franciscan in spirit through her burning love of God and neighbor and her desire of doing penance for the world, Mother Angela gave rise to a new vigorous branch of the Seraphic Order. Following in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi, the Felician Sisters were to help restore the Church of God in souls.

Death stilled the great heart of Mother Angela, but her charity proved stronger than death. Through more than 4,000 daughters in the Congregation of the Felician Sisters, Mother Angela lives on and continues her mission of doing good to the least of Christ's brethren.

II. *Mother Angela's Influence In Poland*

The fruitfulness of Mother Angela's life and virtues is best manifested in the development of the Congregation which she founded.

In Poland, the Felician Sisters were the first religious community of women that added social action to a life of prayer and penance.¹¹ As such, they were especially fitted to answer the need of the times.

The policy of denationalization and progressive religious suppression that followed the Insurrection of 1830 resulted in general moral and religious laxity. Fortunately, some of the nation's noblest sons in exile and at home began to rouse slumbered consciences. They pleaded for action as a means of regeneration from within. The challenge was answered by a number of lay and religious groups that began initiating a variety of projects for the intellectual, social, and religious rebirth of the nation.

One sublime expression of this spiritual awakening was the founding of the Congregation of the Resurrectionist Fathers in Rome. In Poland the Capuchin Friars made renewed efforts to revive religious fervor, especially through tertiary groups. Outstanding among the lay ventures was the charitable activity of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

It was in the midst of these crosscurrents of indifference and of spiritual renaissance that the Congregation of the Felician Sisters arose, clearly a product of its times. Flowering from the soul of Sophia Truszkowska, who was both a Franciscan tertiary and a member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, it was only natural that the Congregation should blend active charity with intense spirituality.

The subsequent history of the Felician Sisters in Poland shows how Mother Angela contributed to the religious and social regeneration of her country.

First, it must be observed that the early activities of the sisters exhibited several specific characteristics, which in their historical development molded the physiognomy of the Congregation and determined the scope of its influence.

Worthy of note is the fact that even though charitable work among neglected children and aged women gave rise to the Congregation, the Foundress and the first sisters considered educational and religious training as indispensable for social and moral reform. Next, there was ever the Franciscan preference for service to the poor and the underprivileged together with a readiness to undertake difficult and thankless tasks refused by others. Finally, even though the sisters worked primarily among the Poles, they also extended their mercy to different national groups.

The entire future apostolate of the Felician Sisters can be traced to the activities of the Congregation prior to its suppression in 1864. Not

¹¹S. Maria Bronislawka, *op. cit.*, 36.

having its scope of activity yet limited by the Holy See, the young Congregation undertook all types of works prompted by the zeal of its members or suggested by ecclesiastical authorities and patriotic lay groups.

In the first motherhouse in Warsaw, the sisters conducted an orphanage for girls, a home for aged women, and a forty-bed hospital.¹² Combined with the Institute was a school for the orphans and for day students from poorer families. Girls from six to ten years of age were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, the catechism, and bible history. Those in the older group, from ten to fifteen, were trained in household tasks and later placed in wealthier homes as domestic servants. In this manner the sisters provided the girls with a means of livelihood and prepared scores of Christian servants.

In 1857 the sisters were entrusted with the direction of the Franciscan Third Order Secular for women. Trained in the faithful observance of the rule, the tertiaries contributed greatly to the renewal of religious fervor among the laity of all classes. Alongside the names of humble servants and seamstresses, the first registries list teachers, public officials, and even women from the aristocracy, such as, Countesses Zamoyska, Lubinska, and Potocka.

Added in 1859 to the activities of the motherhouse was a catechumenate for Jewish girls and those of other religious denominations desiring instruction in the Catholic faith.

The sisters also undertook the care of two other institutions in the city: a convalescent home for poor women and a Magdalen asylum for delinquent girls and fallen women. In addition to these works of mercy, the sisters directed various religious organizations, conducted retreats for women, prepared children and adults for the reception of the Sacraments, visited the sick and the poor in their homes, and brought consolation to the imprisoned.

This wide range of activities was confined to the city of Warsaw until 1859 when the Agricultural Society requested the sisters to undertake work among peasants.

Sister Mary Tullia Doman, C.S.S.F.
(to be continued)

¹²"Klasztor Sióstr św. Feliksa," *Dziennik Warszawski* ("The Convent of the Sisters of St. Felix," *Warsaw Daily*), (Nr. 12, 5 (17) styczeń, 1865), 107-8, quoted in S. Maria Bronisława, *op. cit.*, 271

ENCYCLICAL LETTER

Father Augustine Sepinski, member of the Province of St. Paschal, Minister General of the whole Order of Friars Minor, and humble servant in the Lord—
To the Very Reverend Delegates General, Ministers Provincial, Independent Custodies, Superiors of Mission, all Religious, Sisters and members of the Third Order, and to any others subject to Our care anywhere on the earth serving the Lord piously under the Immaculate Patroness—
health, peace and the plenitude of all consolation in the Holy Spirit.

