the flesh of our humanity. Thus as Zachary says: Per viscera miseric diae Dei nostri in quibus visitavit nos (Lk. 1: 78). And thus theologi teaches that as the Incarnation is such a tremendous grace that it is yond all possible meriting, nevertheless in the Saints of the Old Tea ment and especially in the merits of His Mother, God found such worth ness that it drew Him to become man and to hasten the moment of Incarnation. He was wounded by love for this Celestial Princess. Vi nerasti cor meum. And this drew Him to become man. We can find st port for this thought in the translation of the Seventy (Septuagint) whi reads: Abstraxisti a nobis cor, soror mea sponsa, rapuisti nobis cor, uno oculorum tuorum, et in uno ornamento colli tui. There are the wo of the Most Holy Trinity addressed to the Virgin. "Thou hast stolen of Heart, conquered by thy singular virtue." According to Saint Cleme of Alexandria, the Eternal Word is the Heart. For as the heart the principle of corporal life, so is Christ the principle of spiritual li In ipso vita erat, etc. (In. 1:4). And this Heart, as God says, the Virginia stole on the day that the Word came from heaven to take flesh in h womb. Now, to return to my original theme, if the merits of the Virginia robbed God of His Heart, who would be so rebellious as to deny her I own heart? Who would not place his love and devotion in her? For # is the beginning of all our good, and through her intercession we made able to enjoy the merits of Jesus Christ. We must declare that are defeated by the love of this sovereign Queen, confessing to her the words of the angel to Jacob: Si contra Deum fortis fuisti, quanto m gis contra homines praevalebis (Gen. 32)? If thou hast vanquished Go what can we do but declare ourselves vanquished also? And moved 1 this among other reasons that I hope to discuss later, I say that devotic to the Mother of God is a sure sign of predestination for heaven.

Maria A. Laughlin (transl)

THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE

THE HOLY EUCHARIST AND FRANCISCAN PENANCE

Our Seraphic Father's radical turning to God in a life of penance was his answer to the humility and love of the Incarnate Word, a humility and love that climaxed in the sombre spectacle on Calvary where the Love that loved us without end died in utter shame and dereliction. But this love of the Incarnate Word was not to be limited in space and time; before our Lord entered upon the agony of his supreme sacrifice of love, he perpetuated his bloody immolation on the altar of the cross by the living memorial of the Holy Eucharist. It was natural, therefore, that Saint Francis, whose heart was filled with the words and deeds of the Incarnate Word and who refused to think of anything but of him who spoke to him from the Cross, should center his religious life upon the Holy Eucharist. Let us, therefore, turn to the meaning of the Holy Eucharist for a further understanding of the Franciscan life in penance.

1. The Living Remembrance of the Lord's Passion

It is hardly adequate to say that our holy Father Francis had a great devotion to the Eucharistic Christ. This could easily create the impression that Francis had only a great veneration for the Blessed Sacrament-which in any case is true-but that he was primarily overwhelmed by the fact that Christ is present on our altars, dwells in our tabernacles, and lives in our midst under the species of bread and wine, and consequently adored him and offered him continual praise and thanksgiving surrounded him with all exterior splendor, with lights, flowers, and incense, and offered him private and public adoration in many forms. There is no doubt that Francis urged this veneration of the Blessed Sacrament; indeed, he entreated his brethren and all the faithful to have a great reverence and a most tender respect for the Body of our Lord. He himself cleaned neglected churches, and in his Testament he made clear to his children what he expected of them: "And I want these most Holy Mysteries above all else to be honored and venerated and kept in choice places." But this does not give us the reason for his love

¹⁸Sum. Theol. 3, q. 2, a. 2.

of the Holy Eucharist. For this we must look more deeply into the writings of our Seraphic Father. Two texts of his lead us to the heart and basis of his devotion. In his first Rule Francis admonished the brethren: "Thus with contrition and after confession let them with great humility and reverence receive the Body and the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, remembering what the Lord said: He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life everlasting; and: Do this in remembrance of me" (I Rule, c. 20). With even more emphasi our holy Father urged the Rulers and Magistrates (Epist. IV) "Hence I advise you strongly, my lords, that you set aside all car and worry and that you readily receive the most holy Body and the most holy Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in holy commemoration of him." Thus it is clear that to Saint Francis the Eucharist mean first and above all to come to the living remembrance of Christ passion and death and resurrection through adoring his mystical presence on the altar and through receiving him sacramentally. For to receive the Holy Eucharist is not merely a symbolic act or men orial commemoration of the supreme sacrifice and victory of the Incarnate Word; it is the reality.

There seems to be a danger that our modern religious subjective ism may sometimes lose sight of that which was such a deep convict tion for Saint Francis, that the Holy Eucharist is primarily and es sentially to commemorate the Lord by receiving his Body and Blood An unsound emotionalism may easily creep into what we nowaday call Holy Communion-an expression that can lead us to see in the reception of this Sacrament primarily union with Christ. As a consequence it can tend to make us create a forced devotional atmos phere, a whole routine of emotional acts of salutation, gratitude humility, joy, love, and so forth. There is nothing dogmatically wrong in this; on the contrary, if it is done with sincerity and dis cretion and a love that first seeks the union of will and life, it can be wonderfully fruitful for our religious life; but it is not the deeper meaning nor the ultimate purpose of the Sacrament. The deepes meaning and ultimate purpose is to commemorate the Lord's par sion and death. In receiving the Body and Blood of our Savior w come in living contact with his passion and death, announcing his death until he comes, not simply by thinking of him and piously re membering him, but by the real remembrance of his death which in an unbloody manner is repeated as a sacrifice upon our altars. It is Christ who again celebrates the Passover with us, at whose table we sit in the Upper Room; it is Christ who breaks bread with us and gives us the chalice to drink, who takes us with him to his agony in the garden, to his arrest and trial and condemnation, to his scourging and crowning with thorns, to his weary way of the cross and to his death on Calvary. It is a real remembrance, for Christ is really present.

Saint Francis could never forget this. Thus he wrote in his Letter to All the Faithful: "With his suffering near, he celebrated Passover with his disciples, and taking bread he gave thanks and blessed it and broke it, saying: Take and eat, this is my Body. And taking the chalice he said: This is my Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for you and for many for the remission of your sins. Later he prayed to the Father, saying: Father, if it can be done, let this chalice pass from me. And his sweat became like drops of blood dripping down on the ground. Still he placed his will in the will of his Father, saying: Father, thy will be done; not as I wish, but as thou wishest. Now such was the will of his Father that his glorious blessed Son, whom he gave up to us and who was born for us, should offer himself up in his own Blood as a sacrifice and victim on the altar of the cross, not for himself through whom all things have been made, but for our sins, leaving us an example so that we might follow in his footsteps. It is his will that we all should be saved by him, receiving him with a pure heart and a chaste body."

Do we have the same attitude toward the Holy Eucharist as our Seraphic Father had? Are we also inspired by the Holy Gospel, and do we see in the receiving of the Body of Christ primarily the real commemoration of his passion and death? If this is our attitude, then we are in real communion with Christ and our life of penance will receive its ultimate sacramental blessing and sanctification from the Eucharist. Penance means to die with Christ to our own will as he died to his will in the garden. Father, not my will be done, but thine. And with him and in him and through him we will accept whatever chalice the Father gives to us. We will accept it as Christ did, for we are not alone. He who drank the chalice first is with us. What else then can we do when we return from the table of the Lord but live in the sincere commemoration of his passion and

death, and with fidelity and determination follow the footsteps the Cruffied, drink our chalice daily, and desire nothing but a cross.

