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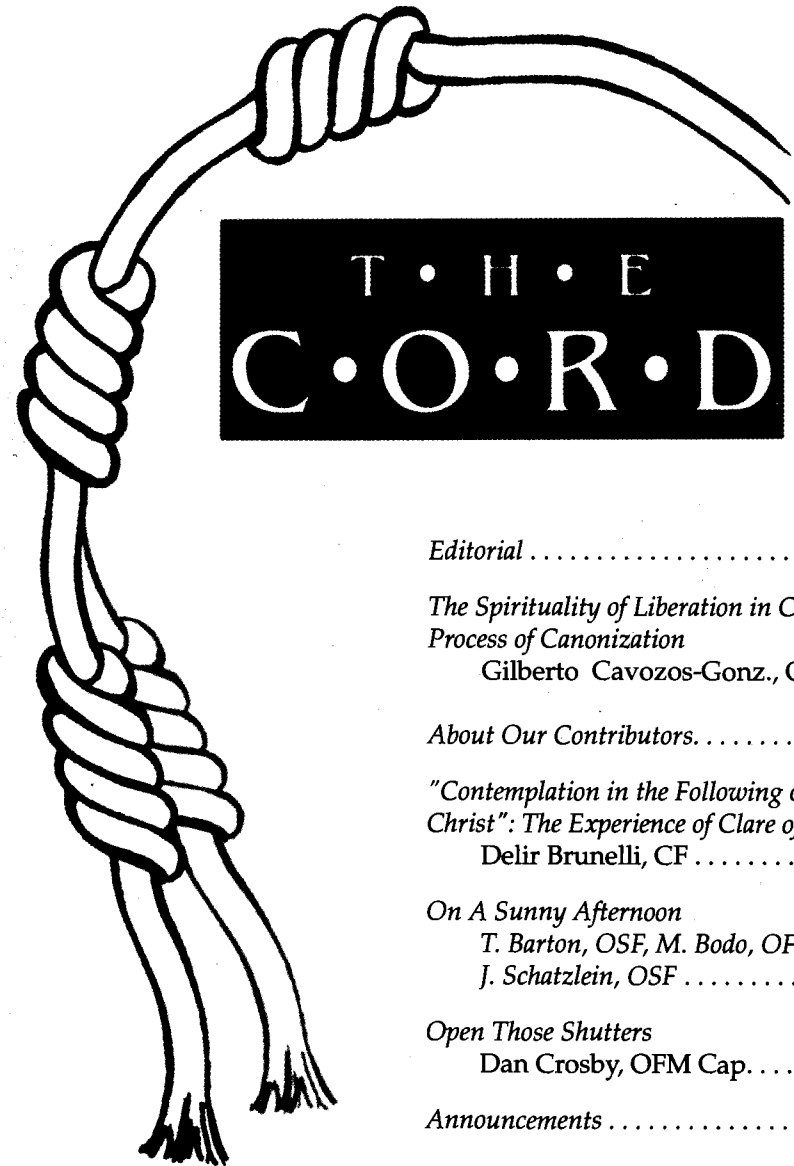
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3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.
Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or italicized.
4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources 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).
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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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The Cord, 52.4 (2002)

Editorial

It seems that it was only yesterday that we were commemorating the 800th centenary of the birth of Clare of Assisi. We celebrated *Clarefest* at LaCrosse, Wisconsin; the Franciscan Institute published a series of books dedicated to expanding and enriching our knowledge of Clare; Poor Clares around the world were re-discovered by the rest of the Franciscan family. And, true enough, that was less than ten short years ago. Now, in about a year, we will mark the 850th anniversary of Clare's passage into eternal life. We are surely blessed to be living in this age when Clare re-assumes her importance as one of the founding figures within the Franciscan movement, a movement that changed the Church and the civil culture of the thirteenth century.

Much has happened in our world and in Franciscan studies these past ten years, and this issue reveals the fruitfulness of some of those changes. We have two articles written from different cultural perspectives: Gilberto Cavazos-Gonzalez was raised in the Hispanic culture and Delir Brunelli is a Brazilian sister whose ministry is catechesis. Both bring Clare to us in rich and challenging ways: Gilberto focuses on a spirituality of liberation and Delir teaches us about Clare as a transformed and transforming presence in the world. We also have a meditative piece offered to us as a "remote preparation" for the 2003 anniversary of Clare's death. Tom Barton, Murray Bodo, and Joanne Schatzlein lead us through the streets of Assisi on the night Clare left her family to join Francis and his/her brothers at the Portiuncola. Together these articles provide wonderful insight into Clare herself and into her importance in our day.

When I began my work as editor of *The Cord*, I promised that mistakes would be "quickly remedied" and I now make good on that promise. You may have noticed that in the May/June issue Dan Crosby's poem "Open Those Shutters" was published with some typographical errors not caught by this editor. An author deserves to have the integrity of his/her work protected, and the best way for me to do that is to re-publish the poem (with no typos) in the current issue. I am grateful to Dan for the grace and good cheer with which he received the news of the mistakes.

May our sister Clare, and all her sisters around the world, rejoice in the beauty of her life! May you always continue to do what is yours to do!

Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF

THE SPIRITUALITY OF LIBERATION IN CLARE'S PROCESS OF CANONIZATION

Gilberto Cavazos-Gonzalez, O.F.M.

It has been said that "Translators are traitors" to their texts. They make choices that affect the message of a document. Such is the case in the contemporary translations of *The Process of Canonization* for St. Clare of Assisi.¹ When I first read the *Process* I did so in Spanish, English and Italian. Eventually I read and reread the document in the original 15th century Umbrian (an Italian dialect). It was only then that I noticed how a theme of liberation appeared in the testimony given by the witnesses of the *Process*.

In reading the Umbrian version of the *Process*, I found a liberating saint who let herself be used by God for the liberation of many. In it the witnesses give testimony of the physical healing of several sisters and children, the mental healing of Friar Steven and the exorcism of a possessed woman from Pisa. These healings are spoken of in terms of liberation.² The sisters do not only speak of liberating healings and exorcisms; they also state that thanks to the prayer of Clare, the monastery of San Damiano and the town of Assisi were "liberated" from war.

Where did this liberating force in Clare come from? She did not write great treatises on liberation in any sense of the word. In her case, I believe we can say that she was a Christian in whom a spirituality of liberation was experienced and lived.

The *Process of Canonization* Text

The actual process of canonization for Clare of Assisi lasted a total of six days, from the 24th to the 29th of November, 1253. Once the process was completed, the proceedings or *Acta* were sent to the Pontifical Curia for their examination. In the meantime, Innocent IV, who had called for the process, died. Thus, it was left to his successor, Alexander IV, to canonize Clare in 1255—only two years after her death. After the canonization, Clare's *Process* was

most likely used by a heretofore unknown author for the redaction of her official hagiography. After the *Legend of Saint Clare* was finished, the *Process* would have been discarded as was the custom of the time.

