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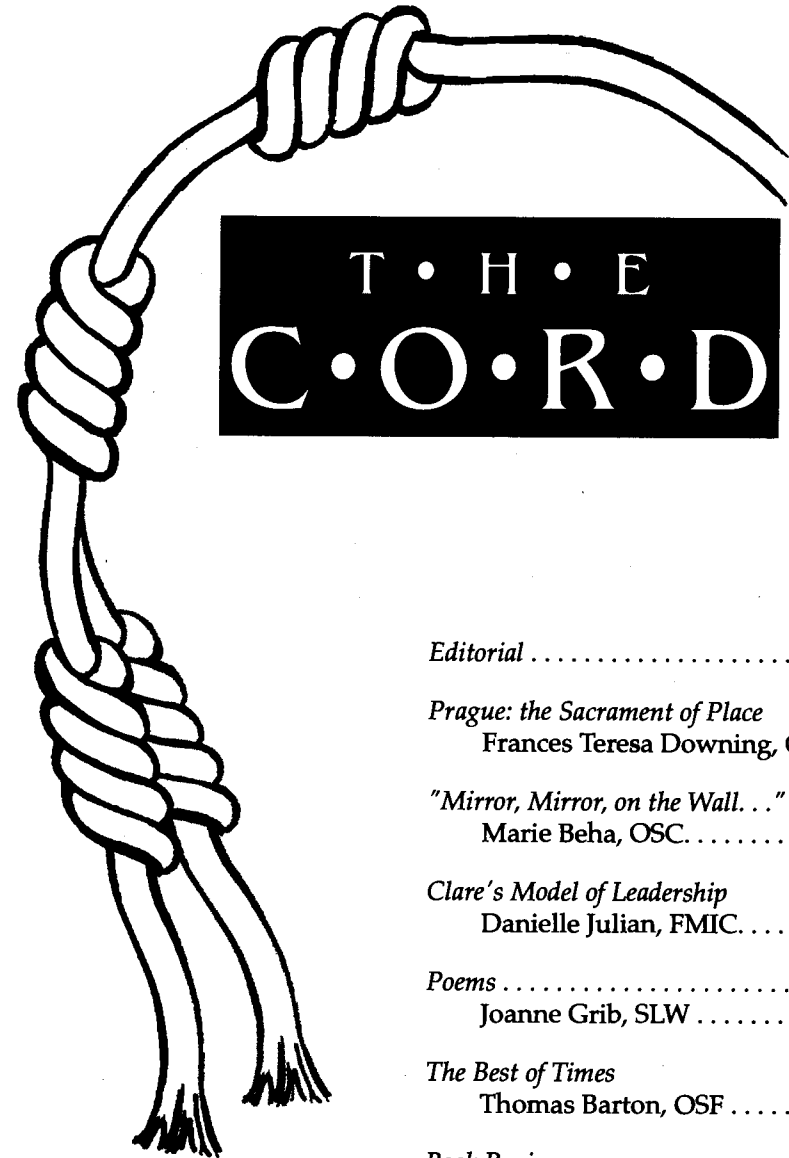
For further information
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materials contact:

The Franciscan Institute
St. Bonaventure University
St. Bonaventure, NY 14778
Phone: 716-375-2105
Fax: 716-375-2156
franinst.sbu.edu



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THE CORD
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Publisher: Margaret Carney, OSF
Editor: Elise Saggau, OSF

Poetry Editor: Frances Ann Thom, OSF
Distribution Manager: Noel Riggs
Production Assistant: Bridget Quinn

Editorial Board: Mary C. Gurley, OSF, Robert Karris, OFM,
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1. MSS should be submitted on disk (or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced).
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 13 ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.
Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or italicized.
4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:
(1Cor. 13:6). (2Cel 5:8).
(RegNB 23:2). (4LAG 2:13).

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

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Editorial

Recently an article in a popular magazine decried the loss of the art of letter-writing. With telephones and e-mail so very fast and convenient, it becomes less and less common for any of us to write thoughtful and well-crafted letters. It is difficult to put a value judgment on this loss in a world and culture where instantaneous and telegraphic communication is such a high priority. However, in our Christian and Franciscan tradition, we recognize that it was often in beautiful and well-developed letters that the sacred word, the blessed "good news," was disseminated and then passed down from generation to generation. While we have received from our tradition four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Book of Revelation, twenty-one of the writings that carry the gospel message in the New Testament collection are in the form of letters. And in the early Franciscan movement, while the actual writings of Francis are relatively few, quite a large proportion of them are letters, which Francis clearly wanted copied and distributed widely.

Clare of Assisi, too, from the narrow confines of her cloistered community at San Damiano, reached out to distant places through her letters, carried by the itinerant friars as they journeyed across Europe. Only five of her letters survive—four to Agnes of Prague and one to Ermentrude of Bruges (possibly a composite of two letters).¹

For us, their followers, these letters of Francis and Clare have become precious documents. They represent first-hand witness to the thought, inspiration, aspiration, and spiritual wisdom of our founders. They are sources of spiritual direction for us today as they were for the people of the thirteenth century, who sought, as we do, an authentic and orthodox way to live the Christian, gospel life with a single heart, mind, and spirit.

This July/August issue of *The Cord* focuses, as usual, on Clare and her particular tradition and wisdom. How blessed we are to have such a mother and sister, from whose simple and few writings we are still harvesting spiritual treasure for ourselves and for our world.

Elise Saggau, OSF

¹Cf. Clare of Assisi: Early Documents, ed. Regis Armstrong (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1993), 53.

Prague: the Sacrament of Place

Frances Teresa Downing, OSC

Pilgrims in Prague

On July 1-9 in the millennium year, a small, international group of people gathered in Prague Airport and made their way to the St. Ludmilla Hostel. From there, we looked across Prague to the Hradčana on the hill top, the great castle where Agnes's family had lived both when she was a child and later after she had become a sister to Clare of Assisi. That castle, brilliantly illuminated at night, and Agnes's monastery were to become familiar places to us over the next eight days, symbolizing two significant aspects of her life.

During those eight days, walking daily through the streets of Prague, learning to find our way on the Metro, learning to shop without knowing the language, we discovered again the international power of the smile. As we did so, we began to realize what a powerful and ever-present reality Agnes is for the Czech people of today. They may know little of her faith or even of her story, but there is no doubt that she is still the Mother of the Czech nation. It seemed to us, as we attended Mass in various churches of the city and as we walked around the streets, that Agnes still has a task to perform for her people. The work she has to do in her land is essentially the same as the work that Clare did for her when she guided her forward into the fullness of God's light.

A small incident revealed how necessary this work still is. One day Ramona Miller and I set out to find any traces of the friary that had, originally, been attached to the monastery. We finally tracked it down, disguised as a very up-market hotel. Talking to a young waiter, we learned that one whole wall of the hotel was thirteenth century and that various arches and doorways had been retained in the careful restoration. In the hall was a small ceramic. "I don't know what that is," the waiter said, "but I know it came from the monastery." It was a charming mother and child in terracotta, possibly later than Agnes's time, but very simple and lovely. "I don't know what that is but I know it came

from the monastery"—such a simple statement, so evocative of present-day Prague, where gifts from Agnes lie scattered round. The people know it, but have no idea of their true meaning. This is the major task that Agnes has now to do for her people.

Agnes's Prague

All this became even clearer when we visited the castle, massive and extensive rather than elegant and fairytale. We walked through chambers where Agnes must have walked, entered the Benedictine chapel where she and her family had prayed, and saw the secular pomp which she had renounced, symbolized by photos of the State Jewels of Bohemia. From the high window we looked down, as she must have done, onto Prague and the broad Vltava River flowing peacefully under lovely bridges. All this was old Prague, which in Agnes's time was quite small. Later the city spread onto other hills and is still spreading. We soon realized, too, that we were in the heartland of Gothic art, with crucifixes of great pathos and pain, and wooden, once painted, statues of Mother and Child. In many—if not most—of these statues, the figures are smiling or laughing at each other in a moment of intimate delight. Seeing these artifacts humanized our experience of the castle, which had been designed as a symbol of power. It was also, we suspected, an extremely cold place, so we were comforted by the sight of a massive ceramic stove in one of the rooms.

Thanks to the generosity of the Czech State officials, we were able to spend four mornings in Agnes's own monastery. In recent years, the Czech government has made the building a national monument, restoring it and using it as the National Gallery. The restoration has been done with love and historical accuracy and the fabric receives constant care. Being pilgrims, we experienced the usual setbacks. On the day we arrived at the monastery, in spite of all the long-term preparations on the part of the pilgrimage team (Ramona Miller, OSF, John Wojtowicz, OFM, André Cirino, OFM and Vit Fiala, OFM), it appeared that we would not be able to enter because the building was closed for yet more restoration. What would we have done without Vit, himself a Czech, who negotiated tirelessly and gently, smoothing difficulties and building many bridges for future pilgrimages? As a result of his work, we ended up even better off! We were allowed in for four mornings. Not only were there no tourists (because of the restoration), but the historian in charge came along on two national holidays and gave us freely of her time and expertise. She showed us around and told us about the various places. Each day, André Cirino spoke on the content and meaning of the letters, and, after a break, Ramona Miller explored the spiritual message of each letter. We had these talks in a small room that was, it is thought, in the general area where people would have come for help, material or spiritual.

Imagine what it meant to us Poor Clares to listen to Clare's letters being read, commented on, and discussed, there where they had been heard for the first time. We also had ample time to roam around, to become familiar with the building and garden, to feel—for a moment—almost like a member of Agnes's own community. Imagine sitting in the garden and looking at it with the eyes of people who themselves live in enclosure and are well aware of the implications of, for instance, the extremely high surrounding walls, the four wells within the enclosure, or the enormous bread oven outside the refectory. Here bread had been baked for the community and for the huge numbers of poor persons who came to the house. I sat often by this great bread oven. It seemed such a powerful symbol of the way Agnes nurtured her people, of the way she was accessible to the poor and the needy. In this she was greatly influenced by the life of her cousin St. Elizabeth of Hungary. St. Hedwig was another saintly ancestor and further back, St. Wenceslaus (+905) and St. Ludmilla. Margareta Dagmar, who figures so largely in Danish folklore, was Agnes's step-sister, daughter of her father's first wife.