Dearly beloved sons in the Lord, and
most dear daughters:

On the occasion of the blessed ending of the Marian Year, a year dignified by the loving kindness and the name of the Immaculate Mary, the sparkling dawns of which daily clothed the sky with royal purple, the heart of your Father is moved with overpowering joy, viewing the happy spectacle of his sons coming with joyfulness carrying their copious sheaves, the glorious results of his encouragement last year on December 8th, when he urged them to run to the odor of the sweet ointments of the Mystic Lily, that they might gather the best fruits from the garden of her who calls, saying: *I have brought forth the fruit of honor and riches; come to me, be filled with the fruits of the spirit which are charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, meekness, faith, modesty, continence, chastity* (Ecclus. 24; 23-26; Gal. 5; 22-23).

Therefore, Our heart rejoices greatly to see our children who in so many places and in so many ways approached that enclosed garden where the everlasting and beautiful olive flourishes, where the cypress stands erect, where the cedar spreads out its branches and the elm tree abounds with foliage, where the cinnamon, the rose, and the lily send forth their sweet odor. What pen, or what voice or tongue, could recount the fruitful results obtained during the Marian Year concerning the Immaculate Virgin, from so many manifestations and lasting monuments of piety and love, of devotion, doctrine, and art? Filled with happiness, we note that the Friars Minor used watchful and filial care, lest in any assemblage of the faithful they be given second place in a study which certainly should inflame militant Christians to venerate the Queen of the heavens and the universe, the Queen beautiful without sin.

Among the innumerable manifestations of piety and doctrine which the members of our illustrious Order everywhere on the earth diligently celebrated during the Marian Year, it would be fitting to recall those at least at which We, not without great happiness and joy, were present namely:

- 1) the National Franciscan Convention, held in California in May;
- 2) the academic convocation at the University of Cologne on July 4th, in honor of the Subtle Marian Doctor, and the translation of his relics to the crypt of our conventual church at which His Eminence Cardinal Frings, Archbishop of Cologne, presided;
- 3) the solemn pilgrimages of the General Curia, of our International College of Saint Anthony, as well as of all the other convents in Rome twice accomplished devoutly and in common, to Saint Mary Major; at one of which, on November 8, 1954, with an excessively large crowd of Friars present, the renowned Protector of our Order, His Eminence Clement Cardinal Micara deigned to be present and to graciously deliver an allocution, making the day doubly auspicious;
- 4) the International Mariological Convention held at Rome, October 24 to November 1, 1954, which was promoted, arranged, and regulated by our own International Marian Academy, to the very great approval and joy of all present; this group, also at Rome, prepared and ordered the exhibition of a Marian book, as well as of pictures of the Blessed Virgin Mary, both of which are outstanding artistically.

The Immaculate Virgin, our most sweet Mother, to whom the Redeemer Himself, dying on the cross, gave the guardianship of his children as a last will and testament, is always present with us. Even though the Marian Year is closed, she has established a certain more binding intimacy and loving association with us, because she has called forth a voice, and she has given us a gift as well. She has spoken through the mouth of her Son's Vicar, to whom she committed the gift, for surely the Encyclical Letter on Holy Virginity should be accepted as a Marian gift, given as glad tidings on the feast when peace and joy were announced to all the world by the Angel Gabriel.

But now, most dear Sons and Daughters, if perchance anyone should ask Us in what one manner above all others it would be fitting to honor worthily our most pure heavenly Mother; on that to spend every care and industry in order to imitate her every word more closely; if anyone would seek from Us a word which would contain as it were the essence of Our exhortation on this solemn festival of the Immaculate Virgin,

Patroness of our Order, at the happy ending of the Marian Year, we certainly think that our Priests, Religious and every servant in the Seraphic Family should be incited and encouraged, before all other things, to study her beautiful virtue.

* * *

In the present condition of worldly matters, the disturbed and roving minds of men allow themselves to be easily carried away by dangerous opinions. Therefore, it is greatly to be lamented that, urged by the fervor of the dynamic activity peculiar to our times, opinions flourish which contend that some forms of life, e.g., the celibate and continent lives of Priests and Religious, have become superfluous and no longer harmonize with the demands of modern living. Almost daily, it is loudly proclaimed that nowadays above all there is need of action, that one must be continuously free for action, without the impediments of celibacy and continence which like iron fetters hinder the progress of men in the universe. We, however, thinking with the Church and cleaving to the doctrine of the Apostle who, as we have mentioned above, concluded his enumeration of the gifts of the Spirit with continence and chastity, unwaveringly proclaim that chastity can most efficaciously advance one's own perfection and that of others.