The *Process* as it is found today was published in 1920 by the Friar Minor, Zeferino Lazzeri, along with a very detailed introduction in the *Archivum Franciscum Historicum (AFH)*. Lazzeri claimed that this document, written in Umbro-Italian,³ must be a translation of the original, which being a juridical document had to have been written in Latin.⁴

The *Process* is one of thirty-four files that at one time might have been separate works, but that now form part of the Landau-Finally collection in codex ms 251.⁵ According to Lazzeri, it comes from the monastery of Santa Chiara in Perugia. Apparently this codex belonged to sister Cherubina Deborgianni, abbess of said monastery during the sixteenth century.⁶

The text itself was probably set in its present form in the fifteenth century. This we can conclude because it is written in the Umbrian dialect of that time.⁷ Interestingly, it also shows signs of having been written by two people.⁸ According to Lazzeri, the present text of the *Process* is a "Life" of St. Clare that was taken to the monastery of *Santa Clara Novella* in Florence.⁹ This monastery was founded in the mid-fifteenth century by Sister Maria de Albizi, who in 1453 was joined by Sister Magdalena del Conde Humberto de Romana, abbess of the monastery of St. Chiara in Perugia. Sister Magdalena brought two other sisters with her to help her in the new monastery. Lazzeri believes that these sisters either brought with them, or later sent for a copy of a Life of St. Clare.

The text is a legal document that was written for the Roman Curia with the purpose of determining whether or not to canonize Clare. As a legal document it is a simple document, which uses pre-established formulas,¹⁰ without a chronology, with much repetition of information, and with interruptions made to the narration.

The document is structured in 20 chapters, with an introduction that includes the letter of Pope Innocent IV's bull *Gloriosus Deus*. For the most part, each chapter is dedicated to the testimony of a single witness. These chapters are further divided into several narratives about events that occurred during the life of Clare, events to which the person giving testimony was a witness.

Because it is a legal document, it does not flow as well as the *Legend of Saint Clare*, but it does contain the strength and vitality of the testimony of the people that lived with Clare, and that saw in person the events and miracles that happened during her lifetime.¹¹

Spirituality of Liberation

Today, liberation is talked about and sought after in a variety of social and ecclesial movements. The reality of these liberation movements leads us to ask: Where can true liberation be found? A Christian spirituality of liberation founded on the Sacred Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church responds that only in the Triune God can true liberation be found.¹²

In the Sacred Scriptures, God is revealed as the God who liberates the slaves (Ex 3: 7-8), revealing Himself as a liberating God who opts for the poor and oppressed.¹³ This theme grows into "good news" for the poor, for those to whom Jesus says that He has come to announce the good news of liberation (Lk. 4:18). This liberation that God works with and for people is not just an interior or "spiritual" liberation. It is also a concrete external liberation; it is a liberation that re-establishes human dignity, and that converts the liberated person into a liberator in Jesus Christ.

The encounter with Jesus is the source that refreshes and sustains the spiritual life of a person and of a community. This encounter not only demands a conversion of life, but also life-giving testimony, and that is the reason why the liberation that Christ offers cannot be limited to an interior liberation. Christian spirituality, then, cannot be an adventure in individualism because the Christian must participate in the liberating mission of Jesus who gave His life for the sake of others and who formed a community of Spirit-filled disciples.¹⁴

Christian spirituality comes from an encounter with the Christ of faith, an encounter that permeates historical reality with the Holy Spirit. The Christ of faith is revealed in the Scriptures, which present the historical Jesus.¹⁵ By the "historical Jesus," the spirituality of liberation understands the totality of the history of Jesus, Who accepted the historical reality into which He was incarnated. Reflecting on this historical reality, José Comblin states that the Spirit acts in history through the poor.¹⁶ It was the Spirit that inspired the poor to go to Jesus of Nazareth, and it was the poor and crucified Jesus of history that after His resurrection continued to inspire the Church in the way of conversion.

Every time Jesus prayed, preached or acted He had only one goal in mind: the realization of the Reign of God.¹⁸ The Christian call is an invitation to a conversion to the Reign of God through a preferential option for the poor and their integral liberation. This radical conversion will lead the Christian and the Church to identify, in the same way in which Francis and Clare of Assisi and many other saints did, with the poor and crucified Christ, as well as with the poor and oppressed.¹⁹

The idea of conversion as a response to an encounter with Jesus presupposes the acceptance of the existence of sin in our lives and in the world in which we live.¹⁷ Sin is never just a personal matter and therefore neither is conversion.

The Language of Liberation and Clare's *Process*

Through the testimony of her sisters and other people who knew her, this woman who decided to live the "liberating" Gospel of Jesus Christ, allowing herself to be used as an instrument of liberation by the Lord who "freed" her, can be examined. When the Umbrian-language text is read and compared with the modern translations, the richness in vocabulary the original document possesses is obvious. Part of this richness is related to the language of liberation that is contained in the *Process*. This language of liberation is very important. The word "liberation" (*liberatione*) appears thirteen times, while the verb "to liberate" (*liberare*) appears seventy-four times in different forms of conjugation. Also, Clare is described as "liberal" (*liberale*), that is, as generous. But in many of the testimonies in which the language of liberation is used, modern translations have opted to use words that have more to do with the language of healing.²⁰ The English version found in *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* translates the verb *liberare* and its variants as "to cure," and translates the subject *liberatione* as "cure" when dealing with the liberation from an ailment.²¹

The Umbrian version of the *Process* uses *liberatione* and *liberare* not only on those occasions that refer to the liberation of the monastery and of Assisi, but also when referring to those healings performed by Clare as acts of liberation. The witnesses spoke in great detail of how Clare liberated the people of Assisi and the Poor Ladies both from the human enemies that endangered their lives, as well as from the enemies that endangered the health and well-being of her sisters and of several people that lived outside of the monastery.

Clare and the Spirituality of Liberation

In addition to the explicit use of the word liberation, the *Process* also contains implicit aspects of a Christian spirituality of liberation such as Clare's fidelity to reality, her conversion process, and the way in which Clare related to Jesus Christ and her sisters.

Although the *Process* never mentions it, we know that Clare and her family were exiled in Perugia during the time of Assisi's civil war. Clare would have been a child then, and it was probably during this confrontation with reality that Clare learned to be faithful to the reality in which she lived and not close her eyes to the misery that surrounded her. Another aspect of this fidelity to reality is learned from the secular witnesses of Clare's *Process*, who attest to her asceticism and her generosity toward the poor. For Clare, being a good Christian meant being generous with the poor beyond acts of asceticism. Even from her childhood, "conversion towards the Lord always involved conversion towards the poor as a principal dimension."²²

These witnesses also claim that from her infancy, Clare was a model of virtue and purity, and that she had been blessed with the Holy Spirit from her mother's womb. Nonetheless, the spirituality of liberation would recognize that although Clare was a model of generosity and practiced charity, she needed to go through a process of conversion because of social sin. According to the witnesses, during the decisive moment of her conversion Clare demonstrated her desire to turn away from the evil in which she lived: the evil of a noble family concerned with land and property; a family that owned much land and most likely enslaved the poor. In abandoning the enslaving nobility of her youth, she turned towards a liberating God.

Testimony given by the witnesses mentions that Clare considered the Lord a guardian who protects and frees the ones He loves. An example of this trust was described by the witnesses who saw in the liberation of Assisi and of the convent of San Damiano the great faith with which Clare would pray to Jesus to defend them from their enemies.²³ This trust in the liberating power of Jesus was likewise manifested in the trust Clare had that Divine Providence would protect her and her sisters. Before dying, Clare herself remembered the fact that God had always protected her, as a mother cared for her beloved child (Proc. III:20). The God that cares so much for God's own is a God that "liberates them from all evil."

Clare also presented herself as an instrument of the care that God had for the sisters and for those in need. When the Saracens arrived at the monastery, she let herself be used by God as a protecting shield for the liberation of her sisters. It is with great humility that Clare says "Lord, guard these your servants, because I cannot guard them" (Proc. IX: 2), putting her sisters in this way in the care of the Lord.