It quickly became apparent that Agnes's way of life was different from Clare's in some respects. For example, the whole place was a royal foundation. This meant that the chapel was built to be a royal burial place, similar to La Sainte Chapelle in Paris (designed for the same purpose). Again, the property and its land were made a kind of protectorate by King Wenceslaus, Agnes's brother, and the police had no jurisdiction there. So the monastery became a place of sanctuary and later, when the country was occupied by the Hapsburgs, perhaps even a focus of nationalist resistance. This would seem indicated since, at the time that Agnes died, the Bishop of Prague had allied himself with the invading power and felt it was not a good career move for him to bury her. As a result, she lay unburied for two whole weeks until the Provincial could come from Germany to officiate.

These facts all highlight her public stature. There was no secret escape in the middle of the night for Agnes. With twelve other noble women, she entered the monastery she herself had built in a ceremony attended by the King and Queen, the Queen Mother, seven bishops, the court, and a blaze of publicity. Before she was even professed, Gregory IX had appointed her abbess. Did he realize that in the matter of poverty she would prove as stubborn, intransigent, and uncooperative as the abbess of San Damiano? Clare was important to Gregory because of her holiness, her connections with Francis, and her immense personal authority among her contemporaries. Agnes was important because she was a daughter of a significant royal house, for Bohemia was at the peak of its golden age and offered a valuable alliance for any European crown.

During the pilgrimage, we were frequently struck by the fact that the many artistic representations of Agnes all showed her dressed as a Poor Clare, but

nearly always wearing her crown and with a building nearby. She was and is a Princess of the Czech people, a builder of the nation in more senses than one. Later, like Clare, she became significant because of her holiness, because she was another key figure in the struggle for the privilege of poverty and because she kept faith long after the death of Clare. In spite of all that, Agnes never lost her particular role with regard to her own people. Yet by a curious irony, her place of burial is unknown. When the sisters fled during the Hussite Wars of the fifteenth century, they exhumed Agnes's body from the church and reburied it in the garden in an unmarked grave. By the time they returned, nobody could remember exactly where she lay. To this day her body has not been found.

One day we had Mass in the chapel of St. Francis, where it is thought Agnes received the habit from the friars and made her profession. This was almost certainly the occasion when Clare sent her that first letter and those four gifts—a veil, a small wooden bowl, a crucifix, and some prayer beads. Did Agnes bring them to the ceremony in this very chapel? All these questions were profoundly moving to us, bringing Agnes to life in an intense way. During the penitential rite of our Mass, we each touched the stones of that sacred place, seeming to sense a thirst, mysteriously arising from the stones themselves, to hear again the voice of prayer and praise.

Present at the Mass were two Secular Franciscan leaders, one of whom had been imprisoned under communism for disseminating Christian and Franciscan literature. At the end he spoke a few words, saying that to be present at this Mass in this particular chapel was like a miracle. It was two hundred and fifty years, we reckoned, since Mass had last been celebrated there. At this moment, for me, Agnes ceased to be simply the person to whom Clare wrote those marvelous letters and became a woman with a story not yet completely told, a woman of character and strength as enduring as the stones of the chapel. Agnes was as thoroughly of her time and place as Clare was of hers—a woman to be learned and learned from.

Each day we had a pilgrimage Mass in a different church of the city. One day we went to (yet another) Church of St. Francis, where a young man was acting as sacristan. It emerged that he belonged to the Order that Agnes had founded to attend to the sick in her hospice/hospital, the Order of the Cross and Red Star or the Croziers of the Red Star. Under communism their numbers had dropped to eight, but now there are thirteen young men in formation. This was a total surprise since nobody had realized the Order was still in existence. What other surprises did Prague hold, we wondered? For instance, Agnes's monastery had had a very competent scriptorium, work from which is still extant, known and available at least to scholars. Joan Mueller, OSF, whose notes on Clare's letters formed the basis of André Cirino's pilgrimage talks, is currently studying the correspondence between Agnes's family and Gregory

IX; and this is probably only the tip of the iceberg.

On several occasions we walked through Wenceslaus Square, so familiar to some of us from pictures of the Prague Spring and the fall of the communist government in 1989. We saw the huge and very beautiful statue of Agnes with other saintly royal women around their King, Wenceslaus, sitting astride his horse. Nearby stands a small memorial to the two young men who had torched themselves in protest at the communist regime. Fresh flowers are placed there still.

There had long been a tradition that, when Agnes was canonized, the nation would be freed. Refused permission by the Czech government to canonize her in Prague (as he had wished), Pope John Paul II held the ceremony in Rome on November 12, 1989. As many people as were able attended from the Czech Republic. Meanwhile, crowds were demonstrating daily in Wenceslaus Square against the government. As the pilgrims returned from Rome, filled with the euphoria of the canonization, they came streaming from the station into the Square singing songs in honor of their saint. The next day communism fell. The impact of this on the Czech people is incalculable. As a result of years of atheistic communism, there is extreme ignorance about Christ and Christianity, but all the people know that Agnes was holy, that Agnes is the protector of the people, especially of the poor, that Agnes was a builder, and that Agnes is theirs!

Fruits of the Pilgrimage

For me personally, the most profound fruits of this pilgrimage were twofold. First, I have an enhanced sense of Agnes herself. Clearly she was much more involved in State affairs than I had realized, particularly when her beloved brother Wenceslaus was King, but later too when her less competent nephew, Ottokar II, succeeded him. In her monastery, Agnes held sway. She set up God's Kingdom in which she was the magistrate applying God's justice. In this way the land—perhaps just over two acres—became a place of sanctuary and refuge. Huge numbers of poor came there to be fed, while those fleeing from justice, or injustice, knew that it was a safe place of refuge. More important than that, however, Agnes lived Clare's ideals with a commitment as intense as that of the sisters at San Damiano, though with a different articulation. Just as today, when every Poor Clare house is different but manifestly Poor Clare, so Prague is not San Damiano but was truly a Poor Clare house.

I also gained a sense of Agnes as very clear-headed, very strong, living an intense life of prayer and well able to enter into all that Clare recommended to her. I suspect she was to Clare a peer, a companion in the spirit, a true sister, one who not only shared Clare's ideals but also shared her greatness. Greatness can be a lonely place, and as the conflicts among the friars grew, Clare's

path became increasingly isolated. It is good to realize that in Prague she found someone of comparable stature, whom she had no need to shield or to protect, one who was truly the "half of her soul."

The second fruit of this pilgrimage is a new awareness of the power of place to speak truths of the spirit. There is something about these sacred places of our heritage that speaks to our spirit at a profound, pre-verbal level. We may never be able to articulate adequately what has been said to us, but stones do indeed cry out. Because their communication is deep, their message will work on us almost without our knowing. I have come to think that the spirituality of the Franciscan Order is deprived of a certain nourishment when that particular kind of communication is lacking. Just as we are molded by our birthplace and by the land in which we matured, so the spirit of our vocation is molded by the place in which it developed. In that place we can be nourished subliminally by the original vision. A pilgrimage is a call from God to open ourselves to the sacrament of place. There we can taste something of what our leaders in the Spirit tasted; this is their gift to us, mediated through place. It is mediated in many other ways too, of course. But there is one particular articulation of that original grace that is mediated only through place, and we receive it when we go there as pilgrims and mendicants.

Eighteen of us went on this pilgrimage. Some of us were Poor Clares, some Franciscans, some lovers of Francis and Clare, and some of Czech background visiting the "old country." It was a good group, small enough for us to bond and share. Through our shared experiences, I became convinced that in an ideal world, every Poor Clare would gain profound insights into her vocation by having the privilege of visiting both Assisi and Prague. Some of us believe we have been called to forfeit this privilege by entering the enclosure; others view it differently. This echoes the way in which there were differences of expression between Prague and San Damiano, but great mutual respect. And there is no question but that Agnes was a wonderful Poor Lady.

*I have resolved, as best I can, to beg your excellency and your holiness
by my humble prayers in the mercy of Christ,
to be strengthened in His holy service and to progress
from good to better, from virtue to virtue,
that He Whom you serve with the total desire of your soul
may bestow on you the reward for which you so long. . . .
Farewell in the Lord. And pray for me.*

(First Letter of Clare to Agnes of Prague, 31-35)

"Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall..."

Marie Beha, OSC

The summer after my graduation from eighth grade marked a time of transition in my life. The security of a small grade school was over; high school loomed large ahead. I was scared and eager in equal proportions. Even my body felt strange that summer as I both lengthened and filled out. Nothing seemed the same.

My parents marked this season of adolescence by asking: "Would you like a room of your own? You could have the back bed room." I jumped at the chance—a room of my own, space to be, to sort things out. Never mind that the furnishings were sparse: nothing but a double bed and a huge, old chest of drawers. Later on I learned that the latter was a valuable antique; at the time my interest centered on a very large mirror set in its center.

During that summer's long days, I spent untold amounts of time just gazing at myself in that mirror and wondering: Who am I? What would I become? Maybe, if I looked long enough, hard enough, I could catch a glimpse of the woman that must be hiding somewhere inside. Perhaps you have your own stories of mirror gazing. Perhaps Clare of Assisi did.

In the Mirror That Was Clare

Medieval people, both men and women, were fascinated by mirrors, so much so that they used them in the title of more than one hundred and fifty works from the period. It is not surprising then that Clare of Assisi repeated the mirror image in her writing, especially in her correspondence with Agnes of Bohemia. Perhaps the fact that they were both women had something to do with this; also that they both came from castle homes which could afford the luxury of such nonessential items as mirrors!

In her second letter to Agnes, Clare uses this symbol to suggest a methodology of prayer in the succinct phrasing of "gaze, consider, contemplate, as you desire to imitate" (2LAg 20). Begin by focusing your attention on Jesus,

that mirror image of the Father—look long and hard, take in details; "gaze"; let what you see absorb your full attention. Then "consider"—allow your mind to work with what you see, remembering the gospel passages that describe this Jesus on whom you gaze; then let your imagination work with what you "see" till it becomes your own. But don't stop there. Keep looking until your heart is touched and what you "contemplate" changes not only how you see but who you are, until living and looking become one, as you imitate Christ in your everyday life. This is what Clare experienced and what she invited Agnes—and us—to discover.

