

ated so delicate and noble by her Spouse, the Author of all, she cannot be without love. Whence it is necessary that we delight either in the highest or in the lowest love." "The soul is called to the image of God, because just as God is love (I Jn. 4:8) so also she has from His own Being when she is in use of free will a certain inborn aptitude to be loved and she can never be without it. Because it is necessary for her either to love the unchangeable Good which is God, or the changeable good which is the world. But the dignity and nobility of our personalities demand more of worldly love. Made to the image and likeness of God, they have an aptitude (from the affective appetite) to embrace a love which is out of this world. The love of which our souls are worthy is the Love of God, found in the Holy Eucharist. Being so priceless, cannot afford not to nourish our souls with His Body? Will we refuse His continual, Sacramental life of grace? His Body and Blood make us perfect personalities. For the dignity and the nobility of the Holy Eucharist is the only work of the Nourishment for our hungry souls. Receiving Him, we truly cry out: 'Emmanuel, God with us!'

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

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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 fulfillment of life. With the words of Christ in his heart: *Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God* (Mtt. 4:4), he bowed his head to God in humility, silenced 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 hope 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 obedience to spirit and to brother, and makes a man subject to all men in this world, and not only to men, but also to all beasts and wild things, 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*). If we study this passage in connection with the liturgy from the beginning of Lent to Pentecost, we shall see that Francis understood obedience as the Church understands it—as the power that prepares the soul for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Obedience loosens the crippling bonds of fear and timidity, banishes self-seeking, puts out all striving for the things of the world, and opens the soul to receptive listening to every word that comes from the mouth of God to every word that is spirit and life. As the obedience of Christ conquered Satan and redeemed the

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world, so too the obedience of every follower of Christ overcomes evil and heals the ravages of sin.

From this it is obvious that our Seraphic Father conceived of obedience as something quite different from what is usually understood by the religious vow and virtue. We need not go into the latter point here; every well-trained novice knows what the religious vows and virtues are, what they allow and what they forbid, and what—more or less—their purpose is. Suffice to remark in passing that Saint Francis never regarded obedience as a kind of steel-barred cage where the soul is broken and beaten raw until it has no will left at all, or where it can prove its capacity for blind self-annihilating sacrifice. Quite the contrary. For him obedience meant not only sacrifice but also, if not primarily, profit and gain; it meant not utter self-annihilation but fullest life and freedom and growth to perfection. Obedience was both the goal and the pivot of his turning to God in penance.

Plainly, then, if we are to live our religious life in the spirit of the Gospel, we must see obedience not as a pattern or a mould set before us according to which we must allow ourselves to be cut or formed regardless of any violence to our nature, but rather as a most precious gift, a means to a new and abundantly fruitful life. We are "received to obedience" (*I Rule*, 2), while at the same time we pray: *Take me, O Lord, according to thy word, and I shall live* (Ps. 118:8). It may be said in all truth that the basic value of our religious life lies in the power of our capacity for obedience. The strength of soul that comes to the obedient man is both a reward for his own acts and a gift of God's grace; and while the gift of grace is infinitely more than our own acts, nevertheless Saint Francis could assure his brethren: "I know what the blessing of obedience is, and that none of that man's time passes without gain who has put his neck under the yoke of another" (*II Celano*, 151).

In the last analysis, obedience and the religious life are synonymous terms in the writings of Saint Francis; and obedience is nothing less than the loving observance of the law of God. Thus he wrote in the First Rule (C. 5): "And let all the brothers understand that if at any time they should turn from the commandments of God and wander outside the bounds of obedience, they are under a curse

outside of obedience, as the prophet says (Cf. Ps. 118:21), for as long as they knowingly remain in such sin. And when they persevere in the Lord's commandments, to which they have pledged themselves in the holy Gospel and their way of life, let them understand that they abide in true obedience and are blessed by the Lord." It is well to note that the disobedient brother is under a curse not because he has withdrawn himself from obedience; the curse lies in the very state of being withdrawn. On the other hand, the obedient brother is blessed by the very state of remaining in obedience. To the mind of Saint Francis obedience is not so much a good act as a reward; disobedience is not so much a sin as a punishment.

2. *The Mystery of Holy Obedience*

We know from the life and writings of Saint Francis that he prized obedience above all other virtues and practiced it almost to the point of folly. But do we know why he so loved obedience? Do we know why he so often spoke of it, so strongly insisted on it for his brotherhood? Certainly it was not because he saw in obedience a means of binding his somewhat erratic brethren into a unified group; nor was it because, as a one-time aspirant to knighthood, he knew the military advantages of obedience; and still less was it because he regarded obedience as a means of strengthening his Order and increasing its efficiency in the work of God. None of these reasons, however objectively valid in themselves, would answer the question of why Francis loved obedience, for he was never a man of ulterior motives. Our Seraphic Father was obedient simply because Christ was obedient. He needed no other motive. The clarity and immediacy of his spiritual perception assured him that the imitation of the life of Christ is the only way to the honor and glory of God and to human salvation. He heard the voice of the Master saying: *Follow me*. That was enough. He followed, keeping the ears of his spirit alert to the words of the Lord, walking faithfully in the footsteps of his Beloved; and in so doing he found his deepest joy and peace. But to Francis obedience was more than this; it was the means of his being nailed to the cross with Christ, of his becoming one with his beloved Master in the ultimate sacrifice of Calvary. As "our Lord Jesus Christ gave up his life rather than fail in obedience to

his most most holy Father" (*Letter to the General Chapter*), so "that man gives up everything he possesses, and loses body and life, who keeps himself wholly ready for obedience at the hands of his superior" (*Admonitions*, 3).

But even with this we have not yet reached the deepest mystery of obedience. If Franciscan obedience means the perfect imitation of the human life of Christ, it also means the birth and growth of a new power in us, a new being. For "we are brothers of Christ when we do the will of his Father who is in heaven" (*Letter to All the Faithful*). Let us pause here for a moment and consider this. It is precisely at this point that Franciscan obedience can be seen not as an action emanating from our will to submit, but as forming power acting upon us. It is divine power, and when it operates in us it ennobles us immeasurably; for what greater nobility could be given us poor creatures of dust than the nobility of being made brother of Christ.

This leads us to a still deeper mystery contained in the words of our First Rule (5): "Let them (the brethren) through charity and spirit willingly serve and obey one another. And this is the true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here we see that Franciscan obedience is much more than a noble act of the will; it is more, even, than the following of Christ; it makes us not only brothers of Christ but bearers of the mystery that Christ lives anew in the obedient man. *Abide in me, and I in you. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.* (Jn. 15:4; 10). Where a man is truly obedient, there he sets forth the obedience of Christ; with the Apostle he can justly say: "I am obedient, now not I, but Christ is obedient in me." Christ's work of salvation, his obedience to his Father's will, appears in us and through us when we are obedient with him. Our obedience, therefore, derives its fullest value not from the fact that it is the way of our own personal salvation but from the fact that through it the whole world is made to share in the saving work of Christ. Obedience restores Paradise; for "Adam could eat of the fruit of any tree in Paradise, and he committed no sin so long as he did not act against obedience" (*Admonitions*, 2). Adam's disobedience brought original sin into the world with all its consequent evils. Christ, the second Adam, redeemed the world by becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. The obedience of religious

life is this "true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ," and by its divine power operating in us and through us we can bring peace and healing to the rebellious, suffering world. The obedient religious shares in the redeeming power of Christ—this is the point we should always bear in mind. If we meditate deeply on this mystery we shall come to realize that the power to bring peace and security to our threatened civilization is indeed ours, but only through obedience. This is the purpose of our Order, this is our role in the world.