Brethren, let every man, wherein he was called, therein abide with God. (I Cor. 7:24). Two years ago, on the 26th of October, 1952, on the Feast of Christ the King, reviewing some suggestions and exhortations with paternal care in a letter reserved to our Priests, we loudly complained of the misleading and variant pretexts by which petitions for obtaining secularization or reduction to the lay state were accustomed to be justified. Nor are there lacking, others, even outside of those who had recourse to the Apostolic See, who heaped up reasons attractive to listen to, concerning the impossibility of the virginal or continent state from a psychological or hygienic standpoint, or concerning the uselessness or rather the impediment of the celibacy in carrying out the duties of the apostolate, in helping to solve the social problems or in applying himself usefully to the sciences and various burdens of the ministry. Opinions are spread about far and wide which aver that it is scarcely possible to preserve constant virginity, that chastity everywhere impedes a person from becoming complete and absolute, that married persons show a more effective skill in the work of the Lord's vineyard than the unmarried. Other opinions of this same type are foolishly preached, as is suffi-

ciently evident, under the guise of a pseudo-pedagogy, a pseudo-science, and a pseudo-apostolate.

Now under the guidance and tutelage of experience, it is obvious that minds which are disturbed by erroneous opinions are drawn to a true knowledge of religious and civil wisdom by a life fragrant with the odor of virginity.

If we have become a spectacle to the world, if we draw the admiration of all upon ourselves, it is beyond doubt because of the life we lead, so opposed as it is to worldly enticements. The people, seeing us, voluntarily say to themselves: "O most admirable man, who although living in the flesh, walks in the spirit, thoroughly hating whatever would stain his life" (Office of Saint Peter of Alcantara, October 19). Nor is such praise untrue, or such commendation vain; otherwise, what is the reason for their frequent greetings in public, for their very devout kissing of our hand or of our holy habit, for their demonstrations of love and good-will toward persons consecrated to God and separated from other men by the bond of chastity, if not that such men, though dwelling on earth, live a life that is almost angelic? Dearly beloved Fathers and Brothers, most dear Sons and Daughters, are not these most fitting and pertinent words of the Seraphic Doctor Saint Bonaventure of great help to you: "Through virginity, the soul becomes as it were the friend and sister and spouse of Christ, and in a certain manner the mother of Christ?"¹

Well advised, therefore, by the best of helpers, we considered that it would be an excellent thing to carefully publish the Marian gift above praised, that is, the Apostolic Encyclical *On Sacred Virginity*, in such a way that we might, though briefly, offer you the essence of that encyclical for reflection. We have already manifested our mind somewhat in the reserved letter already mentioned; we now repeat this important pronouncement of the Vatican in such a way that you would be permitted to contemplate, as though catalogued, not only the infallible truth, the evident importance and the gravity of the ideas and words, but the dissolution of errors and the explanation of objections as well, and the representation of virginity which, in that Encyclical, our Holy Father has skillfully designed. If you will peruse that sketch, you will certainly express disapproval of a negligent and dissolute life, and on the other hand, you will love more and more deeply the chaste life. "Holy virginity, and that perfect chastity which has been consecrated to divine service, is without doubt accounted as the most precious treasure which the

¹*De perf. ev.*, qu. III, art. 3, ad 9, vol. V, p. 179.

Founder of the Church left as an inheritance to the society he established."²

After reviewing praises of virgins, found among pagans and the peoples of antiquity, the Holy Father goes on to say that because the Fathers proclaimed the glory and merit of virginity, "it should be an invitation, a support and a help for all to persevere immovably in their offered sacrifice;" for indeed it is on perfect chastity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven that "one of the three vows in which the religious state consists, is based."³

From the very lips of her Divine Spouse Himself, the Church draws her doctrine concerning the excellence of virginity and the preeminence of this angelic virtue over matrimony. Therefore, it is proper to acknowledge the following rich fruits:

- 1) it gives freedom from the various anxieties which beset married people, and the many grave obligations and duties which burden them; and this is confirmed by examples of abundant good works in the lives of the Saints;
- 2) it offers a pleasure which is consecrated in the satisfactions of spiritual life, for the use of matrimony draws the mind back from being completely absorbed in the service of God;
- 3) it renders the dispensers of holy things more worthy and more fit for serving the altar and for carrying out their apostolic obligations;
- 4) by infinitely extending the duty of paternal care and increasing it immeasurably, it encourages one to help a neighbor encumbered by many urgent needs and suffering great infirmities, while the father of a family very often can concern himself only with his own circumstances;
- 5) moreover, it fosters fervent supplications and prayers, day and night, for the salvation and for the good of others; it urges one to tolerate inconveniences willingly for the same reason; it instills a spiritual strength in souls which can lead one even to martyrdom if need be, as is clearly demonstrated by the multitude of virgins from the time of Agnes of Rome to the Twentieth Century Agnes, Maria Goretti;
- 6) finally, virginity, which is fittingly called angelic, produces the richest fruits, for not only among those who are good, but also amongst those who are entangled in sordidness of vices, virginity diffuses a certain desire, or as it were a yearning, to imitate the better gifts, gifts which elevate the soul, which shape one's course toward true calmness, which look up to the stars of heaven, gifts which give beforehand a taste of the happiness which surpasses sense.

²*A.A.S.*, vol. XLVI (1954), p. 161.

³*Ibid.*, p. 163.

The Vicar of Christ has deigned to publish, to review and to censure various errors which are circulated under the masked appearance of truth, errors which We also have previously examined briefly, e.g., the error concerning the natural instinct for not being confined so that a balance might be preserved in the unfolding and development of life; or the error which considers matrimony as the only means of fostering the natural development and completion of the human person, so much so that it is to be preferred to virginity; the error concerning the mutual help which is considered to aid married persons in attaining some measure of sanctity, as opposed to the difficulties of solitary life which are supposed to vex virgins and celibates in both heart and body; or the error concerning the harm done to society in being deprived of good men, because as it is foolishly said they cannot be of any use to society who being separated from it and having an aversion to matrimony, lead a completely egotistical life.⁴ But immediately He detected and reproved the pernicious "error of those who in turning young men away from Seminaries and young women from religious Institutes, attempt to inculcate in their minds the thought that the Church needs more the help and the profession of Christian virtue of those who in matrimony lead a life in common with others in the world, than the virtues of priests and holy virgins who because of their vow of chastity, are as it were, separated from human society."⁵

Against all these false and erroneous teachings, the Holy Father opposes the teachings of the Holy Church concerning the use of reason and of grace to move the instincts and energies of nature, and concerning the blessings which as history shows are poured forth daily upon society by virgins and by the group of those who profess chastity. But on the other hand, because virginity is not necessary nor is it the only way to reach Christian perfection, it should be noted that God does not command all to embrace virginity; perfect chastity demands a free choice; the free gift of a holy vocation is given by the Father in heaven, an unceasing gift of the protection of divine grace. But because virginity is a difficult virtue involving a continual sacrifice, it demands strong souls of great nobility prepared to conform themselves to the image of Christ crucified by continuously struggling to become victorious over the devil of concupiscence.⁶

Therefore, he proposes very effectual aids to preserve perfect chasti-

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 174-177.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 179-181.

ty, which consist especially in a continuous watchfulness over the movements of the passions and the senses, and a voluntary strictness of life and chastisement of the body. Such would help us to realize that we should vigilantly guard against worldly allurements in order to flee from them according to our strength, rather than to control them by struggling against them. Indeed, it is necessary to take flight from such temptations; and those are just as mistaken who claim that "all Christians, especially the sacred ministers, should not be separated from the world but should be closely associated with the world,"⁷ to test their chastity in order that it might be evident whether or not they have the ability to resist, and a solid clerical vocation. They would readily "allow the eyes to freely gaze on whatever is presented to them, to attend moving pictures, to carefully peruse even obscene periodicals, and to read amorous novels. But that is precisely the reason why a young cleric, because he must be educated in the spiritual life, and in religious and priestly perfection, should be separated from the tumult of the world before he goes out to do battle with it." Certainly, no gardener would expose to storms and tempests his choicest plants which are as yet weak, in order to try their strength. Therefore, the greatest prudence must be used in matters concerning chastity.⁸

In this matter of guarding virginity, Christian humility is worthy of great consideration since it is the best gift which descends from the Father of lights. Regarding this, the Seraphic Doctor says: "Do not think that virginity would please God without humility."⁹ Yet such helps could be of scarcely any avail unless one made use of those means "which entirely surpass the powers of nature, namely sincere prayer to God, the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, and fervent devotion toward the Most Holy Mother of God, the Queen of Virgins."¹⁰

It pleases us to mention these things again, briefly and prayerfully. That celebrated short statement of the Mellifluous Doctor Bernard comes to mind: "Everyone is considered perfect, in whose soul these three things seem to agreeably unite: that he know how to lament for himself, how to rejoice in God, and at the same time, how to be greatly helpful to his neighbors: pleasing to God, distrustful of self, useful to others."¹¹

(to be continued)

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 184-185.