Examples of Liberation

A Christian spirituality of liberation is one that leads the Christian to identify with Christ as the Poor and Crucified Lord found in the poor and oppressed peoples of this world. In this identification s/he will be carried forward to the Reign of God by five currents that blend into his/her life of faith: fraternity/sorority, contemplation, the Cross, poverty, and the Eucharist.

Fraternity

The sisters dedicate seventy-six verses to testimony about the theme of fraternity/sisterhood. When Clare acquiesced to Francis and became the abbess of the monastery of San Damiano, she did so under two conditions: poverty and service. She lived with her sisters in a mutual care that drove Clare to consider herself the servant of her sisters, but also allowed her sisters to take

care of her. In the life that was described by the witnesses at San Damiano Clare stands out as a woman of service even more than as a woman of poverty.

In the testimonies given by the sisters during the *Process*, we find that Clare's fraternal circle extended from her community to the friars, and from there to the hierarchy, to the laity. Apparently, the visitor's parlor of San Damiano was used quite often. The fraternal circle also extended to every creature of God. Clare would encourage her sisters to glorify God every time they encountered one of God's creatures. She actually gave them a list of the creatures for which they were to praise God; these creatures were *the beautiful trees, florid and full of fronds, people and other creatures* (Proc. XIV:9).

Among the creatures mentioned the tree receives special attention. It might be that in the tree Clare was reminded of the special tree used for the crucifixion, or of that other tree in the parable of the Lord, the tree that has room for all of the birds in the sky (Cf. Mt. 13:32; Mk. 4:32; Lk. 13:19).

Prayer and Contemplation

There is no doubt that Clare was a woman of contemplative prayer.²⁴ In the *Process* we find the word "contemplation" (*contemplazione*) six times, "prayer" (*orazione*) fifty-seven times, and the verb "to pray" (*orare*) six times in its different conjugations. According to the secular witnesses, Clare prayed often in her childhood. After she entered religion her prayer matured into a continuous prayer and contemplation of the mysteries of God. Sister Pacifica affirms that Clare *kept vigil (veghiava) so much of the night in prayer* (Proc. I:7). The verb *veghiava* used in the imperfect indicative tense tells us that Clare was constantly in prayer during the night.²⁵



Clare Ellen, OSC

The words with which the sisters described Clare's prayer and contemplation are "assiduous" (*assidua*), "solicitous" (*sollicita*), "vigilant" (*vigilante*), "continuous" (*continua*), "customary" (*consuete*), and "sublime" (*sublime*). Of these words only *consuete* and *sublime* are adjectives, while the other words are adverbs that express a dynamic sense in the prayer and contemplation of Clare.

The sisters also testified that they would see Clare surrounded by a great splendor while at prayer. Clare's face, more beautiful than the sun,²⁶ was not the only outward manifestation that made the sisters happy when Clare returned from praying *as if she had just come from heaven* (Proc. I:9), because she would come back speaking to them words of God which both chastised and consoled them with a *certain sweetness* (Proc. VI:3).

The Sign of the Cross

The miracles that God realized through Clare were, according to the words of Sister Beatrice and of other witnesses, miracles of liberation and defense. These were the consequence both of her prayers and of her tracing of the sign of the cross *with her hand*.

The cross had been important for Clare from the beginning of her life. In the Middle Ages, giving birth to a child was a dangerous and frightening experience,²⁷ and that is why many women would pray to Saint Michael the Archangel for his protection. Ortolana, however, *standing before the cross, praying that the Lord would help her in the danger of childbirth*, did not entrust the birthing of her child to Saint Michael, but to Christ crucified. It was in front of the cross that as the witnesses attest, she heard a voice that told her: *"You shall birth a light that will greatly illuminate the world."* (Proc. III:28) Putting all of her faith in that voice, she gave Clare her name and destiny.²⁸

Thanks to the prophecy received by Ortolana, and to her having shared it with her daughter, Clare, from the very beginning of her life, encountered the crucified Jesus who would reveal to her her life's destiny, a liberation through the sign of the cross.

Of the twenty-two testimonies about the liberations that Clare performed thanks to the sign of the cross, fifteen were dedicated to the liberation of two or more of the Poor Ladies. Clare worried about the welfare of her sisters, although she did not cure all of them. Sister Lucia testified that: *She said that she heard that the Lord had liberated more sisters by her merits. But she had not been present, because she was sick* (Proc. VIII:4). Sister Lucia was not oppressed by her own illness. She actually demonstrated a well-balanced view of the liberations that were attributed to Clare: while many of the other sisters emphasized that their *blessed Mother liberated with the sign of the cross*, she declared that it was the Lord that liberated the sisters thanks to the merits of Clare.

Poverty

The testimony that we find in the *Process* briefly touches on Clare's love for poverty²⁹ and her struggle for the Privilege of Poverty.³⁰ The noun "poverty" (*poverta*) is found only sixteen times in the Umbrian document: twice in

the testimonies given about her decision to live in poverty; nine times about the love that she had for poverty, four about the "Privilege of Poverty," and once about her commitment to living in poverty.

The term "the poor" (*poverti*) as a noun is found ten times in the testimony that talks about her youth: once to declare the love she had for the poor; once in speaking about the help that Ortolana gave to the poor; two times to state that Clare would send her food to the poor; and five times to testify that she had given her inheritance to the poor.

Sister Pacifica declared that the young Clare *loved the poor* (Proc. I:3), and according to the testimony of the other sisters, this love for the poor was transformed into a love for poverty itself. Clare loved the poor so much that she embraced poverty as an essential element in her Christian life. Clare had found the way to holiness in the preferential option not only for the poor but for poverty itself as the way to the Kingdom of God, and she always recommended this way to her sisters.

The Eucharist

In the Middle Ages when people were choosing not to receive communion, giving preference to an act of adoration that was far from the physical contact with the consecrated bread,³¹ it is interesting to note the presence of the adverb "often" (*spesso*) in relation to when Clare *took* the holy sacrament of the body of Jesus Christ. In total, we have four testimonies that make reference to the reception of communion by Clare,³² and only one testimony that refers to her Eucharistic adoration.³³

Clare sustained a personal relationship with her Lord that was expressed through both communion and adoration. It was not enough for her to receive the Lord in the bread of his Body; it was also necessary to adore him, putting her trust in his presence. In the encounter with the Saracens, Clare demonstrated how much she trusted in the Lord, and in His presence in the Sacrament. While other sisters made special reference to Clare's prayer when faced with the Saracens, Sister Francisca emphasized the act of adoration that Clare did *throwing herself prostrate* on the ground when they had brought the Blessed Sacrament in front of her in the refectory (Proc. IX:2). This scene of Clare face down on the ground in adoration and supplication is in strong contrast with many images of the saint we often see, in which she holds high the host in a monstace as if she were Joan of Arc brandishing a sword in front of the frightened enemy. For Clare, the Body of the Lord was not an instrument of war but the presence of Jesus Christ who defends and lovingly cares for his flock.

Summary

In spite of the fact that the *Process* used as a source here is not in its original written language, it is in the tongue of its witnesses. This fact gives the *Process* a freshness and vigor that it might not otherwise have in Latin. With its language of liberation, the text is a wonderful source for the study of the life of Clare. It is also an important tool for us to use to discern what is it that this amazing woman can offer us today while she continues to challenge our concept of liberation. The text of Clare's *Process of Canonization* is full of testimonies given by people who loved Clare both as a mother and as a sister, recognizing in her a liberated and liberal woman.

