

**STOKING THE FIRE OF HOPE:
FIORETTI FOR OUR TIMES.**

by Hermann Schaluck, OFM

The former Minister General of the Friars Minor reflects on his encounters with many people on five continents. In the style of the Franciscan *Fioretti*, he speaks of today's challenges to the Brothers and Sisters of the Order, showing how they try to meet the demands of communicating the good News in different cultural situations.

Through a variety of images and metaphors, the author raises questions about how Franciscans today can follow Jesus Christ effectively in situations very different from those faced by Francis and Clare eight hundred years ago.



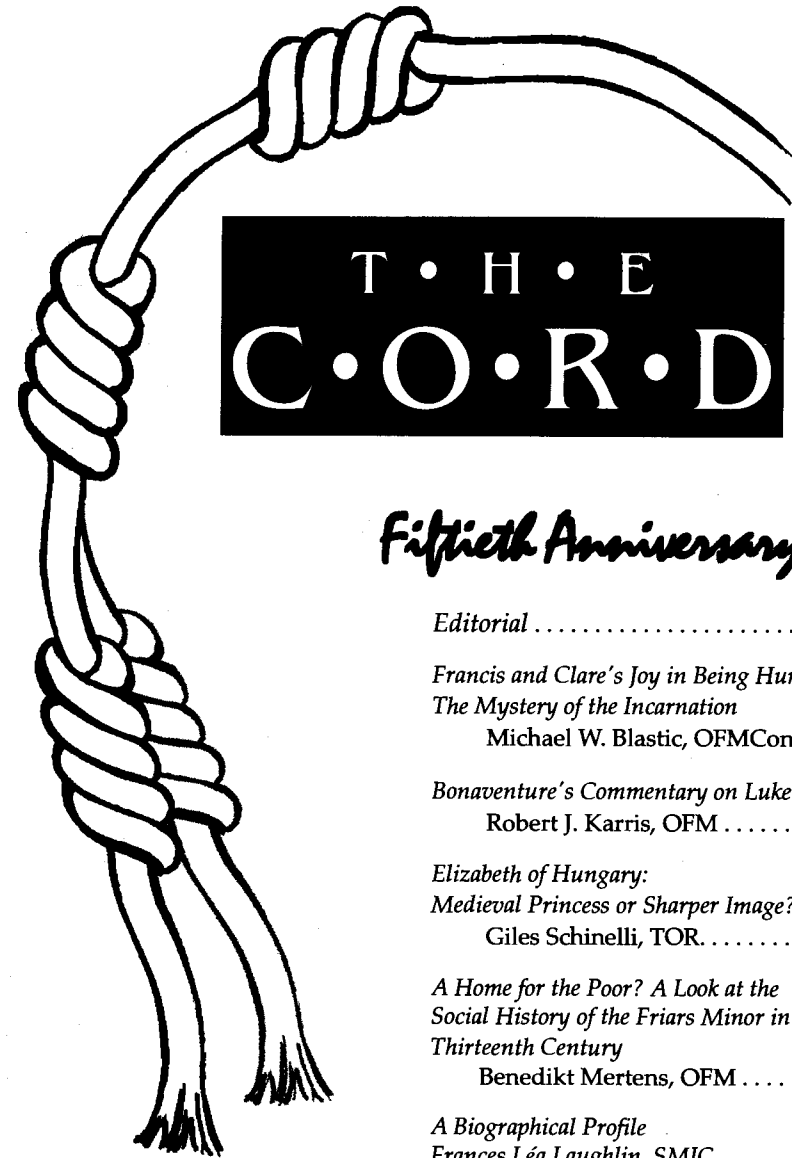
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THE CORD
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(1Cor. 13:6). (2Cel 5:8).
(RegNB 23:2). (4LAg 2:13).

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The Cord, 50.6 (2000)

Editorial

Fiftieth Anniversary Year!

The Fiftieth Anniversary year of *The Cord* draws to a close. The celebrations have offered opportunities for re-energizing the periodical and recommitting it to a significant service to the Franciscan Family worldwide. The end of the year is a special time for remembering gratefully those who make an enterprise like this possible—especially the writers, researchers, reflectors, artists, and poets who offer us sustenance for our journey by helping us appreciate more deeply our rich tradition. Thanks to all who have contributed to *The Cord* and enhanced its value and attractiveness.

Thanks, too, to all who advertise. They not only provide economic support, but witness to the wide diversity of programs and resources that are available to lovers of the Franciscan way. Thanks to members of the editorial board who take the time to offer evaluative comments and suggestions, who make contributions and promote *The Cord* in many ways. Thanks to the support staff who see to it that this effort actually materializes and arrives at your door every other month. Special thanks to all you readers who take up *The Cord* appreciatively and find in it nourishment for mind and spirit. Finally, sincere thanks to those who make an extra financial contribution so that our sisters and brothers in economically deprived situations may receive a gift subscription. In the last two years we have been able to extend our subscriptions significantly because of these gifts. We invite you to remember these others again this year as you renew your own subscription.

As the wondrous feast of the Incarnation draws near, we stand in awe once more at the amazing gift God has bestowed on us in Jesus Christ—and our hearts are moved by this unimaginable event. With Francis and Clare we contemplate “the poverty of Him Who was placed in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. . . . The King of the angels, the Lord of heaven and earth, laid in a manger! O mavelous humility, O astonishing poverty!” (4LAg 19, 21,20)

Elise Saggau, OSF

**We thank You, (O God), for as through Your Son You
created us so through Your holy love with which
You loved us You brought about His birth
as true God and true man by the glorious, ever-virgin,
most blessed, holy Mary (RegNB 23:3).**

Francis and Clare's Joy in Being Human: The Mystery of The Incarnation

Michael W. Blastic, OFM Conv

[This is the text of an address given at the annual meeting of the Franciscan Federation of Australia and New Zealand, July 8, 2000, in Melbourne, Australia.]

I

In his Apostolic Letter in preparation for the Jubilee Year of 2000, *Tertio millennio adveniente* (TMA) (November 1994), John Paul II spoke of the Jubilee as “an experience of joy deeply charged with Christological meaning.” He wrote:

The term Jubilee speaks of joy: not just an inner joy but a jubilation which is manifested outwardly, for the coming of God is also an outward, visible, audible and tangible event, as St. John makes clear (1Jn 1:1) (TMA #16).

The distinctly Christological character of the Jubilee needs to be emphasized, for it will celebrate the Incarnation and coming into the world of the Son of God, the mystery of salvation for all mankind (TMA #40).

Reflecting on the tradition of the Jewish scriptures associated with the year of Jubilee, John Paul suggested that an essential aspect of the year 2000's celebration of the Incarnation must be visible, audible, outward, and tangible as was the Incarnation, and hence he places great emphasis on the aspects of the Jubilee which should engage persons, societies, and nations in real time and space. Most important for the Pope is that the celebration be expressed in terms of justice and peace and the reformation of both the social order and the global structures of dependence which enslave peoples and nations. Echoing familiar themes from his pontificate, John Paul places the Jubilee in the context of

what he describes as the “crisis of civilization” or the “culture of death.” In the context of the challenge of secularism, he wrote:

[I]t will be fitting to broach the vast subject of the *crisis of civilization*, which has become apparent especially in the West, which is highly developed from the standpoint of technology but is interiorly impoverished by its tendency to forget God or to keep him at a distance. This crisis of civilization must be countered by *the civilization of love*, founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice and liberty, which find their full attainment in Christ” [TMA #52].

As we have all seen thus far in the papal celebrations associated with the Jubilee, there is no aspect of human life that remains extrinsic to the celebration of the Jubilee of the Incarnation—from the celebration of the Jubilee for artists, journalists, workers, prisoners, the poor, etc., to the celebration of the Jubilee in the Holy Land with the challenges inherent in each event. Indeed, as the Pope has written in the Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000:

In the encounter with Christ, every man [sic] discovers the mystery of his own life. Jesus is the genuine newness which surpasses all human expectations and as such he remains forever, from age to age. The Incarnation of the Son of God and the salvation which he has accomplished by his death and resurrection are therefore the true criterion for evaluating all that happens in time and every effort to make life more human” (*Incarnationis mysterium* # 1[IM]).

In fact, all efforts connected to the Jubilee are intended to embody the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth in some concrete form, which in turn opens us to the mystery of God the Trinity:

In celebrating the Incarnation, we fix our gaze on the mystery of the Trinity. Jesus of Nazareth, who reveals the Father, has fulfilled the desire hidden in every human heart to know God. What creation preserved as a seal etched on it by the creative hand of God and what the ancient prophets had announced as a promise is disclosed in the revelation of Christ” (IM #3).

Further, the Jubilee grace is the grace of conversion and reconciliation—a grace that is offered as both gift and task. In fact, John Paul makes the option for the poor and commitment for justice and peace a condition for the experience of jubilee joy, because “[T]he joy of every jubilee is above all a joy based upon the forgiveness of sins, the joy of conversion” (TMA #32); this jubilee joy is the effect of forgiveness, offered by the Father in Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

John Paul repeats frequently these essential aspects of Jubilee 2000: **INCARNATION-RECONCILIATION-JOY**. These are not unfamiliar themes for us Franciscans, for we encounter them frequently in the sources surrounding Francis and Clare and the origins of the Franciscan movement. What comes to mind immediately is how joy so characterizes the life of Francis with his brothers and Clare with her sisters. You don't have to look too far through the sources before coming upon examples. Thomas of Celano presents an idyllic portrait of the early fraternity:

There were chaste embraces, delightful affection, a holy kiss, sweet conversation, modest laughter, joyful looks, a clear eye, a supple spirit, a peaceable tongue, a mild answer, a single purpose. . . . So they were safe wherever they went. Disturbed by no fears, distracted by no cares, they awaited the next day without any worry. . . . Often mocked, objects of insult, stripped naked, beaten, bound, jailed, and not defending themselves with anyone's protection, they endured all of these abuses so bravely that from their mouths came only the sound of praise and thanksgiving. They never or hardly ever stopped praying and praising God (1Cel 39-40).¹

A stylized encomium no doubt, but accurate nonetheless. Despite their difficulties and imperfections, the early brothers and sisters were joyful men and women. And the paradox of Christian life becomes visible in their experience—persecuted yet joyful as Celano portrays them! Francis speaks of this as True Joy.²

Write, Leo, what true joy is.

All the Masters of Paris entered the Order
All the prelates, archbishops and bishops beyond the mountains, as well as the King of France and the King of England
My brothers have gone to the non-believers and converted all of them to the faith
I have so much grace from God that I heal the sick and perform many miracles!
I tell you true joy does not consist in any of these things!
I return from Perugia in the dead of night—it's winter—cold and muddy
I knock at the gate and say: "It's me, Brother Francis, let me in."
"Go Away! This is not the proper time to be returning to the friary!"
I insist.
He says: "Go away! You are **SIMPLE** and **STUPID**! Don't come back to us again! There are many of us here like you—we don't need you!"

I say: "For the Love of God, take me in tonight!"

He says: "I will not! Go to the Crosiers' place and ask there."

I tell you this: If I had patience and did not become upset, true joy, as well as true virtue and the salvation of my soul, would consist in this (VPLaet).

This Saying on "True [and Perfect] Joy," which is included among the authentic writings of St. Francis, suggests an experience which gets at the heart of following in the footprints of Christ. For, while all the things Francis mentions as possible sources of joy—Masters, bishops, kings, princes joining the Order; friars converting non-believers; Francis healing the sick and working miracles—have in fact actually begun to occur in Francis's lifetime. It is not these "successes" which are the source of true joy. Contrary to the standards of the world, and sometimes even to the unspoken standards of the Church, Francis insists that true joy is not to be found in such accomplishments. As the saying suggests, Francis connects true joy with the experience of human rejection, in this case, the rejection of Francis by his own brothers—an experience that was also real, especially in the last years of Francis's own life.

The companions indicate that there was a lack of sensitivity toward Francis on the part of some brothers for whom Francis had become an anachronism, or "useless" in Francis's own words. The Saying on True Joy is an autobiographical account of his experience—he too was rejected by his own brothers! But, Francis is not masochistic. Joy does not lie in being rejected and locked out. True joy results from the concrete human response to the experience of rejection: "If I had **PATIENCE** and did not become **UPSET**." This is true joy, virtue, and salvation. So, Francis here is reflecting on his own experience of living the gospel and revealing what is essential to the joy of Christian life—patience and not becoming upset in bearing the rejection of his brothers!