⁹S. Bonav., *De perf. vit.*, II, 3, vol. VIII, p. 100. Cf.: "Virginitas mixta humilitati sicut gemma auro superaddita." *Ibid.*, II, 8, p. 112.

¹⁰A.A.S., I.c.; p. 187.

¹¹S. Bern., *Serm. in Cant. Cantic.*, LVII, 11; P.L. CLXXXIII, 1055a.

THE SIXTH JOY—THE APPARITION OF OUR LORD TO HIS MOTHER AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

But God raised him from the dead on the third day; and he was seen during many days by those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem; and they are now witnesses for him to the people. (Acts 13:30, 31)

From the Seven Joys of Our Lady, the sixth beams forth as a radiant jewel of hope to her devotees. Hope is one of the most touching and beautiful of all the virtues; perhaps this stems from the fact that its contrary is so tragic, yet more likely its beauty flows from the Lily, Whose blossoming on Easter morn gave fullness to the lonely depths of anticipation that dwelt and dwells in the hearts of all this earth's wayfarers.

The Apparition of Our Lord to His Mother has been one of the most cherished memories of our Franciscan heritage. She whose heart was pierced on Calvary knew no such thing as desperation nor despair; rather she was filled with a holy sense of longing for her Son to return to her. The skeptic may question the silence of the Sacred Scriptures concerning the apparition—but then again the skeptic would question the veracity of the story even were it recorded in Holy Writ. We do know this—considering the awful immensity of the meeting of Rabboni and the Magdalene, there is little to wonder at in the reticence of the Sacred Writers to speak of the intimate reunion that took place between the Son and His Mother on Easter morn. From the Cross our dear Lord spoke: *Son, behold thy Mother*, to his beloved John—that is recorded; and yet there is something too tremendous in the logical Resurrection salutation: *Mother, behold thy Son*, to be shared. Perhaps that is why the Lord used the word *Woman* in addressing his Mother from the Cross when he committed all of us to her maternal arms in the person of Saint John.

Again, perhaps the Mother is not mentioned in the Scriptural account because it was she who stayed the blessed hope of all those who are mentioned as having seen the Lord. Could they have relied any less than we on her whom we invoke throughout her Litany

with paeans of holy hope: Star of the Sea—Health of the Sick—Refuge of Sinners—Help of Christians—Consolatrix of the Afflicted—Queen, that is, advocate to the King, for our whole Order, for all Franciscans. Saint Bonaventure tells us that with the Resurrection the most abject of women—the Mother of our sweet Lord Jesus, now becomes the Queen of the World,¹ and the loveliest vocation of our Queen is to obtain grace and mercy and pardon for us.

How glorious is the tradition of those who from apostolic times, even to the latest holy ones of our own Order, not to mention the Universal Church, who have held to the holy virtue of hope. Matthew, publican and petty politician, is made a disciple, for was not hope working in his soul when the Master murmured to him: *Follow me?* Paul, the silent and smug spectator at the stoning of Stephen becomes an Apostle, his conversion and conquests all inspired by holy hope, telling us to *regard the long-suffering of our Lord as salvation as we look for new heavens and a new earth, according to his, Christ's, promises*. The soldier at the crucifixion, so soon after the heinous deed performed, acknowledges *truly this was a just man*. The thief, with the flame of holy hope burning in his heavy heart, is prompted to plead salvation, and receives the divine pardon: *This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise*. The Magdalene, infamous and rotten, is speared by the sword of holy hope, and becomes the special lover and the specially loved of Christ.² All of these, our glorious forebears, our brothers and sisters in Christ, had one special acquaintance, our Mother Mary, for we know from Scriptures that each of them at least saw her. We know some knew her well, some only saw her for a moment at the Cross, but just as we pray to her with confidence and trust, could one glance from the eyes of the most beautiful of all women have failed to impart a ray of supreme consolation to those who only trusted, that is hoped, in her and her Son?

This world carries its share of disappointments, trials, and tribulations for all who walk on it, and well do we speak of it as a "vale of tears" in the beautiful invocation with which we hail our Holy Queen, our Mother of Mercy, our Sweetness and our Hope, after

¹Bonav., *Opus X, Vitis Mystica, Additamentum VI* (VIII 227a)

²Bonav., *Opus. II, Soliloquium, c. 1, n. 3* (VIII 38a).