In a later letter Clare summarizes the same process: "Place your mind before the mirror of eternity and transform your entire being into the image of the Godhead itself through contemplation" (3LAg 12,13). Though this is work for a lifetime, the process is as practical and daily as each morning's beginnings. Taking a long look in the mirror of what matters eternally puts daily reality into perspective. What seems so important today may fade into insignificance tomorrow and what is barely noticed now may prove solid investment for the future. Present failure may merit eternal reward; the hardships of poverty may ultimately enrich. Such transformation is a matter of changed attitude, of putting on the "mind of Christ" (1Cor. 2:16). Over time, this forms those who look into the likeness of what they see.

For Clare, Jesus himself was the mirror, always turned toward the Father, reflecting back to us in human words and ways the mystery of the God whom we cannot see. The lineaments of Jesus are described in detail in the gospel, and it was this "form of life" that Francis and Clare made their own. Shaped by the gospel, they desired to image Jesus in the same way that Jesus mirrored the Father.

What gospel events are especially revelatory of God's eternal love for us? Clare's heart was most attracted to the crib and the cross. She invited Agnes to

look at the border of this mirror, that is, the poverty of Him Who was placed in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. . . . Then at the surface of the mirror, consider the holy humility, the blessed poverty, the untold labors and burdens that he endured for the redemption of the whole human race. Then, in the depth of this same mirror, contemplate the ineffable charity that led Him to suffer on the wood of the cross and to die there the most shameful kind of death. Therefore, that Mirror, suspended on the wood of the Cross, urged those who passed by to consider, saying: all you who pass by the way, look and see if there is any suffering like my suffering (4LAg 19-24).

Only a long, loving look could have seen so much and so deeply. But Clare knew that the same transforming experience is possible for all who are willing to become practiced in the art of mirror gazing. Incarnation, passion, Eucharist,

all image self-emptying love expressed in the familiar terms of birth, death and sharing food. Small wonder that both Clare and Francis came to view a life of God-centered poverty as eternal riches.

Looking into the mirror that is Jesus, Clare saw, not only the eternal Son of God, the perfect reflection of God made visible for us; she also saw herself. As she advises Agnes:

Gaze upon that mirror each day, O Queen and Spouse of Jesus Christ, and continually study your face within it that you may adorn yourself within and without with beautiful robes, covered, as is becoming the daughter and most chaste bride of the Most High King with the flowers and garments of all the virtues (4LAg. 15).

Here Clare's womanly intuition takes mirror gazing a step further. She knows what we see when we look in a mirror—ourselves, just as we are at that moment with all the flaws and faults critical gazing discovers so easily. But Clare suggests another vision. Look into the mirror that is Jesus and see yourself as you are in him. How do you look in Jesus? How do you look *to* Jesus? In this mirror, each of us is transformed—we see ourselves as we really are. Even our faults, failings, and sins are redeemable, and so they are potential adornments. Writing to the royal Agnes, Clare suggests that only the most splendid of clothes will do to set off the beauty of someone who sees herself as daughter of God and Spouse of the most high King. Perhaps Clare is borrowing Pauline imagery, suggesting that Agnes clothe herself “with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” (Col. 3:12). How appealing, inspiring, and positive an examen of consciousness.

But Clare is still not finished with her use of the mirror image. In her Testament, written towards the end of her life, she carries the analogy one step further, seeing the Sisters themselves as mirrors.

For the Lord Himself has placed us not only as a form for others in being an example and mirror, but even for our sisters whom the Lord has called to our way of life as well, that they in turn might be a mirror and example to those living in the world. Since the Lord has called us to such great things that those who are to be mirror and example to others may be reflected in us, we are greatly bound to bless and praise God and be all the more strengthened to do good in the Lord (19-22).

Just as Jesus mirrors the Father to us, so too, we are to mirror Jesus to others. When others look at us they are to see Jesus incarnate in our being, living in the circumstances of our days, dying in our daily deaths, rising in our

coming to new life. In seeing us, they are to discover Jesus today.

In the same way, when we look at others, we are to see them in Jesus, behold in them Jesus present among us here and now. What a “correction” for our too often faulty vision. Seeing each other in the mirror that is Jesus, we perceive that all of us are “maturing in Christ” (Col. 1:28), perhaps not there yet, but on the way.

Sharing such a vision is contagious, as Clare knew. How we see ourselves becomes the way we see others. The way we see others inspires their vision of themselves, and so we all grow together. It was Clare's hope that within the close quarters of a contemplative community, such “contagion” would spread rapidly. She believed it would change the picture not only for the Sisters themselves but for those outside the monastery, who would begin to see Jesus mirrored in the lives of the nuns with whom they came into contact. These in turn would reflect their own reformed perception to still others. All it takes is a change of vision.

Beginning to See

As we have just observed, Clare began by looking at Jesus. And she never stopped doing so. It is where we too must begin and end. “Keep you eyes fixed on Jesus” was Clare's mantra, and it must become the direction of all our gazing. How? When we want to see something, we begin by looking at it, giving it not just a casual glance but a long, hard look. If we perceive that the object of our attention is worthwhile, we give it at least a second searching look. If we judge it to be precious, we continue gazing until all its details are imprinted on our mind's eye.

“Gazing” at Jesus begins with the discipline of that repeated, long, loving look. Sometimes we start with a gospel scene, “considering” what it says about the God we call “Father,” about Jesus, about our own need for conversion. We continue to think about what we have seen, letting it challenge us to more.

At other times, “seeing Jesus” so captivates our hearts that we cannot take our eyes off him. We look in silence, letting what we see change us in ways that we cannot begin to understand, much less observe. In either case, we see not only Jesus but also ourselves in Jesus. It is this vision that is transforming.

In Jesus, I begin to discover the truth about myself, my true identity, my real relationships with others. Like Jesus, I am a beloved son or daughter, someone with whom the Father is well pleased! Unbelievable! Well, almost! We are so accustomed to seeing ourselves in the harsh light of our own lack of true self love that we are badly in need of vision correction. Even when we fail, sin, or make colossal mistakes, we are still lovable and lovely because we are loved (as the psalmist prays: “In your love make Zion lovely” [Ps. 51]). Seeing

us in Jesus, the Father looks on us as sisters, brothers, family of the Beloved Son. In Jesus we are already forgiven, healed, called to new life. We are already a “new creation” (2Cor. 5: 17).

Seeing Deeper, Moved to Transformation

Secure in a basic sense of our identity “in Christ Jesus,” we can risk the second look that measures our redeemed self against what is still needed if we are to grow into the full stature of Christ (Eph. 4: 13). Even though we realize how unfinished we really are, we are not diminished by this, only challenged to grow. Like children who delight in stretching their small hands against their father’s greater size, we are encouraged by the promise that someday we will be like God for we will see God as God really is (1Jn. 32).

But that is eternity’s vision. For now, the call is to continued growth. Our looking at Jesus gives us direction. We don’t have to speculate in the abstract about the basic lineaments of Christian living. The gospel provides form and shape for our imaginings, preventing us from settling for an image that is limited to our own smallness of vision. We are called to be human, yes, but also to be more than human. Neither is easy. As we look at Jesus, we discover that to be truly human is to become divine because in Jesus we see what is godly revealed in human form. We see God in a way that we can recognize and so can imitate.

This imitation is not an exterior putting on of something that is too big for us. Rather, it is an incremental growth from within. It is the Spirit moving our spirit that forms us in likeness to the divine. On a day to day basis we may not see much difference in ourselves, but over time changes do occur. Like an old video that recalls the way we used to be in contrast with the way we are now, when we see ourselves against the backdrop of a familiar setting, we perceive how different we have become. Something that used to be conflictual is so no longer. What once was beyond us has become part of our customary response. We have changed; or, more accurately, we have been changed. What we could never do by ourselves (and we have had repeated experience of this truth) has now been done in us. And we give thanks.

An Ongoing Experience

But we also see how much more there is to do. The mirror that is Jesus reflects to us not only the major areas that still need to be “conformed” to Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:29), but also and increasingly the details. We discover ever more specifically how unChristlike we still are in so much of our thinking, our acting, our reacting. Yet we are not surprised, much less discouraged. Actually, we are not even particularly interested, because the focus of our care and concern is more on “seeing Jesus.” This brings us back to where we started.

We look at Jesus; we see our self in Jesus; more and more our looking is directed back to Jesus. Mirror gazing has become a habit, even a virtue.

We also see others in this same perspective and discover how beautiful they are. It is rather like seeing a newborn through the eyes of its parents in contrast to the more objective view of a disinterested neighbor. We are caught up in potential rather than limited by obvious incapacity. Looking at others with the eyes of Jesus, we grow in patient understanding; we accept the present, while expecting the future. We don’t gloss over the other’s mistakes, but neither do we dwell on them. “Has no one condemned you? Neither do I” (Jn. 8: 10).

In the mirror that is Jesus, we see every other person as united to us. Nothing is outside this frame of reference, for “all things have been created through him and for him” (Col. 1: 16). The young and the old, the wealthy and the poor, the liberal and the conservative, the friend and the enemy—“all are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). We see this, not in the abstract, but in the specifics of those around us who are immediate neighbors, those with whom we live, work, worship, in the present moment of our lives. But we also become aware that the truth of our relationships in Christ Jesus overflows the boundaries of those whom we know personally, reaching back beyond our memories into the past of all our human beginnings, as well as stretching ahead into the still unfolding future, including communion with all the saints. All our relationships are rooted in Christ and grow in Christ.

Our relationships with other human persons, as well as with all creation, will be framed in the same mirror that is Christ Jesus. Created “through him and for him and with him,” all reality gives us glimpses of the one who is “first born” (Col. 1: 15). From the smallest of particles to the most splendid of natural wonders, all reveal something of the Father’s love for the Son, their own loveliness reflecting divine light and life.

Sometimes our long loving look at Jesus allows us to experience something of this glory, and our spontaneous response will be reverence and awe. Just as often, maybe oftener, we will fall back into our own myopic vision, seeing creation primarily in relation to ourselves. Then we view it as useful to us, economically feasible, something we like or don’t like. Even when this happens, if we have been faithful to our mirror gazing, we may be able to recall a truer, more inclusive vision and be changed by it. At least we can realize that we have a choice, if not of what we see, then surely of how we see it.