3. The Boundaries of Obedience

If we are to see religious obedience as the saving obedience of Christ renewed in us for our own and the world's salvation, it is immediately obvious that obedience ends where anything contrary to salvation begins. Therefore Saint Francis was quite explicit in saying that his brethren must obey their superiors "in matters that concern the welfare of their soul and are not contrary to our way of life" (I Rule, 4). This does not mean that obedience must be followed everywhere except where there is question of sin; actually, where sin begins obedience ceases to exist. Saint Francis never said that obedience *must* not cross the boundary into sin, but that it *cannot*. "If, however, any one of the ministers commands any brother to do anything against our way of life or against his conscience, the brother is not held to obey him; for that is not obedience if a fault or a sin is committed by it." (I Rule, 5). It follows, obviously, that we can be truly obedient only if we understand obedience with the mind of our Seraphic Father, as a mystery of salvation, "the true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We see, furthermore, that Saint Francis had no illusions about the so-called "grace of office." Superiors hold authority from God, but they are not God themselves, nor do they speak with the voice of God, nor is the will of God necessarily manifested through their will and commands. We must always be sober in this matter. A religious who obeys his superior should be aware that he is not obeying God, but obeying for love of God. Thus Francis admonished his brethren to consider in their superior not the human person but him for whose love they are subject. The more insignificant the one who resides, the more acceptable the humility of the one who obeys"

(II Celano, 151). And should a superior give an unwarranted command that cannot be obeyed, the brethren must not disown their superior for that, and even if they suffer persecution from him as a consequence, they should love him the more for love of God. "For he who would sooner suffer persecution than be parted from his brethren certainly abides in perfect obedience, since he is laying down his life for his brethren" (*Admonitions*, 3).

It is significant—and unfortunately we so seldom catch the significance—that Our Seraphic Father always spoke of love and obedience as companions and equals. Obedience could only be "loving obedience;" and "holy Lady Charity" was greeted with "her sister holy Obedience." (*Salute to the Virtues, Opuscula* 20). This takes us to the source and origin of obedience—love of God and of his divine Law. Love and obedience are one. Both bow to every wish and command of the brethren; both desire the welfare of all men as Christ desires it. "For obedience is true and in keeping with holy charity when it satisfies both God and neighbor" (*Admonitions*, 3). Love gives even the commanding superior the virtue of obedience. And where love is equated with obedience it follows that our love as well as our obedience will be poured out for the welfare of all mankind. Because our Holy Father Francis was so completely filled with love of God and with reverence for the mystery of holy obedience, he loved all creatures and desired to be subject to them, for they in turn were obedient to their Lord. It was because of his deep admiration for the power of God operating in the forces of nature that once when his coverlet caught fire and he quenched the flames, he immediately blamed himself for discourtesy in not letting Brother Fire finish eating it (*Mirror of Perfection*, 177). He felt that he had interfered with Brother Fire's obedience, for it is the will of God that fire should burn. Such an attitude, charming though it may be, is highly exaggerated and not a little bit foolish—from the standpoint of human prudence. No one is obliged or even advised to carry obedience to such lengths. Yet—was not the exaggerated obedience of our Seraphic Father something like the divine obedience of Gethsemani? of Calvary? of the Holy Eucharist? Was not the folly of his love something like the folly of the Love that died on the cross?

Let us think of this, ponder it deeply, and strive with all our strength to follow the obedience of Christ as our Seraphic Father so urgently bids us. With the grace of obedience we can speak of victory. Let us turn our mind in true *metanoia* to hearken to the words and the will of God. Let us immerse ourselves in the joyful depths of the life-giving mystery of holy obedience. Then God will come to us and make his abode with us, and we will experience the beatitude of our Father Francis: "Blessed is the servant who obeys."

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.

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

Continued from the June Issue

St. Clara Convent—The Plague Year

Once settled in their new convent, the Sisters in accordance with the original plan of Bishop Neumann, devoted themselves to the care of the sick poor. Father Naier, C.S.S.R., then rector of St. Peter Church, asked that they visit the sick of his parish. They did so, ministering to each patient with the spontaneous self-sacrifice of dedicated souls. The Sisters, still in the lay attire of the poor, call at some humble home. One Sister is equipped no doubt with a rudimentary nursing kit; the other, with the necessary articles for the administration of the last sacraments. Of course healing comes. If at times it is denied to the body many are the returns to the Church, conversions to the Faith, edifying acceptance of God's Will under trial and affliction.

For this service to Christ suffering in their brethren, the Sisters accepted no recompense. With Franciscan optimism, they faced the problem of providing for their frugal needs if not with ease certainly with resilience, sewing, doing fancy work, making the artificial flowers then quite popular in church decoration. Despite their industry, they were at all times very poor. The annals tell that at one point they had in the community purse three cents. At another time, it is related, a hungry little postulant, in search of a piece of bread, could find only a few crumbs in the box.

Another familiar account of that period is told of a Sister who ex-

plained in all earnestness to Bishop Neale that fuel for the fire there was often no food, and there was no fuel.

"There, dear Sister," said the holy priest, "is a book. Read it; meditate upon it. It will help you to bear your cross."

Then, with a charity practical as well as with a benevolent twinkle:

"As I usually distribute medals among the poor to do so now. But today I am giving you a gold dollar."

The fifty dollars in gold that he slipped into her hand seemed like a fortune to the little community. Both fuel and food met in a more equitable manner.

Despite the rigors of their lives, the Sisters of St. Clara Convent with that pure joy that comes from content. "In His Will is our tranquillity," said Mother. Two more postulants entered: Mother's daughter Sister Joanna; and Frances Schoenenberger.

The Minor Conventuals who were in the Parish in 1858 requested that the Sisters be directors they had become, staff the parish and gave immediate consent.

For the Sisters teaching in St. Alphonsus at first found a house on the corner of Reed and Rose. She herself took over the task of teaching with this, so in other missions opened. Francis went first, learning the problems and bearing the first heavy burdens, injecting into the dedication that ennobled all the weary.

The St. Clara Convent was becoming a community. Mother saw the need of establishing a Novitiate. On Reed Street, above Fifth, seemed to answer her needs. Although lacking financial assistance, he encouraged her. She generously did the people respond that they had but three cents at her disposal, with which to build an additional three-story house. Mother Francis of Assisi, the establishment was completed on September 28, 1858. That day was also notable for the

the renowned Mother Agnes. In 1871 the Novitiate was transferred to its present site, Glen Riddle; the Motherhouse, in 1896.

During the winter of 1858 smallpox raged in Philadelphia. The work of the Sisters was already well known in St. Peter and St. Michael Parishes and in the southern section of the city. It was natural that the people should turn to the Sisters in their sickness and terror. With courage and generosity the little band (at this time there were only twelve members, eight professed Sisters and four novices) went out to nurse the sick. Often they brought the sufferers into St. Clara and St. Francis Convents for care, especially the working girls evicted from their places of employment because they had contracted the dread disease. Sometimes, it is recorded, the Sisters were on volunteer duty for as long as three nights in succession. They were not afraid, but gave unstintingly of their youthful strength and pure love. Even of their little portion of worldly goods they gave, for much of the expense for those poor sick people had to be met from their scanty income. They welcomed it all: the fatigue, the danger, the privation—with a wonderful cheerfulness. And even today it is a living tradition and a matter of record that the people of Philadelphia rejoiced that they had in their midst those who would bring to them, with gladness, the mercy and the charity of Christ.

St. Mary Hospital: the Sisters Undertake the Care of the Orphans

An aftermath of this period of affliction was the development of two important types of fraternal charity: the care of the orphan and the care of the sick in hospitals.

Since the St. Clara Convent could no longer accommodate all the sick who were brought there, Mother Francis sought a more spacious location. She found this at Fourth and Girard Avenue in a roomy old mansion that rented for \$500 a year—a reasonable price even in those days but a fortune to Mother Francis and her Sisters. She was convinced that in the care of the sick the Sisters of St. Francis could do much for God and souls; therefore, trusting in Divine Providence, she signed the lease. A Quaker physician who had admired the work of the Sisters during the plague offered his services gratis. By December 10, 1860, the twenty-bed hospital was opened under the title of St. Mary. Again it was Mother Mary Francis who headed the staff. She nursed the patients with delicate consideration and maternal concern. It is told how she delighted in serving every tray herself, buoying each patient with words of encouragement and holiness. Now, from those early beginnings, there has grown the present far-flung and highly specialized work of this Community in

thirteen hospitals in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Florida, Oregon, the state of Washington and Ireland.