However, the real significance of this experience does not stop at the level of autobiographical confession. Francis is not drawing attention to himself. His saying on true joy does recapitulate his own experience of following in the footprints of Jesus and the experience of his early brothers as well who were rejected and abused by the people of Assisi as Celano indicated in the text cited above. But much more significantly for Francis, this experience of rejection and suffering was the human condition embraced by Jesus in the Incarnation. Francis's response to rejection thus recapitulates the experience of Jesus—the Incarnate Word made and makes himself vulnerable in our world. Thus, for Francis, the Incarnation is the source of true joy because in the Incarnation Jesus embraced the human condition—our human condition, the condition of our flesh and blood, which is vulnerable, limited, weak, and fragile. And, Jesus bore the human condition in patience and without becoming upset, even in response to those who crucified him!

Francis frequently challenges his brothers to remember that “they have given themselves and abandoned their bodies to the Lord Jesus Christ. For love of Him they must make themselves vulnerable to their enemies, both visible and invisible. . . .” (RegNB 16:10-11); Because, “Our Lord Jesus Christ, whose footprints we must follow, called his betrayer a friend and willingly offered himself to his executioners” (RegNB 22:2). In the Rule of 1223 Francis wrote:

Let the brothers pay attention to what they must desire above all else: to have the Spirit of the Lord and Its holy activity, to pray always to Him with a pure heart, to have humility and patience in persecution and infirmity, and to love those who persecute, rebuke and find fault with us, because the Lord says: “Love your enemies and pray for those who calumniate you [Mt. 5:44]; Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, the Kingdom of God is theirs [Mt. 5:10]; But whoever perseveres to the end will be saved” [Mt. 10:22].

All of this points to Francis’s experience of Christ; his Christology is the background for understanding this experience. He writes to all the faithful:

The most high father made known from heaven through his holy angel Gabriel this Word of the Father—so worthy, so holy and glorious—in the womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, from whose *womb He received the flesh of our humanity and frailty*. Though He was rich, He wished together with the most Blessed Virgin, His mother, to choose poverty in this world beyond all else.

And as His Passion was near, He celebrated the Passover with his disciples. . . .

Then He prayed to his Father, saying: Father, if it can be done, let this cup pass from me. . . . Nevertheless, He placed his will in the will of the Father, saying: Father, let Your will be done; not as I will, but as You will. His Father’s will was such that His blessed and glorious Son, Whom He gave to us and Who was born for us, should offer Himself through his Own blood as a sacrifice and oblation on the altar of the cross: not for Himself through Whom all things were made, but for our sins, leaving us an example that we might follow in His footprints” (2EpFid 4-13).³

Francis’s approach to the Incarnation and Passion of Jesus underlines Jesus’ acceptance of the human condition of frailty even to death for us—these are the footprints Francis follows—it is this experience of Jesus which reveals the meaning of true joy. Ultimately, for Francis as for Christ, salvation is achieved by embracing the human condition of frailty and vulnerability. This too is what Francis discovered in the embrace of the leper, which he remembers as

the source of his conversion when he recounts his own story at the end of his life in the Testament—what was bitter became sweet. And after writing the lines above in his Letter to the Faithful, Francis continues:

And He wishes all of us to be saved through Him and receive Him with our pure heart and our chaste body. But even though his yoke is easy and his burden light, there are few who wish to receive Him and be saved through Him. Those who do not wish to taste how sweet the Lord is and who love the darkness more than the light, not wishing to fulfill God’s commands, are cursed; it is said of them by the prophet: Cursed are those who stray from your commands (2EpFid 14-17).

Francis is in awe at what God does for us in Jesus, the gift of salvation. But even more amazing for Francis is the way in which God accomplishes this—through the gift of Jesus whom literally Francis sees as moving toward us in the embrace of humanity: “From heaven the worthy, holy, glorious Word, IN the womb of Mary becomes incarnate in the FLESH of OUR HUMANITY AND FRAILTY.” Not just any human nature, but a frail, weak, vulnerable, limited human nature. And, joy of joys, God chooses to move down toward us in compassion, to be with us, and in being with us, he saves us—as a story of the companions makes especially clear:

Blessed Francis held the Nativity of the Lord in greater reverence than any other of the Lord’s solemnities. For although the Lord may have accomplished our salvation in his other solemnities, nevertheless, once HE WAS BORN TO US, as blessed Francis would say, IT WAS CERTAIN THAT WE WOULD BE SAVED (Assisi Compilation 14).

In other words, Francis understands salvation in terms of what it means to be human. The life of Jesus was salvific from the moment of his conception. The cross and Easter celebrate the accomplishment of salvation in that they continue to express the meaning of the Incarnation—God for us, God moving toward us in love and compassion! The Incarnation is Redemption!

This perspective on the economy of salvation is one of the truly distinctive characteristics of Franciscan Christology arising out of the experience of Francis and Clare and, at the same time, the element of the Franciscan experience which poses the greatest challenge to our times. Though we live in a postmodern world, we are still very much children of the Enlightenment. We believe in a gospel of unlimited progress and so are drawn towards the Resurrection as the icon of our own humanness. We desire a humanity invulnerable to pain, an existence without limits, and a life impervious to suffering, all the while denying any hint of the reality of death. Just reflect for a moment on the image of humanity that the advertising media present—beautiful, sleek, satis-

fied, content, full; in short, perfect specimens of human contentment.

Francis and Clare's approach to the Incarnation was the polar opposite. It recognized the incarnate, suffering, and crucified Christ as the icon of a humanity living a fragile, vulnerable, and limited human existence. For Francis and Clare the Incarnation of Jesus was an incarnation in human flesh that was very familiar, close to home. It focused on the way things were in terms of human existence in a concrete, real, and ordinary experience of being human—birth and death, struggle and suffering, joy and defeat. The Christ of Francis and Clare is not so much the sleek, satisfied human being as the beggar by the wayside, the face ignored in the crowd, the sick and the leper on our streets.

In other words, the Incarnation does not so much show us what we are not, but rather, what we are. We were created in the image of Jesus Christ, says Francis. Christ shows us to ourselves. And the entire lives of Francis and Clare attempt nothing more than to be simply human, and in being simply human to be for other people. Francis states that in the Eucharist the Lord is always WITH US AND FOR US, because the Eucharist continues the Incarnation, God making himself present to us in human flesh.

John Paul emphasizes that "The Year 2000 will be intensely Eucharistic: in the sacrament of the Eucharist, the Savior, who took flesh in Mary's womb twenty centuries ago, continues to offer himself to humanity as the source of divine life" (TMA #55). For Francis, the Eucharist is the source of Mission. In the Letter to the Entire Order he states that the mission of the brothers is to make known in word and deed that there is no one all-powerful except God. How? By reverencing the Body and Blood of the Lord in which everything is reconciled and brought to peace. God gives Godself in Jesus who is "for us." This is the source of true joy for Francis and Clare. If God is for us, what more could we possibly want? In compassion, Francis and Clare become "Eucharist" for their world.

So, this Jubilee celebration of the year 2000 which celebrates the Incarnation, invites all of us Franciscans to reflect on our lives—is ours truly a Franciscan Christology? Do we see ourselves in the weak, fragile, vulnerable flesh of Jesus Christ? Are our lives for others as was Jesus' life? Do our institutions, our ministries, our local friaries/convents give visible and concrete expression to this Christ who gives himself into our hands?

II

John Paul II finds the entire meaning and task of the jubilee in the gospel text which describes the inauguration of Jesus' public ministry in the Nazareth synagogue:

Jesus of Nazareth, going back one day to the synagogue of his home town, stood up to read (cf. Lk. 4:16-30). Taking the book of the Prophet Isaiah, he read this passage: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,

because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Is. 61:102). The prophet was speaking of the Messiah. "Today," Jesus added, "This scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk. 4:21), thus indicating that he himself was the Messiah foretold by the Prophet, and that the long-expected time was beginning in him (TMA #11).

Here, the text of Luke aptly summarizes the task and grace of the Holy Year in both its personal and social dimensions. But also, with this text, Jesus summarizes the meaning of his life as the fulfillment of scripture in a ministry of compassion. Jesus accomplishes his life and ministry, as we read in the gospel narratives, in and through a manner of being present to all people, a presence which heals, forgives, enlightens, and informs the world with the presence of God. Healing and forgiving sinners is God's attentive, salvific response to those with whom he has come to be Emmanuel, God with us. Monika Hellwig aptly describes Christ as "Jesus, the compassion of God." Compassion, she says,

implies a movement toward the other to help, but also a movement into the experience of the other to be present in solidarity and communion of experience. It implies sensitivity, vulnerability, to be affected by the experience of the other, but it also implies remedial action against suffering and oppression, most of all, it implies involvement in the situation.⁴

We know Francis as a person of compassion. Clare too was remembered by her sisters as showing great compassion to the sick and troubled sisters in the monastery of San Damiano. Patricia Hampl describes Francis in this light:

Francis ran first to the lepers. He didn't run howling into the woods to help them. He simply wanted to join them, to BE with them. He wasn't a do-gooder, not a missionary in the convert-the-heathen sort of way. He was a *joyous mystic* who needed to suffer the great pain of his age, because not to suffer, especially to miss out on the suffering of the world, was not to live.⁵

It is especially in Bonaventure's *Legenda maior* that we see the implications of looking at the life of Francis through the lens of compassion. He emphasizes that compassion was one of the natural virtues of Francis operative in him even before his conversion. After his encounter and embrace of the leper, Francis seeks out solitary places for prayer:

One of those days, withdrawn in this way, while he was praying and all of his fervor was totally absorbed in God, Christ Jesus appeared to

him as fastened to a cross. His soul melted at the sight, and the memory of Christ's passion was so impressed on the innermost recesses of his heart. From that hour, whenever Christ's crucifixion came to his mind, he could scarcely contain his tears and sighs, as he later revealed to his companions when he was approaching the end of his life. Through this, the man of God understood as addressed to himself the Gospel text: If you wish to come after me, deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me (Mt. 16:24) (LM 1:5).

Francis's compassionate embrace of the leper prepared him to experience Christ crucified, an experience which in turn imprinted the cross on the inner life/heart of Francis. Bonaventure comments that Francis "served lepers and with great compassion kissed their hands and mouths. To beggars he wished to give not only his possession but his very self" (LM 1:6). Compassion thus became the condition for understanding and living the Gospel. Throughout the text, Bonaventure draws our attention to the central role of compassion in the life of Francis.

For Bonaventure too, it is compassion which occasions the stigmata of Francis. What happened on LaVerna was not a new grace—it had been there for Francis all along. But, at that moment, he was able to open himself completely to this grace of God:

With the seraphic ardor of DESIRES, therefore, he was being borne aloft into God; and by COMPASSIONATE SWEETNESS he was being transformed into Him Who chose to be crucified out of the excess of His love (LM 13:3).

The desire for God and compassion toward neighbor constitute the convergence of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of human experience, both transcendence and immanence, both being for God and being for others. Francis is transformed by this grace. Thus, it is both contemplation and action, love for God and love for neighbor, which identify Francis at this point in his life.⁶ Bonaventure continues the story, describing the vision of the crucified seraph, after which he writes:

[Francis] marveled exceedingly at the sight of so unfathomable a vision, knowing that the weakness of Christ's passion was in no way compatible with the immortality of the seraphic spirit. Eventually he understood from this, through the Lord revealing it, that Divine Providence had shown him a vision of this sort so that the friend of Christ might learn in advance that he was to be totally transformed into the likeness of Christ crucified, not by the martyrdom of his flesh, but by the enkindling of his soul. As the vision was disappearing, it left in his heart a marvelous fire and imprinted in his flesh a likeness of signs no less marvelous (LM 13:3).

This desire for God and compassion for neighbor transform Francis in both spirit and flesh into the image of Christ crucified! But the point is that the life of Christ which Francis imitates is understood in and through, and is the result of, compassion. Compassion identifies the Christ of Francis and, at the same time, identifies Francis as the image of Christ.

How did Francis learn this? From God who led him to the leper in his conversion—"And the Lord himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them" (Test 2). Here Francis was taught and he learned the meaning of the Incarnation—God turns to us and comes to us in the flesh of Jesus Christ. It is this movement toward the other, the suffering other, in compassion and mercy, which accomplishes the Gospel, the life of Christ.

Interestingly, this is a lesson which Francis never grasps once and for all. Even after receiving the Stigmata, he still has much to learn about its meaning and about the meaning of his life. Thus he needs to continue learning the meaning of true joy. The companion tells the story of how one night, as Francis was suffering from his illnesses and probably from the rejection of some of his brothers, he began to feel sorry for himself: "Lord," he said to himself, "make haste to help me in my illnesses, so that I may be able to bear them patiently." He still had difficulty embracing the suffering of his human condition.

And suddenly he was told in spirit: "Tell me, brother, what if, in exchange for your illness and troubles, someone were to give you a treasure? And it would be so great and precious that, even if the whole earth were changed to pure gold, all stones to precious stones, and all water to balsam, you would still judge and hold all these things as nothing, as if they were earth, stones and water, in comparison to the great and precious treasure which was given you. Wouldn't you greatly rejoice?" "Lord," Blessed Francis answered, "this treasure would indeed be great, worth seeking, very precious, greatly lovable, and desirable." "Then, brother," he was told, "be glad and rejoice in your illness and troubles, because as of now, you are as secure as if you were already in my kingdom."