Only Jesus

Gazing on Jesus, discovering how we as well as others look in Christ Jesus, brings us into the larger truth that we all exist in the unity of “one body” (1Cor. 12:12). Our form and function will necessarily be different, since our union is not the mechanical uniformity of perfectly fitted pieces, but the dynamic

interaction of a living whole where each member is equally a contributor, even though each contributes uniquely and thus differently. Gazing into the mirror that is Jesus shows us that the whole of creation is greater than the sum of its unequal parts because that total is the whole Christ.

The longer we look into this mirror the more we see the grace of this unity of all reality in Christ Jesus; but increasingly we also perceive "only Jesus." As our vision becomes more inclusive, we not only see everything in Jesus but we also behold Jesus in everything. As the so called Breastplate of St. Patrick phrases it: "Christ be beside me; Christ be behind me; . . . Christ be the vision in eyes that see me; in ears that hear me, Christ ever be." No matter what happens, what we do or fail to do, see or do not see, in Jesus nothing is lost, nothing is useless, wasted; everything is redemptive; everything gives cause for thanksgiving.

As a consequence of this change of vision, we come to see who we are on the deepest and most personal of levels. Created in the image of God, we mirror the Word of God made flesh. This is what it means for us to exist. We are Christians; our true identity is rooted in Christ.

But this identity, given us from the beginning, must also be chosen—or rejected—by each of us. And even this basic acceptance must be repeated over and over at ever deeper levels until we no longer live in "the flesh" (Gal. 2:21), that is, in the ways that previously have given meaning to our lives. Then we can begin to realize with Paul that "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

Conclusion

In the end, what we believe and increasingly live out of is the reality that we are Christ's body. Our life embodies Christ in the world of today; we give flesh, our flesh, to continuing the incarnation. Christ continues to proclaim good news in our words; in our deeds the Father continues to be revealed. The mercy of God is manifest in our mercy; God's peace comes into our troubled world as we live in peace within ourselves and so bring peace to others. In us, the healing power of Jesus again touches those who are sick in body or spirit. In us, the will of the Father is again embraced in total surrender. Because we are "alive together with Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:5), the work of redemption continues in the particular patterns that shape our world.

This identification of ourselves with Jesus is not something we deserve or earn. It is given, rather like our membership in our birth family. It is as basic to our identity as what we express when we say we are a "Jones" or a "Smith," something not to be questioned but simply recognized and accepted. Yet each of us knows that even though baptism has ensured our identity as Christians,

we are still far from living out this reality in the whole of our lives. It is a call we are still trying to answer. Our response can range from whole-hearted desire to foot-dragging reluctance. Like adolescents who question family values, we too can leave home, go our own way, even deny who we really are. Or, perhaps, we continue to live "at home" as Christians, but also explore alternative lifestyles. This spiritual adolescence of ours may go on our whole life long. If we never discover whose we are or where we belong, we will always be seeking to find our way home. When asked "who are you?" we will only be able to give our own name.

In contrast, someone who is coming closer to maturity in Christ Jesus says: I am not myself; I am more than I appear to be. I am not so much independent as dependent in the most radical of ways. Without Christ I am nothing. But in Christ I am my truest self; in Christ I am both called and sent. I am called to be Jesus today; I am sent to bring Jesus to the world in which I live. Both my vocation and my mission are unique. No one else can answer my call, say "present" to my name. And no one else can enunciate the good news in the syllables of my life. If I don't say and do this here and now, it won't be done. The world will be poorer, the body of Christ handicapped, the gospel incomplete. But if I continue to live out my identity as a Christian, as Christ today, then the coming of the kingdom will be hastened. The Father's glory, "reflected on the face of Christ" (2Cor. 4:6), will be mirrored in my person. Just as those who saw Jesus saw the Father, so too, in some small way, those who see me will see Jesus mirrored in me.

*Gaze into the mirror
Of your soul
And see reflected back
His image.*

*Gaze into the Mirror
Gaze into the Mirror*

*Study closely each feature
Of God's face.
Imprint it deeply
Upon your open heart.*

Joanne Grib, SLW

*Copy over each line,
Each stroke
Until the mirror's image
Becomes your own.*

Clare's Model of Leadership

Danielle Julien, FMIC

Religious life in the Church often takes its pattern of leadership and government from common practice in society. This pattern of necessary exercise of authority in a given group, whether it be monarchical, dictatorial, or democratic, is, generally speaking, a hierarchical and paternalistic model. It is a "male" design, which has been indiscriminately applied to both men and women religious and accepted most of the time without questioning its relevance, especially for women.

An authoritarian form of leadership and government is a form of power exercised over people. As a consequence, it often keeps them dependent instead of strengthening the power flowing within and from the group. It is a model that does not encourage members to reflect and question, because decisions are made by those who are believed to know what is best for the group. In such a model, leaders may be seen as part of an elite, a privileged class, at a distance from the "ordinary" members of the group. They are perceived as people to be pleased or feared, which may lead to the inhibition of honesty and trust.¹

Clare of Assisi freely and resolutely opted for a creative and alternative form of leadership, which is reflected in her structures of government. She preferred a much more participative, egalitarian, and empowering framework in organizing her life with the Sisters in the monastery of San Damiano. Clare was an innovator, creating a new form of religious life, not only *for*, but also more especially *with* her sisters. All of them, inspired by Clare's vision, took an active part in creating the life they shared.

Franciscan women today are rediscovering Clare as a source of inspiration for their own attempt to formulate new avenues for the exercise of leadership in religious life. I must say that at first, I didn't feel comfortable turning to Clare as a model. After all, we are followers of Francis rather than Clare. It seemed to me, however, that both Francis and Clare should be considered founders of the Franciscan movement. Clare considered herself a follower of Francis, "his little plant." Some call her "the first Franciscan woman." Never-

theless, I still felt reluctant to look at her as our potential model. In addition, I wondered how the life she experienced in an enclosed monastery of about fifty sisters could inspire an apostolic institute of over four hundred members. So I chose to embark upon this journey, to find elements of her form of leadership and way of governance that might enlighten all of us on our journey.

In our institute, there has been a clearly expressed desire for a renewed model of leadership, a new form of governance, and new structures of government. The 1995 Chapter Statement called for a restructuring in order to meet the challenges involved in reclaiming the missionary dimension of our charism and to be prepared to make the necessary and courageous choices involved. The statement asked for a review of the present government structures in order to move towards restructuring the Institute in a way that is more faithful to living our charism and mission. The Statement also called us to raise our consciousness and understanding of our particular style of servant leadership, our particular style of shared responsibility, and the role of the local minister in the context of shared responsibility.

Restructuring means to look at the structures in the light of the principles underlying them and see if 1) the structures are life-giving, embodying those principles; 2) the structures serve our needs for the community and for the mission; and 3) our principles are Gospel based and Franciscan, as exemplified in Clare. If our structures and principles do not meet these standards, we should consider changing them. Steps have already been taken in this direction, but much is still to be done. The practicalities of the new vision are still to be born, and giving birth is always a painful experience.

We chose Clare of Assisi as our focal point of reference, because she embodies the Franciscan principles of leadership and governance in a feminine way. Clare was a creative leader. Creative leadership "points a finger at the future rather than shakes a finger at the past."² The creative leader is responsible for creating and maintaining an atmosphere in which each sister can realize her potential to the fullness. To follow the logical consequences of creativity and intuition would enable us to develop a feminine model of leadership. Clare developed this model in her way of relating with others in the monastery as a servant, a sister, and a mother. In this paper, Clare's concept of authority will be considered, as well as her leadership and way of governance. I hope to offer out of these considerations some guidelines and suggestions for the future in our pursuit of a feminine Franciscan model of leadership and government.

Clare's Concept of Authority

Our way of governance and leadership needs to be one with our charism as Franciscan women. The basic Franciscan characteristic of this charism is a life according to the form of the holy Gospel. This element is present at the

beginning of all four Franciscan Rules: of the Friars Minor (Rule of 1223), of the Poor Ladies (Rule of Clare 1253), of the Secular Franciscan Order (1978) and of the Third Order Regular (1982). All specify that our rule and/or form of life is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

This Gospel life originates from one's own personal *experience of God*; it flows from a continuous *contemplation* of Jesus Christ; it is expressed in a life of *penance*, which means ongoing conversion; and it aims towards a loving and transforming *union* in and with God. It is a life of *love*—love of God, of Jesus, of the brothers and sisters, and of all creation. It is a life that is highly relational: one cannot be a Franciscan if he or she is not part of some sort of intimate and often quite complex network of relationships. "Loving one another is the heart of the gospel project as Francis and Clare understood it."³

As we are searching for our feminine Franciscan way of governance, there are some elements in Clare which can inform our search: a) authority rooted in love of Christ; b) balance between strength and tenderness; c) exemplarism as an expression of authority; d) three feminine images of authority.

An Authority Rooted in Love of Christ

"The form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters that Blessed Francis established is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity" (RCl 1: 1-2). Clare had one single motivation for her life: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. From the day she was received by Francis at the Portiuncola in 1212 to the day of her death at San Damiano in 1253, that was her *leitmotif*, her dynamism, her determination from which no one, even a pope, would ever be able to distract her. "Strong and passionate love of Christ animated her entire being. This profound and fundamental motive was basic to the whole of Clare's life."⁴ This focus is the source of her authority, an inner power that has no need of any external use of force to lead others. Having Christ as her own focus, Clare followed his example, and like him became other-centered rather than self-centered. Relationship was so important for Clare that it made her reluctant to give commands to her sisters—she would rather do something herself than command another to do it (Proc 1:10).

Clare's loving relationship with Christ is best expressed in her Letters to Agnes of Prague. Although the entire passages should be taken into consideration, the following excerpts illustrate this love:

You took a spouse of a more noble lineage, the Lord Jesus Christ. *In Whose embrace* You are already caught up (1LAg 7:10).

As a poor virgin, *embrace the poor Christ*. Look upon Him . . . , and follow Him, who became the lowest of men, despised, struck, amid the sufferings of the Cross. . . (2LAg 18-20).