2. The Exhortation to Purity

As the culmination of our life in penance, the receiving of Body and Blood of Christ demands and leads to purity of heart. Saint Fancis understood it. We know what he meant by purity heart from the letter he wrote to the General Chapter. He address himself painly to the priests of the Order, but his words apply everyon receiving the Holy Eucharist: "I likewise beg in the Leall my bothers who are now and will be and wish to be priests of Most High, that when they wish to celebrate Mass they should pure and in a pure and reverent manner perform the true sacrif of the post holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with clean and holy intention, and not for any earthly return or out fear or we of any man, as if to please men. But let all their will, far as the grace of the Almighty favors, be directed toward him in the desire uplease with it the sovereign Lord alone, because in it alone ats, as it pleases him."

From this it is clear what Saint Francis meant by purity of heat he mean purity of intention, the clean breaking with the world a the unaditional turning to God in simplicity and directness heart. In him to be pure in heart meant "to despise earthly thin and to sek only heavenly things" (Admonition 16.) In the Ho Euchard we meet our God who in utter humility, in his passion at death, lows us by his example the worthlessness of the mundal things & cherish, the follies we seek with an impure heart, t empty kasures we indulge in to the forgetfulness of him who sires topossess our whole heart. What a contradiction, what a for us uncetour Lord at the Last Supper in living commemoratic of his dath, and at the same time to be governed by human respec by worlly favors, by loves that can never fill our heart! It is true enshrinour Lord in gold and jewels, we use the most precio material for the vessels that will contain his sacred Body and Blod -but the is only a sign of our reverence; the reality they contain the comemoration of his passion and death, and this reality d mands the clean vessel of the heart, detached from all earthly desires.

Franciscan penance, therefore, is really a Eucharistic penance. It takes its inspiration from the Incarnate Word and its direction from his passion; but its life itakes from the reality of the Incarnate Word and the Crucified in the transformation into the life of Christ. Here our pride is shattered not by the stirring account of Christ's life and death, but by the facing of Humility itself in reality. If we can understand this, then we can understand with our heart and mind and our whole personality in the metanoia the words Saint Francis uttered, not as a pious effusion but as his everlasting experience: "Let the whole man stand in awe, let the whole world tremble, and let heaven exult, when Christthe Son of the living God is there on the altar in the hands of the priest! O admirable dignity and amazing condescension! O sublime lowliness! O lowly sublimity! That the Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, should so humble himself as to hide under the form of a morsel of bread for our welfare. Look, brethren, at the humility of God and pour out your hearts before him. Be humbled yourselves so you can be exalted by him. Do not keep anything back for yourselves, so that he may have you altogether as his own who puts himself altogether at your disposal" (Letter to the General Chapter).

3. The Pledge of Our Eternal Glory

When we celebrate the real commemoration of our Savior's passion and death we meet our lord who for us lived this metanoia, this radical penance, in its depestisense by despising utterly the things of the world and by choosing the things of eternity, that is, the will of his Eternal Father. or as sint Francis said so emphatically, "he placed his will in the will of the Father." It was through this radical penance in the fulfillment of the will of the Father that Christ became our victorious Savior. For humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even to death a cross. Therefore God also has exalted him and has bestowed to the him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of the saving every knee should bend (Phil. 2:8-10).

Thus Saint Francis also under the Holy Eucharist. Not only as a real commemoration of the molation of Christ but also

as his own co-immolation with Chris Celano reports that "he quently received Holy Communion and so devoutly that he m others devout. With every reverence he followed that which mands reverence, offering the sacrific of all his members, and ceiving the immolated Lamb he immolated his spirit with that which was constantly burning on the altar of his heart" (Vita 201). Thus Saint Francis himself became a sacrifice, became a vic in the sacrifice of the Mass togethe with the divine Victima celebrated Mass with the priest, the claimed instrument; he off himself, his body, his spirit, his whollife, by uniting himself the Lamb whose immolation was being renewed on the altar, in this co-immolation he received the pledge of his future gl What Saint Augustine said about Chist, "he was victor because was victim" (Victor quia victima), Sint Francis clearly underst for himself and all those who becomvictims in holy Mass. In union with the passion and death of the Crucified lies our real for life everlasting; here lies our rel victory over death and For though we are commemorating he death of our Savior in Holy Eucharist, it is not Christ in his mortality and suffering is concealed under the morsel of bred. Saint Francis explains we receive him "not now as going to lie, but as going to live and be glorified forever, whom the angels earn to gaze upon" (Letter the General Chapter).

It is true, we are not yet victors. But it is equally true that if are now victims with Christ, we will also be victors with Christ, our mortal state we must grow into him as he was in his mortal state and that means first and above all to k united with him in total molation in that sacrifice which he constantly renews on our alto Here our death to the world must tak its daily beginning, here of striving for perfection, our constant ting to ourselves, must receive its strength and blessing; here our daily carrying of the cross must sanctified. But the more we grow into him in this immolation, bettrue victims, the more the seed that a planted in us will grow a be strengthened, the pledge of our final victory, the promise eternal life, and the hope of our evertating glory. To the Sacrame of Penance we owe the remission of his; but confession is not to pledge of eternal life and resurrection It is only in this Holy Sacrament of the Altar that the pledge of he everlasting is given. Hence

esh and drinks my blood has life everlasting" (Admonition I). The Holy Eucharist, Mass and Holy Communion, is the Sacrament of our hope in Christ. Do we think of this and really act according to this hope? We worry so much about our eternal destiny, we scrutinize our conscience, we wonder whether our sins are forgiven, we may begin to doubt and lapse into that futile battle with scruples and the uncertainty that any human action entails. As long as we base our hope on confession or on our so-called "good conscience," we can be sure that we are on very shaky ground and are enjoying a very doubtful security. The pledge of our future salvation, of eternal life, of the resurrection of the body, is given only in this blessed Sacrament. Only here is true peace and reconciliation to be found, the true hope that will never let us be confounded. Why not take it where it is placed at our disposal? Why neglect to make this most

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

With deep sorrow the members of the Franciscan Institute announce the untimely death of our beloved Director, Father Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M. Sometime after midnight, Sunday, May 22, coronary thrombosis ended the earthly life of a man who was a true Friar Minor, a great scholar, and a faithful friend.

Father Philotheus, was born on February 17, 1901, in Lichtenau, Westphalia. He entered the Order of Friar Minor in 1920 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1927. He had been stationed at Saint Bonaventure University since 1939 and had been director of the Franciscan Institute since its founding in 1940.

The passing of Father Philotheus is deeply regretted by those who knew him and loved him for his genuine greatness. Yet there is consolation in the knowledge that his earthly life of selfless charity, of scholarship devoted to the clarification of truth, and above all his priestly zeal for the things of God, are surely meriting a glorious and everlasting reward.

we receive the Body and Blood of the Lord, when we are with in real remembrance of his passion and death, with him who own power rose from the dead and now reigns forever, let render all our insecurity and all our worries and all our scruhim who has made this his Supper, made his table the ple eternal life for us. Let us therefore take to heart the words holy Father Francis to the Chapter: "Hence I entreat you brethren, with a kiss of your feet and whatever charity I can you show every reverence and every honor, whatever you can, most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which ever is in heaven and on earth has been brought to peace an been reconciled with the almighty God."

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.

THE FOUNDING YEARS OF THE SISTERS OF THE THIRD ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS

Who shall find a valiant woman? Far and to the uttermost ends of the coast is the price of her (Prov. 31:10).

Whether a soul turns to or from God in a given moment is, in words of Dr. Anton Pegis, incomparably more important than the plosion of the atom bomb. Nowhere can the significance of this evation be more clearly understood than in the history of the Sister the Third Order of St. Francis, Glen Riddle, Pennsylvania who, on ninth of April of this year, celebrated the one hundredth anniversatheir foundation.