The next morning on rising, he said to his companions:

". . . I must rejoice greatly in my illnesses and troubles and be consoled in the Lord, giving thanks always to God the Father, to His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit for such a great grace and blessing. In His mercy He has given me, His unworthy little servant still living in the flesh, the promise of His Kingdom!" (Assisi Compilation 83).

Having patience and not becoming upset in his illness and trouble was true joy for Francis. And true joy is ultimately all about living in the Kingdom of God here on earth. Notice the image of Christ that Francis suggests we

place before our eyes as we recite the liturgy of the Hours: "The Lamb who was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing." Francis repeats this text from the Book of Revelation 5:12 in "The Praises to be Said at All the Hours," verse 3. This is Francis's image of the resurrected Christ, the Lamb who was slain and who continues to carry in glory the wounds of the passion. For Francis, the Kingdom is the Kingdom of the Lamb who was slain, who now in the glory of resurrected life carries the marks, the wounds of the cross. Progress toward this Kingdom is measured by the degree of one's transformation into the image of the Lamb who was slain. True joy is a sign of life in the Kingdom, which is not a better or different world than this one in which we live. Living in the Kingdom implies being at home in this world, just the way it is and just the way we are!

Franciscan reflection and celebration of Jubilee 2000 challenges us to rejoice in being human, because that is what God did and continues to do in Jesus, the compassion of God. Our salvation was/is effected by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the compassionate presence of God. To follow his footprints means to live true joy.

III

From all that I have suggested here, it seems that this Jubilee of the Incarnation, the meaning of True Joy and Franciscan life, all converge in the reality of compassion. Reviewing the stated aims, goals, processes, and prayer of the Jubilee year from this Franciscan perspective, I suggest a few thoughts and questions that might be helpful.

1. John Paul suggested that all human questions find an answer in Jesus Christ. Jesus reveals to us the truth of the human condition. Francis follows the footprints of Jesus and discovers in compassion his own truest identity and task. This challenges us Franciscans not just at the level of pious thought or good intention, but invites us to re-orient our lives so that we recognize in our struggles to be truly human the image of Jesus Christ. In those struggles we come to know and begin to taste the sweetness of the Kingdom of the Lamb who was slain. This is the heart of the gospel. It reveals a God who, in moving toward us in the Incarnation, invites us to turn toward the leper, the other in our life. What is in our hearts? What is it that we really seek and desire? What do we hope for? Where do we put our energy? Who is Jesus Christ for us? Can we or do we portray this image with the life we live with others? How do we bear the human condition? How do we understand the Franciscan mission in terms of what we say, do, think, and act, both personally and institutionally?

2. One of the primary realities which the Jubilee hopes to foster and accomplish in real and tangible ways is the reality of reconciliation on all levels of existence—personal, social, and ecclesial. Reconciliation begins with the hon-

est acceptance of the way things are—admission of guilt is the first step toward healing. In addition to prayer and fasting, how are we Franciscans called to foster reconciliation in the world? I suggest that the early Franciscan sources respond by demonstrating that reconciliation was the primary effect of the very life and presence of the Franciscan brothers and sisters at all levels of society.

Thus, in a short time, the appearance of the entire region was changed and, once rid of its earlier ugliness, it revealed a happier expression everywhere. The former dryness was put to rout and a crop sprang up quickly in the untilled field. Even the uncultivated vine began to produce buds with a sweet-smell for the Lord, and when it had produced flowers of sweetness, it brought forth equally the fruit of honor and respectability. Thanks and the voice of praise resounded everywhere, as many, casting aside earthly concerns, gained knowledge of themselves in the life and teaching of the most blessed father Francis and aspired to love and reverence for their Creator (1Cel 37).

Even the cosmos—care for the earth—was affected by the presence of Francis according to Celano! But it was the *quality of life, the presence*, in compassion, of the brothers and sisters which effected this transformation of the earth, the cosmos, and human lives. Are we compassionate? Do we stand in compassion with the broken, the sinner, the outcast, the abused, the proud? What is the quality of our Franciscan presence as persons, communities, and institutions?

3. Both Francis and Clare were convinced that God continues to make the offer of Self to us in Jesus right now in this world. Francis and Clare lived in the space celebrated in the Cantic of the Creatures—everything is a reflection of God! In order to live that way ourselves, we must be able to see what Francis and Clare saw in the poor, in creation, in their brothers and sisters. Francis often exhorted his brothers: "Let us pay attention to what the Lord says and does." Notice the present tense of the verb—pay attention to what God is saying and doing right now, in this situation, at this moment in history. This way of seeing is contemplation. Franciscan contemplation takes us out of ourselves and directs us toward the other, as God directed Francis to the leper. Are we contemplatives in this sense? Can we contemplate like this "on our feet," that is while we live and minister, and not merely when we are in church or in the quiet of our rooms?

4. John Paul has stated that "Among the sins which require a greater commitment to repentance and conversion should certainly be counted those which have been detrimental to the unity willed by God for his People. In the course of the thousand years now drawing to a close, even more than in the first

millennium, ecclesial communion has been painfully wounded, a fact for which, at times, men of both sides were to blame” (TMA #34). On the First Sunday of Lent, 2000, we witnessed the public, visible, and challenging confession of fault by John Paul for the sins of the Church. How have we Franciscans embraced the challenge of ecumensism and inter-religious dialogue? How have we embraced this call for unity among ourselves? The history of the First Order, the Second and Third Orders are replete with sins against unity. Have we honestly faced up to these and admitted our guilt to each other? How does the call for the re-union of churches affect us Franciscans as a body?

Whether or not it is possible, feasible, or even desirable for a re-union of the branches of the First Order is not the question or issue I raise. But rather what is the impact of our divisions on the Body of Christ? How have our sins against each other redounded to the detriment of the Church and the world? Can we ever get beyond questions of who are the real, authentic followers of Francis or Clare so that we can live as brothers and sisters with our differences? I don't think this will ever happen until we can accept and admit our complicity in the sins of our history. Real unity fosters diversity (Scotus and *haecceitas* with common nature!). This is something all of us Franciscans need to reflect on at the beginning of this new millennium!

There are many more implications for our Franciscan tradition's approach to the Incarnation in terms of True Joy and Compassion. We have only begun to touch the surface. But half way through this Jubilee Year, the 2000th anniversary of the Incarnation, let us begin, brothers and sisters, because until now we have done very little (LM 14:1).

May the Lord give you Jubilee Peace and True Joy!

Endnotes:

¹References to the writings of Francis and the early sources for his life are from *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, Vols. 1 and 2, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., J. A. Wayne Hellmann, OFM Conv., William J. Short. OFM (New York: New City Press, 1999, 2000).

²Francis speaks in the text only of “True Joy” but somehow the further qualification of “Perfect Joy” was later added, a concept which placed the meaning of Francis in the realm of the ascetical rather than leave it in the realm of the practical, which it was for Francis himself!

³It is interesting to note that Francis connects the image of following footprints to the context of Christ's example in the Passion. See also RegNB 22:1-2.

⁴Monika Hellwig, *Jesus the Compassion of God* (Glazier, 1983), 121.

⁵Patricia Hampl, *Virgin Time* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992), 121.

⁶Chapter 12 of the *Legenda Maior* begins with the story of the conflict Francis experienced between contemplation and action, but this is resolved for Francis by the conviction that he is called to follow the example set on the mountain, that is Jesus Christ who synthesizes action and contemplation in his own life.

The holy man of God stands before the manger, filled with heartfelt sighs,
contrite in his piety, and overcome with wondrous joy (ICel 30).

Bonaventure's Commentary on Luke 2:6-7¹

Introduced and Translated by
Robert J. Karris, OFM

Introduction

In introducing this abbreviated excerpt from St. Bonaventure's marvelous commentary on Luke's Gospel, I make three points.

1. Bonaventure's commentary deals primarily with the literal sense of Luke's Gospel and does so by following the traditional interpretation of his predecessors and especially by using parallel scripture passages. Take a quick look at paragraph 9 on Luke 2:6 below where Bonaventure interprets “the days were fulfilled” via Galatians 4:4: “When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman.” But Bonaventure's commentary will also give a moral interpretation of a passage or what we might call today “a pastoral application.” See, for example, paragraph 13 below where Bonaventure interprets Christ's being placed in the bed of the manger as Christ's condemnation of voluptuous beds.

2. I have discovered that in many ways Bonaventure's exegesis anticipates contemporary exegetical praxis. Today scripture scholars are wont to talk about the “co-text” of a scripture passage or try to interpret a scripture passage by means of its “intertext.” In less technical terms, these scholars are searching for the Old Testament antecedents of a New Testament passage. Bonaventure was a pioneer in this search as he interpreted scripture by scripture. I quote from Raymond E. Brown's *The Birth of the Messiah* and ask my readers to compare Brown's interpretation with that of Bonaventure in paragraph 12 below. Brown writes:

A better suggestion relates the symbolism of the Lucan manger to God's complaint in the Septuagint of Isaiah 1:3: “The ox knows its

owner, and the donkey knows the manger of its lord. But Israel has not known me. My people has not understood me.' Luke would be proclaiming that the Isaian dictum is repealed. . . . In other words, God's people have begun to know the manger of their Lord.²

3. Finally, this excerpt, especially the exquisite paragraphs 15-16, offers us a rich sample of Bonaventure's christology of exemplarity which spotlights the poverty and humility of the Son of God. In a marvelous passage on Bonaventure's christology, Ilija Delio writes:

For Bonaventure, poverty and humility are not simply accidental qualities of the earthly life of Jesus; rather, they express the very nature of God hidden in the earthly life of Christ. Poverty is the foundation of the imitation of Christ since the very manner of Christ's entry into this world reveals, in a concrete way, the self-emptying of God and calls us to imitate him.³

With all the symbolism revolving around Jesus, bread of life, lying in a manger which provides food for creation, I may be allowed to conclude this introduction with the waiter's injunction: "Enjoy." Or to conclude on a more biblical note, I say: "Taste and see the goodness of the Lord."

The Text of Bonaventure's Commentary

9. (Verse 6). *And it came to pass while they were there*, etc. Previously the Evangelist described the nativity of Christ with regard to its fitting time and suitable place. Now, in his third point, he describes it with regard to its *birthing*, and does so under three categories: *the occasion for giving birth, the newness of the birth, and the poverty of the one giving birth*. And in these three ways the birth of Christ is shown forth to be wonderful, inimitable, and commendable.

First, then the text points to the occasion for giving birth when it says: *And it came to pass when they were there, that the days for Mary to give birth were fulfilled*, in accordance with what was said above in Luke 1:57 about her relative: "The time was fulfilled for Elizabeth to give birth." Verily, *were fulfilled* because in the fullness of time Christ was conceived and born as Galatians 4:4 has: "And when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman." The psalm has: "Full days will be found in them" (72:10).

10. (Verse 7). The text indicates *the newness of the birth* when it says: *And she brought forth her firstborn son*. And this means that there were no prior children, because, since a Virgin had conceived him, he was her firstborn. As Isaiah 7:14 says: "Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son." And therefore, this birthing was new, just as his conception was, because, just as he was conceived without shame, so he was born without pain. As Isaiah 66:7-9 says:

"Before she was in labor, she gave birth. Before her time came to be delivered, she gave birth to a boy. Who has ever heard such a thing? Who has seen the like? . . . Shall not I who empower others to give birth to children, myself not bring forth, says the Lord? Shall I who give the power of generation to others be barren, says the Lord God?" Such a birthing was fitting for the Christ, of whom Colossians 1:14-15 says: "In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creatures." Thus, just as he was the firstborn of the Father, so too is he the firstborn of the Mother. And just as he is the only begotten of the Father, so too is he the only begotten of the Mother. John 1:14 has: "We have seen his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father," etc. Thus the text does not say here firstborn with respect to those born after him, as the heretic Helvidius used to say, but with respect to those born before him. For Mary had none before him, in order to show that he was to be totally dedicated to the Lord. For all the firstborn are to be offered to God. Exodus 13:2 has: "Sanctify unto me every firstborn that opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of human and of beasts. For they are mine."⁴

11. In the third place the text points to the poverty of *the one giving birth*, because she lacks *clothing, a bed, and hospitality*. With regard to the paucity of clothing it says: *And she wrapped him in swaddling clothes*, that is, not in one single garment, but in many, so that he could be called a pauper in tatters and would clearly exemplify what the Apostle says in 1 Timothy 6:8: "Having some food and something in which we are clothed, let us be content with these." And this corresponds to that prophecy of Zechariah 3:3 where it is said that "Jesus, the high priest, was clothed in filthy garments."⁵ Bernard says: "May you recognize Jesus the high priest, clothed with filthy garments, as he contends with the devil. But when he had been exalted as our head over our enemies, he changed his clothes and put on a splendid garment, *clothed with light as with a garment*. First one puts on the burdensome iron breastplate to do battle, then in victory one dons the linen garment of honor."⁶—And in *this the cultivation of precious garments* is condemned. On account of what is said in Matthew 11:8: "Those who are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings" and in Sirach 11:4: "Do not glory in your apparel at any time."