From the beginning Mother Francis and her companions were concerned with the welfare of the dependent children and orphans of Philadelphia. Early in 1859, February 28 to be exact, the Sisters undertook the care of St. Vincent Orphanage in Tacony. Sister Bernardine, Sister Angela, and Sister Agnes were in charge. Although the work there was terminated by December 6 of the same year, it initiated the Sisters into that particular form of charity so pleasing to the Father of Orphans. Today, the Sisters of St. Francis staff seven homes in Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

The New York Mission:

Their Separation from the Philadelphia Foundation

In the spring of 1858 the Reverend Commissary Leopold Moczygemba of the Minor Conventuals asked Mother Francis for teachers for two of their New York parishes. Bishop Neumann consenting, Mother promised to send Sisters when the schools were ready. Meanwhile, God suddenly called that saintly prelate to his eternal reward on January 1, 1860. His co-adjutor, the Most Reverend James Frederick Wood, succeeded to the see of Philadelphia. In him, as in his revered predecessor, the little community enjoyed true spiritual leadership. His visits were frequent and full of consolation. It is an undoubted fact, however, that had Bishop Neumann lived a long episcopal life, subsequent events in community history may well have been different.

In March of 1860, the Conventual Fathers sent for the Sisters to staff the school in St. Mary Assumption Parish in Syracuse. Mother left with Sisters Antonia, Angela, and Isabelle. Later she returned for more recruits for St. Joseph School, Utica. On April 10, Sisters Bernardine, Alphonsia, Petronella, and Josepha became the pioneers there.

In these new ventures Mother Francis and her Sisters were encouraged at what they believed was the enlarging scope of their work. The assumption of duties in New York did indeed lead to a wonderful flowering of Franciscan life there, but in a manner in no way anticipated by the founding Sisters.

On a canonical visitation, Bishop Wood learned that the deed to the Reed Street property was in the names of Mother Francis and her two consultors, both laboring in the diocese of Albany. Later events revealed that His Lordship did not think this legal arrangement wise; he feared differences with the New York Franciscan Fathers under whose

spiritual direction the community had been placed. The Philadelphia prelate's solution to what he foresaw might result in a problem brought about the unusual development in Community history already alluded to.

For the first public profession in the order, November 21, 1860, Bishop Wood instructed Mother Francis to invite her two consultors to the ceremony when he would accept the vows of Sister Aloysia and Sister Teresa. The ceremony over, Mother and her consultors were invited to the Bishop's residence for a business meeting.

When the Bishop explained his concern about the deed, the Sisters immediately conformed to his wish, deeding in proper legal procedure the property to Mother Francis and the diocese of Philadelphia. His Lordship then invited the New York Sisters to return to Philadelphia if they so wished. It is hardly possible that the Sisters understood the implications of that statement. Addressing Sister Bernardine and Sister Antonia, Bishop Wood announced that he was separating the New York foundations from the Motherhouse in Philadelphia, and that he was requesting Bishop John McCloskey of Albany to affiliate them into his diocese.

Hard as that blow was to bear for all the Sisters, particularly the three founders, history reveals that it was God's way of bringing into existence the Syracuse foundation that He had destined for a particularly noble work of charity. Upon being informed of Bishop Wood's decision, Bishop McCloskey consulted with the Reverend Father Moczygemba and through him affiliated the Sisters teaching in Syracuse and Utica with the Second Order of St. Francis of Assisi. This separate community, now numbering approximately 500 members, is famed for its work with the lepers begun by Mother Marianne, true spiritual daughter of the intrepid Anna Dorn. It may well be doubted, had those Sisters continued under the Philadelphia generalship, whether they would ever have entered into that unusual sphere of charity. In God's plan, the abrupt severance served a great end.

The Buffalo Foundations

In 1861, Reverend Father Kleinenden, C.S.S.R., rector of St. Mary Church in Buffalo, asked Mother Francis for Sisters to engage in social service work in his parish. He had already heard of their good work in St. Mary Hospital, and desired that his parishioners have the benefits of their ministry. This permission was obtained from Bishop Wood, and Sisters Elizabeth, Bonaventure, and Magdalen, as well as Mother's own daughter, Johanna Bachman (now a postulant), were sent there. Sister Margaret, one of the foundresses, was in charge.

October 10, 1862, was an auspicious date for those Sisters. On that date they moved into their first convent at 337 Pine Street from a little house on Minor Street which had followed upon a few rented rooms. That day was also memorable for the fact that Mother Francis brought her little eleven-year old daughter, Cunigunda, to Buffalo to live. At that point in Mother's history, both her daughters and her sisters were in the New York missions. New members began to enter. On December 28, 1862, five postulants received the holy habit from Father Claessens, C.S.S.R., then rector of St. Mary's, who had been delegated by Bishop Timon to preside at the ceremony.

About this time, Bishop Timon offered the Sisters a property in East Eden, a community about ten miles east of Buffalo, if they would staff a school there. The fifteen acres of ground surrounding the old house, and the remote situation, attracted Mother Francis. It is generally believed that she would later have transferred the novitiate there. Sister Joanna, Mother's sister Louise, was placed in charge.

Death of Mother Mary Francis

On February 22, 1863, Mother Francis returned to Philadelphia from Buffalo in anticipation of a reception of Philadelphia postulants. A letter written on October 27, 1862, from Buffalo, reveals that she was already in poor health. She refers to the fact that her health "has grown worse since my arrival here. I think the raw air and the intense cold are largely to blame for this." Then, casually, she announces what must have been apparent to her, her coming death. Her words emphasize the whole tenor of her life with lucid eloquence—the motion of the soul in loving trust toward God:

He (the doctor) diagnosed my condition as tuberculosis in the worst form. This did not alarm me, however, for God knows that I would rather be sick than well, and that an early death would be my greatest gain. But, Lord, Thy will be done.

Then, with that splendid factualness about personal cares that reveals to the thoughtful the sound integration of her personality in God, she said:

I am writing this, not for sympathy, but so that in case my return is delayed you may know the reason.

Despite intense pain and exhaustion, Mother Francis insisted upon assuming the responsibilities of the Investiture. During the ceremony she collapsed and was taken to St. Francis Convent, later to St. Mary's

Hospital. Sister Agnes, the novice mistress, took Mother's place in the investing ceremony.

On June 29, the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, Mother Francis was dying. Sister Agnes and Sister Aloysius remained with her during the long night, assisting her to dedicate the last painful moments in acts of love of that God whom she had served with such heroic fidelity. All the calm endurance and holy resignation that had sanctified her life she displayed in the hour of death. Before noon, on the 30th of June, 1863, Mother Mary Francis turned peacefully, with the prayers of the Sisters echoing in her soul, "to the God of Love," as she had said, "Who inflames my heart with His sentiments."

On the feast of the Visitation, Mother Francis was buried from St. Peter Church. Clothed in her religious habit, she lay barefoot, in a plain pine coffin, upon shavings covered with a white cloth. Her remains, first interred in St. Peter Cemetery, were taken to the convent cemetery in Glen Riddle in 1875.

In considering the special vocation Mother Mary Francis had to religious life and to the founding, in conjunction with Sister Margareta and Sister Bernardine, of the Institute of the Third Order of St. Francis, one must remember that she followed the normal ways of thought and prayer. As far as is known, she had no visions, no ecstasies, no revelations. In the difficult beginnings when she, more than Anna Dorn or Barbara Boll, had reasonable cause to question the validity of her vocation, she never wavered in the firm conviction that the establishment of the community was the will of God. The gift of prudence, which could well have cautioned her against the practicality of the step she was taking, actually was a strong factor, enlightened by grace, in the successful formation of the order. In her is manifest how far supernatural prudence differs from mere earthly caution, and in the history of her Community during the last one hundred years one sees how great can be the consequences of a movement of the soul toward God in complete trust and abandonment. Actually, only eight of Mother Mary Francis' thirty-nine years were spent as a Sister of St. Francis, yet in that period of time she carried the Community through the most difficult years of establishment and laid, in broad outlines, the work of the community even as it is carried out today: social service, teaching, the care of the orphan, the care of the sick and the aged.