That moment so fraught with extraordinary consequences was a to Marie Anna Bachman on the fourteenth of September, 1851, as knelt in an agony of grief beside the mangled form of her young hush How could she know, so young there, so insignificant a figure in crowded life of burgeoning Philadelphia, that at that moment she placed on the crest of time; that the movement of the soul would a her and thousands touched by her decision out, far out, into myster spiritual depths or back, slowly back, into the shallow and snug shoal security and spiritual mediocrity?

What were her thoughts, this Anna Bachman, aged 27, poor immirant wife of Anthony Bachman, late of Wenigumstadt, near Aschaffenurg, Bavaria, as she knelt there beside her husband, mortally wounded in the quarry where he worked outside of Philadelphia? Did she forese herself destitute in a strange land, the mother of four little children, the last not yet born? Did her mind sweep back, perhaps, to the familiar security of Aschaffenburg where her husband was coachman to King Ludwig of Bavaria? Or did she, in a stunned and awesome wonder, turn earching eyes upon the inscrutable designs of God?

Two points of evidence now tell us that in that moment when ternity reached out to trouble the peaceful current of her life, Mark anna Bachman raised up her stricken heart to God in an act of utter bandonment. Far from turning in upon herself in a confusion of misery and self-pity, this frail woman with the instinctive strength of the soul dready closely united to the Divine Will, bowed meekly before the designs of Almighty God in an act of heroic love and trust.

We spoke of evidence. In the chronicles of the community there is related that the Sister on duty in Saint Joseph Hospital where Anthony Bachman died that day approached the young wife to console her. But the heavenly calm of the clear blue eyes that looked up from the still form, the intensity of the prayer that illuminated her face and hushed ll natural signs of grief, told that Sister Nurse, as she later recalled that her words of solace would have been an intrusion.

More tangibly, the history of the Glen Riddle Franciscan Sisten estifies in its one hundred years of dedicated service to God and human ty that in that moment of sorrow Marie Anna Bachman turned to God with results that have been, in the spiritual and social order, incompatibly more important than the achievements of nuclear science that have baken this generation.

A spiritual writer has said, "The source of the waters of interior joy not on earth; the mouth of desire must be opened heavenward—utterempty." In the days that followed, Marie Anna Bachman learned ore and more deeply that for her earth was devoid of joy. Unerringly, the turned to Christ Crucified, and in His Passion found strength and ace.

In sympathy for her sister, Barbara Boll took up residence with arie Anna in the simple home at 253 Apple Street in Philadelphia. Barra had already revealed to her confessor, the Reverend John Hespein, C.SS.R., of Saint Peter Church, her desire to become a religious the had even, at his direction, made application to the School Sisters of

Notre Dame. The sudden death of Anthony Bachman led her to be that for the present at least she was needed by her widowed sister. No theless the call to religious life was so persistent that Barbara a sought Father Hespelein. By this time she was convinced that, for serving God must take some form of service to her suffering neight Aware of the conditions in the Bachman home, Father Hespelein de ded Barbara to remain there, practice charity towards her little orpharelatives, and subject herself to her sister as she would a religious perior. He urged her, moreover, to spend much time in prayer and a ual reading. Beyond that, Divine Providence in due time would a her.

For Barbara, amazement must have mingled with joy when N Anna divulged that she too felt the call of a religious vocation. I aware of her duty towards her children—indeed, filled with the most der love for them—this young woman yet felt that God desired of I total immolation. Never impetuous in speech or precipitate in ac Marie could await quietly the unfolding of God's Will. With Bernard she knew that He Who is the source of all holy desires prothe means to fulfill them. Wisely, she turned to her confessor, the R end L. Coudenhove, for guidance.

The prudent Redemptorist was slow to counsel beyond recomming much prayer to the Holy Spirit. As a possible step in the direction their desires, he suggested that they convert their home into a hospid working girls' home. Interpreting this arrangement from the remove one hundred years, perhaps Father Coudenhove anticipated a result: the nominal fee paid by the residents would assist the young men financially, yet in such a way as to exercise them in the realitic poverty—self-denial and sacrifice.

It is recorded by early members of the community how happy I women were at what they believed was the first step toward their some The little dwelling on Apple Street became the "Holy Family How For it, Fr. Hespelein drew up a definite rule of life sufficiently liberate enable everyone to follow its directions. In the serenity and aust of that little "convent" the first two members of the Community be the social service work by which they hoped to sanctify themselves work for the spiritual and temporal good of their neighbor. Each began with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in Saint Peter Church at I and Girard Avenue. In spiritual reading and quiet meditation they tered, as Father Faber has so well described it, "...the world of thou where we most often meet with God, walking as in the shades of ancients."

Eden." In that holy atmosphere, their desire to serve God took deep root. However, before God saw fit to embark them formally upon the sea of religious life, He had determined that another soul must join them. That soul, so privileged by God to contribute notably to the spread of the Church in America, was meanwhile leading the simple devout life of a Tertiary of Saint Francis in her native village of Casseldorf in Bavaria.

About 1853 one of the young ladies who resided in the Holy Family Home returned to Germany for a family visit. In the group of interested friends who listened raptly to her tales of America was the young Tertiary, Anna Dorn. Particularly inspiring to her youthful and pious imagination must have been the story of the "gentle Widow Bachman," as the visitor called her. The narrator's statement that in all probability Mrs. Bachman would found a religious order, since the tenor of her little home so closely approximated conventual life, fired Anna's earnest soul. She would go to America and join Mrs. Bachman! Scrutinizing the incident from the century's distance, one must see in Anna Dorn's sudden decision youth's impetuous enthusiasm. Nevertheless, that facile interpretation does not explain fully ensuing events. One wonders: If the missionary life in America so attracted Anna Dorn, why did she not join the German Sisters of the Precious Blood who had settled in Ohio in 1844? (Her good parents must have urged it.) Or, perhaps, the Sisters of Saint Dominic of Ratisbon? Their coming to Brooklyn in 1853 may well have reached Anna's ears. Naturally speaking, Anna Dorn's decision looks overhasty. Mrs. Bachman was unknown to her; her plans were both tentative and vague. What was there, then, in the villager's account that so persuaded her to forsake the security of her humble home? How well those know who have served God's mysterious and adorable ways with man that His "... counsel is not in man's power," "... neither is there any searching out of His wisdom." In the passing conversation of a returning emigrant, the Holy Spirit spoke His will.

"With haste," to use the phrase that charms us so in Saint Luke's account of the Visitation, Anna journeyed into a far country. Her quest for Mrs. Bachman was delayed upon arrival in Philadelphia by the promise she had made her parents to repay her passage. As this young woman emerges in Community history, it is delightful to observe with what simplicity and spontaneity she moves. Evidently Anna Dorn was a woman of action: decisive and courageous. One finds those characteristics illuminated in all the little incidents that recall her early history. For her, the thing to be done must be done at once! In her first situation,

her employers object to attendance at Sunday Mass. She leaves imp ately and finds work with a tailor. The first day there, a fellow-wo asks: "Will you join me at lunch" Characteristically, Anna accepts notes, with shrewd self-reliance, of the modest boarding house to w her friend had led her-its other-worldly atmosphere, the simple gen of the owners, their unabashed spirituality. Informed that this is in the Holy Family Home she intended to contact later, Anna at one quests an interview with Mrs. Bachman. That evening we find her ing upon the woman who had ispired her to leave home and con far behind. In the light of faith, this remarkable coincidence is but other manifestation of the loving care with which God was moving bring about the Philadelphia foundation of the Sisters of Saint Fra In leading Anna Dorn to Marie Anna Bachman, it was as though Our Father were impatient now that she be about His work. "He led about and taught me: and He kept me as the apple of His eye," A might have paraphrased the sacred writer in thinking of her vocat

In the interview that followed, Anna revealed her pious aspirate her daring journey. Marie Bachman marveled how God had brown them together with such singular explicitness. The information Anna was a Tertiary of Saint Francis pleased Marie. Indeed, she reged that as an inspiration from Divine Providence that the incipal community be enrolled under the protection of Saint Francis of Abut, with temperateness that would serve as a prudent foil to AD Dorn's quick decisiveness, she asked counsel of her spiritual guide, ways was Marie Bachman the true and humble daughter of the Chuwho sought Wisdom from her Mother's hand.