Clare herself did not write anything about liberation; it was more important to her that she be used as an instrument of liberation by the Lord. She was one of the many saints who have responded to humanity's desire for liberation, and she challenges us to live a process of liberating conversion so that once liberated ourselves, we can help liberate other.

Endnotes

¹Realizing that there still does not exist a critical edition of the Process of Canonization of St. Clare of Assisi, the citations of the process will be taken from the reproduction of the text written by Fr. Zefferino Lazzeri, OFM in "Il Processo di Canonizzazione di S. Chiara D' Assisi" in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 13 (1920): 403-507.

²Of the seventy-four times that the verb "to liberate" (*liberare*) and the noun "liberation" (*liberatione*) are used within the context of healing, only in five verses do the witnesses refer to the event using the words *liberare* and "to heal" (*guarire*) (Proc. III:10, 15; IV:11; VI:8; IX:6) while in two verses the witnesses speak of healing without reference to *liberatione*; Cf. Proc. III:11, 16. Two other verses are also of interest here: Proc. III: 16, where sister Fillipa comments that Sister Andrea desired *guarire*. The notary, in the title that he gives to this event, states that Clare "freed" her; and Proc. VI:9, in which Sister Cecilia declares that some who were brought to Clare to be "healed" (*curati*), were actually "freed" (*liberati*).

³Cf. Lazzeri, "Processo," 409.

⁴Cf. Ignacio Omaechevarria, *Escritos de Santa Clara y documentos complementarios* (Madrid, 1970), 62.

⁵Lazzeri states that this codex is the only one that is known to contain the *Process*; cf. Lazzeri, "Processo," 437.

⁶Cf. M. Bartoli and G.G. Zopetti, *S. Chiara d' Assisi: scritti e documenti* (Assisi, 1994), 149.

⁷Unfortunately, the "supposed" original Latin text has been lost. However, it must be noted that some version of the *Process* was consulted by different Franciscan authors throughout the centuries: an anonymous author of a late fourteenth century biography of St. Clare; friar Mariano of Florence in the early sixteenth century; and friar Luke Wadding, who cited and used the acts of the *Process* towards the middle of the seventeenth century. Unfortunately for us, the first two authors do not tell us where they found the acts of the *Process*, nor

found the acts of the *Process*, nor if they were written in Latin or in the Umbrian dialect. And after Wadding finished working with these *acta*, they were again forgotten until 1920 when Zefferino Lazzeri, O.F.M., found and published them. See Lazzeri, "Processo," 406-408; 412-414.

⁸Lazzeri also tells us that the first eleven pages of our Process were handwritten in a "style characteristic of the XIV century," but that beginning with folio 11v, "a new style of writing is recognizable, one less beautiful, and closer cursive script than the first one, and which continues till the end of the Process." Cf. Lazzeri, "Processo," 409, 438.

⁹Lazzeri states that our text for the process of canonization of St. Clare was originally found in this monastery. Cf. Lazzeri, "Processo," 409.

¹⁰Cf. Lazzeri, "Processo," 412.

¹¹Cf. C.A. Lainati, "Proceso di canonizzazioni di santa Chiara" in *Fonti Francescane: Scritti e biografie di san Francesco d' Assisi; Cronache e altre testimonianze del primo secolo francescano; Scritti e biografie di santa Chiara d' Assisi* [IV ed.] (Padua, 1990), 2302.

¹²Pope John Paul II in his "Inaugural speech given at the Palafoxiano seminary in Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico," declares human dignity an "evangelical value which cannot be despised without greatly offending the Creator," while at the same time stating that the process of liberation forms part of the ecclesial mission that must always consider the human being "in the integrity (totality) of his own being." Cf. Papa Juan Pablo II, "Discurso Inaugural" III 1-III 2 in *Puebla: La evangelización en el presente y en el futuro de America Latina* [2 ed.] (Madrid, 1985), 20-21. (The translations of Spanish texts are my own).

¹³Y. Spiteris, *La vita Cristiana: esperienza de libertà* (Bologna, 1993), 24.

¹⁴Cf. G. Gutierrez, *Beber en su propio pozo: En el itinerario espiritual de un pueblo* (Salamanca, 1993), 89.

¹⁵Cf. P. Casaldaliga and J. M. Vigil, *Espiritualidad de la liberación* (Santander, 1992), 115-121.

¹⁶Cf. J. Comblin, *Spirito Santo e liberazione* (Assisi, 1989), 74-79.

¹⁷The Latin-American bishops in Puebla were very clear in stating that personal sin has social consequences that cause anguish and frustration to a large part of the world. The bishops especially condemn as anti-Christian the ever-growing gap that exists between the poor and the rich. Cf. Puebla, 28 and 73.

¹⁸ Cf. Puebla, 226.

¹⁹Puebla, 1134 and 1140; Cf. P. De Anasagasti, *Liberación en San Francisco de Asís: Peculiar metodología misionera franciscana en el siglo XIII* (Aranzazu, 1976), 194-95.

²⁰The Italian version of the *Processo*, found in the *Fonti Francescane*, is a contemporary version of the fifteenth century Umbrian version. It contains a few modifications that do not affect the language of liberation. The Spanish version, which can be found in the *Escritos de Santa Clara y documentos complementarios*, written by Omaechevarria, the majority of times changes the verb *liberare* and its variants for the verb "to heal" but only on half of the occasions does it change the word *liberatione* for that of healing. Of the seventy-four times that the verb *liberare* is found in "its several verbal forms" in our text, Omaechevarria only translates it fifteen times using some verbal form of "to free"; the other fifty-nine times he translates the verb with some verbal form of "to heal," or the noun of the word "healing" (two times), and on two occasions he does not even translate the word. In Proc. XIII: 9 where the word *liberatione* is used in regard to the liberation of the monastery and the liberation of Assisi, Omaechevarria translates "to free" the monastery and "to free" Assisi. He does not explain why he made this change,

neither does he explain why he used the noun *liberatione* to translate "liberation (five times), and healing (six times).

²¹Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994). Of the seventy-four times that *liberare* is found in "its various verbal forms" in our text, Armstrong only translates one case with the verbal form "liberated;" one with "delivered" and in six cases he used "to cure;" in other cases he translates them with a verbal form of "to cure," or "to heal" (one time), and on one occasion he does not translate the word at all.

²²S. Galilea, *El seguimiento de Cristo* (Bogota, 1989), 45.

²³It is interesting to see that the "liberations" of Assisi and of the convent are not mentioned by the civil witnesses, while nine of the fifteen sisters attest to it. Cf. Proc. II, 20; III:18-19; IV:14-15; VII:6; IX:2-3; XII:8; XIII:9; XIV:3.

²⁴Contemplation is considered as that which gives Christian action its efficiency because, in the end, it is the Christian who must move within the "realm of love," trusting always that, even if the efforts in favor of liberation are ours, the results will always be in God's hands. Without contemplation, any act of liberation is simply transformed into a social activity that does not see nor go beyond the present, and that does not know how to transcend itself. Without acts of liberation, contemplation is transformed into a type of self-satisfaction that also does not see beyond the present, and that does not know how to transform itself through generosity. The experience of generosity through contemplation makes us aware that it is God who has given us life, and that it is God who calls us to an efficacy that does not fall into fatalism, but that it rises in the hope of the merciful and providential action of God in our lives and in history. Cf. Gutierrez, *Beber*, 142-45.