morning Mass. We may desire many things on this earth and receive none, and it may be that we will never receive our wants, even our needs here; yet holy hope buoys us up to the fulfillment of all our desires in the world to come. Saint Bonaventure tells us this very succinctly.³ He asks us to consider our earthly desires in the light of the eternal reward which we will purchase with holy hope. If you desire beauty, he says, consider that *the just will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father*. If you desire length of years, consider that *the just shall live forevermore*. If you long for health, consider that *the salvation of the just is from the Lord, and he is their protector in the time of trouble*. If you desire to be filled, consider that you *shall be satisfied when the Lord's glory shall appear*. If you thirst, consider that you shall be *inebriated with the plenty* of the kingdom of heaven. If beautiful melodies delight you, consider that you will hear untold choirs of angels singing without end the praises of God. If you yearn for friendship, consider that in heaven the Saints love God more than themselves, their neighbors as themselves, and God loves them more than they love themselves. If you seek peace and concord, know that in heaven all are of one will because all wills are one with God. If you desire riches and esteem, consider that one day you are to hear: *Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many; enter into the joy of thy master*. In a word, the man of hope is the man of love, who can sing with King David: "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength: The Lord is my firmament, my refuge, and my deliverer. My God is my helper, and in him will I put my trust. My protector and the horn of my salvation, and my support."

In appearing to His Mother after His Resurrection, Our Lord teaches us the reward which was hers, and which will be ours, in return for sacred and unswerving trust placed in Him. In cultivating this trust, or perseverance, we do well to remember what Saint Bonaventure tells us, namely, that holy hope crowns all virtue and no one appears glorious before God without it. In this, Saint Bonaventure calls upon Saint Bernard, who says that final perseverance, or trust, or hope, is the crown of the virtues, the food of heavenly mer-

³Bonav., *Opus*. VI, *De Perf. Vitae ad Sorores*, c. VII (VIII 126b).

it, the means of attaining the reward of heaven.⁴ Well may we mention here the loving words of Saint Bernard which are woven throughout Saint Bonaventure's writings. In the midst of profound theological tracts, as well as in his simplest sermons, the Seraphic Doctor cries out Saint Bernard's confident recommendations to the Mother of Holy Hope:

When the storm of temptation arises, when you are midst the reefs and shoals of tribulation, fix thy gaze upon the Star of the Sea, call upon Mary. If tossed by the rising tide of pride and ambition, if lost upon the troubled waters of scandal and contention, look then at the Star, invoke her name. Do the billows of anger, of avarice, of lust batter against thy soul, cast thine eyes upon Mary. Does the greatness of thy crime fill thy Soul with terror, does thy wretched conscience beat thee down in shame and the fear of judgment paralyze thy heart, then, when about to sink to the depths of despondency, to plunge headlong into despair, then think of Mary. In perils and in sorrows and in fears think of her, call upon her name. Let her name be ever on thy lips and the thought of her be ever in thy heart. Follow her that the power of her intercession may attend thee; imitate her, for in her footsteps thou canst not go astray; call upon her and thou canst not despair; think of her and thou canst not fail. If she holds thee by the hand how canst thou fall! Under her protection thou shalt know no fear; under her guidance thou shalt not falter; under her patronage thou shalt surely reach the goal.

In reflecting on this Joy of our Lady, well can we consider the consolation that was hers in seeing the Body of her beloved Son, but a few days ago lacerated, bleeding, and wounded for our iniquities, bruised for our sins, as it were a leper, now so glorious and luminous in the Light of His Resurrection. How inspired we should be by this scene when we are faced with the tragic occasions that God has permitted on this earth. The deformed, the lepers, the mentally ill, the agonizing—every last one of these we should meet with the blessed hope of their being restored to perfect health of mind and body in that day when there shall be no mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, that day when *the former things have passed away*. It is this holy hope that brings sense and meaning to all human tragedies that a reason-seeking and seething world can find no answer to explain. Whenever we observe tragedy in this world we should ever revert to Saint Bonaventure's words that in the general resurrection all corruption will be removed through the gift of impas-

⁴Bonav., *Opus* VI, *De Perf. Vitae ad Sorores*, c. VIII (VIII 125a).

sibility, all deformity and obscurity through the gift of clarity, all hesitation and impossibility through the gift of agility, all infirmity and sickness through power and subtilty.⁵ God knows that there is purpose to everything that he allows to happen, and even though every human analysis fails, and our duties or obligations seem insurmountable, then it is time for us to recall the consoling words of Saint Peter: *One day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord does not delay in his promises, but for your sake is long-suffering.*

Does any one of us think for long that our Immaculate Mother could have endured the sorrowful death of her Son, the trials of His infant Church, were she not the Queen of Hope, and could we endure the trials of His Church today, or our own anxieties and pressures and disappointments, without the beacon of light which she throws out to lead us to the port of heaven?