Describing their meeting many years later, Anna Dorn, then Mor Mary Bernardine, wondered at the impression of profound spiritual that the young Mrs. Bachman even then created. Mother Bernardine called the stark poverty of the little bedroom where the interview occ red. A small table was there on which rested a crucifix, a spiritual reing book, some stationery. An old chair stood nearby. On the wall hu a large framed certificate of the family's enrollment in the Holy Fam Association, a gift of Mr. Bachman to his family. Anna was convint that Mrs. Bachman, like many another saintly soul, slept either on floor or in the rude chair. But of that Marie revealed nothing.

Well satisfied that in the Holy Home she had found those kinds spiritual desires that had prompted her to cross the ocean, Anna Do arranged to move into the Home and join the two sisters in their plate to dedicate their lives to the service of God. All this was in the year 185

His Holiness, Pope Pius IX, desires a Franciscan Community

Now that God in His wisdom had fitted together the triform cornerstone on which to erect the present Franciscan Community, factors external to the lives of these young women began to hasten the work. It was necessary for two great and holy ecclesiastics to cooperate in God's plan: the Venerable John Nepomucene Neumann, fourth bishop of Philadelphia, and His Holines, Pope Pius IX.

In the year 1854, Bishop Neumann accepted the invitation of the Holy Father to be present at the solemn ceremony of the definition of the dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception. As his biographer, the Reverend Michael J. Curley, C.S.R., records, Bishop Neumann also used the occasion for his ad limina visit to Rome. In his report to the Holy Father, Bishop Neumann mentioned that he wished to introduce the Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Dominic into Philadelphia for the large German immigrant population there. In the Holy Father's response one again sees the Providential hand of God pointedly indicating His pleasure in the desires of Marie Anna Bachman, Barbara Boll, and now Anna Dorn. Although sympathizing with the Bishop's need of sisters. His Holiness thought it wiser for him to found his own community. The Holy Father suggested, moreover, that it be Franciscan. As a Tertiary of the Third Order, Pius IX was well schooled in the essential Franciscan spirituality and he believed that the Franciscan spirit could best adapt itself to the needs of the country.

Although the gentle prelate was a man of intense faith and tried humility, this change in plans must have been disturbing. He knew of no women qualified for this serious and noble undertaking. Where could he turn? The same Divine Guidance that had led him to enlarge the scope of the charitable work of his diocese had already prepared for the good Bishop the means to conform quickly to the Holy Father's wishes. In the mail from America, he found a letter from Father Hespelein concerning the three young women who were requesting episcopal approbation as Franciscan Sisters. It was at once manifest to the venerable prelate—and it has ever since been manifest and consoling to the members of this Community—that the foundation was the undoubted will of God voiced by His Vicar on earth. In the ardent desires of the three founding members Almighty God had prepared the means to carry out the Holy Father's wishes.

Bishop Neumann then wrote to Father Hespelein bidding him continue his direction of the three women and to instruct them to pre-

pare for their clothing in the holy habit upon his return to Ameri Meantime the Bishop also communicated with the Franciscan Fath in Rome to obtain permission to receive and profess members of Third Order of Saint Francis.

Bishop Neumann landed in New York on the 28th of March, 18 He went directly to his see. In the interview with Mrs. Bachman her companions that occurred shortly thereafter, it is apparent that Bishop was highly pleased for the clothing ceremony was set at once Easter Monday, April 9.

That first Investiture, so different from the carefully formal solemn ceremony now held annually on the feast of Saint Clare, to place in Saint Peter Church after Vespers. Bishop Neumann presided few members of the parish, perhaps attracted by the presence of prelate, perhaps knowing something of the story of the Holy Fam Home, remained to witness the investing. What were the emotions those three holy founder? Since there is no written record, it is diffic to tell. "I have desired to go where springs not fail," the poet says for young nun taking her veil. That verse veils more than reveals the sac emotions that no nun would have dissected. What is evident from events that so quickly followed is this: the Holy Spirit filled those vent young souls with many graces. Those of fortitude and a hum daring were not least among His gifts.

Early Trials of the Founding Sisters

Mrs. Bachman, now referred to as the Foundress, received the nar of Sister Mary Francis. Barbara Boll became Sister Mary Margaret; An Dorn, Sister Mary Bernardine. A fourth member, Mary December, call Sister Mary Otillia, did not persevere. The Bishop's appointment of Sist Mary Francis as superior of the little group simply voiced the spontageous choice of all. Mother Francis' leadership had been evident from the start. Turning to her mature judgments and thoughtful decisions, the Sisters found in her quiet assumption of authority a stabilizing force the early produced in the Community a mental environment of calm a purposiveness.

From the vicissitudes of the past four years Marie Anna Bachm had emerged noticeably greater in spiritual stature. There was about be now a strength and buoyancy that follow upon a great spiritual crisis. It the well-developed gifts of prudence and temperateness already not she had grown in a love of God distinguishably Franciscan in character Mother Mary Francis evidenced a marked attraction toward penance.

in union with the suffering humanity of Christ and an extension of her love of humanity at once valorous and benign. We find her—and for many years the early members of the Community—fasting and abstaining on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, and conforming to the long fasts of Advent and Lent. To this were added the daily rigors and privations that followed upon the total poverty of their lives. Through discerning spiritual reading and daily meditation, her interior life had been further deepened so that she walked as one never quite removed from an active awareness of the presence of God. Gracing this personality and softening what might well have become austere asceticism, there was about Mother Francis a maternal benignity that found expression in a tender and vocal solicitude for her Sisters' spiritual and physical wellbeing. Thus it is that we find her writing from Utica, New York, in September of 1860, with unaffected tenderness:

My dearest Sisters: Only God knows how much I love you! Would that I in my youth had been as fortunate as you to dwell in the house of God...

Then, after exhorting them to flee temptation and live in interior recollection and prayer, with the touching concern of the true mother, she says:

Write soon and let me know how you all are. I embrace you all in the loving Heart of Jesus your cherished Spouse, and again bless every single one of you.

Hardly had the three women donned the brown habit of a Tertiary than they were denounced for appearing in it. An explanation for this lies in the social-political-religious atmosphere of the Philadelphia of the fifties. Nativists and the Know-Nothing Party had harried ecclesiastics and the faithful into a distrubed state of mind timorous of further persecution. The appearance of the three in religious garb touched off a kind of hysteria. It was some time before the recriminations of the laity and even the clergy ceased to cause them humiliation and sorrow. Father Hespelein, their spiritual guide, solved the difficulty, at least for those who objected to the habit, by ordering the Sisters not to appear in it in public. Sister Bernardine and Sister Margaret later recalled their deep humiliation at this obedience. There is something so human—feminine—in their reaction. Mother Francis, with the insight that sorrow gives, penetrated beyond accidentals to unchanging values. She accepted the situation with equanimity and no recalled comment. It was not until

October, 1858, when the Sisters began teaching in Saint Alphonsus School, that they again donned a religious habit. By then, the Minoc Conventual Fathers had been introduced into the diocese for the expression purpose of guiding the spiritual formation of the young community. Like that of the Conventuals, the new habit of the Sisters of Saint Francisca a simple black serge with identifying Franciscan cord from which hung, then, a five-decade rosary. A black veil and white linens, much a they are worn today, completed the garb. Sister Bernardine, it is interesting to note, the former tailoress, made the habits with expert skill.