12. And because of *the lack of a bed* the text continues: *She laid him in a manger*, not in a bedroom, so that what Matthew 8:20 says might be verified: "Foxes have their dens, and the birds of heaven have their nests. But the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head." *In a manger* Christ is laid, so that what John 6:41 says might be demonstrated: "I am the living bread that has come down from heaven,"⁷ and so that what Isaiah 1:3 says might be verified: "The ox knows its owner and the ass the manger of its master." And also so that there might be verifications of what Habakkuk 3:2 in the Greek Septuagint has: "In the middle

of two animals you will become known. When the years have drawn near, you will be recognized," etc.

13. Now according to the *mystical* understanding, the fact that he was born *in Bethlehem* means that he is the living bread, for *Bethlehem* is interpreted as the house of bread.⁸ The fact that he is placed *in a manger* means that he is food for the simple and humble by reason of his assumed flesh. Isaiah 40:6 has: "All flesh is hay, and all its glory like the flowering of the hay." That he is *in the midst of two animals* signifies that in this pasture and under this shepherd sheep of both folds must be united as John 10:16 has: "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. Them I must also bring, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one fold and one shepherd."

Morally and literally, by his actions Christ condemned voluptuous beds, against which Amos 6:4 railed: "Woe to you, who sleep in ivory beds and are wanton on your couches."

14. Because there was *no dwelling* the text continues: *Because there was no room for them in the inn*. For according to Isidore it is called an *inn* (in Latin: *diversorium*) because diverse peoples might congregate there. And it is an open space. But according to Bede, it is called such because it has diverse openings. For it is an empty space between two districts of a town and has access to and egress from both. It is also covered because of inclement weather, so that the citizens could convene to talk among themselves. It is here that the Virgin Mary bore her son, because they did not have a house in which they could receive hospitality whether because they were poor or because they arrived tardily. And this space was constricted or even filled with others, so that she had only the tiniest of places among the brute animals. Whence Christ could say what the psalm has: "I have become a beast among you, and I am always with you" (72:23). And this is verified in Jeremiah 14:8-9: "Why will you be as a wandering man, as a mighty man that cannot save? But you, O Lord, are among us, and your name is invoked upon us," etc. -And in this *extensive buildings* are condemned, according to what Isaiah 5:8 has: "Woe to you that join house to house and lay field to field." Augustine says: "On earth he had the smallest places, so that you might open wide to him that place in your heart which you keep to yourself. The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head, and you measure yourself by your expansive palaces and gigantic colonnades."

15. Therefore, the poor mother gives birth to the poor Christ in such a way that he might invite us to embrace poverty and to be enriched by his penury, according to what 2 Corinthians 8:9 says: "You know the graciousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, who although he was rich, became poor for your sakes." And by means of his all-embracing indigence he condemned avaricious opu-

lence. Whence Bernard says: "The Son of God chose a poor mother, who barely had sufficient swaddling clothes for him and had no place but a manger in which to lay him. His decision is not according to the world's standards. Either he is wrong, or the world is in error. . . . But it is impossible for divine wisdom to be in error. Therefore, he, who did not err, chose what was bothersome to the flesh, and in doing so, showed us how to choose what is better, more useful, and more pleasing."⁹ Let us, therefore, be on Christ's side, as it is said in 2 Corinthians 6:10: "As poor, yet enriching many; as having nothing, but possessing all."

16. From this it becomes clearer to us that Jesus was really *the Savior of the world*, who from the first moment of his birth gave an example of virtue and shows *the way of salvation*. For in possessing a vile, humble, and poor bed, he already began to say that the world is to be despised with respect to the three things in it.¹⁰ Already by example he began to demonstrate *the state of perfection* which consists of humility, austerity, and poverty. Also in this the Lord manifests *the disposition of highest condescension*, because not only did he become a little child for us, but also became poor and despised for us, so that he could truly say what the psalm has: "I am poor and in labors from my youth" (87:16).

Endnotes

¹This excerpt is from St. Bonaventure, *Commentary on Luke's Gospel, 1-8*, translated and annotated by Robert J. Karris, OFM (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, forthcoming). It is a translation of S. *Bonaventurae Commentarius in Evangelium S. Lucae*, Vol. VII (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1895).

²See *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, New Updated Edition; Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1993) 419. I have slightly modified Brown's text.

³Ilia Delio, OSF, *Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ*, Studies in Franciscanism (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1998) 91.

⁴The Quaracchi editors on p. 46 n.6 give good evidence that Bonaventure is dependent here on Jerome's *De Perpetua Virginitate Beatae Mariae adversus Helvidium*. See *The Perpetual Virginity of Blessed Mary Against Helvidius* #12 in Jerome, *Letters and Select Works*, A Select Library of the Christian Church, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Volume 6 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995) 339: "Our position is this: Every only begotten son is a first-born son, but not every first-born is an only begotten. By first-born we understand not only one who is succeeded by others, but one who has had no predecessor. 'Everything,' says the Lord to Aaron, 'that openeth the womb of all flesh.' . . . The word of the Lord defines first-born as everything that openeth the womb. Otherwise, if the title belongs to such only as have younger brothers, the priests cannot claim the firstlings until their successors have been begotten, lest, perchance, in case there were no subsequent delivery it should prove to be the first-born and not merely the only begotten."

⁵Bonaventure and Bernard of Clairvaux, whom Bonaventure quotes, have in mind the larger context of Zechariah 3:1-4. I quote Zechariah 3:1,4: "And the Lord showed me Jesus the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord. And Satan stood on his right hand to be his adversary. . . . Take away the filthy garments from him. And he said to him: Behold I have taken away your iniquity and have clothed you with a change of garments."

⁶Bonaventure adjusts his quotation from Bernard's Fourth Sermon on the Nativity of the Lord. See SBOp 4.264 for the full text of "in Nativitate Domini Sermo Quartus De abiectiōne et humilitate nativitatus Christi." The phrase, "clothed with light as with a garment," is from Psalm 103:1.

⁷The Quaracchi editors on p. 47 n. 2 indicate that Bonaventure's interpretation of Jesus in the manger as "the bread of life" has illustrious predecessors. In his commentary on Luke 2:7, Venerable Bede writes: "... [he] who is the bread of angels lies in a manger, so that he might nourish us like sacred animals with the food of his flesh. ..." See CCSL 120, p. 49. And in Bede's Homily 1.6 on the Gospels we read: "And it was on account of the preeminent sacrament that, when he was born, he chose a resting-place for himself in a manger, where animals are accustomed to come to take food. For already then he suggested that by the mysteries of his incarnation he would restore all the faithful upon the most sacred table of the altar." Translation from *Bede the Venerable Homilies on the Gospels: Book One, Advent to Lent*, Cistercian Studies Series 110 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1991), 58. ... It should not surprise us that Venerable Bede is dependent on one of his predecessors, Gregory the Great, for his commentary. In his eighth homily on the Gospels, Gregory the Great writes: "And because it is said by the prophet that *all flesh is hay*, he, having become a human being, changed this hay of ours into wheat and said of himself, *Unless the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone*. Hence when born he was laid in a manger, so that he might nourish with the food of his flesh all the faithful like sacred animals, lest they remain empty of the food of eternal understanding." Translation modified from what David Hurst denotes Homily 7 in his *Gregory the Great, Forty Gospel Homilies*, Cistercian Studies Series 123 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1990), 51.

⁸Bonaventure's interpretation, whether "mystical" or not, has a long pre-history. In Letter 108.10 To Eustochium, Jerome quotes Paula as saying: "Hail Bethlehem, house of bread, wherein was born that Bread that came down from heaven." See *Jerome: Letters and Select Works*, p. 199. ... In his Sermon 8 on the Gospels, Gregory the Great has: "It was fitting too that he was born in Bethlehem. Bethlehem is translated, 'house of bread,' and it is he who said: *I am the living bread who came down from heaven*. The place in which the Lord was born was called the 'house of bread,' because it was truly going to come to pass that he would appear there in a material body who would nourish the hearts of his chosen ones by an interior food" (p. 51 of *Gregory the Great, Forty Gospel Homilies*). ... In his homily 1.6 Venerable Bede writes: "... for Bethlehem has the meaning 'house of bread,' and he himself said, *I am the living bread which descended from heaven*.' Because he descended from heaven to earth in order to grant us the nourishing fare of heavenly life and to satisfy us with the favor of eternal sweetness, the place where he was born is rightly called 'house of bread'" (*Bede the Venerable, Homilies on the Gospels, Book One*, p. 56).

⁹In this quotation from Bernard's *Third Sermon on the Nativity of the Lord*, Bonaventure abbreviates Bernard's thought. The thought of Bernard and Bonaventure is that Christ, eternal Wisdom, could have chosen any mother and any way to be born. By choosing a poor mother and poor circumstances, he has laid down a way of life which is in contradiction to that of the world. (See SBOP 4.258).

¹⁰The Quaracchi editors on p. 48 n. 2 rightly point to 1 John 2:16 as the source of the "three things" in the world: "concupiscence of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

Elizabeth of Hungary: Medieval Princess or Sharper Image?

Giles Schinelli, TOR

As the work on the sources continues to progress, we followers of Francis and Clare find our blessings to be many. Richer translations, sources once obscure now readily available, and new insights into personages through their writings excite and overwhelm at the same time. This faithful return to the roots of Franciscan evangelical life kindles in me an enthusiasm to explore. Presently it is Elizabeth of Hungary who captures my imagination. This attraction was fueled last year while I was on a Franciscan Study Pilgrimage. In a number of places, like the Church of San Francesco a Ripa (on the banks of the Tiber) and the Capella Ungharese (in the crypt of St. Peter's), Elizabeth's image seemed to beckon to me. The memory of these encounters encourages me to share the fruits of my exploration. I am further motivated by a puzzling portrait of Elizabeth which hangs in the Franciscan church where I most recently served. In this portrait, she has a very Wagnerian look, complete with blond braids, royal crown, and roses. First some background.

Background

André Vauchez, in his book *The Laity in the Middle Ages*, has a chapter entitled, "Female Sanctity in the Franciscan Movement." He notes that between the years 1198 and 1431 the number of women proposed for canonization rose dramatically. In this period 21.4 percent of the saints belonging to mendicant orders were female, and of the lay saints more than half (58.5 percent) were women. He compares this to the period between the years 500-1200, when fewer than 10 percent of the saints venerated in the West were women.¹ Commenting on these statistics, Vauchez remarks that this change in direction was no doubt due, in part, to the Franciscan ideal and the activities of the Franciscan friars.²

**SHE TRUSTED
THAT GOD
WOULD PROVIDE
AS SHE TRIED
TO LIVE AS ONE
POOR PERSON
AMONG OTHER
POOR PERSONS.**

Giles Schinelli, TOR



But exactly how did the Franciscan vision and the activities of the friars effect this shift? How can we understand this change in direction which Vauchez calls the "feminization of sanctity"? What was happening in society and in the Church that conspired to bring about such a change in religious sensibilities? The answers to these questions are complex and essentially beyond the scope of this article. But it is important to sketch briefly some of the developments because they give substance to Elizabeth's life. These developments also serve as a kind of prism through which the lives of early Franciscan women, especially those who did not leave writings, have relevance for today.

First, it is helpful to remember that the twelfth and thirteenth centuries built upon a climate of reform and change which had begun much earlier. The structural reform of the Church initiated by Pope Gregory VII (c.1075) and the Cluniac reorganization of monasticism developed new awarenesses over a period of time. One began to ask "whether each and every Christian (not just members of the hierarchy and monks) might be called by the command of the gospels and the example of the apostles to model her/his life on the gospels and apostolic standards."³ In other words, reform orchestrated from above began ever so slowly to influence changes which developed from below in a variety of places and in many guises. It is analogous to our own experience as Church some thirty years after Vatican II.