So that you too may feel what His friends feel as they taste the hidden sweetness that God Himself has reserved from the beginning for those who *love Him*. And, after all . . . have been completely sent away, *you may totally love Him* Who gave Himself totally for your love. . . (3LAg 14-15).

Happy, indeed, is she to whom it is given to share in this sacred banquet so that she might cling with all her heart to Him. . . . As you further contemplate His ineffable delights, eternal riches and honors, and sigh for them in the great desire and love of your heart, may you cry out: Draw me after you, we will run in the fragrance of your perfumes, O heavenly Spouse! I will run and not tire, until You bring me into the wine-cellar, until Your left hand is under my head and Your right hand will embrace me happily, and You will kiss me with the happiest kiss of Your mouth (4LAg 9:30-32).

"Embrace the poor Christ and love Him totally" sums up Clare's lifelong motivation. It was a fire consuming her. She was "burning with love of God" (Proc 11:5), and she first taught her sisters "to love God above all else and always have the Lord's passion in their memory" (Proc 11:2). The heart of Clare's life is this loving embrace of the poor and suffering Christ. She says to Agnes in her third Letter: if you are to be united to Christ, this is the pathway, going deeper and deeper into woundedness, staying at the foot of the cross like another Mary and sharing in the fruit of salvation. "All her powers of affection were absorbed in this love. She loved Christ with her whole heart. It is this integration of her affectivity that made her so ardent in serving and imitating her Beloved. This passion entirely devoured her."⁵ This passion drew sisters after her, and they were enabled to obey out of that same love. "Moved by her [the abbess's] example, the sisters may obey her more out of love than out of fear" (RCl 4: 9).

A Balanced Authority: Tenderness and Strength

Jean-François Godet gives us an excellent insight into the balance between tenderness and strength. He demonstrates how any human being is intrinsically both male and female in the image of God, according to Genesis 1:27, and that such a reality God sees as VERY good. Therefore, says Godet,

femininity is not a monopoly of women, nor is masculinity a monopoly of men. To be truly and fully human is to accept and respect the difference, to communicate with, admire, marvel at, and make an alliance with the masculinity and the femininity within oneself and with others. "Both are necessary for anyone who wishes to be truly human, that is, to be in the image of God."⁶

In their friendship, Francis and Clare were able to reveal to one another the inner complementary of their being. Francis accepted the feminine part of himself, his tenderness, recognizing it in Clare; and Clare acknowledged the masculine element of her nature, her strength, seeing it in Francis. Thus, both of them became fully human in the image of God.

Clare acknowledged her physical weakness and frailty (TestCl 27-29; 3LAg 38-39) and took it into account, going to the proper source of strength, the service of Christ (1LAg 31-32), finding in Him the source of the virtues and of real power and strength. "For Clare, the man Christ, Whom . . . she loved fervently, symbolized and gave strength."⁷ Strength finds its source in the core values one embodies and then it impregnates a person's authority and leadership.

In her concept of authority as expressed in her Rule, Clare shows an amazing balance between strength and tenderness. She keeps some elements from the Benedictine Rule, which was imposed on her in 1216; she does not mitigate the essentials. She does not hesitate to change the Rule and adapt it where it seems too harsh for the relational aspect of Franciscan life. For example, look at her prescriptions about silence: "They may speak discreetly at all times for the recreation and service of those who are sick," and "they can communicate always and everywhere whatever is necessary" (RCl 5:3-4). Regarding enclosure, Clare writes: "She may not go outside the monastery except for a useful, reasonable, evident, and approved purpose" (RCl 2:12). There is a balance between acceptance of the norms fixed by the Rule and flexibility in Franciscan freedom. Clare is also able to stand her ground firmly, especially on what is particularly dear to her—holy poverty as the way to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. The chapter dealing with poverty is the kernel of Clare's Rule, and she inserts it at the heart of the text, in Chapter 6. Like a weaver, she places the most beautiful, precious, and unique threads at the center.⁸

Exemplarism as an Expression of Authority

Clare was a reluctant abbess. "Three years after her conversion, declining the name and office of Abbess, she wished in her humility to be placed under others rather than above them and, among the servants of Christ, to serve more willingly than to be served" (CL 12; see also Proc 3:9). When she commanded, she did so with great fear and humility, wishing to do herself what she had commanded to others (Proc 1:10). She only accepted the direction and

government of the sisters at the prayers and insistence of St. Francis (Proc 1:6). But Clare was careful to insert in her Rule that the Abbess should live in equality with her sisters, preserving the common life in everything (RCl 4:13).

Her means of authority was to be the servant of all the sisters (cf. RCl 10:5; TestCl 65-66). Her principle of authority was to be an example for others to follow (cf. RCl 4:9; CL 12). Her model was Jesus, the Servant, washing the feet of his disciples (Jn. 13:1-15), who said: "The one who rules should be like the one who serves. I am among you as one who serves (Lk. 22: 26-27). . . . "Whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk. 10:44-45).

Clare strove to give an example by going first, confessing her faults at the weekly chapter (cf. RCl 4:15-16), washing the feet of her sisters (Proc 1:12; 2:1.3; 3:9; 6:7; 7:5; 10:6), and placing herself in front of her sisters before the Saracens, ready to lay down her life as their ransom in imitation of Jesus (CL 21; Proc 3:18; 4:14; other witnesses also relate this event.) "This is a summarizing image of Clare the leader—in front, yes, but for the sake of serving, giving life, to those who were her sisters."⁹

Three Feminine Images of Authority

Clare exercised authority as a *servant*, she remained a *sister*, and she cared for her sisters as a *mother*.¹⁰ It is interesting that all these feminine images of authority found in Clare have to do with *relationships*. It is also noticeable that they are Franciscan images, having an echo in Francis's own writings and life.

The Servant

Clare rarely called herself "Abbess." The term she prefers is the Latin word *ancilla* (cf. RCl 1:3; 6:6; 10:4), an affectionate term used for the beloved servant of a master, one in a close relationship with the master. Rooted in contemplation of Christ, Clare gazed upon Jesus as Servant and gave heed to his teachings on servanthood. It is noteworthy that all these teachings are related to the Passion, and this is not without influence in the form of life Clare chose as *the* way to follow Christ.

When she was asked to assume the role of Abbess of San Damiano in 1216, Clare found in the image of the Suffering Servant the way God chose to display his power (cf. the Songs of the Servant in Is. 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-11 and Ph. 2:5-8). Clare saw herself as serving the leadership in the sisters. Bearing in mind Jesus in his Passion, Clare put on the attitudes of the obedient Servant, listening to the call of the Father in the depths of her being, remaining docile to the Spirit at work in the community, responding to the needs of the sisters.¹¹

Reluctant in becoming Abbess, Clare never despised the most menial and even risky tasks of service. She was eager to clean the mattresses of the sick sisters (Proc 2:1; 6:7). By so doing she possibly exposed herself to the fleas that transmitted plague, thus performing an act of laying down her life for her sisters, risking her own safety and health, ready to lay down her life as did the Suffering Servant, Jesus.¹² Clare's humble service to her sisters, in its various expressions, flowed from the focus of her life: the imitation of her Beloved, Jesus Christ.

Foot-washing is another service performed by Clare to which many of the witnesses at the Process of Canonization refer. It was a gesture invested with symbolic meaning. For Clare, as for Jesus, it anticipated the ultimate service of the passion and death. It set a pattern of relationships far from a hierarchical one, abolishing ranks and inequality. Foot-washing is a call to a life of service and of self-giving for another's good.¹³ This gesture also calls others to do the same; thus the one performing it is an example. Jesus said: "I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you" (Jn. 13: 15). Foot-washing as a model of servanthood calls for many other aspects, as can also be seen in the writings of Francis, especially Adm 13 (patience) and Adm 19 (humility).

The Sister

Clare fulfilled the duties of the Abbess, but devoted her life to being a Sister. Writing about the Abbess's role in the community, she insists that she be one among equals, a sister rather than a superior. She is compelled to preserve common life with the others (RCl 4:13) and in all decisions to consult the sisters: "I, together *with* my sisters" (RCl 6:10) or "the Abbess *and* the sisters" (RCl 1:9; 4:20; 6:11; 9:5) or "the Abbess *and* the Vicarress" (RCl 5:8), or "the Abbess or her Vicarress *with* the discreets" (RCl 7:5; 8:11; 9:18). We shall return to this in the next section of this paper when we look at mutual responsibility.

Clare views herself and any succeeding Abbess as on the same level as the rest of the community,¹⁴ and the image of the Sister conveys this horizontal structure of relationships between the members of the community. The image includes ideas of equality, calls forth mutual sharing and support, requires reverence for the other, and finally aims towards harmony and unity.

The Mother

Instead of calling herself "abbess," Clare uses the term "mother," and it is an image she applies to the Abbess in her Rule. The image is very Franciscan.

It conveys the idea of security, understanding, and loving care that Francis himself expresses in his writings (e.g. the Letter to Brother Leo and the Rule for Hermitages). The image has two main dimensions: motherhood and nurturing care.

Motherhood is a powerful and recurrent theme in early Franciscan thinking about the spiritual life. It refers to the ongoing and painful process of giving life. It is nothing like a "wishy-washy" ideal of mothering, nor does it encourage a leader to become a target for the brothers and sisters' hang-ups about their birth mothers. The birthing Francis has in mind is described in Bonaventure's *Legenda Maior*:

While her servant Francis was living in the church of the Virgin Mother of God, he prayed to her who had conceived the Word full of grace and truth, imploring her with continuous sighs to become his advocate. Through the merits of the Mother of Mercy, *he conceived and brought to birth the spirit of the truth of the Gospel* (LM 3:1).