²⁵The other sisters also use verbal phrases to express the regular praxis of Clare's prayer in its different manifestations: she was a long time in prayer; she rose for prayer; she kept vigil in prayer.

²⁶Sisters Benvenuta, Francisca and Agnes declared that they saw a great splendor that surrounded the head of the saint on three other occasions: once while she was praying, then when she received the Eucharist before she died, and finally, when she was listening to the preaching of brother Phillip; Cf. Proc. II:17; IX: 10; X: 8.

²⁷Ingrid Peterson, *Clare of Assisi* (Quincy, IL: The Franciscan Press, 1993), 46.

²⁸In the Middle Ages, the name was important because it was believed that it was a sign from the very beginning of the type of person that the child would become as an adult. The name Clare would be for Clare "the synthesis of her history in prophesy." Cf. M. V. Triviño, *Clara de Asís ante el espejo: historia y espiritualidad* (Madrid, 1991), 35-37.

²⁹Cf. Proc. I:13; II:22; III:3, 13; IV:3; VI:10; VII:8; XIII:10; XIV:4.

³⁰Cf. Proc. III:14, 32; VII:8; XII:6; XIII:3.

³¹Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987), 53.

³²Cf. Proc II:11; III:7, 24; IX:10.

³³Proc IX:2.

Clare had found the way to holiness in the preferential option not only for the poor but for poverty itself as the way to the Kingdom of God, and she always recommended this way to her sisters.

About Our Contributors

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**“Contemplation in the Following
of Jesus Christ”
The Experience of Clare of Assisi**

Delir Brunelli, CF

This paper was first presented as an article in the July-August, 1998 issue of *Convergencia*, a publication for religious in Brazil. It was translated by Eilzabeth Mackowiak, CSSF.

Contemplate: to see with the eyes of the heart; to feel in another way; to perceive that analyses alone do not explain because they cannot.

Clare of Assisi (1194-1253) is a great teacher of Christian spirituality.¹ Her experience is inscribed in the living and dynamic context of the 11-13th centuries, during which many religious movements arose that actively involved a great number of women.

Inspired by God and animated by Francis of Assisi, Clare broke away from her family and her social environment in order to follow Jesus Christ in the condition of the poor of her time.² She sought an alternative Christian life, one that flees from the monastic model and also innovates in relation to the feminine religious movements of that period. With great wisdom, she traced a spiritual itinerary which can be expressed in a few words: to follow Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became the Way and Mirror, when he assumed the human condition in the form of a Servant and was obedient until death on a cross.

The mystery of the Incarnation is at the root of Clare's spirituality. Not only the fact of the Incarnation, but the Incarnation as it happened in reality: in poverty and total renunciation. In this mystery Clare perceives God's special solidarity with the little and poor ones, with the abandoned and powerless, with the marginalized and those excluded from the social contact of their times.

Poverty and sister/brotherhood concretize the “following of Christ” and become the main pillars of Clare's form of life. Through spousal mysticism Clare emphasizes the personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the sharing of

the life and communion with the destiny of the Poor and Crucified. Through maternal mysticism, she accentuates the commitment to generate new life, to produce fruit which will last.

But the originality of Clare's proposal is shown, in a particular way, by inserting contemplation in the dynamic of “following.” This deals with a contemplative following which transforms and sheds light. The metaphor of the mirror is used to speak of this experience and to proclaim a truth little recognized in the Middle Ages: that women who follow the Way and contemplate the mirror (who is Christ) participate in the Christifying grace and may reflect in their revealed faces the image of divinity.

It is this contemplative aspect of the experience of Clare of Assisi which is developed in this article.³ The first section shows that Clare's contemplation develops through a very simple method which harmonizes the participation of the senses, mind and heart; the second part accentuates a contemplation which transforms, divinizes, and unfolds in witness.

Look, Consider, Contemplate . . .

In recent centuries the contemplative life has been understood as a specific type of consecrated life in the Church. The charisms of diverse religious orders and institutes were classified as either contemplative or apostolic based on a type of polarization between the praying Jesus and the Jesus who announces the Reign of God. Contemplative charisms had as a determining characteristic intense prayer favored in the cloister, particularly in the case of women. This reductive vision was greatly damaging for the Church because it dispensed the majority of Christians—including members of religious institutes of an “apostolic nature”—from searching for contemplation as an experience of the Christian life.

The present time has seen a return to the question of “meaning” and the possibility of contemplation in any type of life within the horizon of the following of Christ and of commitment to the cause of the Reign of God. In Latin America, for example, one speaks of “contemplation in action,” “contemplation in commitment,” and “contemplatives for liberation,” as a profound experience of God in history, in the mixed reality of grace and sin where one realizes the concrete struggle in favor of life and where the Spirit of God works.⁴ In this way Clare of Assisi speaks with authority. For her, contemplation is not something distinct from her radical option for Jesus Christ but is an intrinsic and indispensable dimension of this same option.

To express her contemplative experience Clare uses the metaphor of a mirror, well known during the Middle Ages, but she makes it original by applying it to Jesus Christ as much in his divinity as in his humanity.

The great teachers of contemplation speak of steps, stages, measures or degrees through which one arrives at the experience of contemplation.⁵ Clare also elaborates her method but without becoming restricted by any of the current trends. Hers is a simple method which germinates from experience and is not entangled in lengthy explanations and considerations. It can be summed up in three verbs that appear together twice in the Letters to Agnes of Prague: look, consider, contemplate (2LAg 20, 4LAg 19-23).

Enfolded in the perspective of the following of Jesus Christ poor and crucified, Clare's contemplation involves the entire person. It has no difficulty in harmonizing the participation of the senses, mind, and heart without excessively accentuating one aspect to the detriment of another.

For Clare, the Son of God became the Way for us by assuming our humanity in the form of a servant. At the same time He became a mirror. Clare's contemplative way is the same as the "following": the mystery of the Incarnation, synthesized in the manger, in the public life, and on the cross. It is a "mirror-way," where we see reflected the poverty, the humility, and the love of the Son of God. To contemplate this mirror every day, continually, is to walk in this way without weakening, with light but firm footsteps; to place the mind, soul, and heart in the mirror, and is also to place one's feet in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

Look at Poverty

The contemplative following of Jesus Christ involves one's manner of seeing. In St. John's gospel the first challenging proposal of Jesus to the disciples is this: come and see (Jn. 1:39). "To see" is the fundamental attitude of one who wishes to follow the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth. It is as fundamental as "to listen," "to follow," and "to serve."⁶

A *following* begins with an encounter, with a "seeing," "listening," "touching," "feeling." The women who approach Jesus, who *live alongside* him and follow him have this experience. They see (Mk. 15:40); listen (Lk. 10:39); touch (Lk. 7:38; Mk. 5:27); speak (Jn. 4:9-26; 11:21-27); anoint (Lk. 7:38; Jn. 12:3; Mk. 14:3). An experience of the senses is fundamental for witness. John, in his first letter, expresses it thus: "...what we have heard, ~~what we have~~ seen with our eyes, what we have contemplated and our hands have ~~applied~~... this is what we announce..." (Jn. 1:1-3). The witness of ~~one who has seen~~ cannot be challenged because it is true (Jn. 19:35). The ~~"seeing"~~ synthesizes all experience—leads one to "remain": "They ~~went to~~ lived and remained with him..." (Jn. 1:39).