Secondly, it is clear that in the eleventh and twelfth centuries a certain clerical mentality presented women as "creatures incapable of spiritual reflection and understanding, frivolous, fickle and inconstant."⁴ Women were thought to operate under the dual handicap of presumed physical and moral weakness as well as the passive role to which the Church consigned them.⁵ The reasons for these views are interesting, and recent research has helped us to understand their causes.⁶ This mentality was not unique to the Church. It was mirrored in a medieval society shifting from a feudal base to a growing money economy. Greed and the will to power mingled with an obvious double moral standard for the sexes. Men considered women as chattels or as pawns to be used in arranged marriages which would further political or social ambitions. It was an uncommonly violent society, capitalistically ambivalent and essentially Catholic. Preachers condemned trade and the charging of interest as immoral. Yet, surprisingly, we find an increasing number of women, in spite of the handicaps listed above, developing a religious self-awareness marked by abandonment of worldly goods and devotion to the needs of the poor and the sick.⁷

Thirdly, few seem to have understood women's new religious self-awareness or what it prophesied, except perhaps the ubiquitous Jacques de Vitry. In the twelfth century, the Church exhibited a guarded (and ambiguous?) openness to these new initiatives, perhaps in an opportunistic attempt to stem the

growing number of women who, the reports suggest, were avidly drawn to certain movements with heretical overtones.⁸ The rapid spread of the Franciscan movement was taking place amid all of this cultural shifting. That it took on a kind of prominence is not hard to imagine.⁹ From the evidence, one suspects that it served a dual kind of function. On the one hand, the Franciscan movement was a conduit for Christian ideals, highlighting and promoting the gospel values of humility and voluntary poverty. On the other hand, it served as a kind of protector—albeit unwillingly—of a developing and novel kind of religious expression.

This very brief historical sketch suggests that in trying to understand medieval persons it is helpful to examine as much evidence as possible. The development of persons is never a simple matter. Much goes into the mix. Conclusions should not be drawn hastily because cause and effect are not easily ascertained. Grundmann seems to say it best:

The frequently expressed opinion that the women's religious movement of the thirteenth century can be explained entirely in terms of the economic and social distress of women in lower, poorer social levels, or that it originated with women who could not marry due to a shortage of men and hence had to seek some other means of support, not only contradicts all the sources, but utterly misunderstands them and their sense of religiosity.¹⁰

While it is true that human development is conditioned by external circumstances, the mere examination of external circumstances does not capture the whole truth or mystery of how a person's life takes shape. Longstanding friendships with women and men assure me that a person's development has an inner, sometimes hidden and sometimes mysterious, dimension. In this respect, women and men share a certain common ground. Experience teaches that life is fashioned not given. Personal sensitivities, grace, faith, attraction to certain values are some of the tools used in the process. Is it possible to get to this level of exploration when it comes to Elizabeth? Let's take a sharper look.

Elizabeth of Thuringia

Elizabeth, princess daughter of King Andrew II of Hungary and Queen Gertrude, was born in 1207 about the time young Francis of Assisi was repairing the Church of San Damiano and trying to understand God's design for his life. Elizabeth's sister Mary would marry Asen II, the King of Bulgaria. Her brother, Béla, would eventually become the King of Hungary. Her maternal aunt was Queen Hedwig of Poland and her first cousin on her father's side was Agnes of Bohemia with whom Clare of Assisi later corresponded and who is

known in these letters as Agnes of Prague. Among her other maternal relatives were the abbess of Kitzingen-on-the-Main (Mathilda) and the Bishop of Bamberg (Eckbert).

In 1211, at the age of four, Elizabeth was betrothed to Ludwig IV of Thuringia, son of Duke Hermann and Duchess Sophie of Bavaria. At that time she was brought to the castle in Thuringia, the Wartburg, near Eisenach. There she was raised with her intended husband, some six years her senior, along with his older sister (Irmingard), three brothers (Hermann, Henry, and Conrad), and a younger sister Agnes who would have been about Elizabeth's age. In 1221, the year the Franciscans successfully came to Germany, Elizabeth and Ludwig were married. She was fourteen and he twenty. They had three children—a boy (Hermann) and two girls (Sophia and Gertrude). Ludwig died in 1227 as he was embarking for the Holy Land. Elizabeth lived another four years after his death. She died on November 16/17, 1231. Pope Gregory IX canonized her in Perugia on May 27, 1235.¹¹

Nesta de Robeck, in her biography of Elizabeth, provided a valuable service by making available in English the testimony of certain witnesses who were questioned as part of the process of Elizabeth's canonization. Along with these testimonies, she provided letters from Conrad of Marburg, Elizabeth's spiritual director, as well as other pertinent documents related to the canonization process.¹² Lacking written material by Elizabeth herself, these sources put us into astonishingly close contact with our subject. Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, in the very extensive and interesting introduction to her book, details the history of these earlier sources and the commentaries which have been made on them. She remarks that the letter of Master Conrad to Pope Gregory IX (the former Cardinal Hugolino), as well as the testimony of the witnesses to the miracles and the deposition of Elizabeth's four maidservants, were compiled remarkably early, that is between 1232 and 1235.¹³ This fact gives them pride of place and is one of the reasons that the publication and study of them is so important.¹⁴

The second letter of Conrad of Marburg to the Pope fills in some details about the last two years of Elizabeth's married life and her four years as a widow. This information enables us to complete a thumbnail sketch of her life and affords us some insight into the multidimensional layers of her emerging personality. Conrad mentions her dedication to providing food for the poor and hungry and her care for the sick. The latter concern caused her to build a hospital, he says, near Wartburg castle and later another one in the town of Marburg.

Most definitely a product of his time, Conrad further mentions his refusal to allow Elizabeth to beg from door to door, his reasons only implied. As a spiritual director of some expertise, he proudly outlines the discipline he imposed on her, in the name of humility, by removing her maidservants.¹⁵ Read-

ing Conrad's description of her, one is struck by three things: her practical interest in the poor, the hungry, and the sick; her fierce determination to embrace a life of voluntary poverty; and his somewhat grudging admiration of her response to the call to holiness.

However, the best witness to Elizabeth's complex personality comes from the testimony of her four maidservants. The text in English is entitled the *Deposition Made Before the Commissioners for the Cause of Canonization*.¹⁶ The text follows no chronological order. The testimony of the maidservants is interwoven in a stream of consciousness style which is sometimes difficult to follow. The four women are Guda, Isentrude, Elizabeth, and Irmingarde. Guda was one year older than Elizabeth and lived with her from the time she went to the Wartburg at age four until some years after Ludwig's death. Isentrude, a noblewoman, lived with Elizabeth five years during Ludwig's life and one year thereafter.

Two incidents reported by these maidservants enable us to glimpse the depth and richness of this emerging personality. The first has to do with Elizabeth's introduction into the world of what we would call social analysis. Isentrude tells us that Elizabeth's spiritual director admonished her not to make use of her husband's goods unless she was sure they were honestly acquired.¹⁷ This directive had to do particularly with foodstuffs, and Elizabeth complied as did her companions/servants. Her husband supported this initiative even though he feared the reproaches of those about him. Apparently, Elizabeth had an arrangement with Ludwig in which she had access to the use of certain funds. These funds allowed her the freedom to purchase food which had been legitimately obtained.

In her book on discipleship, Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza focuses on what she calls the features of Elizabeth's outstanding and independent personality. Referring to this particular directive she comments:

Elizabeth's contribution consisted in seeing poverty not as willed by God but as closely linked with the lifestyle of the rich and noble classes. She recognized that many consumer goods were unjustly taken away from the poor peasants who were her subjects. Peasants and petty workers paid for the luxurious living of the princes and lords. . . . Elizabeth's vow was a decisive step in the medieval praxis of almsgiving. She not only shared her husband's goods with the poor; she also publicly protested against the injustices done to them. Her contemporaries recognized the revolutionary potential of her action. Ludwig's family attacked her and the surrounding gentility ridiculed her.¹⁸

No doubt living this radical and prophetic-justice stance (as we might say today) was not easy. But when Elizabeth was supported and protected by her loving husband, surrounded by companions who followed her lead, and had

money to provide food from untainted sources, the challenge, though inconvenient and difficult, was not impossible.

But the situation dramatically changed after Ludwig's death. The testimony of Guda and Isentrude is not always clear. At times it is even contradictory. The initial impression is that after her husband's death Elizabeth was driven from the castle by her brother-in-law. This impression is justifiable given the reaction of Ludwig's family to her public protest about ill-gotten food. Ancelet-Hustasche's explanation is more cautious, however. When Ludwig died the duchy passed to his son, but all the members of the family inherited the family possessions in common. Since the son of Elizabeth and Ludwig was still a minor, Ludwig's brothers, Henry and Conrad, took charge of the disposition of the estate. The women were mentioned and their dowries included in the family property. The revenues from their dowries were given to them primarily in the form of subsistence. After the death of a husband there were two possibilities for a widow. Either she could continue to receive the usual subsistence or there could be an arrangement by which she received a modest share of the estate and from then on ceased to be a coproprietor of the family possessions.¹⁹

One of the maidservants testifies that, after Ludwig's death, Elizabeth was "thrown out of the castle and deprived of the property which belonged to her." But later on this witness and others testified with a different twist and portrayed Elizabeth as having some financial resources. What actually happened? It is possible that Elizabeth had no choice but to leave the castle. She realized that the financial arrangements she had enjoyed with her husband could no longer be maintained. If the only support she could claim from the family was the usual subsistence, she had a significant problem—she was no longer able to discriminate in any way between ill-gotten and legitimately acquired foodstuffs. The exigencies of this situation were in conflict with the discipline Master Conrad had enjoined on her and which she had fully embraced. Thus, she was forced to leave by the unresolvable conflict she faced. This was a critical moment in which her identity was being forged, most probably by the Franciscan ideal of voluntary poverty.²⁰

The maidservants later testified that both her uncle, Bishop Eckbert, and Master Conrad, knowing that a better arrangement could be made that would insure some modest future financial support, acted on her behalf in this regard. That seems to be the reason why the servants testify in two places that after her husband's burial she returned to Thuringia to obtain some of her dowry and that in Marburg she was distributing money to the poor.²¹ Yet, Elizabeth seemed strangely detached from these financial concerns and set her sights on practical ways to live with and for the poor.

Her maidservants also testified to a second incident that provides insight into her emerging personality. Elizabeth is remembered by these witnesses as

a person who tried to live in solidarity with them (i.e. her women servants) and with others who were not of her class. She never let herself be called "mistress." She refused to be addressed by the formal "you" but insisted that they should use the familiar form of speech when speaking with her. Her intuitive approach to expressing the ideal of the imitation of the poor Christ was novel to be sure. She enlisted the support of husband and servants. She did not define herself narrowly in terms of either her privileged class or her status as a mother. She had an intuitive grasp of what we call today systemic injustice, giving to the poor not only food, beer, and clothing but the necessary tools to work. She trusted that God would provide as she tried to live as one poor person among other poor persons. She compromised when necessity demanded it, but never as a radical disciple of the poor Christ.²²

Conclusion

This portrait gleaned from very early sources is somewhat different from the story of the roses, which has long been a popular vehicle for learning about Elizabeth's life. The legend portrays her as hiding her charitable works from her royal husband out of fear. When she is found out, she prays for a miracle and it is granted. The miracle, in the form of roses which conceal her almsgiving, protects her from the anger of the duke. The legend certainly portrays the charitable works that were incumbent on a noble medieval lady. But it conceals what her maidservants tell us about Ludwig's support of his wife's charity as well as the deep love he shared with her. It certainly, as one commentator suggests, keeps her remote from the visions and goals of contemporary women and men.²³ Not surprisingly, this legend is not found in the earliest accounts of Elizabeth's life.²⁴

Manselli, whose take on these early testimonies is a bit different from mine, sums up both Elizabeth's multidimensional personality and her importance in the Franciscan story:

Whether through the influence of her first confessor, a Franciscan, or through direct acquaintances with the Friars Minor, Elizabeth had reliable information about Francis of Assisi. She offered herself to him in a Franciscan church and later built a hospital in his name. She certainly felt his influence, but it is worth emphasizing strongly that her image of him was not yet that of the biographers. In fact, if we wish to characterize Elizabeth's personality as a whole, we must say that, for her time, she is the saint closest to Francis of Assisi. Paradoxically, she is closer to Francis through her life and activity in the world than even Clare of Assisi, who was obliged to live within the walls of a monastery.²⁵

¹André Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices* ed. Daniel E. Bornstein, trans. Margery J. Schneider (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 172.

²Vauchez, 172-173.

³Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism*, trans. Steven Rowan with an Introduction by Robert E. Lerner (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 7.

⁴Vauchez, 174.

⁵Vauchez, 174.

⁶Vauchez, as well as other sources cited in this article.

⁷Jo Ann Kay McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 233-235.

⁸Vauchez, 174.

⁹Vauchez, 174-175.

¹⁰Grundmann, 82.

¹¹For dates and other significant historical data, I have found the following helpful: Jeanne Ancelet-Hustasche, *Gold Tried by Fire: St. Elizabeth of Hungary*, trans. Paul J. Oligny, OFM and Venard O'Donnell, OSF (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1963). (This work was originally published in 1946 by *Editions Franciscaines, Paris.*) Nesta de Robeck, *Saint Elizabeth of Hungary: A Story of Twenty-four Years* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1954).