The Buffalo Foundation Becomes Independent of the Philadelphia Institute

Mother Mary Francis' death brought about the separation of the

Buffalo Sisters from the Philadelphia foundation. Informed of Mother's death, Bishop Timon of Buffalo notified the Sisters there that they would elect their own superior general in Buffalo since the Rule of their Institute made no definite reference to elections. The Sisters felt obliged to accept the severance, and Sister Margareta became the first Superior General. Thus, in the course of eight years, each of the founding Sisters had become the General of a religious institute. The Buffalo foundation, now numbering approximately 400 members, has done remarkable work for God and souls in its schools, hospitals, and home for the orphaned and the aged.

The Philadelphia foundation, deprived as it was of all three of the founding Sisters, was blessed by God in the appointment of Mother Mary Agnes who governed the Community for forty-two years. But her long and fruitful leadership constitutes another chapter in the history of the Sisters of St. Francis.

Today, the Glen Riddle Franciscan Sisters number almost 1600 professed Sisters. Their scenes of labor extend from New England to Florida, from the state of Washington to California, and across the Atlantic to Ireland where St. Patrick Hospital was opened by them two years ago. Adapting themselves to the technical and social pressures of the present age, to the highly specialized requirements of educational and social work, fundamentally they function still in the spirit of their founding Sisters: that this Institute is the will of God and that in their complete abandonment to His Providence they will find the means and the grace faithfully to execute His designs in their lives and in the lives of all those whom He sees fit to be touched by their Franciscan vocation. As the Community enters upon the second century of its existence, it is the prayer of every faithful member that in their Order and in their lives God, in His goodness and His mercy, may be glorified!

Sister Jeannette Clare, O.S.F.

FATHER PHILOTHEUS BOEHNER, O.F.M.

When a dear and familiar figure is suddenly snatched away by death, the shock usually dispels all remembrance of whatever human imperfections may have plagued him in life and presents him to the memory in the full glory of untainted holiness. But somehow it is different with Father Philotheus. Those who were closest to him and knew

him best are remembering him now exactly as he was in life, with all the little weaknesses that made him so endearingly human. Perhaps this is because "his unassuming simplicity covered what was a real and deep holiness. Like a true Franciscan, he was one who dared to be perfectly himself with our Lord."¹ It would be something of an affront to his memory if we were to attempt to describe him now as a paragon of perfection, nor would it be a true description, for he was a man of flesh and blood, with a great mind and a very great soul, who made the mistakes that all men make who try to accomplish great things. So this is not to be read as a panygeric but as a portrait sketch; as true to life as a loving memory can make it.

Heinrich Boehner was born in the little Westphalian town of Lichtenau, February 17, 1901, the youngest of the seven children born to Franz and Maria Boehner. His early childhood was pleasantly uneventful—except for the problems that arose over his lack of interest in study and his frequently-indulged preference for unscheduled excursions into neighboring fields and woodlands. He was always vaguely puzzled by what went on in the classroom, yet every year he somehow managed to get himself promoted. Life for him was what it is for most boys—an agreeable succession of parental caresses and punishments, of intramural skirmishes with brothers and sisters, of winter skating and summer swimming, spring hiking and autumn hunting. And then came the call of the Lord. His "vocation," however, was much more a matter of expediency than of piety, for it was the result of a battle with a schoolmate. Young Heinrich had beaten his opponent so badly that inter-parental feelings ran high, and his long-suffering father, always a prudent man, thought best to enroll his son in another school. The only suitable alternative was the Franciscan Seraphicate at Brakel, and thus it was that Heinrich Boehner found himself on the way to becoming a Friar Minor.

The new environment effected little change in him. He was still very poor in his studies, still very vague about things in general and especially about what it meant to be a Franciscan and a priest. It was not until the last years in the clericate that Heinrich—by then Frater Philotheus—gave evidence of any outstanding ability. An inspiring teacher of botany awakened him to the joy of scientific study, and from then on, to the amazement of everyone, he distinguished himself in all the courses of the clericate. The only exception was canon law which, characteristically, he despised and barely passed.

Meanwhile the tuberculosis that had already carried off two of the other Boehner children attacked Frater Philotheus. He fell so ill that he

had no hope of being ordained; but he willingly submitted to treatment and prepared himself for death by translating Etienne Gilson's *La Philosophie St. Bonaventure* into very good German. It is somehow typical of Father Philotheus—he was a man of so many seeming contradictions—that he should have begun his scholarly career in the face of death, and that he should have begun it by translating from French, the very language he failed in for three successive years. Against all expectations he finished the book, won the battle to have it published (it appeared in 1929 under the title of *Der heilige Bonaventura*), regained his health and was ordained to the priesthood in 1927.

From then on Father Philotheus was recognized as a very brilliant and promising young man, and it is to the credit of his superiors that every advantage was given him to develop his ability. From 1929 to 1933 he attended the Universities of Munich and Muenster to work for the doctorate in biology. Not only did he produce an outstanding doctoral dissertation ("Ueber die thermonastischen Bluetenbewegungen bei der Tulpe," in *Zeitschrift der Botanik*, 26. Band, 1933, 65-107), but also found time during those busy years to translate Gilson's study of Saint Augustine, giving it the title of *Der heilige Augustinus, Eine Einfuehrung in seine Lehre*. It was during these years also that he formed a friendship with the noted German philosopher Peter Wurst that lasted until the latter's death in 1940. From 1933 to 1939 Father Philotheus served as lecturer for his province (Holy Cross Saxonia), but from time to time his superiors sent him abroad to such centers of study as Quaracchi, Rome and Paris. In 1936 he completed the translation of Gilson's work on Saint Bernard, under the German title of *Die Mystik des heiligen Bernhard von Clairvaux*. These translations had been bringing Father Philotheus in closer contact with Professor Gilson, and within the span of ten years the moribund young cleric had developed into a scholar of such dimensions that Gilson was willing to collaborate with him on a history of Christian philosophy. The book first appeared in German as *Die Geschichte der christlichen Philosophie* in 1937. The second edition (1954) bore the title: *Christliche Philosophie, Von ihren Anfaengen bis Nikolaus von Cues*, and the latest revised edition, published in 1954 bore the same title. Meanwhile a warm friendship had grown up between Father Philotheus and Professor Gilson, based not only on their mutual interest in medieval philosophy but also on a sincere respect and affection for each other. Father Philotheus always recognized Gilson as his father and master, and it was a source of keen suffering to him when,

later years, the misguided zeal of others threatened to disrupt their friendship. That Father Philotheus began his life-work, the critical edition of Ockham now in progress, was due primarily to Gilson's inspiration and encouragement, and that he left Germany in the spring of 1939 was also due to Gilson, for it was on his invitation that Father Philotheus went to the Pontifical Institute at Toronto to lecture in palaeography. However, his stay there was brief, for with the outbreak of World War II in the September of that year his friends advised him to leave Canada. He found himself in something of a quandary. To return to Germany would have been suicidal. The Nazis had already devastated Holy Cross Province, and since Father Philotheus had openly expressed his opinion of their origin and end—"They have come from the devil and they are going to the devil!"—he could hardly expect to survive long in his own country. But where to go? The answer came from Father Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M., then president of Saint Bonaventure College, who invited him to lecture at the college in Franciscan philosophy. Thus it was that in the summer of 1940 Father Philotheus began to lay the foundations of what was eventually to develop into the Franciscan Institute.

Among his first students were Thomas Merton and Robert Lax. It was their interest in Franciscan philosophy that encouraged Father Philotheus to go on with his plans for the Institute; and he did need their encouragement, for there were few then who were able to visualize what such a research center could mean to a college. The first years of his sojourn at St. Bonaventure were difficult ones. Being a foreigner, he made the usual mistakes of a foreigner in a strange land. Despite his best efforts to conform to the bewildering ways of his adopted country (he was an American citizen), Father Philotheus was not always understood by others. Nevertheless it is especially the work he accomplished at Saint Bonaventure that has established his fame as a scholar both in the United States and abroad. In 1944 he published *The Tractatus de Successivis Attributed to William Ockham*, followed in 1945 by *The Tractatus de Praedestinatione et de Praescientia Dei et de Futuris Contingentibus of William Ockham*. In 1951 and 1954 he published *William Ockham, Summa Logicae (Pars Prima and Pars Secunda et Tertiae Prima)*. In collaboration with a friend he was working on a critical edition of the monumental *Logic* of Albert of Saxony, and was just completing a treatise on *suppositio* for the North Holland Publishing Company when death called him. In 1952 the University of Chicago published his *Medi-*

eval Logic: An Outline of Its Development from 1250 to C. 1400; Thomas Nelson of Edinburgh will soon have ready his *Life, Writings and Teachings of William Ockham*. His edition of *Walter Burleigh Puritate Artis Logicae Tractatus Longior with a Revised Edition of Tractatus Brevior*, is currently in press and due to appear this year.