Fast upon this trial came another much more disconcerting Mother Mary Francis. Sister Bernardine, who had evidently been under going some scruples about her vocation, was directed by Father Hespeleil to enter a community more firmly established. Contemporaries recalled Mother's stricken silence at the news, her, "Sister, repeat what you have said. I do not think I understand you." This blow was particularly har upon Mother. Perhaps more than she realized, she had depended upor the vigor and youthful courage of Sister Bernardine. Rightly, the other foundresses had looked to Sister Bernardine to be with them a pilla of strength for the three postulants who had already joined them. Seat ing as the trial was, it did not last long. Sister Bernardine could no content herself in any convent except the poverty-stricken little home of Apple Street, and with no religious companions except the gentle Moth er Francis and the faithful Sister Margaret. She begged Father Hespeleit to permit her to return. He did so, and Mother Francis welcomed he back with simple joy: "Sister, I knew that you would come back to us."

Thus was their novitiate year spent in the Holy Family Home. It their welfare, the Venerable Bishop exercised great paternal concern visiting at intervals to encourage and instruct them in those religious principles that he himself observed with heroic virtue. Of his interess in the Sisters of Saint Francis, his biographer observes that "he lavished the utmost care" upon them. He received, on the 26th of May, 1856 the vows of the three Sisters in his private chapel, now an office in the Cathedral Building at 18th and Summer Streets. Father Hespelein was present. The words of a member of the Community, now with God, may well recall that event:

Of earthly splendor there was none at this ceremony. There was nothing of the greatness that might attract the votaries of the world in this little group; but the one great Lord

beheld with pleasure their vows registered in the Book of Life; and heavenly melody filled their souls as the first great chapter of their lives as religious closed.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Bishop Neumann handed Mother Francis a Rule of Life, written in his own hand, a copy of which is still preserved in the archives of the Community. He said:

Take this Rule, which is small in form but which, if faithfully adhered to, will lead to great ends.

When the Bishop's plans to build a convent for the Sisters near the Seminary of 18th and Race Streets did not materialize—he had hoped that they would help in the care of the Seminary-Mother Francis found herself in a quandary in that she had, anticipating the move, allowed the lease on the Apple Street house to lapse. It was necessary to place in private homes the Sisters and the novices until other quarters suitable for their needs could be found. These temporary measures were taken, Sister Margaret departing with the Bachman children to her sister Cunigunda's home. Cunigunda-to digress momentarily-with her widowed mother and sisters Baraba, Louise, and Walburga, had come to Philadelphia in June, 1849, at Marie Anna's urging After her mother's death Cunigunda, by then Mrs. Bielefeld, had settled in Tacony. The arrangements should have eased Mother's mind, for in the hospitality of the Bielefeld home Sister Margaret was free to care for the children and at the same time earn a modest living sewing. Instead, the arrangement precipitated a crisis that caused both sisters keen mental suffering. Alone with her own thoughts, the loyal and good Margaret began to doubt the reality of her vocation. It was a presumption, she reasoned, for her to think of establishing a religious community. More, she had deterred Marie Anna from her sacred obligation to her little children. In her tortured thinking, Sister Maragaret resolved to remain with Cunigunda and care for the Bachman children. Mother Francis, she concluded, must solve the problem for herself.

This untoward development became known to John Geisenhoff, husband of Walburga Boll, when he imparted the news that Mother had located a suitable home at 1517 Apple Street (now Lawrence). It is a testimony to Mr. Geisenhoff's firm faith and sound judgment that he reproved her rather than sympathized with what he probably saw were the protestations of a distraught soul. Providentially, Mother Francis arrived on the scene to calm Sister Margaret's fears. The next day Mother

er arranged that her two boys remain with the Bielefelds and that her two little daughters continue to live with her at what would now be Saint Clara Convent.*

Again Mother Francis had been called upon to weather a crisis in the establishment of the community. In the light of her evident obliga tions to her children, Mother's unwavering conviction that this wor was the will of God seems clearly a divine inspiration. In her struggle and suffering one is reminded of two other noble American mothers of her century-the long-suffering Cornelia Connelly, the valiant Elizabet Seton. What this incident cost Mother Francis, touching as it did s personal a question as her duty to her children, is only hinted at in the annals. From afar, one pictures her on the Feast of the Stigmata of Sain Francis as she admits with gentle old-world courtesy Father Hespelein Saint Clara Convent for the formal blessing of this new cradle of Francis can life. Do her lovely quiet eyes move in poignant reflection from the children of her youth and love to this cherished new life that she feel constrained to bring forth in so much pain? "What does he know wh has not been tried?" one asked before her. But nothing escapes the sen sitive lips. They keep their wordless vigil over an agony of spirit that learning anew the complexity of sorrow and joy Saint Francis felt when he cried, "My God and my All!"

Sr. Jeannette Clare, O.S.F. (To be continued)

WORKADAY RELIGIOUS

We religious talk about acts of love as fundamental motives for our work because we are a very special type of people, laboring for the perfection of our soul. We want personalities modeled on God's, Who is love. For His glory and our sanctification we seek to do His will, and we know that His will for us is that our faith bring forth the fruit of good works. Dogmatic insistence on good work also remarks that such works must be consecrated by the right motive. Though fatigued and burdened by the effects of sin, we know that as religious our labor has a God-given dignity, blessed as it is by the spirit of obedience and submission to the will of God.

Daily tasks lose nothing of their rigor, but they do gain in meaning, when we consecrate them by offering them as works of the children of God. We often think that it would have been happiness itself to have walked with the historical Christ, to have ministered to His needs, to have worked in the ministry under His eyes. Then we would really have felt that we were cooperating in God's work. But is the daily task imposed by obedience less a participation in the work of Christ? The living reality of Christ in His Church calls for men to continue His mission. It is for the Church to offer still a sheepfold of security to all men, to administer the means of grace, to keep the faith pure and perennial. Those of us who live the life of the Church dwell in an aura of grace, ever striving both to earn more and to pass the great gift on to others. We learn very early in our novitiate life the fact that we have not been admitted to religion for a purely personal, and perhaps selfish purpose. Nor does being a religious mean being immured in a secure monastic cell for a yogilike existence of inert contemplation. For Christians, the religious life—be it active or contemplative—is a life combining prayer and labor. If we fail in one or the other, we fail totally in the religious life.

Ideals we all have by the bookful. Most of them revolve around compliance to the will of God, which is all very fine. But the translation of these ideals into reality remains to be done. And it must be done wholly, in the spirit of our Order, without any decline from the first fervor to a comfortable attitude that casually sidesteps the monotony of daily duties and onerous assignments. No fear should be felt that the early ideal was a bit on the ascetical or impractical side, as we might be tempted to call it. It may seem so now, but only because we have allowed our first love to cool, because we have yielded to compromise with self, because we have let the world tell us what is practical and sensible. But when we were young in religion we interpreted things in relation to the Gospel and the Rule. We immersed ourselves in the writings of Saint Francis and made every effort to conform to his spirit. We loved the ideal of prayer

^{*}God's care of Mother Mary Francis' children is striking. Her two daughters became Sisters of St. Francis. The younger, Cunigunda, is still living at the age of 103, the venerated Sister Francis of the Buffalo Community. Her boy, John Frederick, died for his country at 17, a soldier in the Civil War. The other son, Aloysius, became a priest and labored with great piety for over fifty years in the Albany diocese.

and work because he had loved it and told us in his Testament ho he and his first companions lived. "We who were clerics said the Office like other clerics, the lay members said the Our Father, and we were quite happy spending the time in churches. And we were plain people and at everybody's service. And I worked with me hands, and I wish to work; and I wish earnestly to have all the resof the brothers work at employment such as conforms with property. Those who know none should learn, not from any desire to ear the price of their labor, but for example's sake and to repel idleness. And of course there is the Rule: "Those brothers to whom the Lor has given the grace of working should work faithfully and devotedly in such a way that with idleness, the enemy of the soul, excluded they do not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which everything temporal must be subservient."