The Birthing Dimension

There is indeed a birthing dimension in Franciscan spirituality. In our tradition, bringing to birth is a process of giving life to the Gospel and thus to Jesus who is the Word incarnate expressed in the text of the Gospel. Franciscans, like Mary, are to bear this Word in their flesh, to embody it, and to bring it forth to the world, to bring it to life. They are to do this in themselves and to encourage it in others: "We are mothers, when we carry Him in our heart and body through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and when we *give birth to him* through His holy manner of working, which should shine before others as an *example*" (1EpFid 1:10). This "Holy manner of working shining as an example" is the life of the Gospel, the evangelical way of life professed by the Franciscans of all branches. Its principle is the Holy Spirit, the One who came upon Mary, so that she conceived the Word from her own flesh (Lk. 1:35), and the One whom all the brothers and sisters should desire above all things (cf. RegB 10:8; RCl 10:9; Rule of TOR 32). Its Way is the imitation of Christ, especially through his Passion, for the Crucified is the only way to enter into life, as Bonaventure says at the beginning of The Tree of Life:

The true worshiper of God and disciple of Christ, who desires to conform perfectly to the Savior of all men crucified for him, should, above all, strive with an earnest endeavor of soul to *carry* about continuously, *both in his soul and in his flesh, the cross of Christ* (Prologue 1).

The other aspect of the image of the mother is that of nurturing care. We find it echoed in both Francis and Clare, the latter taking the words from the former: "If a mother has such care and love for her [child] born according to the flesh, should not someone love and care for his brother [or sister] according to the Spirit even more diligently [or lovingly]?" (Cf. RegB 6:7; RCI 8:16). We see again in this passage the role of the Spirit as the One through whom someone is born. Nurturing care has the same root as spiritual motherhood—it is a way of being one with Jesus Christ, the firstborn of the Spirit.

For Godet, femininity is chiefly characterized by nurturing and tender care. To care, to nurture, to make life grow is to be fully human in the image and likeness of God, and this again is for all human beings, men and women. Godet presents three aspects in which Clare's femininity is fully developed: nurturing the body, nurturing the heart, and nurturing the spirit. In nurturing the body, Clare had a maternal and loving concern for the welfare and needs of her sisters (RCI 2:15-16, 22; 8:9-16; TestCl 63-64); in nurturing the heart, she wanted the Abbess to be a haven for the sisters, compassionate, welcoming, and accessible to all (RCI 4:11-12; TestCl 65-66; Proc 3:3,7; 6:2,4; 8:3; 10:5); in nurturing the spirit, Clare was a skilled teacher (Proc 11:2; 14:9; 18:5), inspiring, counseling, and conversing with the sisters, correcting them with humility and love when necessary (RCI 10:1).

Clare, in seeing herself as "the little plant" of Francis, acknowledges in him the nurturing care which is so characteristic of a mother, for if she is his little plant, then he is the gardener, an image which evokes the patient and careful attention of a nurturing person.¹⁵ In the Form of Life he gave to the first Poor Ladies, Francis resolved and promised for himself and for his brothers to have that same loving care and special solicitude for them as he had for his brethren. There are, therefore, signs of a nurturing relationship between Francis and Clare, a relationship with a mutual component. Francis had meetings with Clare to help her find her way according to the insight they both shared about Gospel life. He received her at the Portiuncola and made her fully a member of the young Franciscan movement, eventually establishing her in San Damiano. Clare also helped Francis find his way when he was confused about the orientation of his life, and she most certainly cared for him whenever he stayed at San Damiano, especially during the years of turmoil surrounding the stigmata.

In addition to what she says in her Rule, Clare describes in her Testament what she envisions as the nurturing care of the Abbess—kindness and compassion, offering a shelter and bringing consolation to her sisters (TestCl 4-9). She is a caring person, concerned, discreet, kind, familiar, friendly, never cold

or unapproachable, providing for the needs of each (TestCl 64), especially concerned for the sick (RCI 8:12-16) and the afflicted (RCI 4:11-12), offering them guidance, sympathy, and support.¹⁶

The words spoken by Clare on her death bed show us the source of her motherly love for her sisters: "Go calmly in peace, for you will have a good escort, because He Who created you has sent you the Holy Sprit and has always guarded you *as a mother does her child* who loves her" (Proc 3:20). It is in the image of God caring for us as a mother that Clare found the source for her own maternal attitudes towards her sisters.¹⁷

These three feminine images color Clare's concept of authority. They say something about why she did not find it easy to issue orders, why she assigned tasks with shyness and humility, why she reserved the lowliest and most unpleasant tasks for herself, why she rarely gave orders in obedience. She placed humility above obedience,¹⁸ because that is how she found her way to follow in the footsteps of Christ and imitate Him.

Clare's Leadership—Concept of Governance

What I have said about Clare's concept of authority lays the foundation for her leadership and concept of governance. Her unswerving love of God and her unwavering adherence to God's will led her to follow in the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ through example, especially conforming herself to the Suffering Servant. Imitating his humility, she strove to bring him to birth in herself and in others. As a sister among equals, she guided them with strength and tenderness, a fully human being in the image of God. Two aspects of her leadership derive from these characteristics: a) fostering unity in reverence for each sister and in personal responsibility; b) mutual responsibility among mature women.

Fostering Unity

"Let the sisters be always eager to preserve among themselves the unity of mutual love which is the bond of perfection" (RCI 10:7; cf. Jn. 17:22-23). Unity is the evangelical foundation of the community of sisters, because the same essential love reigned in the heart of each one. The basis, the root of their common ideal, was an "absolute adherence to Jesus Christ and a readiness to endure anything to follow him."¹⁹ Each sister knew *why* and *for whom* she was living—the Lord Jesus Christ. This was their bond of unity, which Clare herself lived first and taught them.

Each sister could look at the heart of the other and find there the same profound and dedicated love for Christ that she herself experienced. Because of this, there had to be a deep reverence for the mystery of each other, as each

one was personally called to follow in the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ in a very personal and unique manner in the midst of the community. In this regard, Clare is definitely speaking to the best in each person.

It is the responsibility of the Abbess to preserve the unity of mutual love and peace (RCl 4:22). This unity in mutual charity is the expression of each sister's union with God. Any sister can claim to be in union with God only insofar as she is acting charitably with her sisters (Jm. 2:14-17; 3:13-16; 1Jn. 4:20-21). Mutual charity is to love the other as Christ loves her. External deeds are the measure of the love within the heart; however there are some deeds that can destroy charity.²⁰ Clare warns against the anger and disturbance that one may feel at the sin of a sister (RCl 9:5) and calls for reconciliation among the sisters whenever a word or a gesture causes one to be troubled by another (RCl 9: 6-10).

Clare seems to be well aware of difficulties that, like field mines, endanger common life in the enclosure. She writes her Rule out of a long experience: "I admonish and exhort the sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ to beware of all pride, vainglory, envy, avarice, care and anxiety about this world, detraction and murmuring, dissension and division" (RCl 10:6). All of these situations must have occurred in the monastery of San Damiano for Clare to feel a need to write about them in her Rule, because all her words are weighed when she writes. She is clearly attempting to uproot all sources of discord that cloud the unity of the sisters' life of mutual love.

Mutual Responsibility among Mature Women

The basis of the common ideal provides the foundation for mutuality in the community. It is because each sister is totally dedicated to the love of Christ as the very core dimension of her life that all of them and together are responsible for the welfare of the group. Each sister stands before God, having surrendered her own will and freedom for the love of God (RCl 10:2). In their obedience the sisters seek to fulfill God's will.

Each sister is bound to the others in affection and tenderness (RCl 8:16). Clare provides many openings for respect, trust, openness, creating a climate of mutual listening through dialogue, calling for an obedience that is far from passive. The sisters are to inquire about the needs of the sick (RCl 8:14), share confidently their needs with one another (RCl 8:15), and meet together weekly (RCl 4:15-18) to make any decisions that pertain to the good of their common commitment to the Gospel form of life, which they have professed and which they daily live.

Clare expresses mutual and caring solicitude by using a metaphor in her Testament—the sisters are like mirrors for one another, revealing in reciprocity the image to which the Lord has called them to be in fullness of life.

For the Lord Himself has placed us not only as a form for others in being an example and mirror, but even for our sisters whom the Lord has called to our way of life as well, that they in turn might be a mirror and example to those living in the world. Since the Lord has called us to such great things that *those who are to be a mirror and example to others may be reflected in us*, we are greatly bound to bless and praise God and be all the more strengthened to do good in the Lord (TestCl 19-22).

The weekly chapter emphasizes the shared responsibility in the community's life for growth and development. The Abbess consults with all her sisters concerning whatever pertains to the welfare and good of the monastery, for the Lord frequently reveals what is best to the least among them (RCl 4: 17-18). It is the sisters' shared responsibility to elect an Abbess. It is their responsibility, as well, to replace an Abbess who is not competent for their service and common welfare or any other official in the community if it seems necessary (RCl 4:7,24). All who hold offices in the monastery are chosen by the common consent of all the sisters to preserve the unity of mutual love and peace (RCl 4: 22). The Abbess is helped in her office by eight sisters elected by all (RCl 4:23).

Decision-making in collegiality and consultation requires a good deal of discernment and maturity. Each sister's intelligence, will, and heart have a part in the process of reflection, critical judgment, decision-making, and common action.²¹ The Rule of Clare provides inner space for judgment and discernment. It requires trust in the individual good will and prudence of the sisters. Clare acts as a facilitator and active listener in the midst of her sisters. She believes that the Spirit may speak through any of the sisters, even the least (RCl 4:18). Listening to the Spirit speaking to each one and to the group is a process that needs time. It is counter-cultural in our society of immediacy. Our experience of communal decision-making shows that it is a process in which we often have disagreements. To listen to the Spirit is to allow disagreements to be expressed and heard: the Spirit may be saying something to us in the very midst of our disagreements. We must therefore pay attention to them, continuing to ask ourselves: What is the Spirit trying to say to us now?

Some Elements of Feminine Franciscan Governance

Clare's goal was to achieve an evangelical fraternity like that of the friars,²² but in a totally different context—that of an enclosed group comprised of many women (sometimes as many as fifty). Her principles need to be enfolded in our Third Order Regular way of life. From this study of Clare's authority and leadership, we are now able to draw some principles for a feminine Franciscan leadership.

1. Feminine Franciscan leadership resides in each sister's *personal inner authority rooted in deep love of Christ*. This love is fed and nourished by prayer and *contemplation of the Suffering Servant as our model*. Such inner authority calls for *discernment*, listening to the Spirit first in oneself and then in the group. In turn, discernment brings forth *collegiality* in decision-making, each one being involved in an ongoing process of personal and communal discernment through constant attentiveness, openness, and readiness before the Spirit.