His most important project, however, and the work on which fame will most probably rest, is the critical edition of Ockham. In 1941 he began the work with his publication of the first *Quaestio* of the *logique* of Ockham's *Ordinatio*. He intended to continue with the *Commentary on the Sentences*, but the war destroyed his plans. In coming to the United States he was able not only to resume the work but also to find an excellent collaborator in Professor Ernest Moody of Columbia University. Thus plans were made for a critical edition of the *Opera Omnia theologica et philosophica* (*Opera non-politica*), a work that will include twenty-five volumes when completed. Although the edition was to have remained primarily in the hands of Father Philotheus, he nevertheless surrounded himself with a staff of highly competent collaborators, including Professor Moody, Father Gaudens Mohan, O.F.M., and Father Eligius M. Buytaert, O.F.M., who is also co-editor. When the first volume went to press a few months ago (*Expositionis in libros artis logicae prooemium et Expositio in librum Porphyrii de praedicabilibus*, Ernest A. Moody), Father Philotheus saw the realization of his cherished ambition. The critical edition of Ockham was at last under way.

Besides these major works, Father Philotheus wrote numerous articles and reviews for such publications as *Franziskanische Studien*, *Wissenschaft und Weisheit*, *Archiv fuer Philosophie*, *Recherches de Theologie ancienne et médiévale* (Louvain), *Traditio*, *Review of Metaphysics*, *Franciscan Studies*, *Rivista di Filosofia neo-scolastica*, and many others. He wrote the article on medieval logic for the forthcoming edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and was also revising the article on William Ockham for the *Britannica*.

In 1941, together with Father Thomas Plassmann, Father Philotheus reorganized *Franciscan Studies* on a more scholarly basis. It is now going through its fifteenth year in the revised form, and has been steadily growing in reputation and influence. In 1950-51, with Sister M. Francis S.M.I.C. as Assistant Editor, Father Philotheus launched *The Cord* for the purpose of bringing the wealth of traditional Franciscan spirituality to the untrained Franciscan reader. We are happy to say that the enthusiastic response of Franciscan Sisters to *The Cord* was one of the brighter spots in the last years of his life.

Father Philotheus was not only a distinguished logician. He was also an excellent lecturer in the philosophy of Saint Augustine, Saint Bonaventure, and the Franciscan school in general; and his courses in epistemology and psychology were highly valued by those who were capable of following them. Lecturing in English was always something of a trial to him—he never mastered American speech, though he possessed a formidable vocabulary. Yet in spite of the accent and characteristic stutter, there was such charm in his manner of presentation, such sureness and mastery of subject, such subtle humor in pointing out disconcerting facts, that his courses were always a delight to the students who were equal to him. He was much sought-after as guest lecturer by the big universities in the United States and Europe; but his pride and joy was the invitation he received last year to lecture to the Jesuit scholastics on the logic of Ockham. In the standard Franciscan manner, he pretended to disapprove of everything connected with the Jesuits, but in reality he cherished a sincere admiration for the Society of Jesus and counted several of his closest friends among its members. Jesuit interest in Franciscan doctrine was to him the happy sign of wonderful things to come.

Besides his work in medieval philosophy, Father Philotheus always devoted some of his time to his beloved botany, the *scientia amabilis* of his youth. He was especially enamoured of bryology, primarily, as he used to say, because mosses are both beautiful and useless. (Utilitarianism of any kind was essentially distasteful to his Franciscan soul; he regarded the good pleasure of God as the sole reason for all things in creation.) He delighted in the prodigality of nature, in the abundant and purposeless variety of exquisite forms, in the humorous oddities of the plant and animal world. Those who were his companions on field trips through the wooded hills and the glacial swamp and rock deposit areas of Cattaraugus County remember that he reveled in nature like a boy on a glorious holiday. And to see him clambering up and down rocky slopes and giant boulders, sloshing through swamps and bogs, a stub of a cigar clamped between his teeth, a huge knapsack fastened to his shoulders, one would indeed think him a boy who had never grown up. It was characteristic that the play theory in psychology should appeal to him, and that he should try to bolster it by quoting the Book of Wisdom: *I was with him, forming all things, playing before him at all times, playing in the world*. Those who knew him best know that despite the burdens and the sorrows that weighed upon him, his soul was ever at play before the Lord. But Father Philotheus was no mere nature-lover; he was a scientist through and through. He looked upon the lovely things

of creation not only with the eye of the enthusiast but with the trained and appreciative eye—aided by the microscope—of the man of science. Thomas Merton's recollection of him is quite descriptive: "One thing none of us will forget about Philo was his truly Franciscan ardor and insight into the creatures of God. He was a true scientist, for whose natural beings were only a step on the ladder by which a soul rises to the contemplation of God. And he certainly had an eye for the smallest of God's creatures. I will never forget once when we were driving in a car through one of those narrow wooded valleys near Allegany, and we were going too fast for the trees to be more than a blur, when Philo suddenly shouted: 'Stop! Stop!' and blurted out some unintelligible name of a rare moss. He hopped out of the car and was half way up the side of a small mountain before anyone knew what was happening. He came back with something I wouldn't have seen if I had been standing dead-straight in front of it. Now that he has exchanged the 'evening knowledge' of God in creatures for the 'morning knowledge' of creatures in God, he need no longer fear getting lost and wandering all night in a cranberry bog—which was, I believe, another mishap that attended his pursuit of science during my stay at Saint Bona's."

Aside from the field trip escapades—and the tales of these are legion among his friends—Father Philotheus was a respected and well-loved member of Saint Bonaventure's biology department, and was frequently asked to give special courses in botany. He was becoming known in the United States as a competent bryologist, and his articles in Saint Bonaventure's *Science Studies* and his collection of mosses gathered within the area of Cattaraugus County are distinguished contributions to bryology.

The Franciscan Institute, meanwhile, had been steadily growing. In 1948 it was formally recognized as a *studium generale* or interprovincial house of advanced studies and research in Franciscan theology, philosophy, history, and missiology. With the approval of its statutes by the Definitorium Generale in Rome, the Institute was firmly established and empowered to grant the titles of Lector Provincialis and Lector Generalis to members of the Franciscan family; and with its approval by the State of New York it could confer the degrees of Master of Science, Master of Arts, and Doctor of Philosophy. It was largely because of the Institute's high level of scholarship and its research library of some 10,000 volumes that Saint Bonaventure College was raised to the status of university in 1950.

But when all has been said of Father Philotheus as a scholar, only

small part has been said, for he was a priest above all, a Franciscan especially, and always a gentleman in the truest sense of the word. Perhaps his most characteristic quality was his genuine, unaffected simplicity. He was so completely unpretentious that hardly any of the collegians at Saint Bonaventure even knew who he was. Certainly there was nothing about his appearance that bespoke a great scholar. He was a powerful man, strong, muscular, well over two hundred pounds, but his posture was unimpressive. In manner he was sometimes quick, sometimes vaguely quizzical, sometimes sure and determined and stubborn as only a Westphalian can be, and sometimes completely befogged. A typical "absent-minded professor," it was nothing for him to put the lighted end of a cigar in his mouth, or to spend ten minutes or more looking for the glasses he was wearing. He was always shabby and usually in need of a hair-cut, although his red-blond hair had long since been reduced to a mere fringe curling about his ears and neck. The little black solideo that kept slipping off his head was as much a part of him as his patched and mended habit.

His room at the Institute was a sight to behold. It was always in total disorder, yet he used to defend himself by insisting that he maintained "philosophical order," that is, he kept order in his mind, because he knew where everything could be found when he wanted it. Yet it is related that once he spent several minutes ploughing through the debris on his desk in search of a bottle opener. His room was a desert of books and papers, and as far as human comforts were concerned, he was as poor as the proverbial church mouse.