If we have come to think, after so many years in religion, the the Rule is somewhat out of place in the modern world and nee not be followed too literally, we might do well to recall that the Rul was approved over the objections of many princes of the Church They called it a dreamer's document, beyond the power of ordinar men to observe. But Cardinal Colonna recalled the source of Francis inspiration—the Gospel itself—and remarked that he thought is blasphemous to call the evangelical life impractical. So we have our Rule, which we know to be guaranteed as a perfect standard of life. And if our activities are to reflect the spirit of the Rule, we must not allow secular attitudes to condition them.

A famous industrialist said recently: "You can buy a man's time, you can buy a man's physical presence at a given place. But you cannot buy enthusiasm; you cannot buy initiative; you cannot buy loyalty. You have to earn those things." It is ironic that Americans—the world's most advanced people technically, mechanically, and industrially are just beginning to inquire into the most promising source of productivity: the human will to work.

Pope Leo XIII had something to say about labor in his Rerum novarum: "A man's labor has two characteristics. First of all it is personal, for the exertion of individual power belongs to the individual who puts it forth, employing the power for the personal profit for which it was given. Secondly, a man's labor is necessary, for with-

out the results of labor a man cannot live; and self-conservation is a law of nature, which it is wrong to disobey."

Applying this to our state of life, we can very easily conclude what profit we want from our labor. The whole of our religious personality is directed toward the fulfillment of the will of God. We have gone far beyond working for mere necessity. Our labor is that of love. Far from disobeying a law of nature, we see a greater fulfilment and fuller development of our personality through our individual activity. We labor, but we elevate work to an act of love.

How do we do this? We do this by making our work productive, by applying to a human act of will a meaningful right intention, the kind we meant when we took our vows. Then we had enthusiasm, initiative, loyalty. If anything has happened to our attitude since that time, we have but to reinstate our vows as the motivating forces of our activity. Idleness—laziness—such words can have no part in a truly Franciscan life.

Recall that our Seraphic Father addressed the few bitter words he ever spoke to Brother Fly, the one who just coasted along, fattening on the labor of others.

It is not unusual to find Franciscans asking themselves in all seriousness just how much they are getting out of the Order. With any kind of honesty, we all have to admit that even on the purely natural level, the hundredfold is ours. But what about asking ourselves how much the Order is getting out of us? How much are we contributing to the common welfare? How much are we doing to make the Order the great power for good that the Church expects it to be? As Franciscans, we are expected to work. And not only are we expected to work, but we are expected to work in a particular way. If we have any doubt about the prescriptions of the Rule being obsolete, we have a recent and quite authoritative voice to state the contrary. Our former Minister General, Fr. Pacificus Perantoni, in his encyclical Divina Providentia, speaks blastingly: "There are several classes of religious whose labor is altogether futile. Some just about settle down to work, and then if any difficulty arises, they lose heart ... Some, again, feel the need to work under human approval and compensation; let us understand that we must always keep active even if human applause is lacking, since we shall receive the full reward for it from God in heaven. For that matter, even among us mortals at times one may do the sowing while another does the reaping.

"Others do not loathe work, and they occupy themselves useful ly. . .but on condition that they suffer no annoyance or inconvenience from the work, nor have to change the usual very restful ten or of their life; there must be no overcast skies, no storms, but only general peace about them. No reason, they say, to worry about finish ing today; tomorrow is another day. Saint Philip Neri would tell u in his humorous way that Paradise does not go to the comfortable."

We can perhaps flatter ourselves into greater effort by recalling that the Church depends on our varied works to build up her treas ury. The personal satisfaction of our work is needed by the Church for the still unfinished task of bringing Christ to all. Speaking to the priests of Christ, Pope Pius XII in his Menti Nostrae listed the responsibility of each minister in a very precise order: "The good of the Church, personal sanctification, and the sanctification of the faithful." The day we get around to realizing all of these perfectly will be the next time we can, conscientiously, be lazy.

Religious profession is not a meaningless ceremony. Each of us can recall the words of the formula we repeated. Then we asked for admittance to profession ad agendam poenitentiam-to do penance. We said not a word about being comfortable. We said nothing of being praised for our labor, or finding it interesting. All we had in mind was to go out and do what we were told to do, to the best of our ability, in the spirit of humble obedience. We felt commissioned as co-laborers with Christ and we left the altar steps filled with newlyconsecrated ambition. There were no shades of practicality in our will then. We were filled with the desire to do God's work and for His sake alone, not ours, nor our superiors,' nor our confereres,' nor any other creatures'. We need no re-consecration; just a realization of what we promised to do then and the will to do it now.

By way of checking up on our spirit, it may be helpful to make a list of the personal qualities that effect our labor. The following is merely a suggestion-at least pardonable in this day of psychological testing.

The answer to these and similar questions may help us to see

Disposition:	Cheerful?	Usually pleasant	tient?	[mpa-
	_	13	Cet by?	

uting to the wel-grant violations? fare of the com-

munity?

Friendly? Gener-Liked by those Avoided and Relation to who know you? avoiding? Fellow Religious: ally well-liked? Work well with Unable to work Helpful to all Cooperation: those you like? with others?

and always? Attitude toward Welcome it and Accept 't without Resent it?

reaction? profit by it? Criticism:

Always ready for Do regular assign-Do only what is Quantity of necessary? ments? extra tasks? Work:

Always see things Tend to lose in Stop in face of Perseverance: difficulty? terest and let through? others take over?

Always on time Frequently late? Habitually "too Punctuality: busy?

our shortcomings more clearly, and consequently to remedy them. In any case, it is well for us always to keep in mind that we are laboring for our own sanctification, for the benefit of the Order, for the good of others, and above all, for the honor and glory of God. Then without doubt our labor will be fruitful. Fr. Anselm Hardy, O.F.M.

UP UNTIL THIS TIME WE HAVE DONE NOTHING

If the statement that not to advance in the spiritual life is to retreat, is a cliche, it neverthless remains a truth. Movement is so es sential to the religious vocation that where progression ceases, retrogression begins. It is an awesome consideration but one not without its own peculiar consolation. For it is our poignant and paradoxical comfort to have the doors of nature's comfort shut against us. When we might desire to settle for a comfortable degree of holines and nestle down into the rewarding warmth of our own regular observance, our own spiritual tidiness, our own convenient brand of "charity" which preserves continual serenity by the simple expedia ent of never rousing ourselves on any count!-we find this cozy chamber locked and bolted. No heart has ever yet found its own full fillment short of eternity, but the religious vocation plants a seed of unrest more pregnant with power than the slimmer seed that is the common heritage of all men. Strangely, this unrest is our single genuine solace. Our inevitable failure ever to arrive at completion marks our dignity as the children of God, wandering in a land of exile but with the hope of returning one day to our Fatherland.

What is this progression in the spiritual life? More precisely, what is it in the life of a Franciscan? Deprived of the odorous ease of stagnaton, we should at least like to envision progress as a measured march from good to better to best unto Heaven. The pious shops go on renewing their stock of those precious little pictures which show the religious, hair and draperies streaming, on the stairway to perfection. Invariably, our dear and long-suffering Lord is depicted as a trim-bearded Figure in the background urging this languid lady to take another step, perhaps from humility to charity, or maybe another dainty advance from self-abnegation to patience. Each step is always neatly labelled. And we may safely infer that we shall become more delighted with ourselves on each new rise. Actually, nowhere is the piercing paradox of the spiritual life more stark and painful than in this consideration of spiritual progress.