In the symbolism of the mirror it is ~~obvious~~ emphasized in a special way. Clare delves into this symbol and ~~the~~ type of synthesis to express the involvement of all the senses in ~~the~~ contemplative following

of Jesus. When she says "look" she also means "touch," "listen," "experiment," "perceive the essence and flavor." All these aspects appear in relation to Jesus. Clare invites Agnes to look at his bruised and violated beauty (1 LAg 9; 2LAg 19; 3LAg 16; 4LAg 10); and embrace him (2LAg 18); touch him (2LAg 8); perceive his fragrance (4LAg 13); hear his voice (4LAg 24-26); taste the hidden sweetness which his friends experience (3LAg 14).⁷

In speaking of the mirror, the invitation is to look at the poverty of Jesus: "*Look at the border of this mirror, that is, the poverty of Him Who was placed in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. The King of angels is laid in a manger*" (4LAg 15: 19-21). This is not about a romantic posture before the manger but a real experience of poverty which is the deprivation of material things, [an experience of] humiliation and contempt such as the Son of God who, "... on coming into the Virgin's womb, chose to appear despised, needy, and poor in this world" (1LAg 19).

It may be that the poor whom Clare loved so much and to whom she extended her hand (LegCl 3; Proc 1:3; 17:1), specific persons who lived on the periphery and byroads of Assisi and who frequented San Damiano in search of help, were present there in the human features of the Son of God wrapped in swaddling clothes and resting in the manger.

The first step in Clare's contemplation (contemplation according to Clare) does not consist in penetrating one's own self to discover one's own misery but to go out of the self to see the misery of the other. It is not a struggle against vices and passions, an arduous exercise of humility but a resolute option for poverty, the chosen way of the Son of God.⁸ The reality of the option made in her youth and the battle waged throughout her entire life to remain faithful to this option did not allow Clare to idealize or spiritualize poverty. For her, poverty is very concrete and can be seen: "Look! He is there, wrapped in swaddling clothes."

Whoever suffers from poverty suffers, first of all, physically. The suffering comes from hunger, thirst, nakedness, exhaustion, sickness, homelessness. . . . In the same way, whoever perceives poverty observes it, above all, through the senses. Thus the evangelical way of solidarity is opened and a sharing of life which is exactly the proposal of the mirror as we see it in the manger takes place. Clare's gesture of solidarity with the powerless and forsaken, severing the link with the socio-economic and political model of her time, has, as its fundamental incentive the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God as it is synthesized in the manger. Clare first lived what she later recommended to her friend: "*Look upon Him Who became contemptible for you, and follow Him, making yourself contemptible in this world for Him*" (2LAg 19).

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Consider Humility

The following of Jesus involves the mind, intelligence, and reason. On various occasions Jesus questions the disciples: why do they not understand or why are they slow to understand his words and actions. Later, he himself demonstrates the meaning of the signs which he accomplishes, explaining the parables and the Scriptures.⁹

In order to follow Jesus it is necessary to understand the mystery which is involved. According to Clare, this consideration leads us to perceive the humility, the contrast, which scandalizes and fascinates: the King of angels is wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger (4LAg 19-21). He who rules heaven and earth appears in the world despised, needy and poor (1LAg 19); the Son of the Most High takes refuge in the little cloister of Mary's womb (3LAg 17-19).

Poverty and humility form an inseparable duality in the writings of Clare and appear almost constantly in the texts which speak of following (RCl 8:2; 12:13; TestCl 46-56; 2LAg 7; 3LAg 4, 7, 25; 4LAg 19-22). This preference shows that the particular focus within which she understands the mystery of the Incarnation and the "following of Christ" is the same as that of Francis.¹⁰

Poverty highlights life in the condition of the poor, and humility expresses the depths of poverty, the degradation, the humiliation, the disdain. For Clare the practice of poverty meant to assume the life of the poor, without the guarantee of material ownership, or, for example, to assume the condition of the excluded, those whose story was not included in the official archives of the time. If poverty is the negation of riches, humility is the negation of power. The following of Christ demands both dimensions.

This consideration should lead to an understanding of the salvific motivation of the humility of Jesus Christ. The Son of God divests himself and becomes a servant: to make us rich (1LAg 20); for our salvation (2LAg 20); for our love (3LAg 15); for the redemption of the human race (4LAg 22). This should also lead us to discern the real motive for our response. We do all "for Him" as Clare writes to Agnes (2LAg 19).

Biblical and theological studies help us to understand the Christian mystery. In her writings Clare reveals a very solid theology acquired certainly through her listening to the Word of God, preaching, the liturgy, and personal reflection. One of the sisters testifies to this: "The witness also said Lady Clare delighted in hearing the Word of God. Although she had never studied letters, she nevertheless listened willingly to learned sermons" (Proc 10:8).

For contemplative following of Jesus Christ it is also necessary to understand reality in its many dimensions, since this following takes place within the limits of a very specific history. The following of Christ is concretized within time and space, within a series of relationships and decisions.

In the course of Clare's life, in the decisions she made and in the struggles which she endured, Clare proved herself a profound expert of the reality in which she lived. When she decided not to possess properties and asked for the "Privilege of Poverty," when she renounced her status of nobility and established a style of life in San Damiano which made no class distinctions, when she renounced the use of the title "abbess" and organized her community in a democratic manner, or more so when she resisted the pressures of Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241), she was not acting from mere intuition but knew exactly what she wanted and in what territory she was walking.

To consider the humility of Jesus Christ, his work and sorrow, means to sink deeply into the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God in its essential dimension of *kenosis*, poverty and renunciation, in order that this mystery be renewed today in the different realities where we live and work.

Contemplate Love

The contemplative following of Jesus involves the heart. In her *Third Letter to Agnes*, Clare invites her to "Place your soul and heart before the mirror of eternity" (3LAg 12). In the following letter she added: "*Happy indeed, are you to whom it is given to share in this sacred banquet so that she might cling with all her heart to Him... whose affection excites . . . the mirror without blemish*" (4LAg 9, 11, 14).

In speaking of the heart in the relationship with God and Jesus Christ, Clare seeks inspiration more in the Scriptures than in the prevailing contemplative thought of her time.¹¹ The Bible, of course, places a great emphasis on the heart. It is the place of the decisive options of the human being and the mysterious and merciful action of God. The covenant which God made with his people passes through the heart and demands openness, welcome, commitment. The first obligation of Israel is to seek God with all its heart and with all its soul if it wishes to encounter God (Deut. 4:29). As a partner with God in the Covenant, Israel must love God with all its heart, soul, and all its strength (Deut. 6:5). Israel is called to abandon idols and secure its heart in God and serve only Him (1 Sm. 7:3). God Himself assumes the responsibility of giving Israel a new heart, totally purified, to guarantee fidelity to the covenant (Deut. 30:6; Jer. 31, 32, 33, 39; Ez. 36:25).

The New Testament follows the same thought. The new covenant, established in Jesus Christ, also demands that we love God with our whole heart (Mt. 27:37). In the Beatitudes the pure of heart are promised the vision of God (Mt. 5:8). Paul asks that God enlighten the "eyes of the heart" of the Ephesians in order that they understand their call (Eph. 1:8). He also asks that they be strengthened by the Spirit and that Christ live in their hearts. In that way they

may understand the mystery of the love of Christ which surpasses all human understanding, and experience the fullness of the life of God (Eph. 3:16-19).