Essentially, Father Philotheus was a happy man with a keen and boyish sense of fun. Habitually jovial, he reserved his best wit for a chosen few. In the right company his humor was spicy, subtle, and cultivated; in argument it was pointed and devastating. He was a master in the art of small talk and nonsense, with an almost Gallic skill in repartee. There was nothing he enjoyed more than bandying insults with his friends. He was a wonderful companion anywhere. Like a true son of Saint Francis, he appreciated the good things of the Lord and enjoyed them when he could. A mild cigar (usually a gift from the Poor Clares), a glass of wine, a well-roasted duck, a potato baked in a camp-fire—all such things he accepted with undisguised pleasure and simple gratitude. His mortifications—which were many indeed—were never of the kind that would chill the warmth of fellowship. If he was abstemious he was never obviously so; but he respected the restrictions of Franciscan poverty and the dignity of his priesthood.

In spite of all appearances to the contrary, Father Philotheus had a

deep appreciation of the fine arts. Many an artist and poet received sound criticism and practical encouragement from him. As a boy he had tried his hand at painting and had even sold a few pictures. He never developed his talent, but he always retained a delicate sense for color and line. He loved literature and read widely, especially the works of the great French writers. And he was one of the few men left in our day who could quote nice things from the Greek and Latin poets.

Intellectually, culturally, and spiritually, Father Philotheus was a thoroughly Franciscan. His whole personality was formed and nourished by the writings of Saint Francis, Saint Bonaventure, Duns Scotus—and Ockham, for whatever else may be said of that great logician, he was a religious thinker of remarkable precision. Intimate association with the saints and doctors of the Order gave Father Philotheus a spiritual breadth and depth, a freedom of action and a clarity of vision that is traditional to the Franciscan but rarely found in this day of ours. He deplored fuzzy thinking everywhere, but nowhere so much as in the religious sphere. There was no sentimentality, no emotionalism in his spiritual makeup, yet he was a man of wonderful tenderness and deep sympathy. No one in great trouble ever approached him without feeling the warmth of his paternal heart. He was never too busy to hear a confession, to give a word of consolation, or even to spend several hours with anyone who needed him. The burden of spiritual direction weighed heavily upon him and consumed much of his time, yet he gave himself freely, as a loving father, to all who sought his help. Every week he wrote an average of from twelve to fifteen letters, almost all of a personal nature. It was a continual mystery to those who worked with him how he managed to accomplish so much in so many directions. The answer to the mystery lay in his clear sense of values, in his reverence for the gift of time. He knew that because he had received much, much also would be demanded of him, and like the good and faithful servant of the Gospel, he traded as well as he could with all the talents entrusted to him.

Ironically enough, it was largely because of his work in the care of souls that he was most severely criticized. Certainly he lacked human prudence; but when there was question of helping another he never hesitated to expose himself to rash judgment or ridicule. He took long chances and played for high stakes. Sometimes he won; sometimes he lost; sometimes he never knew the outcome. Yet he never slackened his efforts. Once in a moment of depression he confided to a friend that the fruits of his labor for souls seemed very small. Father Philotheus never worked for his own satisfaction but solely for the love of God and the good

of the souls that clung to him. His charity never led to self-satisfaction; rather it led to self-sacrifice, and not infrequently to bitter humiliation.

The death of Father Philotheus came as a severe shock. He had been suffering from pains in the chest for over a year, but since the doctors could find no evidence of anything alarming, he tried to dismiss the pains as due to some passing indisposition. Physical check-ups showed that he was "abnormally healthy," and despite an increasing tendency to tire easily, he seemed as strong and vigorous as ever. On the evening of May 21, a Saturday, he complained of extremely severe pains and retired earlier than usual.

Apparently Father Philotheus had no premonition of approaching death. His room was in its usual disorder. Ockham manuscripts lay on his desk; on his bedside table were the unidentified mosses he had collected two days before, his microscope, and a few opened copies of *The Bryologist*. He was busy to the last hours of his life.

Then, sometime after midnight, May 22, coronary thrombosis ended his life. No sound had come from his room, no sign of struggle was in evidence when his body was found Sunday morning. He had slept away peacefully in the Lord.

There is a line from Rilke that Father Philotheus especially admired: "O Lord, give to each his own death." As we look back upon the life of our departed friend and confrere, we realize how beautifully his own was his tranquil death in the silence and solitude of night. He had gone through life as a wise and loving child of the Eternal Father, playing before Him, laboring for Him, desiring only to please Him. Then like a tired child at the end of day he fell asleep in the arms of his Father the contented smile of eternity on his lips.

The Editors

¹These are the words of Thomas Merton, taken from his letter to Fr. Thomas Plassmann on hearing of Fr. Philotheus' death. We have chosen to quote his letter here and further on (though we could have taken similar passages from any number of letters from other friends) because we feel that the readers of *The Cord* will appreciate it.

THE SECOND JOY—THE VISITATION

*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in
God my Saviour.*
(Luke 1:46-47)

The most beautiful song of love ever heard on this earth was Magnificat. The joyful paean of praise and glory that flowed from lips and soul of the Virgin Mother of God in the home of her cousin Ain Karim has remained unsurpassed throughout the centuries. The whole scene which occasioned the Magnificat—the Visitation—is indeed one of great moment. Elizabeth's salutation, the wondrous communion between the Precursor and the Messiah, the Canticle of Mary, the delay in the little hamlet west of Jerusalem, each provide material for reflection and meditation. Yet in our endeavor to find one general seraphic characteristic in each of our Lady's Joys, we pause on the heavenly-sounded keynote of her words to Elizabeth. That key-note is *love*.

She who carries Love in her womb goes to her cousin to share magnificent good tidings of what has happened within her. She sings a song to express her unrestrainable joy, and in that song Franciscan finds its soul of love.

The prelude to Mary's words were the touching salutation to Elizabeth, exclaiming the honor paid her by a visit from the Mother of her Lord. Another display of love was Jesus' going to his friend Joseph in order that, as the office of the feast of the Visitation tells us, Joseph might take on his labor of love even though barred by the flesh. Saint Ambrose reminds us that the Greater went to the lesser, an act which was to be often repeated in the life of our Lord.

Saint Bonaventure writes that love is the virtue of virtues; he who does not have love is poor, pitiful and pathetic. Love alone opens heaven; love alone gives hope of salvation; love alone makes us lovable in the eyes of God.¹ Well does Saint Bonaventure comment that we are unable to obtain perfection and its reward of heaven without this precious gift of the Holy Spirit. However, he cautions us that we can never measure our love because, regardless of our length of days, we will never be able on this earth that we possess either the gift or its fullness.² In other words, love is never exhausted on the way to heaven, for we can never love God enough. Truly then we are poor men, if not in a material sense, always in a spiritual sense.

¹Bonav., Opus. VI, De Perf. Vitae ad Sorores, c. 7 (VIII 124a).

²Bonav., Opus. XI, Apologia Pauperum, c. 3 (VIII 25ob).

How foolish it would be for us to think that the Mother of fair Love exhausted her praise of God, her gratitude, her love, in the Magnificat. It is important for us to realize that Mary *lived* the Magnificat, for she breathed forth love until God carried her home to heaven, where the only communication is love to Love.

As Franciscans, our love for God takes the form of all love, but it is inflamed with something greater—and that is why we are called a seraphic order. Above all others God has a right to expect a *burning* love from us; a love modeled on that of our Queen. Even as her love was only intoned, as it were, in the Magnificat, so our love was only intoned in the promises we made when we were received into the company of Saint Francis. It remains to see if that love will remain on the same key when the *trumpet of God* drowns out the canticles, harmonious or discordant, which our lives are playing on this earth.