¹²de Robeck, 155-203.

¹³Ancelet-Hustasche, xvii-xix.

¹⁴Huyskens' work *Quellenstudien zur Geschichte der hl. Elisabeth, Landröfin von Thüringen* is often quoted as a source. It was published in Marburg in 1908 and is the first time that the proceedings of 1235—the testimony of the four maidservants—was published.

¹⁵de Robeck, 183-187.

¹⁶de Robeck, 155-181.

¹⁷de Robeck, 158.

¹⁸Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesiology of Liberation* (New York: Crossroads Books, 1993), 45.

¹⁹Ancelet-Hustasche, 150-151.

²⁰Raoul Manselli, "Royal Holiness in the Daily Life of Elizabeth of Hungary: The Testimony of Her Servants," trans. Edward Hagmann, OFM^{Cap.}, *Greyfriars Review*, 11.3 (The Franciscan Institute, 1997): 322, note 30.

²¹de Robeck, 168.

²²Manselli, 311-330.

²³Schüssler-Fiorenza, 43.

²⁴Cf. Brigitte Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint: A Collection of French Hagiographic Romances of the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 152-171. (See here three versions of Elizabeth's life written about 1258-1270.) Cf. also Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, vol. 2, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 302-318. (This written about 1260.)

²⁵Manselli, 329

A Home for the Poor? A Look at the Social History of the Friars Minor in the Thirteenth Century

Benedikt Mertens, OFM

The Church has widely come to the awareness of the special place the poor are to be given in its midst. When Latin American Christians started some decades ago to promote a Gospel based *preferential option for the poor*, they had in mind a conversion process which went far beyond the practice of mere assistential works of charity, for which, by the way, Christians have always earned the admiration of non-believers. The Church rather declares its solidarity with the poor and their just struggles, allowing them to become subjects and decision-makers in society and Church. In other words, the Church commits itself to become a Church with the poor and eventually of the poor. As the final document of the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Puebla (1979) reminded us, this process implies ground-breaking reorientations:

It is important that we reevaluate, in community, our communion and participation with the poor, the humble, the lowly. It will be, at the same time, necessary to listen to them, to accept their deepest aspirations, to value, discern, encourage, correct, with the desire that the Lord guide us to make real our unity with them in one body and one spirit. This demands of us . . . the personal and emotional renunciation, according to the Gospel, of our privileges, ways of thinking, ideologies, preferential relationships, and material goods.¹

Given its poverty- and minority-oriented self-understanding, the Franciscan movement seems to have the charism and potential to play an exemplary role in the Church's option for the poor. The question that I would like to pursue in this article is how and whether the Friars Minor in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries were able not only to reach out to the poor and powerless of their time but also to integrate them into the movement initiated by Francis of Assisi. This historical perspective might invite us to screen our

own ways of looking at the poor and of living our vowed poverty in a world of social inequalities and injustices.

Early Concepts of Egalitarianism and Social Powerlessness

A look at the mixed social composition of the first generation of friars does not lead to the conclusion that Francis had in mind to promote a movement harboring and coordinating the social protest of the marginalized lower classes of central Italy. Instead, as the Lord gave him brothers (Test 14), he invited them to share in a Gospel fraternity open to all social levels, "rich or poor, noble or insignificant, wise or simple, cleric or illiterate" (1Cel 31; also 1Cel 37).² This integration of men from such different backgrounds (nobles, clerics, rich burghers, peasants) into a form of life based on egalitarian relationships was in itself provocative and did not pass unnoticed in a society so conscious of its determinant stratifications. Jacques de Vitry, for example, the famous external observer of the early Franciscan movement, ascribes its growth to the astonishing fact that the Minors "refuse no one entry into their Order, except those bound to marriage or to another Order." What a challenge this must have been to the actual members of the early fraternity. The clerics were given no privileges over lay brothers; and those joined together who, in the world, had belonged to different camps in the struggle between nobles and commoners in Assisi and in the war between Assisi and Perugia. The same challenge was provided in Clare's community at San Damiano in which she invited all sisters without respect for the class divisions encountered in the commune to be part of the communal decision-making process. Thus, when calling for a weekly chapter, she did not want to see anyone excluded, "for the Lord frequently reveals what is best to the least [among us]" (RCI 4:18; also 2:1). She also did not seem to attach to the servant sisters of her community any inferior status, as was so often the case in monastic communities of her time. Clare thus omitted in her Form of Life the passage of the Rule of Innocent IV in which the pope had asked the servant sisters to wear a distinctive dress (RIIn 5).

Francis's Gospel fraternity received a distinctive shape from the commitment to evangelical poverty as strict non-appropriation in an all-inclusive sense—no property, no litigation over their dwellings, no claim of positions within the fraternity, no privileges fostering more ready acceptance in Church and society. Such a commitment went against the social contract of the communes according to which each citizen was expected to contribute actively to the communal increase of power, independence, and wealth. The friars opted for making their living by working with others and by begging alms, thus placing themselves outside a money-based economy. This would necessarily bring them into close contact with those excluded from the success story of

the rural or urban elite, be they old nobility or the emerging leaders of the mercantile class. The friars were admonished not fear such a social positioning, but rather rejoice to live their minority "among people considered of little value and looked down upon, among the poor and the powerless, the sick and the lepers, and the beggars by the wayside" (RegNB 9:3). This classical line taken from the Rule of 1221 describes well the devastating dimensions of poverty. The poor are reduced to non-persons since their situation is characterized by a lack of all it takes to be successful in life—riches, power, health!

The very life-style of the early Franciscans allowed them to develop with the poor privileged relationships that hardly existed anywhere else in the society and that helped to give back to the marginalized their human dignity. This happened much more by the concrete solidarity of day-to-day contacts and sharing of scarce resources than by initiating large-scale charitable projects. At least, Francis seems never to have used his former "Assisi-contacts" to raise money and means for an institutionalized service for the poor. And even though their work and their mobile life led the early friars to share closely in the life of the lower classes, the latter were not the exclusive addressees of minorite penitential preaching (see RegNB 23:7) nor were they the privileged recruits of the Franciscan movement. We conclude rather that membership in the early fraternity was open to people from all social backgrounds, provided they showed signs of conversion to a life of joyful poverty and minority in following the poor Christ. This eventually meant different things for different people. Those coming from lower social conditions were offered a genuine evangelical and fraternal perspective on a life they already knew and from whose hardships they had suffered, including the feeling of having been excluded from God's love. For others, their conversion to the evangelical life of the early friars' included a painful rupture from promising careers and from the attitudes and privileges that their social status had offered them.

Development of Social Consciousness

Much of what has been said so far is authenticated by the Rule of 1221, which best shows the freshness and boldness of the friars' self-understanding and life-plan at this early stage. On the other hand, major new developments occurring during the following decades would influence and alter to a great extent the outlook and general orientation of the Order. These facts are more evident in some late thirteenth-century documents. They give us some hints as to how open the Order was at that stage to invite men of modest origins to participate in its particular form of religious life.

It is beyond any doubt that the mendicant orders and the Friars Minor in particular managed to draw the attention of the well-to-do to the fate of the poor and to create a new consciousness of social responsibility. They did so by

their life-style, their preaching, and their actions. Throughout the thirteenth century, we see Italian friars involved with work at leprosaria and as reformers of communal statutes, which bettered the situation of the destitute. In France, Gilbert of Tournai and Eudes Rigaud were assigned by King Louis, himself a Franciscan tertiary, to exercise social advocacy wherever bailiffs on the royal estates committed deeds of injustice against the poor. The friars thus helped to give these poor widows and peasants a voice and to make their complaints heard. The Franciscan tertiaries, for their part, realized their penitential vocation by generous charitable activities, investing their own means and lives to help the poor, the sick, and the uneducated. Recent scholarship has been able to identify a whole variety of "social works" exercised by the Penitents of St. Francis, such as "hospitals for the sick, hospices for the poor and travelers, 'soup kitchens' for the poor, centers of care for the needy, services to the prisoners, recovery of the abandoned, the care of the mentally ill and those wounded in war, schools for girls and foundlings, and even homes for the redemption of prostitutes."³

A particular field in which the friars could impart their own social consciousness on others was their far-reaching preaching activity. Franciscan and Dominican preachers alike conveyed an ethos which on the one hand severely troubled the consciences of the well-to-do and on the other hand gave the poor the consolation of being among God's beloved children. In terms of individual salvation, the "rich and the powerful were held to be potential sinners and the poor and humble potentially better Christians likely to obtain salvation."⁴ In their sermons, the friars could address the peasants, the lepers, and the destitute and tell them that their state was not caused by sin. Rather, the Son of God had made his home among the poor and announced to them that, according to Luke 6:20, they were honored and called blessed by God. Since the friars were close to the poor and good to them, the latter were willing to endure the preachers' exhortations to avoid the sins which were normally ascribed to their state: lying, fraud, theft, impatience. Thus, although poverty as such was neutral to virtuousness, the pauper who made the best of his or her situation and remained honest had nevertheless good chances to please God.

Development of Distinctions in Understanding Poverty

Franciscan preachers like Guibert of Tournai, John of Wales, Francis of Mayronnes, and Nicolas of Aquaevilla uttered warnings against the rich and spoke positively of those who were poor by necessity. Nevertheless, they still saw themselves—the *voluntary* poor—as the ones for whom God not only provided salvation but heavenly glory. The famous German popular preacher Berthold of Regensburg presumed that those entering Franciscan religious life were the only ones who merited the title "poor in spirit" (Mt. 5:3) since

they voluntarily gave up possessions and riches which they could otherwise have had and enjoyed without sin. This situation reflects the sharp distinctions to be found in homiletic, exegetical, and spiritual literature of the thirteenth century. The mendicant authors distinguish between the *poor with Peter* (thus "apostolic poverty") and the *poor with Lazarus*, or, put in different terms, the *poor in spirit* and the *involuntary poor*. Wherever the Franciscans responded to attacks against their mendicancy, their treatises introduced evangelical perfection and voluntary poverty as synonyms. At the same time, the material expression of Franciscan poverty and powerlessness became more a matter of theoretical distinction rather than an experience of living side by side with those who were poor by necessity. Given the acclaimed superiority of "poverty by choice," it is difficult to believe that a pauper would have been welcomed among the friars with open arms and without second thoughts.⁵

Discrimination in Admitting the Poor to Membership

This suspicion is nurtured by passages from the so-called *Determinationes questionum circa Regulam FF. Minorum*. This document assembles responses to questions about Franciscan living which arose during the third quarter of the thirteenth century.⁶ We do not have to trace all these questions back to the academic "mendicant controversy" at the university of Paris. They reflect deliberations which could have been brought forth by any observer of the friars' life. Two questions particularly concern admission to Franciscan religious life. The interrogators ask, for example, why the friars do not accept all candidates without discrimination. Understandably, the response refers to people with mental disfunctions who could not bear the discipline in the Order and actively support its mission. Yet, the text then also rejects the poor "who would wish to live with us not for the sake of God, but for their sustenance." Although not necessarily speaking about all the poor, this passage still shows a great deal of suspicion about the motivation of the materially poor. Again, Franciscan voluntary poverty and the "real" poor appear as two different worlds.

Following the same mentality, the Franciscan dialogue partner also explains why the friars are not eager to support the lay penitents. Among other arguments, he expresses his fear that a penitent in want would rely on the friars to have his bodily needs met. This material argumentation sounds not only like a refusal to share with the poor, and especially those following the same evangelical inspiration, but implicitly admits that obviously the friars had reached a level of material well-being that could be envied.

But who were the young people the friars liked to recruit? The frank Franciscan spokesman aims at all youth who could possibly promote the Order by their "knowledge and activity" (*scientia et industria*), that is, people with basic academic education and a good sense of business. Especially apt are "those

who are famous in the world," since they are most likely to move others by their example. Finally, some youths have to be taken in out of respect for their intercessors, that is, the sons and relatives of the friars' benefactors.