For Clare also the heart is the place of the covenantal exchange with God and expresses the radicality of our response, our total involvement, a communion which helps us to perceive the divine. Agnes could have enjoyed the pomp and honors that this world lavishes upon [the wife of] an emperor, but she preferred poverty with all her soul and with all the affection of her heart (2LAg 6). She should not now become discouraged in the face of difficulties but should place her mind, soul, and heart in the "mirror," and should "cling to Him with all her heart." In this way she will experience the sweetness which God has reserved for his friends (3LAg 12-14; 4LAg 9).

God also has a heart. This aspect is decisive in order to understand Clare's invitation when she writes to Agnes: "... 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" (4LAg 23).

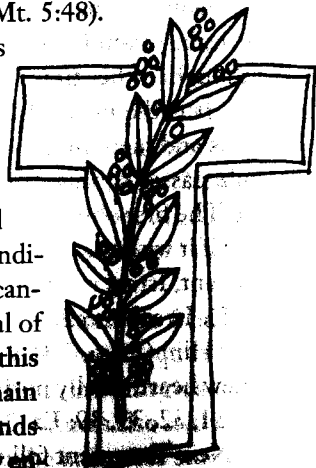
To speak of God's heart is to speak of God's mercy, God's maternal instincts. Hosea 11 is most significant here. Yahweh loved Israel since he was a child, cared for him in the desert, wrapped him in a maternal embrace. When God thought of punishing him for his infidelities God's heart became wrenched within; God was moved within the depths of his being. After all, God is God and not a human being!

Luke expresses God's perfection in terms of mercy and it is the same mercy which is demanded of the disciples (Lk. 6:36; Mt. 5:48).

John's first letter is clear: "God's love only abides in those who have not closed their hearts, their deepest selves, to the needy" (1 Jn. 3:17).

This merciful love of God is manifested above all on the cross of Jesus. There, one perceives the unequivocal manner with which God gives his heart to the misery of the human condition, leading to the extreme of God's love. The scandal of the cross is the scandal of love, the scandal of the heart of a God deeply in love. In the face of this scandal, the disciples flee. But a few women remain and contemplate the mystery which transcends them. They try to penetrate this mystery.¹² They enter into communion with the pain and loneliness of the one who is totally stripped of power, totally dependent on who can "only love."

The Jesus whom Clare contemplates is perfectly sacrificed. These three dimensions correspond to "see," "consider," and "contemplate." Contemplation summarizes the entire process, reassumes the "see"



and "consider." To contemplate is to see with other eyes, to feel with another capacity, to perceive what analyses alone cannot explain. To contemplate is to see with the eyes of the heart, but with the heart of God, which is compassionate and merciful.

This is not a matter of simply employing the affections; that could reduce everything to sentimentalism. To contemplate is to sense and perceive the love of God made visible in Jesus Christ and to vest oneself with the same love, to put on Christ (Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:24), to have the same attitude as Christ who renounced everything . . . until the cross (Phil. 2:5). It is this Clare proposes and desires for Agnes: "Let yourself be inflamed more strongly with the fervor of this charity. . ." (4LAg 27).

To look and consider may be attitudes which are simply human. We look at Jesus and study the gospel in detail; we look at reality and analyze the causes of poverty, violence, the exclusion of millions of people. Contemplation will make the difference. It does not dispense seeing and considering, but gives them a special touch. It is the difference made by the Spirit. To contemplate is to open oneself to the Spirit who renews, transforms, and impels to witness.

Be Transformed and Witness!

In the New Testament the Christian life is presented as "new life." The radical change which the Reign of God demands, the *metanoia* (Mt. 3:2; Mk. 1:15) is equivalent to new birth. There is a double dimension to "new life": a conversion to following Jesus Christ and a "Christification." Both are the work of the Spirit (Jn. 3:5; 2Cor. 3:17), but in the first the human response is accentuated, while in the second what is emphasized is the gratuitous action of God. Clare's contemplation includes both dimensions. In the texts where she uses the metaphor of the mirror, the process of conversion in the following of Jesus appears as embellishment and compassion, while the "Christification" is seen as a participation in divine life, anticipating eschatological communion.

Witnessing is also a part of Clare's spirituality. To be a mirror of Christ is not a privilege but a missionary vocation, a call to reveal, in one's own life, the project of God manifest in Jesus Christ.

Enhancement and *Com-passion*

According to the Gospels, God desires us to be like Him in perfection and mercy (Mt. 5:48; Lk. 6:36). This synthesis also includes the commandment of beauty, which can be expressed: "Be 'beautiful' as your heavenly Father is 'beautiful.'" [The author is using a word, *beleza*, which also means gracefulness, goodness. . . translator's note].

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may understand the mystery of the love of Christ which surpasses all human understanding, and experience the fullness of the life of God (Eph. 3:16-19).

For Clare also the heart is the place of the covenantal exchange with God and expresses the radicality of our response, our total involvement, a communion which helps us to perceive the divine. Agnes could have enjoyed the pomp and honors that this world lavishes upon [the wife of] an emperor, but she preferred poverty with all her soul and with all the affection of her heart (2LAG 6). She should not now become discouraged in the face of difficulties but should place her mind, soul, and heart in the "mirror," and should "cling to Him with all her heart." In this way she will experience the sweetness which God has reserved for his friends (3LAG 12-14; 4LAG 9).

God also has a heart. This aspect is decisive in order to understand Clare's invitation when she writes to Agnes: "... *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*" (4LAG 23).

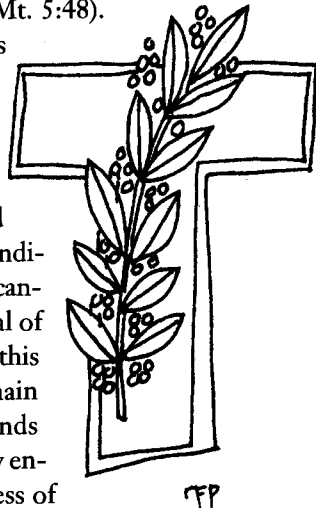
To speak of God's heart is to speak of God's mercy, God's maternal instincts. Hosea 11 is most significant here. Yahweh loved Israel since he was a child, cared for him in the desert, wrapped him in a maternal embrace. When God thought of punishing him for his infidelities God's heart became wrenched within; God was moved within the depths of his being. After all, God is God and not a human being!

Luke expresses God's perfection in terms of mercy and it is the same mercy which is demanded of the disciples (Lk. 6:36; Mt. 5:48).

John's first letter is clear: "God's love only abides in those who have not closed their hearts, their deepest selves, to the needy" (1 Jn. 3:17).

This merciful love of God is manifested above all on the cross of Jesus. There, one perceives the unequivocal manner with which God gives his heart to the misery of the human condition, leading to the extreme of God's love. The scandal of the cross is the scandal of love, the scandal of the heart of a God deeply in love. In the face of this scandal, the disciples flee. But a few women remain and contemplate the mystery which transcends them. They try to penetrate this mystery.¹² They enter into communion with the pain and loneliness of Him who is totally stripped of power, totally annihilated; He who can "only love."

The Jesus whom Clare contemplates is poor, humble and crucified. These three dimensions correspond to "see," "consider," "contemplate." Contemplation summarizes the entire process, reassumes and re-dimensions the "see"



and "consider." To contemplate is to see with other eyes, to feel with another capacity, to perceive what analyses alone cannot explain. To contemplate is to see with the eyes of the heart, but with the heart of God, which is compassionate and merciful.

This is not a matter of simply employing the affections; that could reduce everything to sentimentalism. To contemplate is to sense and perceive the love of God made visible in Jesus Christ and to vest oneself with the same love, to put on Christ (Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:24), to have the same attitude as Christ who renounced everything . . . until the cross (Phil. 2:5). It is this Clare proposes and desires for Agnes: "*Let yourself be inflamed more strongly with the fervor of this charity. . .*" (4LAG 27).