2. *Relational structures of equality* among sisters freed from a dominant exercise of power are the direct consequence of each sister's rootedness in a deep love of Christ. Clare instructed her sisters constantly to remember, embrace, and love totally the poor Christ, especially in his Passion. She chose His way of exercising authority through *servanthood*. With this in mind, we ask ourselves if the Suffering Servant is really the center of our lives and if we are ready to serve and lay down our life for any sister.

3. Looking at Clare, each one of us, in developing our personal inner authority, is also called to become fully human, a *balanced* person, acknowledging our strengths and weaknesses, mutually helping one another to grow in awareness towards *wholeness*. Like Clare, we are invited to use our feminine and masculine components, the strength and the tenderness in us, holding firm to what is essential to our Franciscan way of life and showing motherly care and solicitude for our sisters.

4. Inner authority is the source of each sister's leadership. One way of expressing this reality is *exemplarism*, taking again Christ the Servant as the model, following his command: As I have done for you, so shall you do for others. Exemplarism, rooted in Jesus' teaching on *servanthood*, sets an *egalitarian pattern of relationships* as the foundation for renewed structures of government and way of governance. Setting a way of life to follow, exemplarism calls every sister to become a mirror for others, revealing herself as who she is called to be, bringing to light her potential.

5. The leadership in each sister is also a capacity to *give birth to the Word*, in herself and in others, through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Hence the importance Clare puts on each sister's capacity for *discernment* and responsibility to strive to *listen to the Spirit* Who can reveal to the least what is best for the community. It is only in listening to the Spirit that Christ can be formed in our hearts and brought to birth in our own lives first and then in the lives of others. And this *birthing process*, this spiritual *motherhood*, calls for *nurturing care*, as expressed repeatedly by Clare in *mutual solicitude* for one another and in *collegial decision-making* for the welfare of all in the monastery.

6. In Clare's vision, each sister's love of God is the root of *unity* to be fostered among the sisters, in deep *reverence* for the mystery of each one's personal call to union with God. Anything that impedes unity among the sisters can be a hindrance to union with God. Therefore it must be uprooted. In love of God, each sister becomes accountable before the others, all being *bound* to one another in *mutual* love, *life-giving* care, and *shared* responsibility.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this reflection, I recalled the two-fold desire for new structures of government and a renewed concept of governance. We want these to be Franciscan and feminine, knowing that we must remain focused on new life and new ways of living the charism *for the sake of mission*. Clare teaches us to begin with a personal, essential, and fundamental element—our rootedness in love of God. Each sister's personal experience of God, each sister's personal call to union with God is the source of her inner authority and leadership. This gives her a profound freedom in which all are bound in mutuality for the sake of God's love.

Each sister's inner authority and leadership constitutes the starting point from which a renewed form of leadership and new structures of government will spring. Instead of falling into the trap of beginning at the top with new structures, we need a process that starts at the bottom with an examination of the underlying principles of our current structures—confronting them with the six elements I have drawn from Clare.

Although the vision presented here is a difficult and challenging ideal to attain, Clare's steadfastness inspires us not to give up. Just as her Rule was approved as she lay on her deathbed, so our ideal might not be attained until the end of our lives. May we take to heart these words of Francis on his death bed: "Let us begin, brothers, to serve the Lord God, for up to now we have made little or no progress" (1Cel 103).

Endnotes

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¹⁵Godet, 24.

¹⁶Schlosser, 236-237.

¹⁷Schlosser, 237.

¹⁸Schlosser, 235.

¹⁹Dhont, 107.

²⁰Dhont, 111; cf. also RCI 10:6.

²¹Dhont, 126.

²²Dhont, 127.

*Clare, solitary morning star of the sleeping cosmos,
Wake my soul to songs of praise and thanksgiving.
Teach me how to radiate goodness to my little world today.*

*Clare, brilliant light of the noonday sun,
Brighten my day with the warmth of your love.
Fill me to overflow with charity and simplicity.*

*Clare, gentle light of the late afternoon,
Coax me along ways of peace and justice.
Make me a lover of souls, just like you.*

*Clare, fair light of the fading day at twilight,
Bring me to a contemplation of the Crucified.
Help me realize the depth of God's love for me.*

*Clare, quiet light at the end of a busy day,
Give rest to my weary soul.*

Blanket it with the mantle of your mercy. Amen

Clare Prayer

Joanne Grib, SLW

The Cord, 51.4 (2001)

The Best of Times

Thomas Barton, OSF

"It was the best of times. It was the worst of times." With these words Charles Dickens began his novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*. These same words could have applied centuries earlier. The year was A.D. 1197. The place, Assisi, Italy. For the Lady Clare of Favarone de Offreduccio, 1197 would be the best of times as she fled with her family from Assisi to take refuge in the city of Perugia. For most of her family, however, literally running from the crowd of democracy-seeking merchants, 1197 would prove to be the worst of times.

In that year, Clare was a mere child among the ranks of displaced political refugees, experiencing all the chaos, uncertainty, and financial insecurity that such a situation entailed. She learned, however, the value and security that nobility and wealth can provide during changing times. Fortunately for Clare, the family's place of refuge was Perugia.

Though we do not know the exact time, it is certain that Clare encountered a group of penitents in the city of Perugia. All indications are that she became well acquainted with them and began to imitate their lifestyle. In 1204 she returned to Assisi with a desire to live a penitential life.

In Perugia, penitents gathered in associations or fraternities. In Assisi, however, penitents tended to be solitaires. As recluses, sometimes under the direction of a priest, most continued to live with their respective families. The one known exception in the area of Assisi was at the Monastery of Sant Angelo in Panzo, where a group of penitents lived in seclusion together. We know that Clare spent some time there before she settled down at San Damiano.

The sources for the life of Clare, meager as they are, do give hints about her lifestyle, both before and after her conversion. As a young girl she was devout. Using pebbles, she would keep track of her prayers. Under the careful supervision of her pious mother, Ortolana, Clare early on developed a spirit of prayer and devotion.

Although a known beauty and a wealthy one, she stayed out of the public eye. After her return to Assisi, Clare lived as a recluse within her parental

home. While she did not cut off her hair as a penitent might, we know that under all her finery she wore a pighide hairshirt with the bristles turned inward. She fasted discreetly for the sake of others. She often took her choice and specially prepared dishes and sent them to the poor. She willingly gave alms from her own resources when there was need. Once, at least, these alms found their way to San Damiano for Francis and his associates. Among her friends she was known as someone capable of giving direction. The Lady Bona testified in the Process of Canonization that Clare had sent her on pilgrimage to Rome during Lent 1212.

It seems that Clare had decided to remain in her own home as a penitent, promising virginal chastity to the Lord. Having made this decision, she was willing to do whatever was necessary to deflect her uncle Monaldo's plans for a well-arranged marriage.

No doubt Francis of Assisi was a surprise for Clare. She was obviously aware of Francis. Her family and other nobles of the town considered him mad, describing him as a fool. Her cousin Rufino, however, had abandoned everything, including his knighthood, to become a companion of Francis, a move which understandably upset the family. Francis, having heard about Clare, desired to rescue her from the world.

Her conversion was effected, simply and directly, through Francis's preaching. In the power of the Spirit, Clare left all things to follow Christ as a pilgrim and stranger. That she lived as a penitent is clear; that she did so within the context of a community of penitential women gathered at San Damiano and following the example of Francis is also clear.

In her first letter to Agnes of Prague, Clare praised the royal princess's decision to follow Christ as a Poor Lady with these words:

What a great and praiseworthy exchange: to leave the things of time for those of eternity, to choose the things of heaven for the goods of earth, to receive the hundredfold in place of one, and to possess a blessed eternal life (30).

A.D. 1197, was the best of times, a year that put Clare on the road from Assisi to San Damiano, via Perugia. Who can fathom the ways of the Lord?

**The Son of God has been made for us the Way,
which our blessed father Francis,
His true lover and imitator,
has shown and taught us by word and example.
(TestCl 5)**

Clothed in Gladness: The Story of St. Clare. Sister Mary St. Paul. Our Sunday Visitor Press, 2000.

This book is a many-faceted gem. Practically every Catholic and many persons of other persuasions have heard of St. Francis of Assisi. Fewer know his first woman follower, the one, who in a very special way, sustained the movement of the early Franciscans. Francis was the mentor who attracted Clare to his journey of spiritual poverty. Later, he gained consolation knowing that this woman was a pillar of prayer solidly supporting him and the brothers. As Benedict Groeschel says in the fine foreword to this book: "Clare really went all the way along the road to perfection with St. Francis." More people need to become acquainted with the spiritual journey of St. Clare.

The author is well qualified to write on the subject. A Poor Clare herself for over forty years, she has served as novice director and general superior in a monastery in Ohio. In a very skillful way, she has designed each chapter around a short theme that can be read and meditated on in one sitting. Followed this way the book can be completed in a week or two. I found it convenient to treat each chapter as a window of the spirit to be read and savored. In the sixth chapter, for example, one becomes aware of Clare's longsuffering and fierce dedication to a life of poverty. At times the Franciscan friars tried to temper her fasts, which had weakened her body. But overall her fortitude in the spiritual life became stronger than ever. In chapter ten we learn how she endured real infirmities with joy and peace. Earlier sections of the book describe how she became the focus of a tug of war between her family and her call to this new way of religious life, a contest that her family lost. Soon, two of her blood sisters joined her. When it comes to inner strength, Clare is a shining example for her times and for all ages. Here is the story of a saint and how she progressively empties herself to receive the grace of the Lord.

This is a book for anyone interested in the contemplative life. It is strongly recommended to members of the Franciscan family, but could be useful to any religious. It would be helpful, also, for lay people yearning to grow in holiness. It is hard to picture the Franciscan movement growing to its present proportions without the prayerful groundwork led by Clare and her followers.

Each section of the book has a simple drawing, which I found helpful as a kind of graphic connection to the words on the pages. An epilogue articulates the relevance of St. Clare for our modern times when many people are spiritually exploring. She is a mentor pointing the way towards satisfying the hunger and thirst for God experienced by our contemporary distracted world. As a

young noble woman of the thirteenth century, Clare had all that society could offer. But deep down she felt a great emptiness. When she heard the call of the Spirit of God, she started to fill this void with wisdom and love. In the end, she was bursting with the presence of the Immortal One. What a life!