We need not live long past our novitiate to begin squirming under the deepening instinct of what real progress is: the unfolding of our multifarious miseries, the revelation of our utter poverty of

virtue, the acceptance of ourselves as wholly unlovable. We made a clean break with the persons and things we most cherished. We put on a poor habit and a common cord to testify we were the humble sons and daughters of the poverello and wanted no part of earthly riches or greatness. We signed a solemn compact, with Holy Church for witness, giving over our rights to carnal love, proprietorship, and the direction of our own persons. Surely these heroic folk who showed such unmistakable courage, who clung to such shining convictions against odds often heavy enough, who willingly gave the very core of their humanity into the open palm of the Divine Master, are persons to be trusted. They are men and women fitted to follow through to perfection such an auspicious beginning. What do we discover instead? The exact opposite.

Painfully, ashamedly, and then agonizingly we find ourselves out for tricksters and shamsters. We attain with little show of scholarship to the aching knowledge of our utter untrustworthiness. We discover the traitor in our own flesh and mind and spirit, the clever enemy who unravels all our resolutions and trips our stride at the very moment we had thought ourselves secure.

Here is the first interior crossroads. If our spiritual cheeks flame with embarrassment at discovering our essential meanness, then we shall never discover our essential greatness. We shall work so assiduously at discovering excuses for all our faults, at finding some others with whose conduct our own will compare excellently well, at taking refuge from the vision of our own failings in a pietous surprise at the sins and faults of others, that we shall throw our whole spiritual gaze out of focus. It takes heroic courage to face oneself for what one is. The alternative is self-deception, which throws a kind of mental tarpaulin over the field of spintual combat in the soul, making it impervious alike to the sunlight of God's love and the rainfalls of His grace. On the other hand, if by strength of prayer and the superhuman effort which grace makes possible, we can force ourselves to accept ourselves for what we are, then we are immediately rewarded. Taking no step at all, we are set by God Himself on the first low rise of humility. The religious whe does not realize himself to be capable of any sin and every fault hand even the first faint glimmer of humility. Conversely, the religion who has such a realization has indeed the preparation of soul necessary for the seed of humility, though he does not think so!. It takes heroic courage to face oneself for what one is? Yes. But the reward is almost overpowering. It is peace, contentment, song.

Our father Saint Francis would never have needed a psychiatrist even had such services been as handy and accepted in his day as in ours. He never tortured his mind nor bedeviled his soul with the complex considerations of those who refuse to face the first and greatest of all natural realities—themselves. So rely no man ever suffered more poignantly over his own sins and the sins of the world, than did the little Poor Man. Surely no man is d a more penetrating spiritual vision than he. Yet his conclusion was as calm as it was sound: "Lord, Who art Thou!—and who am !"

It is small wonder that our seraphic Free er could never seem to exhaust the meaning of the few words in hat famous outcry of his. They express everything: our dignity are our ignobleness, our glory and our shame. They constitute a flaming protestation of love, and that particular kind of amazement which it is always characterized Franciscans. They also betoken a humiling whose profundity no other saint has plumbed more completely.

The Franciscan who refuses to face him of and the Sister who will not call her faults by their true names, we holy Father a mere pious mouthing as far concerned. We may address our Lord as, "We are art Thou!" and bow our heads with a, "Who am I!" and still be seen who would in our right-eousness, secretly satisfied that we are not crulous like Sister X nor hot-tempered like Father Y, and never great sing that our pride is far noisier than any chatter of tongues, and the final outpost in the desert of spiritual black reguessing" is indeed the final outpost in the desert of spiritual blacks.

The young religious who cannot face self builds up a leathery scar tissue on the wounds of correction and reproof until she is quite unfit for saving spiritual surgery. By the time she has grown into a middle-aged nun she is like a frighter suspect of cancer who refuses to see the diagnostician for fear of he ailment. How often do we not hear an old religious heartily decaire:

"Oh, I have my faults, but I am certainly not jealous-curious-proudetc." Trace it, whatever it is, down the long litany of human ignobilities; and we shall find that this base of "innocence" is the snug stronghold of that religious' predominant fault. Contrariwise, the humble religious is always sure that she is proud. The loving Sister who delights in the joys and successes of others is the first one to admit to the jealously inherent in us all. The mortified religious is always trying to guard his senses. And only the very pure fear greatly for their purity.

"Who art thou, Lord? And, Lord, who am I?" The Franciscan

"Who art thou, Lord? And, Lord, who am I?" The Franciscan who is mature in the spiritual life poses those rhetorical questions as a true prayer, based on a self-knowledge which has fitted him for humility. There is nothing so disheartening as trying to direct a soul entrenched in an elected self-ignorance, nothing so futile as attempting to enlighten a religious who finds his bliss in blindness. Actually, it is stupor, not bliss. Something more akin to bliss is reserved for the soul stricken less with its own meanness than with the grandeur of a God great enough to find such meanness lovable.

If the greatest saints thought themselves the greatest sinners, it was not because they were blind nor foolish. They had nearly perfect vision, whereas we often suffer from amild form of the spiritual astigmatism which afflicted the famous (or infamous) "praying" pharisee in the temple. As does everything else in the spiritual life, this knowledge of ourselves revolves on a pin of paradox. It is only when we recognize ourselves to be utterly unlovable that God can find us a fit object for His love. It is when we are no longer surprised at anything we find emerging in others, nor hiding in the scented folds of our own self-esteem, that God can surprise us with that kind of joy which sent our Father Francis singing down the Umbrian lanes. We can never be free of the treachery of our own nature unless we feel the weight of its chains. And surely all of us, at scattered and splendid moments, have tasted the mysterious and heady happiness of knowing it is the very chains that endear us to a compassionate God. At such moments, we kiss the chains of our ignoming and learn what Saint Therese of Lisieux knew so well: that we cannot lay claim to God's saving mercy unless we know ourselves desperately in need of that mercy. "The best way to insure God's mercy," said Saint Therese, "is to come before Him empty-handed." If we are the clutching at scraps and patches of self-justification to cover the mess of our spirit, always printing counterfeit money of examples swell our own exchequer, what is left to God? Yet He will we miracle of mercy to justify a soul that never justifies itself. God not fail to find excuses for the religious who has no excuses for self.

"Up until this time, my brothers," our seraphic Father like repeat, "we have done nothing. Now let us begin." This hum undespairing cry is a spiritual escutcheon for all his sons and dan ters. Having failed so often, seeing each day some new baseness this self we perhaps once thought impeccable, we sink into the dep of our ignobility only to find there the key to our only nobility: strange, splendid dignity as children of a God Who never stoope quickly to our misery as when the taste of it lies most bitterly rea nized on our soul. Indeed, we have done nothing, we poor lit creatures so easily unmanned in our most idealistic and resolutions by the untiring enemy within us. But now let us begin. It now we have swung the full, pendulumed paradox-arc of sanctions of find our unlovableness loved by God, our naked and admitt shame covered with His mercy, and our protestations of guilt drowed in the thunder of His forgiveness.

The sturdy old pious books were fond of inviting us to see contempt and to glory in being despised by others. For the contemp plative soul,—which every true son and daughter of Saint Francimust be,—there is a far more exquisite suffering than the contemp of others: the knowing that we are indeed contemptible, but finding ourselves loved instead. In the moments of our most acute self-knowledge, the contempt of others would be something of a balm on the aching twist of sorrow and remorse in our hearts! Indeed, we are encompassed at that precise moment with the unspeakable love of God This is the keenest suffering of the contemplative, and also the aper of her joy. There, we begin. And at that point, we shall one day hope to end.

Sister Mary Francis, P.C.