Preference for Wealth and Nobility

Why this obvious option for the famous and the powerful? As we know, the Order soon became largely urban-based. It was in the rising towns and cities all over Europe that the friars founded their dwellings and study centers. As their main activity now consisted in preaching and pastoral care of the citizens, the friars' economic basis was provided by alms gathered by begging and also, to a large extent, by generous benefactors of the emerging middle-class. The friars entered into a kind of symbiosis with the more affluent burghers and lower nobility and both sides benefited. John B. Freed, studying the mendicant insertion into German society during the thirteenth century, comes to this conclusion:

The success of the mendicant orders, measured at least in human terms, depended upon the existence of familial, feudal, and personal ties between the friars and potential patrons. . . . The price which the friars paid for such material and moral support was a partial loss of their independence. It was impossible for the friars to ignore completely the temporal interests of their benefactors. As the disparity between the friars' professed spiritual aims and actual practices became increasingly more obvious, criticism of the mendicant orders mounted.⁷

This criticism is also echoed in our text which asks why the friars "honor the rich more than the poor" and why they "sit more often at the tables of the rich than of the poor." The answer does not at all deny the facts as they are brought forth. Yet, the response is convincing only to the degree that one is willing to enter into the logic of this kind of reasoning. A first set of answers is very practical. After the fatigue of their journeyings, so states the writer, the friars are better served at the table of the rich since they have enough to give and there they can feel like sitting at a table of friends who know the friars well. On the other hand, the friars fear they would deprive the poor of what little they earn by their daily work when being invited to their tables.

Another argument is more pastoral and strategic. A meal at the table of the rich is used for pastoral conversations which could otherwise not be had without difficulty, since the rich normally do not come easily to the friars' places for spiritual counseling. Moreover, the lives of the affluent are more complicated and naturally need more attention than those of simple folk. It is then for the good of the poor if the friars deal with the rich, since "who moves the powerful to do good serves many people." In this perspective, "there is more usefulness in the correction of one rich [person] than of some poor."

The responder finally argues with reference to the secular order of this world, wherein God indeed has placed the rich in a position to be honored more than the poor. In seeking acquaintances among the powerful and rich, the friars thus only respect the God-given order! Such an argument affirms a posture that Francis wanted to overcome in his fraternity. According to Celano, Francis insisted that "the order should be for the poor and unlearned, not only for the rich and wise. 'With God,' he said, 'there is no respect of persons,' and the minister general of the order, the Holy Spirit, rests equally upon the poor and the simple'" (2Cel 193).

Yet, not only was it favorable for the friars to stay close to their benefactors, but it also made sense that the latter would place their sons in the Franciscan Order, which had quickly become an indispensable and prestigious entity within social urban life. The upward social aspirations of many a family passed through the friars as a possible "avenue for social advance."⁸ D. R. Lesnick's case study on Dominicans and Franciscans in late thirteenth and early fourteenth century Florence points especially to this phenomenon. He sees the newly immigrated artisans and shopkeepers and other professionals as the main reservoir of Franciscan recruitment. This movement, he believes, was motivated by the "desire of these new urbanites to scale the social and political ladder."⁹ They were, most likely, the "industrious people" the writer of the *Determinationes* wished to see among the novices.

Another witness to the changed self-understanding of the Order in the second half of the thirteenth century is the *Chronicle* of Salimbene de Adam, written in his old age between 1283-88. The gabby chronicler of Parma covered, by his own experience as a friar, exactly fifty years of mainly French and Italian Franciscan history. His account is heavily biased by his own aristocratic leanings and his unreserved support for the Order's move towards becoming a clericalized and learned institution at the service of the Church. In his static conception of life, we encounter the world of the powerful and the rich as the protagonists of history, burdened with responsibility to rule and to do justice, and, on the other side, the sinister world of the poor, for whom he shows more disdain than compassion. He is convinced that "it is through the commoners and the farmers that the world is destroyed, and through the knights and noblemen that it is preserved" (640s).¹⁰

In more than two hundred eulogies throughout his extensive chronicle, Salimbene speaks with admiration and complicity about the powerful, the handsome, and the rich. In his mind, beauty and nobility of blood and manners always go hand in hand. When it comes to his own brethren, he adopts the same categories, adding the friars' outstanding learning and careers. In a debate with secular clergy over the right of the friars to mendicancy, he highlights the superior nobility and career-potential of the Minors in comparison to the seculars. His own religious brothers, he states, "were and are, as noble,

rich, powerful, learned, and wise as these men are themselves [the secular clergy] and so they would be priests, archpriests, canons, archdeacons, bishops, and perhaps patriarchs, cardinals, and popes" (423). As a matter of fact, the chronicler rejoices in the fact that their careers do not only exist in the subjunctive mood but are very real.

Salimbene takes great pride in the nobility and high learning in his Order. This stance is, of course, by no means singular. A chronicler quite naturally tries to substantiate the success and worth of his object of praise by referring to its adherents from among the leading groups of society. Bartholomew of Pisa in his monumental late fourteenth-century work *De conformitate*, for example, saw the Franciscan Order excel in sanctity, science, nobility, and numbers over all other orders. Accordingly, he adds a long list of secular dignitaries joining the Order as well as of friars raised to high ecclesiastical positions. In the same vein, he hails the sanctity and nobility among the Poor Clares and the Franciscan penitents.¹¹ In fact, the noble bias, especially among the Poor Clare saints, is more than evident, since of the nineteen Clarian *beatae* of the thirteenth century, five belonged to the royalty, thirteen were gentlewomen, and one was described as rich.¹²

Salimbene's Biases

Such statistical evidence demonstrates that this attitude was normative for a friar like Salimbene. It is not by accident that, according to him, the clarian abbess of Gattaiola, who was only "the lowly daughter of a baker woman," happened to be "extremely cruel, shameful, and dishonorable in her governance" (45). A similar expression of contempt was expressed when he characterized a certain bishop as "avaricious and unlearned like a layman" (528). Salimbene seemed to be particularly scandalized by the "Brothers of the Apostles," that is, the movement founded by Gerard Segarelli (around 1260) which, despite its official suppression by the Second Council of Lyon (1274), was still popular and appeared to the friars as a real competitor at the time Salimbene wrote his chronicle. According to the categories of pastoral usefulness adopted by his own order, Salimbene considered these brothers as "useless for preaching or singing the Church offices; they could not celebrate mass, nor hear confession, nor teach in schools, nor give counsel, nor even seek out benefactors" (249). This could not be otherwise, since their leader was "a man of base family, an illiterate layman, ignorant and foolish" (250) and had therefore rightly been rejected from entering the Franciscan Order in his youth. Accordingly, Salimbene wishes Segarelli's followers to be occupied with base occupations "like scouring latrines" rather than "serving in a religious order" (253). He is convinced that "[i]f these men were in the Order of the Friars Minor, they would scarcely be allowed to wait on the tables or wash dishes or go out begging for bread" (277).

From this statement we can already imagine how Salimbene will assess the situation of the lay friars in his own order. According to his convictions, they are, in fact, just as useless for the Friars Minor as are the "Pseudo-Apostles" for the Church, since they lack appropriate learning for any reasonable apostolate and even provoke scandal by their behavior. He thus shows himself content that after the era of Brother Elias, "the lay brothers were properly reduced in importance, for their admission to the Order was almost totally prohibited" (83). As a matter of fact, Salimbene refers to the legislation which the Order adopted in the early 1240s according to which lay friars were not only denied holding offices in the Order but could only be admitted by the minister general in cases of extraordinary exemplarity and particular usefulness to the Order!

By his contempt for a popular movement like that of Gerard Segarelli and his followers, Salimbene implicitly expresses his disdain for the very beginnings of his own Order which started off not unlike that of the "Pseudo-Apostles." Nor does he hold back his contempt for the "useless" lay friars in his own community, whom he considered a burden for the learned Order and its clerical mission. Seeing the situation through the lense of Salimbene at the end of the thirteenth century, one might wonder if young people attracted by the Franciscan way of life but without adequate education and honorable family background were not forced to find their spiritual home in other popular evangelical movements or under the umbrella of the Franciscan penitents.

Later Developments

As Franciscan history moves into the fourteenth century, the picture does not change. Few lay friars were accepted, exceptions being made for members of noble families. The service of lay friars was not considered necessary, since many friaries employed secular servants. Within the fraternity, superiors and lecturers were given special favors such as having their own servants and being able to eat and pray apart from the "ordinary friars." The friars were now expected to find personal benefactors to supply their own needs. This practice created such inequality that the General Statutes of 1325 and 1354 had to remind superiors not to forget the "poor friars" (*fratres indigentes*). John Moorman relates the case of some young English friars who, in 1360, had to give up their novitiate for lack of means to buy their own clothes.¹³ Similar observations could be made about the practice of social stratification among both fourteenth-century Poor Clares and some women members of the Third Order Regular.

During this time, Poor Clare convents all over Europe were not only being sponsored by the nobility and well-to-do burghers but were highly, if not exclusively, populated by descendants of the most powerful families. Such

members were allowed to keep private property and personal servants. Additionally, the dowry requirement introduced in the second half of the thirteenth century did not help members of lower social status to join the Order.¹⁴

This survey of the insertion of the Franciscan friars into thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century society reveals a self-understanding and subsequent practices that display the friars' identification with upwardly oriented groups of urban society. The concern to share the Franciscan charism with the poor in terms of means and membership seems noticeably lacking. The friars voluntarily assisted the knights, merchants, and professionals to deal in a proper Christian way with their social aspirations. The Franciscan preacher could admonish the rich not to forget the poor and the latter to bear in patience their destiny in view of the heavenly reward. But those "poor by necessity" did not qualify for membership with the Friars Minor who called themselves the "poor of Christ," exalting their voluntary poverty which so often came down to comfortable social security assured by the supportive network of dependable benefactors.

This, of course, is quite a black-and-white picture. We cannot say with certainty how the poor were welcomed quantitatively and qualitatively into the Order during its first hundred years of existence. The question did not seem to matter all that much. The poor are not given a face and a name in our historical documents. But, has history ever been written from the perspective of the poor? At least, we should not forget the rare Franciscan voices who seemed to advocate a life of proximity with the poor and marginalized. At the end of the thirteenth century, such a voice was raised in the person of Peter John Olivi, who articulated in his *Question on Highest Poverty* a denunciation of the hypocrisy of those religious who called themselves adherents of "true poverty" without knowing destitution and hardship by experience and without compassionately and lovingly being with the poor. Olivi even goes further. According to him—and here he appeals to common sense—"the poor are more easily attracted to the love and profession of poverty than the rich." "Was it not the rich young man who was not able to leave his riches behind?" he asks.¹⁵

What of Us Today?

Olivi's perspective seems to encourage a mutual encounter between Franciscan religious and the poor. This poses questions for us today as does the opposite argumentation coming from texts like Salimbene's *Chronicle* or the *Determinationes questionum*. We are living in a different time and in highly diversified cultures. Yet, we have to try to make sense of our Franciscan commitment to minority and poverty in a given social context and in the sight of the poor. The questions we might want to ask the early friars are the same we have to address to ourselves. We need to give an account of our life-style,

which is sometimes far superior to that of the economically poor. We might ask who are our acquaintances? at whose tables do we sit? where are our communities located? and to whom do we ordinarily give hospitality in our houses? Are we not inclined to adopt the view that it is more promising, if not necessary, to be where the social and cultural elites meet? Have we not too readily agreed to educate the future elite of our respective countries, since "who moves the powerful to do good serves many people?" Can that ever be a specifically Franciscan educational option as long as there are masses of poorly trained youth?

On the other hand, we might look at our modes and criteria of recruitment and ask if they eventually exclude entire parts of the population out of an understandable quest for a high educational standard. Finally, are our fraternities, our structures, and our very hearts prepared to welcome the poor and the cultural world they bring along with them?

The Church's option for the poor aims at a *mutual* process of conversion and evangelization which liberates the poor from centuries of neglect and makes it possible for the Church to receive the gifts of the powerless. This cannot be realized without the poor opting for the Church. Accordingly, as a Franciscan family, we are invited to pave a way to meet the poor humbly, not only in our professional charitable relationships but also on our own grounds, in the sanctuary of our homes and communities, as associates or members, and as brothers and sisters in our common search for bread and peace for all.

Endnotes:

¹Nos. 974-975, cited in Leonardo Boff, *Saint Francis: A Model for Human Liberation*, trans. John Diercksmeier (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 78.

²The following editions of the Franciscan sources will be used: *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, Vol. I: *The Saint*, eds. Regis Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann and William J. Short (New York: New City Press, 1999); *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies: English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis*, ed. Marion Habig (Chicago IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973); *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. and trans. Regis Armstrong (St. Bonaventure NY: Franciscan Institute, 1993).

³Lino Temperini, "Poor with Christ to serve the poor," *Propositum* 3.2 (1998): 5-26, here 16. For the beforementioned social activities of the friars see Michel Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages: An Essay in Social History*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 123-128, and Luciano Canonici, "Leper, Leprosarium," *Greyfriars Review* 9 (1995): 247-258.

⁴This is the result of the examination of thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century mendicant sermons on Lk. 16:19-31 by Jussi Hanska, "And the Rich Man also died; and He was buried in Hell"—*The Social Ethos in Mendicant Sermons*, *Bibliotheca Historica*, 28 (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1997), 168.