I

Our first obligation is to love God. Saint Bonaventure indicates this to us when he tells us that it is outrightly impossible to proceed in love of neighbor unless we first strive for perfect love of God. That love will prompt us to love our neighbor because he is lovable on account of God.³ The true lover of God, the Seraphic Doctor says, desires not only to enjoy his sweetness and to adhere to him, but he also loves to embrace his worship and hold high his honor; for he wishes God to be known by all, to be served by all, and especially to be honored by all.⁴

Even though we cannot find adequate measure for our love, we can, nonetheless, examine the works which produce love. Following Saint Bonaventure we may first ask ourselves if we love God above all—or is there something that separates us from his love? This question is best answered by comparing our love with the Saints' description of the true lover of God. Do we enjoy, unlike the true lover, only the sweetness of the religious life, and thus cling to God only in moments of sentimental delight or loneliness? Do we take joy only in the beauties of our religion, shunning the cross; and, shame of shame, do we pretend to hold high God's honor, while inwardly seeking our own esteem and not his?

Each of these questions can in turn be answered by inquiring of ourselves whether we have the perfection of love found in Saint Bonaventure's qualifications distinguishing selfish love from perfect love. Perfect love desires that God be *known* by all. It spares no pain in acquiring a deep and serious knowledge of the truths of holy religion in

³Bonav., Opus. I, De Triplici Via (VIII 10a).

⁴Bonav., Opus. VIII, De Sex Alis Seraphim, c. 2 (VIII 134a).

proportion to one's obligation to know. Thus the priest seeks ever to increase the knowledge of God imparted to him in his theological studies; the brother or sister will endeavor to build up the knowledge received in the novitiate. All of us will read wisely and avidly and seriously the great truths of our holy faith. We will all endeavor to observe and know God in the marvelous harmony of creation and revelation.

Perfect love desires that God be *loved* by all. Thus in communicating itself, it will not display itself in the noisy, sensual blares of the world but in deep faith and reverence. It becomes a truly silent testimony of the holy joy and gladness which reside in the company of God and his saints, and all the world observes it as this and nothing else.

Perfect love desires that God be *served* by all, and it prompts others to his service not so much by command as by example. From the lips of our blessed Lady, only one command passed in all her days—and that was the simple: *Do whatever he tells you*. Not do as "I" tell you, but as "He"! How often in our encounters with our fellow men does the "I" overshadow the "He"?

Perfect love desires, finally, that God be *honored* by all. Thus, it seeks to honor God in all things, and attributes all to God. It is built on a complete emptying of self. No matter what the accomplishment or the effort put into it, all credit belongs to God. Thus it truly draws men to admire the handiwork and goodness of the Creator of all, and to honor him thereby.

Each of these qualifications of Saint Bonaventure is emphasized by the totally inclusive word *all*. Thus in desiring that God be known, loved, served and honored, we do not limit our efforts; rather we go forth with the message of Mary—that the mercy of God *is from generation to generation*. We may observe in this regard that although the Magnificat was sung only before the aged Elizabeth, its message was for the world.

In loving God we have a perfect model in the Virgin Mary. Through her she may direct our love we pray to her:

Mother of God, no sooner had your cousin's wonderfully inspired inquiry left her lips than it was returned by your Magnificat, which attributed all your glory, all your blessedness to *the Lord*. Give us to rejoice always with you in God our *Saviour* and teach us to mirror your priceless knowledge, love, service, and honor of God. You above all, O blessed Mother, loved God for himself, for you carried him in the tabernacle of your body which with his coming became the House of Gold. Teach us that we cannot rightly call you our Queen unless we put aside all our foolish pretenses and sophistications—so worldly and vain—and

love only God who is Love himself. Imprint deeply in our hearts the meaning of the words, daily recited by the whole Franciscan family: *God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Imitating you, let us therefore love, because God first loved us.*

II

Love's second obligation belongs to self. Love of self is a dangerous, if not poisonous concoction. Perhaps no virtue can so easily be turned into vice, and no vice become virtue with such difficulty as love of self. Yet love of self plays a necessary role in our salvation. By a certain divine irony, self-love, if it is true, is really proven in hatred of self. For true and meritorious self-love can be directed only to love of God. It directs all the good in self to God, all the evil to self; and it constantly endeavors to rid itself of the evil, the better to love God. True self-love will always direct us to love ourselves only insofar as we can merit salvation by it. True self-love is fed on a hatred for anything which would mar in any way the beauty of our souls in the eyes of God. Like love of God, love of self must be a silent virtue, an unknown quantity, even if a very real one, in the soul.

Let us ask God's Mother to lead us to perfect and meritorious love of self:

Dear Lady Mary, your Magnificat indicates that you had a right love of self, for you said: *My soul magnifies*, and *my spirit rejoices*. May we never be blinded to the fact that your soul magnified *the Lord* and your spirit rejoiced *in God*. Rid us of all the small and mean expressions of our personalities which proclaim to men that we magnify ourselves and rejoice in ourselves. Teach us the great price by which our souls have been purchased, and lead us to know that love of self is base and rotten unless it reflects *God, who commanded the light to shine* in our darkness. Teach us your lowliness, and let us love ourselves best when we are humbled, despised and insulted by men. Teach us that true love of self is ever seeking *the things that are above*, and that it is purified by the barbs and bitterness of the world.

III

The third obligation of love is related to our neighbor. Saint Bonaventure tells us that we best realize the purpose of this love if we realize that it is begun *in via*, and terminated *in gloria*.⁵ These are important words, and we should weigh them well. They mean simply that whatever love we have in this world, if it be worthy of God, it is to be returned to

⁵Bonav., Breviloq., p. 5, c. 9 (V 262a).

him in heaven. Saint Bonaventure's words carry a tremendous weight and a wonderful consolation. They warn us that whatever our love, it is only a sharing of our love for God, and God will not have our love shared unless it be for his own honor and glory: *The Lord is a jealous God*. Their consolation is to be found in the fact that our love for neighbor, even though interrupted in this life, will be eternal before the throne of God.

In hastening to Elizabeth, our Mother manifested to us the beauty of human love, and in this meeting we find the qualities of true human love as expounded by Saint Bonaventure. He tells us that it is true that human love is to will the same and not to will the same, yet it is something more than this. It is to think the same in intellection, to will the same in affection, to act the same in consummation, and to intend the same in perfection. For Saint Bonaventure, our love of neighbor is our neighbor's love for us find their source in a mutual effort to attain God. In a word he echoes Saint Paul and directs us to *walk in love as Christ also loved us*.

Sad to relate, the world has difficulty in understanding love, and perhaps that is because so much of its love is directed away from God. If the word "love" has lost the beauty of the love, which is in Christ, then it is time for the world to reevaluate its love, and not for us to reevaluate the word given us by the Master, in the greatest and the first commandment, as our key to salvation.

As Franciscans we are professed to become imitators of a man who had nothing but love in his heart and on his lips; a man, who, next to our blessed Lord, inflamed the hearts of his time, and still inflames the hearts of our time by his love. Saint Francis was no politician, no diplomat, nor was he a weak pacifist; he was simply a man who knew how to open his heart to others, and that is why his own age and all ages since have opened their heart to Christ through him.

How we measure up to this flower of Christian virtue does not take long to ascertain. Saint Francis desired that his Order dwell in unity, and that is why he called its members "the brethren." Saint Bonaventure repeats this desire of our holy Father when he tells us that those who are united by the bond of love are united to Christ as the body to the Head. Both reflect the truth that *God is love*; and God the Son prayed that *all may be one*. All are one in the unity of love.

The beautiful words *pax* and *bonum*, now so long a second motto of

⁶Bonav., Sermones, De SS. Philip. et Iacobo Ap (IX 531-32a).

⁷Bonav., Breviloq., *ibid.* (V 262a).

our Order, are easily telescoped into the one word *amor*. For love is the soul of Franciscan zeal and devotion and dedication. In striving to perfect our love for our fellow men, the Queen of our Order will lead us. May we ask her to awaken in our hearts a great and burning love for our neighbor, for ourselves, and for God, as we address her:

O beautiful Virgin Mary, lead us to see your Son in all men, even as your cousin Elizabeth beheld him in you when the child John leapt in her womb for joy. Especially teach us to love all our brothers and sisters in our holy Father Saint Francis. Give us a deep realization that their successes, their failures; their hopes, their disappointments; their lives and their deaths are ours also, for we are all the lesser brethren of the man of love—the seraphic Francis. Teach us to put aside all envy and jealousy, and every thought that intones discord among our brethren. By word and thought and deed may we promote the happiness and holiness of our brothers and sisters. This, that our Father may behold his children from heaven, and exclaim to God: *Behold how good and how pleasant it is for the brethren to dwell together in unity and love*.