SCRIPTURE READING WITH ST. BONAVENTURE

(Comment. in Joannem, ch. VI, Omnia Opera, Tom. VI, pp. 33f.)

Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen I say unto you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this bread, shall live forever (Jn. 6, 54-59).

First of all, from the words of Christ, we see the necessity of receiving the Corpus Christi. For, as the Seraphic Doctor states, without receiving the Holy Eucharist there can be no spiritual health: You shall not have life in you (v. 54). Eucharistic Reception is the 'sine qua non' of truly living. Christ emphasized this, saying: Amen, amen I say unto you (v. 54). Those emphatic words mean that He was insisting upon the following statement as the absolute truth: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man (as true bread) and drink his blood (as true drink) you shall not have life in you (v. 54). This life refers to the life of grace. We behold Christ's gracious Presence in us from a following text: He that eateth my flesh. . .abideth in me (v. 57). This Sacramental living the life of grace in the Body of Christ is a prerequisite for eternal life: He that eateth this bread, shall live forever (v. 59). Upon giving Holy Communion to the well-disposed soul, the priest breathes this prayer: "May the Body of our Lord Jesus guard your soul unto eternal life."

So, secondly, we notice the usefulness of receiving the Body of Christ. This utility benefits the recipient in both body and soul. First the soul is vivified: He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life (v. 55). 'Hath' means the possession of merit for eternity; but, it also means 'beginning to have'—which is like a foretaste of eternal sweetness. Sacred Scripture foretold this usefulness: Hearken diligently to me, and eat that which is good, and your

soul shall be delighted in fatness. Incline your ear and come to me hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting cover ant with you, the faithful mercies of David (Isa. 55f). This gratu tous Gift of God, well-received, enters the soul upon an etern covenant with Him. Its reward is endless. Moreover, the body all benefits from this Refection: And I will raise him up in the last d (v. 55).

Besides the necessity and utility of the Eucharist, Christ make us aware of the truth of the refection: For my flesh is meat indee and my blood is drink indeed (v. 56). Literally, the Eucharist is tr food and true drink. Can we not take Him at His Word? Or will s rebel against the Truth of His Nourishment? Some of those prese on that occasion revolted: Many therefore of his disciples, hearing said: This saying is hard, and who can hear it? (v. 61). They we too much taken up with carnal craving, as He had told them: Ame amen I say to you, you seek me not because you have seen miracle but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled (v. 26). The perception was only flesh-deep; hence, they had difficulty arising the spiritual level of refreshment. May the Truth of His Refection not become a stumbling block for us. Put to the test, He asks us, He asked them: Doth this scandalize you?. . It is the spirit that quic eneth: the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken you, are spirit and life (vv. 62, 64). On any occasion of his Euchard tic Presence, we are on safe ground if our conviction of His Trut bows our souls as well as our knees. This is especially true upon the reception of His Sacramental Sustenance. For, then, we must no only acquiesce to His Body by opening our mouths, but we mu agree with His Words by opening our hearts to believe His lastin Presence in us by grace. As He said: He that eateth my flesh, an drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him (v. 57). Our state grace assures us: God is charity: and he that abideth in charit abideth in God, and God is him (I Jn. 4, 16).

The Eucharistic life is a kind of divine life. So much so the Christ compared It to His own and to His Father's life: As the livin Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me the same also shall live by me (v. 58). The importance of sharing in the Father's and in His life cannot be over-emphasized. His Word

to Philip were also meant for us: Philip, he that seeth me seeth the Father also. . . Do you not believe, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? (Jn. 14:91). So in somewhat the same way as He shares the Divine Life with the Father-analogously, we share also His life in the Eucharist: He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me (v. 58). Hence, upon worthy reception of Holy Communion, we can be truly said to live on account of Christ.

The last verse, comparing the Eucharist with Old Testament manna, brings out the dignity of this Holy Sacrament. For the Eucharist excells that food of their fathers, which the Jews were always praising. The Sacramental Body of Christ surpasses that manna because it is more noble and more permanent. It is more noble, because: This is the bread that came down from heaven (v. 59). Previously, Christ had contrasted this Bread with the manna: Moses gave you not bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven (v. 32). Hence, the manna is of the earth, but the Eucharist is a heavenly Food. Behold the surpassing nobility of the Holy Eucharist! Further, this Sacrament is more permanent than the manna. For the manna gave temporal strength alone; whereas the Body of Christ conserves one eternally: Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this bread, shall live forever (v. 59). We should often eat this eternal, life-giving Bread.

This life gives us radiant personalities in the proper sense. Nowadays, one often hears the dubious praise: "He (or she) has such a wonderful personality!" Just what is here meant, frankly, is hard to determine. But Saint Bonaventure gives us a sound standard for the meaning of "personality." He claims that it is based on two qualities, God-given to the soul. They are dignity and nobility. The one proceeds from the fact that the soul is made to the image and likeness of God; the other gives to human souls a supremacy over the rest of this world's creation. They are properties of the spirit; they belong to our souls. Consequently, no amount of external care will give them to us nor preserve them in us. However, the Holy Eucharist can—and will—help keep them resplendent with the life of grace. Our dignity and nobility of soul flourish with the Sacramental Presence.

Saint Bonaventure has elsewhere said: "The soul has been cre-

ated so delicate and noble by her shouse, the Author of all, she cannt be without love. Whence is necessary that we deli either in the highest or in the lowest love." "The soul is called ated to the image of God, because is God is love (I Jn. 4: so also she has from His own Being hen she is in use of free a certain inborn aptitude to be loveled she can never be with it. Because it is necessary for her to love the unchange Good which is God, or the change good which is the wor But the dignity and nobility of our sonalities demand more worldly love. Made to the image ikeness of God, they have aptitude (from the affective appear to embrace a love which out of this world. The love of which rouls are worthy is the L of God, found in the Holy Euc Being so priceless, can afford not to nourish our souls will Body? Will we refuse the His continual, Sacramental life His Body and Blood make us perfect personalities. Be dignity and the nobility the Holy Eucharist is the only work Nourishment for our le hungry souls. Receiving Him, ruly cry out: 'Emmanue God with us!

Rt. Owen A. Colligan, O.F.M.

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THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE FRANCISCAN OBEDIENCE

When our Seraphic Father Francis meditated on the earthly life of the Incarnate Word, when he pondered the mystery of the divine presence in the Holy Eucharist, he saw clearly that the only way to the perfect imitation of Christ is the way of unlimited loving obedience. His metanoia, therefore, his radical turning to God, began with an eager listening to the voice of the Father in whose will he saw the perfection and fulfilment of life. With the words of Christ in his heart: Not by break alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the bouth of God (Mtt. 4:4), he bowed his head to God in humility, sinced the voices of the world and of the flesh, and threw open his listening soul to the voice of the Beloved.

Our life in penance, then, is essentially a life in obedience; and without a clear understanding of what obedience meant to our Seraphic Father we can hardly have for a clear understanding of our Franciscan vocation.

1. Holy Obedience and the Franciscan Vocation

To grasp fully the importance of holy obedience in our Franciscan life, we need only look to the words of our Holy Father Francis: "Holy obedience puts to confusion all bodily and carnal desires and keeps its body mortified for obtaince to spirit and to brother, and makes a man subject to all men this world, and not only to men, but also to all beasts and wild to so, so that they can do with him whatever they want, as far as is given them by the Lord from on high" (Salute to Virtues, Opuscula 20 the we study this passage in connection with the liturgy from the sinning of Lent to Pentecost, we shall see that Francis underston obedience as the Church understands it—as the power that presente the soul for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Obedience loser the crippling bonds of fear and timidity, banishes self-seeking, out all striving for the things of the world, and opens the soul ecceptive listening to every word to every word that is spirit and that comes from the mouth of life. As the obedience of Christ quered Satan and redeemed the

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