On Easter morn one great Alleluia will rise out from the heart of all Christendom, and from the hearts of all Christians, proclaiming that the Lord *has risen even as he said!* Well do we recall in this Joy of our Lady that that Alleluia first rang in her heart. In praying the ten Aves of the Sixth Joy we reecho her own Alleluia, and join our hope of one day seeing her Son in Glory with her joy in seeing her Glorious Son. She is now in heaven and she knows that *from the beginning of the world they have not heard, nor perceived with the ears: the eye hath not seen, O God, besides thee, what things thou hast prepared for them that wait for thee.* That wait for thee!—that wait for thee filled with holy hope. Our Mother knows this, and she invites us to share this heavenly home with her help in the holy, hope-filled words that Mother Church places on her lips in the Epistle on the Feast of her Immaculate Heart:

I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue. Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits. For my spirit is sweet above honey, and my inheritance above honey and the honeycomb. My memory is unto everlasting generations. They that eat me, shall yet hunger: and they that drink me, shall yet thirst. He that hearkeneth to me, shall not be confounded: and they that work by me, shall not sin. They that explain me shall have life everlasting.

⁵Bonav., *Sermones, Dom. I Adventus, sermo 3* (IX 29h).

Saint Bonaventure prays to Our Lady thus: O Most Beautiful Queen of Heaven pray for us to God and to Our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may participate in His Resurrection in the present through grace, and in the future through glory.⁶ No one of us knows the day of his Easter, but every one of us knows that by remaining close to the Virgin Mary in this life, he will receive the grace to be gathered into the arms of her Son in the glory of heaven.

Let us beg and beseech her every time we pray the Sixth Joy an awareness of the meaning of her Son's Resurrection. Let us ask her, now and always, the grace to be filled with blessed Hope. We may speak to her thus: O Immaculate Mother of Holy Hope obtain for us always to realize that we *have risen with Christ*, and give us to *seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.* Let us ever *mind the things that are above, not the things that are on earth.* Give us to die to this world and all its snares, and grant that we so live in this world that our *life is hidden with Christ, your Son, in God.* Turn our eyes to that day, once and forever, *when Christ, our life, shall appear, when we too will appear with him in glory,* that day when we shall fall asleep to awaken to your beautiful smile in heaven, and be taken in your arms to the same Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

William Marring, T.O.F.

SCRIPTURE READING WITH SAINT BONAVENTURE

(Comment. in Joannem, ch. XX, Omnia Opera, Tom VI, pp. 507ff).

But Mary was standing outside weeping at the tomb. So, as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the tomb, and saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid. They said to her, "Women, why art thou weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

When she had said this she turned round and beheld Jesus standing there, and she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said

⁶Bonav., *Opus. VII, Rhythmica, V, Corona B. V. M.* (VIII 678a).

to her, "Woman, why art thou weeping? Whom dost thou seek?" She, thinking that he was the gardener, said to him, "Sir, if thou hast removed him, tell me where thou hast laid him and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" Turning, she said to him, "Rabboni!" (that is to say, Master) (Jn. 20, 11-17).

Saint Bonaventure remarks that there are certain things to be pointed out in the manifestation of Christ to Mary Magdalen. We might first notice her *desolation*. This very desolation compelled her to remain, even when the disciples had left. This act of implicit hope characterizes Mary as a religious person who perseveres even when all—whether through trial or in—seems lost. The tears that fell at this moment were first those of *compunction*, reminding her of her first repentant turning to Christ (Luke 7. 38). But she was also weeping tears of *compassion* with Christ (Jn. 11, 33). Yet, perhaps most of all, they were tears of *devotion*, as if pleading that she might not again be separated from the God Whom she had formerly lost through sin, but had found by mercy and grace: *My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God?* (Ps. 41, 4). Answering her three-fold, tearful desolation, Christ offers her the consolation of His veiled Presence and His spoken Word: *She turned round and beheld Jesus standing there, and she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why art thou weeping? Whom dost thou seek?"* (Jn. 20, 14f).

When Christ asked, "Why art thou weeping?", he began to show her that this was not a time for sorrow, but for joy. But, because she had only turned outwardly toward Him, He kept His identity hidden: *And she did not know that it was Jesus* (Ibid. v. 12). So too, in the beginning one will hardly see Christ, if he merely turns to Him weeping because he is disgusted with worldliness. Nor will the tears of the Religious soul (for *whatever reason!*), who pities self rather than Christ, avail to open her eyes to see Him truly. And yet this first sorrowful turning to Christ, like Magdalen, can be either an occasion of disaster or of profit. If, at this trying time when Christ hides Himself, the person accepts mere human consolation, much can be lost. That is why Mary refused to let one, who appeared to be the gardener, console her. So one embracing Religion on a more or less human level, which is satisfied with externals, will receive