In imitating you, the Mother of Love, may we pass through this life as true sons and daughters of the little man of Assisi, keeping ourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto life everlasting.

Fr. William J. Manning, T.O.F.

SCRIPTURE READING WITH ST. BONAVENTURE

(Comment. in Joannem, Opera Omnia, Ch. XIX)

The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other, who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs; but one of the soldiers opened his side with a lance, and immediately there came out blood and water.

And he who saw it has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he tells the truth, that you also may believe. For these things came to pass that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not a bone of him shall you break." And again another Scripture says: "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced" (Jn. 19:32-37).

The Old Testament tradition forbade that the bodies of crucified

men remain on their crosses after the day of their crucifixion (cf. Deut. 21). Since Jesus and the two thieves were crucified on a Friday, it was deemed doubly unfitting that their bodies should remain suspended over the Sabbath, for the Jews believed that this would profane the day made holy by the Lord. Saint Augustine explains in reference to the two thieves (*In Ioan. Evang.* tr. 120, n. 4): "Therefore their bones were broken, so that they would die and could be removed from the wood, lest hanging on their crosses they might defile the great feast day by the horror of their enduring agony." From these words we can infer that it was thought improper to remove the bodies while life was still in them. "Therefore their bones were broken, so that they could die and then be removed." And thus it came about that the legs of the two thieves were broken, so that they would die and could be taken down.

But it was different with Christ. For, *when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs* (v. 33). Saint Bonaventure remarks that it was proper that the Lamb be so distinguished from the others. Inasmuch as He alone was free from sin, His integrity demanded that His bones be wholly preserved. The entire human race, save Mary, must admit its sinfulness and misery, crying out with the Psalmist: *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak: heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled* (Ps. 6:3). All men must trace their weakness, their fear and tribulation of soul, to original and actual sin. And all men, too, hanging on the cross of life, will eventually be broken. But this breaking will be a great good and a passage to eternal joy if it is accepted with unconditional surrender to the will of the Lord.

The legs of Christ were not broken because *he was already dead* (v. 33). If the soldiers could hardly hasten the death that had already taken place, what was left for them to do but to drain the Sacred Body of the last drop of Its Precious Blood? *But one of the soldiers opened his side with a lance, and immediately there came out blood and water.* (v. 34). Isaias speaks of a wounded Christ: *He was wounded for our iniquities* (Is. 53:5). But John the Evangelist, the eye-witness of the scene, refers not to the wounding but to the *opening* of His side. Saint Augustine calls attention to this opening and then goes on to comment that the soldiers opened His side as if opening the floodgate through which the Sacraments of the Church should pour forth.

The Gospel adds: *and immediately there came out blood and water.* (v. 34). Saint Augustine goes on to say that there is mention of water besides the blood to signify the washing and cleansing power of the Sacraments, as well as the healing of our spiritual infirmities by the

Precious Blood. And this explanation is borne out by the words of the Apocalypse: *He washed us from our sins in his own blood* (Apoc. 1:5) and by the words of Saint Paul: *Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, cleansing her in the bath of water* (Ephes. 5:25f).

The next two verses of our text are mighty reminders that Saint John—eagle Evangelist that he was—not only soared to the height of heaven to gather truths from the very bosom of God, but also had an eagle's care for the fledgling Christians he was raising up in the Church of Christ. He tells them what he saw with his own eyes, and solemnly testifies to the truth of his statement that they may believe and receive eternal life from the death of Christ. If we ourselves desire to strengthen our faith against the seductive skepticism and half-truths that threaten us in our modern world, let us fix our eyes upon the Crucified Christ, the pierced Lamb of God, as the soldiers were forced to do: *They shall look upon him whom they have pierced* (v. 37).

A final question. Why was the side of Christ opened, not before, but after death? Saint Augustine says that as Eve was taken from the side of the sleeping Adam, so too Holy Mother Church was formed from the side of Christ sleeping in death. Saint Ambrose offers another explanation. He tells us that Christ wished to show us His divinity as well as His humanity, for although the body of Christ was by nature mortal like ours, yet it was unlike ours by some special grace. After death the blood in our bodies congeals, but from the incorruptible body of Christ life came forth, blood and water poured out in a fresh, life-giving steam. Not only did Christ, by His death on the cross, give us that love *greater than which no man hath*; but He left this love with us, pouring forth grace from his opened side through the Sacraments.

A humble leper asked Jesus to cleanse him, and by a simple word he was made clean. Will we ask for less? Or, will we refuse to ask at all, preferring to remain in the leprosy of sin rather than be healed by the Precious Blood and restored to the health of divine grace? A Samaritan woman asked for a drink from which she would never thirst again. Will we refuse our parched and barren souls the life-giving waters from the side of Christ? Rather, let us implore: *Soul of Christ, sanctify me! Body of Christ, save me! Blood of Christ, inebriate me! Water of the side of Christ, wash me! Passion of Christ, strengthen me! O good Jesus, hear me! Within Thy wounds hide me, that with Thy saints may I praise Thee forever and ever. Amen.*

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

FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

MISSION NOTES

BELGIAN CONGO: LULUA. The Marian Year brought an abundant spiritual harvest to this Vicariate Apostolic. All the schools are filled to capacity and new applicants are constantly coming in. The normal and professional schools are especially flourishing. There are many more applicants than can be accommodated with our limited space, teaching facilities, and personnel.

In Kamina the primary school numbers 1700 boys. During the past year several young men entered the major seminary to prepare for the secular priesthood. Another small college that prepares candidates for the Third Order Regular reports that some of the boys have returned to their families, but ten have happily persevered.

The native Congregation of Sisters Auxiliatrices of Mary Immaculate now number six professed religious, two of whom are studying at the normal school. There are two novices and several aspirants.

New buildings are going up fast. The construction of the minor seminary is progressing well, and the residence hall for the students has been considerably enlarged. In Kayeye, the leprosarium has been expanded to include one hundred new cubicles for the patients. In Kamina, where the seat of the Vicariate Apostolic is now located, a new episcopal residence is under construction. The former residence in Luabo is being remodeled for young men aspiring to the religious life. In Mutchatcha a large chapel has been erected and blessed.

BOLIVIA: CUEVO. Conditions in this Vicariate Apostolic are satisfactory and there is evidence of steady if moderate progress in the religious life of the people. A beautiful little church dedicated to Our Lady was blessed at the end of the Marian Year by the Vicar Apostolic. The church took three years in building. Other churches and chapels also were erected during the past year; nevertheless there has also grown up, during the past year, a strong Protestant influence. The Protestant sects have numerous and well-trained ministers—about 10 for every 1000 members of their congregations—and abundant material means.

CHIQUEIAOS. The Pilgrim Virgin came to Concepcion where the spiritual fruits surpassed all expectation. The Vicariate was blessed with a special grace during the Marian Year—the coming of nine Mexican Sisters whose example of piety and apostolic zeal and fervent charity has been a powerful factor in bringing the people back to a truly Christian way of life.

In the city of San Ignacio-Velasco the Catholic Action group opened a center where the poor can obtain whatever they need in the line of food, clothing, and medicine. The center has been established to meet the increasing propaganda—not wholly unjustified—of the Communists and also of the Protestants. Although the Protestant missionaries have entered Bolivia in large numbers and have abundant financial means to support public charitable enterprises, they are not making any permanent gains in this Vicariate. Apparently the people's deeply-rooted devotion to Our Lady and the Saints makes Protestantism essentially distasteful to them.

POEM I.

there was a king
who lived among the willows:
his realms were wide-cast,
he called his lords
by twisting
on a grass-blade;
dissolved
his parlement,
casting a seed-pod
from him.

slow as seasons
were his edicts published
falling to earth
and taking root
like rain;
he drifted wind-borne
like the seeds
of autumn:
yet his kingdom
prospered as the sun.

he wandered often
at the bands of rivers
wistful,
drifting,
listening for a song.

ROBERT LAX

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