⁵Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages*, trans. Steven Rowan; with an introduction by Robert E. Lerner (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 133f. Grundmann stresses the upper-class origin of many Franciscans as well as of the leaders of the poverty movement as such. He comes to a quite cynical conclusion that perhaps echoes the

mindset of "the typical friar" he describes: "A commitment to voluntary poverty would be an empty joke in the mouth of someone who was unable to lower himself any further than need had already placed him. Yet in the religious poverty movement, poverty and humility were chosen and experienced as religious values because they meant overcoming and renouncing the goods and honor of the world, demanding a conversion, a turning away from secular prosperity and social position to another way, which was that of the gospel."

⁶The two parts of this text are edited in *Sancti Bonaventurae Opera omnia, VIII* (Quaracchi: Coll. S. Bonaventurae, 1898), 337-374. The chapters that will be referred to are the pars I, qq. X, XV, XXII, XXIII, and pars II, q. XVI.

⁷John B. Freed, *The Friars and German Society in the Thirteenth Century*, The Medieval Academy of America Publication No. 86 (Cambridge MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1977), 171.

⁸Freed, 133. Freed refers, among others, to the singular career of Henry Knoderer, a baker's or miller's son, who, as a Friar Minor, became archbishop of Mainz and primate of Germany in 1286-88.

⁹D. R. Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence: The Social World of Franciscan and Dominican Spirituality* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 54. See also page 62: "A son's enrollment among the Santa Croce Franciscans opened avenues to power and control in Florentine society and politics. The avenues to socio-political participation and influence available through the Franciscan Order were especially attractive to Florence's upwardly aspiring immigrant population."

¹⁰The numbers given after the following citations refer to the pagination of the edition of Joseph L. Baird, Giuseppe Baglivi, John Robert Kane, *The Chronicle of Salimbene de Adam*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 40 (Binghampton, NY: Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies University Center, 1986). See also M. Boriosi: "The *Chronicle* of Brother Salimbene: A Polemical Chronicle?" *Greyfriars Review*, 12 (1998): 315-359.

¹¹See Bartholomew of Pisa, "De conformitate vitae beati Francisci ad vitam Domini Iesu," *Analecta Franciscana*, 4 (Quaracchi: Coll. S. Bonaventurae, 1906): 175-364. The "ideological background" of this chapter is the author's effort to show how Francis was the seed for a flourishing movement in the Church comparable to the development of the Church at large. In his *Letter in Response to an Unknown Master*, Bonaventure adopts a similar perspective when confessing "that what made me love St. Francis' way of life so much was that it is exactly like the origin and the perfection of the Church itself, which began first with simple fishermen and afterwards developed to include the most illustrious and learned doctors." Cited from *St. Bonaventure's Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order*, trans. Dominic Monti, Works of Saint Bonaventure, 5 (St. Bonaventure NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994), 54.

¹²Michael Goodich, *Vita perfecta: The Ideal of Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1982), 184. See also pp. 159-168 for the social background of Franciscan First Order and Third Order saints.

¹³John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order: From its Origins to the Year 1517* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), ch. 28 "The Friars' Standard of Living," 350-368. See pp. 406-428 for the Poor Clares and the Third Order in the fourteenth century.

¹⁴The rejection of Poor Clare candidates without dowry is discussed in the above-mentioned *Determinaciones*, p. II, q. XVIII, pages 369f. The tertiary community around Angelina of Marsciano in Foligno was called already by the end of the fourteenth century "monastery of the Contesses," which does not necessarily mean, though, that non-nobles were excluded from entry. See Raffaele Pazzelli, *The Franciscan Sisters: Outlines of History and Spirituality* (Steubenville OH: Franciscan University Press, 1992), 66.

¹⁵Cited from the edition of Johannes Schlageter, *Das Heil der Armen und das Verderben der Reichen: Petrus Johannis Olivi OFM. Die Frage nach der höchsten Armut*, Franziskanische Forschungen, 34 (Werl: Coelde, 1989), 168. See also 96f

Contributors

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Robert Karris, OFM, is a friar of Sacred Heart Province, St. Louis, Missouri. He earned a Th.D. in New Testament at Harvard University in 1971 and taught at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago from 1971-1987. He then served as Provincial from 1987-1991 and as a General Definitor of the Order from 1991-1997. He is now Researcher in Residence at The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, New York. Among his recent publications are *Prayer and the New Testament* (Crossroad, 2000) and *The Admonitions of St. Francis: Sources and Meanings* (The Franciscan Institute, 1999). He will soon publish an annotated translation of *Bonaventure's Commentary on Luke's Gospel, 1-8* (The Franciscan Institute).

Clairvaux McFarland, OSE, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Our Lady of Lourdes, Rochester, Minnesota. Her art work has frequently graced the pages of *The Cord* and other Franciscan Institute publications. Her current work involves the creation of icons.

Benedikt Mertens, OFM, a German friar of the Fulda Province, worked for a number of years as a missionary and formator in Togo, Africa. A graduate of The Franciscan Institute, he contributed a chapter, "The Eremitical Movement During the 11th Century," to *Franciscan Solitude* (The Franciscan Institute, 1995). He continues to serve in Africa as part of the friars' Africa Project.

Giles Schinelli, TOR, is a member of the Immaculate Conception Province and was Provincial Minister from 1986-1994. He was President of the Franciscan Federation from 1994-1995 and presently serves as retreat and spiritual director at the San Pedro Spiritual Development Center in Winter Park, Florida.

Finally the holy night arrives. Blessed Francis is there with many of his brothers. . . . The hay in the manger is prepared, the ox and the ass are arranged around the manger, and the vigil begins with joy. A great multitude of people stream together from various places, the night is filled with an unaccustomed joy and made luminous by candles and torches. And so, with a new ritual, the festival of a new Bethlehem is celebrated. . . . He who was asleep or dead in the hearts of many, owing to forgetfulness, was awakened and recalled to memory by the teaching and example of Blessed Francis. The solemnities were completed with great exultation, and everyone happily returned to their homes.
(Life of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer 10)

A Biographical Profile

Voice from the Past

Sister Frances Léa Laughlin, SMIC

As a fitting event in the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of *The Cord*, the Franciscan Institute had the pleasure of visiting with Sister Frances Léa Laughlin, SMIC, who spent a couple of days on campus at St. Bonaventure University from September 17-19. Sister Frances played a critical role in the earliest days of the Institute, (late 40s and early 50s) assisting Father Philotheus Boehner, OFM, in the vital work of retrieving and translating important works of the Franciscan tradition and beginning enterprises that would make Franciscan sources more available to English-speaking Franciscans worldwide.

As a young religious, Sister Frances got her bachelor's and master's degrees at St. Bonaventure University. She wanted to go to China as a missionary, but the war broke out and she couldn't get the necessary passport. So, her congregation, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (West Paterson, NJ), sent her to Catholic University to get a doctorate in English. While there, she also studied art. She minored in medieval Latin and paleography because her dissertation was a transcript of a medieval treatise on rhetoric. By the time she had finished that work, she had pretty much mastered fourteenth-century Latin paleography. But at the same time she had done some earlier paleography for a course on medieval Latin history. Thus she became a very skilled paleographer. She finished her degree work just before she left for China in the late 40s. She was in China just long enough to unpack her suitcase and her trunk when she was expelled, along with other missionaries. They flew out in a cargo plane in a rush and got as far as Shanghai, which was still open. There they slept in the freezing cold on bags of sugar which were stored on the docks ready to be shipped out. It was the middle of winter.

Having returned to the United States, she found herself as a qualified scholar with nothing to do. Mother Pacifica, her superior, told her that Father Philotheus Boehner needed her at The Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University, where sisters from her congregation were already working in domestic occupations. At that time, Father Philotheus was working on Bonaventure and Ockham texts. He had the theory that Ockham was the Father of Modern Logic. Sister Frances's work was to help transcribe texts from

photocopies of manuscripts. These photocopies were not always great, and the paleography was very tricky. The original scribes had not always been aware of what Ockham was trying to say. So the transcribers had to try to get a correct transcription. Thus, Sister Frances would read the manuscripts and write out transcriptions by hand, passing them on to Father Philotheus for editing.

As for the Bonaventure material, Sister Frances assisted Father Philotheus by translating the *Itinerarium*, the notes of which are still the standard after all these years. There has yet to be an English edition where the critical apparatus is as fine.

Sister Frances and Father Philotheus also collaborated on a new series of works called Spirit and Life. She helped translate a *Legend of Clare*, which was edited by Ignatius Brady, OFM, and also worked on *Margaret of Cortona*. The idea of this series was to make works available in English that would be hard to get hold of otherwise. At that time, there was almost nothing in francescana for the formation of young Franciscans, either male or female. Sister Frances was at the very beginning of the contemporary movement to make valuable Franciscan resources more accessible to English-speaking Franciscans.

In 1950, Sister Frances also worked with Father Philotheus in founding a new periodical called *The Cord*. The initial idea for this came from her acquaintance with many sisters who were studying at St. Bonaventure during the summer months. She realized that these sisters were very intelligent women, very knowledgeable in their fields, but, as she put it: "They didn't know beans about what it meant to be Franciscan!" Many of them, though identified as Franciscan, did not even follow a Franciscan Rule. She and Father Philotheus would talk about these sisters and how wonderful it would be to provide something for them. Doing formal Franciscan studies was not feasible then because they didn't have the necessary theological backgrounds. Sister Frances and Father Philotheus thought they'd start out with something solid, but simple—something on the level of the religious magazine, *Sponsa Christi*. They would do a Franciscan *Sponsa Christi!* And so *The Cord* was born in November, 1950. The rest, as they say, is history.

Sister Frances lives today in New Mexico among the Navajos in a little place called Blue Water Acres. Now in her 80s, she continues to design cards and posters, a work she began while at The Franciscan Institute fifty years ago. Her designs are widely marketed. She enjoys the missionary context and works as a volunteer for parishes and other agencies that serve the Native Americans of the area.

Sister Frances has seen many changes in the past fifty years and served in many capacities. She honored us by returning to The Franciscan Institute to tell us stories about our beginnings. She was glad to see that we are, in her words, "still alive." And we, of course, are very glad that she, too, is still alive to help us remember gratefully our origins.

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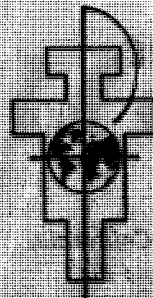
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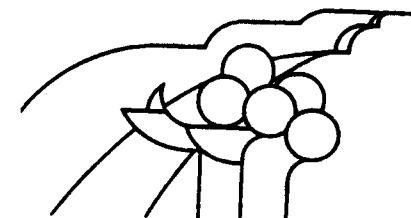
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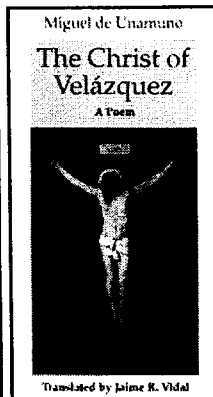
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Friday, December 8-Sunday, December 10, 2000

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Friday, February 3-Thursday, February 8, 2001

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Friday, February 9-Sunday, February 11, 2001

The Canticle of Conversion. Sponsored by The Franciscan Federation. At Franciscan Center, Colorado Springs, CO (see ad p. 311).

Sunday, February 18-Friday, February 23, 2001

Conference Retreat for Sisters. With James Gavin, OFMCap. At Franciscan Center, Hastings on Hudson. Contact Franciscan Center, 49 Jackson Ave., Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706; ph. 914-478-3696.

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The Canticle of Conversion. Sponsored by The Franciscan Federation. At St. Joseph Center, Tiffin, OH (see ad p. 311).

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BenBern	Blessing for Brother Bernard	1Fragm	Fragment of other Rule I
CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun	2Fragm	Fragment of other Rule II
EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony	LaudDei	Praises of God
EpCler	Letter to the Clergy	LaudHor	Praises to be said at all the Hours.
1EpCust	First Letter to the Custodians	OffPass	Office of the Passion
2EpCust	Second Letter to the Custodians	OrCruc	Prayer before the Crucifix
1EpFid	First Letter to the Faithful	RegB	Later Rule
2EpFid	Second Letter to the Faithful	RegNB	Earlier Rule
EpLeo	Letter to Brother Leo	RegEr	Rule for Hermitages
EpMin	Letter to a Minister	SalBMV	Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
EpOrd	Letter to the Entire Order	SalVirt	Salutation of the Virtues
EpRect	Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples	Test	Testament
ExhLD	Exhortation to the Praise of God	TestS	Testament written in Siena
ExhPD	Exhortation to Poor Ladies	UltVol	Last Will written for St. Clare
		VPLaet	Dictate on True and Perfect Joy

Writings of Saint Clare

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

Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel	First Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
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CL	Legend of Clare
CSD	Consideration of the Stigmata
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L3S	Legend of the Three Companions
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SC	Sacrum Commercium
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