only outward returns from Christ. But more could be gained. That is why Christ asked: "Whom dost thou seek?" Seizing the opportunity, Mary asked only directions from the gardener, not human consolation: "Sir, if thou hast removed him, tell me where thou hast laid and I will take him away" (Jn. 20, 15). So she was consistent. Because, realizing that the cause of her sorrow was the loss of Jesus, she was determined to find Him Who alone could console her. This is a stern reminder for the Religious that only God, at least through a lawful intermediary in the Sacraments, is the consoling director of the soul. The words of the Old Testament about Jacob apply here: *The Lord alone was his leader* (Deut. 32, 12). The Psalmist experienced a loss like that of Mary: *My soul refused to be comforted: I remembered God . . . Will God then cast off forever? or will he never be more favourable again* (Ps. 76 3, 8). And Jeremias lamented this loss: *Therefore do I weep, and my eyes run down with water: because the comforter, the relief of my soul, is far from me* (Lam. I, 16).

The directness of her search was so evident that Mary did not even mention His Name: "Tell me where thou hast laid him" (Jn. 20, 15). Gregory observed that Magdalen believes everyone ought to know Whom it was that her soul loved. Moreover, she said: "I will take Him away" (Ibid.). Here she wanted to be like the lover who found God: *I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him: and I will not let him go* (Cant. 3, 4). Her attitude now shows us (as Christ knew) that she had finally turned to Him from her soul. So, whereas He answered her outward turning with the word 'Woman,' later He spoke to her heart: 'Mary.' Calling her by name means that Christ manifested His identity to Magdalen. Saint Augustine observes: One, turning outwardly to Christ, only thinks he sees Who He is (as Magdalen thought Him to be the gardener); whereas one, turning to Christ with a true heart, knows Him as He truly is.

And this conclusion brings us to our final point: it was only when Christ spoke (by name) to her heart that Mary Magdalen truly recognized her Beloved. Her recollection may have reminded her that previously Martha had called her attention to His Presence: "The Master is here and he is sitting at the table with thee" (Jn. 11, 28). Must we also be reminded that His Sacred Presence continually keeps Him here

calling for us? Even if reminded, do we merely turn outwardly to the chapel when obedience calls? And then, do we give no more than a kind of lip service, which cannot evoke a revelation of His true identity? If we must admit this, can we not strive to turn our soul to Him, in the hope that He will manifest Himself to our heart? May His constant calling to us not fall on deafened spiritual ears, but upon our awakened and opened inward senses. These, turned to Him, will cause Christ to manifest Himself openly to us: in faith and love, here; in vision and love, hereafter. When we effect this, by the help of His manifesting grace, let us call out our cry of true recognition: "Master"!

Fr. Owen Colligan, O.F.M.

EASTER SONG

I.

between the talking fingers
of the trees
the light speaks clearly:

the far land near of promise
is both there and here—

will you through moved leaves follow
or still stay silent

while through rain and green
the singing glistens?

ROBERT LAX

THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE

FRANCISCAN PENANCE IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

To live the Franciscan life is to follow Christ in the way of Gospel perfection, in the way of Christian *metanoia*. And we must follow this way of life not for ourselves alone, but for the world as well. True penance cannot be a half-measure; it cannot mean that we begin to turn to Christ in heart and mind and action, and then lose courage half way and fail to complete the turn. Such cowardice would make us unworthy of Christ, unworthy even of the name Franciscan. For as Saint Francis wrote in his Rule, quoting Saint Luke (9:62), nobody putting his hand to the plow and looking backward is fit for the kingdom of God. There must be courage, a holy and youthful radicalism, in our penance, and it must be inspired by the deepest love and the uttermost trust in the grace of God. It is remarkable that the Apostles, *when they were now on their way going up to Jerusalem* and *Jesus was walking up in front of them*, were astonished and followed him in fear (Mk. 10:32). They could not understand why he went to his passion and death, and it is true that practically all of them left him in the hour of his greatest humiliation; but it is equally true that when they began their line of true penance, their apostolic life, they followed him to death without hesitation or fear, for having been sealed with the fire of the Holy Spirit, they realized the glory of being found worthy to suffer for the name of their Lord. Thus it is evident that Franciscan penance, the penance of the Gospel, must be lived under the shadow of the cross.

1. Franciscan Meditation on the Cross

It was after his experience with the leper that Saint Francis died to himself and to the world. Then, shortly after that, the Crucified spoke to him from the cross at San Damiano and asked him to restore his Church. This was one of the greatest moments in the life of our holy Father. The Lord had told him what he wanted of him, and although Francis did not immediately grasp the full significance of the words coming from the cross, he did immediately realize that the message of his mission came from the cross. The Beloved had