Richard Hurzeler, SFO

About Our Contributors

Thomas Barton, OSF, Franciscan Brother of Brooklyn, is a graduate of The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University. He spent a number of years in India, where he taught Franciscan courses. He serves on the staff of the Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs and has been engaged in HIV ministry in New York City.

Marie Beha, OSC, a member of the Poor Clare community in Greenville, South Carolina, is a regular contributor to *The Cord*. She has also served on *The Cord's* editorial board. Her articles have appeared in *Sisters Today*, *Review for Religious*, and *Human Development*.

Frances Teresa Downing, OSC, is a Poor Clare of the monastery at Arundel, West Sussex, England. She is author of *Living the Incarnation: Praying with Francis and Clare of Assisi* (Franciscan Press, 1996) and *This Living Mirror: Reflections on Clare of Assisi* (Orbis, 1995). She has also translated *Clare of Assisi* by Marco Bartoli (DLT) and *The Charism of the Founder* by Antonio Romano (Paulist Press). She is a regular contributor to *The Way* and to *The Cord*.

Joanne Grib, SLW, a Sister of the Living Word residing in Arlington Heights, Illinois, claims a Franciscan heart. With a Master's Degree in Chemistry and Education, she recently retired from the Nalco Chemical Company where she had worked as a researcher and computer specialist for twenty years. Her post-retirement ministry is teaching computer skills to battered women in her area.

Richard P. Hurzeler, SFO, a professed Secular Franciscan since 1984, taught Anthropology and Sociology at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas, for twenty-nine years (1971-2000). He is now retired in Tyler, Texas, where he lives with his wife Carol, daughter Debbie, and granddaughter Christine.

Danielle Julian, FMIC, a Missionary Franciscan Sister of the Immaculate Conception, lives in Montréal, Québec, Canada. She has a B.A. in Biblical and Pastoral studies from the Faculté de Théologie, University of Montréal, and a certificate in Franciscan Formation and Spiritual Direction from the Franciscan Study Centre in Canterbury, England. After six years in catechist formation ministry in Chad, Africa, (1992-1998) she returned to Canada and now writes extensively for the Franciscan Family of Québec province.

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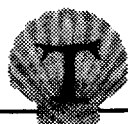
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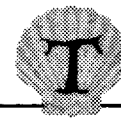
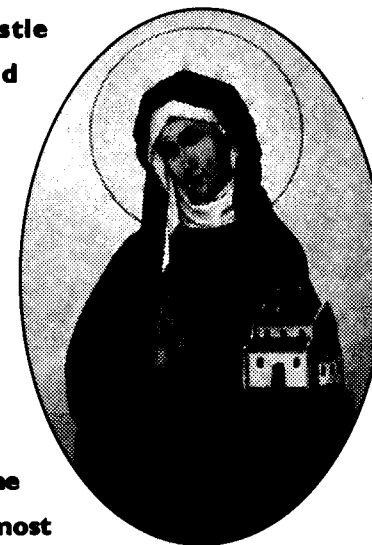
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the friars, and the
monastery for herself
and her sisters.

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THIRTY-SIXTH
FRANCISCAN FEDERATION CONFERENCE

August 20-23, 2001
Baltimore, Maryland

Theme:

The Vowed Life

*Act Justly (Poverty) Love Tenderly (Chastity)
Walk Humbly with Your God (Obedience)*
Micah 6:8

Keynote Speakers:

Roland Faley, TOR & Nancy Schreck, OSF

Breakout Sessions

on each vow,
on ecology and the vowed life and
on issues and concerns in living the vowed life.

Networking Sessions:

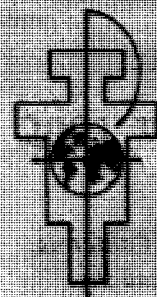
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International Franciscan Conferences
Franciscan Archivists and Website Keepers
Secular Franciscans
Franciscan Common Novitiates
Next Generation Franciscans

Social — evening of August 20
Peacemaking Banquet — evening of August 22

Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel

Registration cost: \$275
Two or more from same congregation: \$250 each
Registration brochures available in April from

The Franciscan Federation
P.O. Box 29080
Washington, DC 20017
202-529-2334; fax: 202-529-7016; e-mail: franfed@aol.com
Website: www.franfed.org



FRANCISCAN FEDERATION THIRD ORDER REGULAR OF THE SISTERS AND BROTHERS OF THE UNITED STATES ANNOUNCES A NEW NATIONAL PROGRAM THE CANTICLE OF CONVERSION SINGING THE COSMIC SYMPHONY

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- Reflection on our personal change of heart experiences.
- Presentation on the Franciscan tradition of contemplation.
- Application of our evolving consciousness to the present world.
- Quiet time to search the mystery of God in our life stories.
- Appearance and dialog with a figure from our heritage.
- Integration of our individual and cosmic stories in being the future to birth.
- Invitation to enter into the growing and transforming of the cosmos.

Program dates and places:

September 21-23, 2001—Holy Spirit Center, San Antonio, TX
October 5-7, 2001—Franciscan Center, Tampa, FL
November 2-4, 2001—Center of Renewal, Stella Niagara, NY
November 30-December 2, 2001—Avila Retreat Center, Durham, NC
January 11-13, 2002—Mt. Alverno Conference Center, Redwood City, CA
February 1-3, 2002—Berger Hall, St. Louis, MO
March 1-3, 2002—Mariandale Retreat/Conference Center, Ossining, NY
May 17-19, 2002—Marian College, Indianapolis, IN
October 4-6, 2002—Portiuncula Center for Prayer, Frankfort, IL

Cost: \$275—Room, meals, program, materials (includes \$25 non-refundable registration fee)

Commuter rate: \$100—Program, material, meals (includes \$25 non-refundable registration fee)

Contact:

The Franciscan Federation
Attn: Megan Fogarty
PO Box 29080, Washington, DC 20017
Ph: 202-529-2334 fax: 202-529-7016
e-mail: franfed@aol.com Website: www.franfed.org

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A Franciscan Renewal Center

Malibu, California

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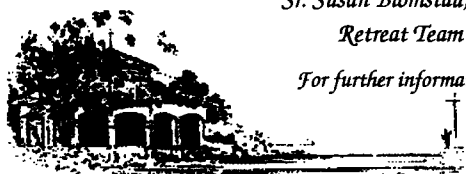
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*Fr. Michael Doherty, OFM
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*Serra Retreat
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Ph: 310-456-6631 (Reservations)
Fax: 310-456-9417
srmalibu@aol.com
www: sbfranciscans.org or
globalretreats.com*

FRANCISCAN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

2001

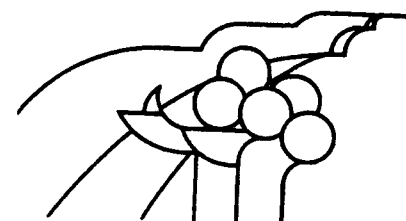
2001

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For more information contact:

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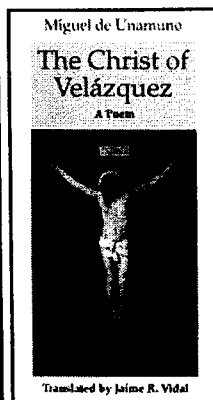
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On the Franciscan Circuit

Coming Events 2001

Wednesday, August 1-Wednesday, August 8

The Cantic of Creatures: A Guided Retreat. With Anne Amati, OSF. At Franciscan Spiritual Center, 609 2. Convent Road, Aston, PA 19014; ph. 610-558-6152; email: fsc@osfphila.org

Friday, August 3-Saturday, August 11

The Soul's Journey into God. With André Cirino, OFM, and Joseph Raischl, SFO. At Tau Center. Contact: Susan Althoff, 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987; ph. 507-454-2993; fax: 507-453-0910; email: taucentr@luminet.net

Sunday, August 5-Saturday, August 11

Reweaving the World: When Nature and Spirit Meet. With Gabriele Uhlein, OSF. At Christ the King Seminary, East Aurora, NY. Contact: Concetta DeFelice, FMDC at 716-632-3144; fax: 716-626-1332.

Monday, August 20-Thursaday, August 23

36th Franciscan Federation Conference. With Roland Faley, TOR, and Nancy Schreck, OSF. At Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel. (See ad, p. 210.)

Friday, September 21-Sunday, September 23

The Cantic of Conversion. At Holy Spirit Center, San Antonio, TX. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation. (See ad, p. 211.)

Friday, October 5-Sunday, October 7

The Cantic of Conversion. At Franciscan Center, Tampa, FL. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation. (See ad, p. 211.)

Saturday, October 13

Following Christ in an Evolutionary World: The Franciscan Vocation Today. With Ilia Delio, OSF. At Felician College Lecture Hall, Lodi, NJ. Sponsored by Region I, Franciscan Federation. Contact: Lorraine Campanelli, OSF, Immaculate Conception Motherhouse, 49 Jackson Ave., Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706.

Friday, November 2-Sunday, November 4

The Cantic of Conversion. At Center of Renewal, Stella Niagara, NY. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation. (See ad, p. 211.)

Friday, November 2-Sunday, November 4

Franciscanism: Medieval Story and Postmodern Promises. With Margaret Carney, OSF. At Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, 3605 McRoberts Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234-2340; ph. 412-881-9207; email: fslccom@aol.com

Sunday, November 11-Friday, December 21

40-Day Franciscan Hermitage Retreat. At the Portiuncula Center for Prayer, 9263 W. St. Francis Road, Frankfort, IL 60423-8330; ph. 815-464-3880; fax: 815-469-4880; email: portc4p@aol.com

Friday, November 30-Sunday, December 2

The Cantic of Conversion. At Avila Retreat Center, Durham, NC. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation. (See ad, p. 211.)

Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	Admonitions	ExPat	Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo	FormViv	Form of Life for St. Clare
BenBern	Blessing for Brother Bernard	1Fragm	Fragment of other Rule I
CantSol	Cantic 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
RCl	Rule of Clare
TestCl	Testament of Clare
BCl	Blessing of Clare

Early Franciscan Sources

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