To look and consider may be attitudes which are simply human. We look at Jesus and study the gospel in detail; we look at reality and analyze the causes of poverty, violence, the exclusion of millions of people. Contemplation will make the difference. It does not dispense seeing and considering, but gives them a special touch. It is the difference made by the Spirit. To contemplate is to open oneself to the Spirit who renews, transforms, and impels to witness.

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In the theology of spirituality of recent centuries, the irruption of the

divine in beauty was rarely perceived. Excessive rationalization banalized beauty; moralism was suspicious of it, and pragmatism considered it useless.¹³ Today, however, one can perceive the search to redeem beauty and what has begun to appear is a relationship between theology and aesthetics, mysticism and aesthetics. This is where Franciscan/Clarian spirituality can contribute. For Francis of Assisi beauty is a very important divine attribute. He praises God with these words: "You are joy and jubilation! You are beauty!" (PrsG 4). Creatures are all beautiful and reflect the Creator (Ctc 8; 1C 81; 1MP 116). In them, according to Bonaventure, Francis contemplates the Most Beautiful! (LMj 9:1).

Clare's contribution is Christological. She contemplates the glory/beauty of God which is reflected in the face of Christ, as the New Testament tells us. (2Cor. 4:6; Heb. 1:3). The theme of beauty appears in Clare's four letters, signifying that this [concept] is fundamental and constant in Clare's spirituality. Jesus Christ is "beautiful" (1LAg 9), or better, He is the "*most beautiful among the sons of men*" (2LAg 20). The sun and the moon and all the armies of the heavens admire his beauty without end (3LAg 16; 4LAg 10). But what is of interest to Clare is not so much to exalt the beauty/glory of the Son of God but to perceive that this beauty revealed itself in the face of the man Jesus of Nazareth and, moreover, to call attention to the contrast! He who is so beautiful is bruised and disfigured for our salvation.

Jesus Christ's beauty not only leads Clare to ecstasy but also seduces her and impassions her. An ardent desire to follow Him is born, to become like Him, to vest oneself with the same beauty. The symbolism of the mirror, better than any other, is adequate to express the transformation at work in one who is capable of contemplating beauty.

To our present-day sensitivity it seems out of context to speak of the following of Jesus Christ in terms of "adornment." But not for Clare. She writes to Agnes: "*Gaze upon that mirror each day . . . and continually study your face within it, that you may adorn yourself within and without with beautiful robes . . .*" (4LAg 15-17). Clare's mirror serves as a means for Agnes to beautify herself and also as a point of reference to verify her own beauty.¹⁴ To "mirror oneself" in him means to confront one's own life with the life of Jesus and with the word which he announces. To beautify oneself externally is to journey along the same road, in the concrete reality in which one lives. To beautify oneself internally is to assume the way of Jesus with the same spirit, with the "same perception" (Phil. 2:5).

The following of Jesus, thought of as a process of adornment/beautification, highlights the contemplative dimension and the important aspects of joy and pleasure which accompany the encounter and the intimate living together with one whom one loves.

Tradition has accustomed us to consider the Christian life as an obligation, expressed in the search for truth, in the observance of the command-

ments and precepts, in the practice of renunciation and asceticism. Today this obligation is translated as a struggle, a journey and commitment but one runs the same risk: to turn the Christian life into a burden of responsibilities without any beauty.

The life of Clare wasn't any less difficult and her obligation wasn't any less than what is demanded today. The witnesses to this are numerous. But one notes in Clare a joviality, a lightness and joy which not only cause admiration but question and attract. Contemplation even transforms her externally, increasing her beauty and kindness (Proc. 4:4; 6:3).

Because of this, when she writes to Agnes saying that she should adorn herself, Clare wants to express also the pleasure, thrill, and joy of living found in the following of Jesus. This is the secret of a woman impassioned not only for a cause but also for someone she allows herself to be totally involved with, in freedom and even daring. [This is the secret of] a woman who adorns herself because she feels loved and because of this is capable of profoundly communicating her longings to the loved one, and is also ready to give her life so that these aspirations be realized.

But one could ask: is it possible to speak of the following of Jesus Christ in terms of adornment without leaving the concrete reality wherein the adventure of following the Poor Crucified takes place? In order to avoid this risk Clare joins adornment to *com-passion*. The Son of God is in our midst as a servant, stripped, humiliated, excluded. Because of this, the adornment that Clare speaks of passes through solidarity as the means to recapture a wounded and violated beauty.

In her *Rule* Clare synthesizes the principle characteristics of her life and the life of her sisters: "When the Blessed Father saw we had no fear of poverty, hard work, trial, shame, or contempt of the world . . ." (RCl 6:2; TestCl 27). In Clare's letters these characteristics appear as essential aspects of the human life of Jesus, aspects which Agnes should contemplate. The most explicit text is in the second letter: ". . . *contemplate your Spouse, who, though most beautiful among the children of men, became, for your salvation, the lowest of men, was despised, struck, scourged untold times throughout His entire body, and then died amid the suffering of the Cross*" (2LAg 20). The content is the same as that expressed in the fourth Song of the Servant: ". . . he had neither beauty nor splendor . . . he was despised and abandoned by all, a man subject to suffering, familiar with pain . . . nevertheless, it was our infirmity which he bore, our sufferings which he endured . . ." (Is. 53: 2-4).

Clare has this experience of *com-passion* in varied ways. She confronted poverty, fatigue, humiliation and even a prolonged illness (LegCl 44; RCl 6:2; TestCl 27). She assumed the suffering of the poor and sick who ran to San Damiano in search of help (Proc. 2:18; 3:7, 15; 4:11). She had solidarity with her sisters, especially those who endured illness (Proc. 1:12; 16:2, 13:3; 7:16).

She took upon herself the distress of the citizens of Assisi, threatened by the Saracens and troops of Vital of Aversa (Proc. 3:18-19).

The cross which Clare lived was a redeeming cross. One does not sense a pleasure in suffering itself but from the fact that it allows one to accept it for Christ and, with Christ, bring forth new life. In the final analysis it is not the cross but the life which bursts forth from it. It is with this consciousness that the harsh penances that Clare practiced must be understood. They do not reflect any rejection of the body but the great desire to be conformed to Jesus crucified from the same perspective as the desire for martyrdom.¹⁵

With the Sign of the Cross Clare cured the sick and consoled the afflicted (Proc. 2:13; 3:6, 11, 15; 4:7-8, 10-11). She did not have the stigmata in her hands and feet, as Francis did, but she carried within her heart the Passion of Christ as well as the suffering of others. The sisters, the friars, and the many poor from the surrounding area of Assisi, as well as ecclesial personalities such as Cardinal Hugolino, felt the grace of her compassionate heart.

Divine Union

The last condition of "following" is not a configuration with the Servant but a configuration with the Resurrected Christ and a communion with God. Adornment and *com-passion* are part of a journey to be traveled which leads to the participation in that life which is born of death, of the glory/beauty which shines forth from the face of the Resurrected Servant and from Trinitarian communion which resurrection makes possible. This signifies a real participation in the divine life and happens in a progressive manner; it begins at baptism/conversion and continues throughout the entire process of the following.

Participation in the divine life is a fundamental point in Clare's spirituality. Her thought is enfolded in three aspects all present in the *Third Letter*: through the grace of God we are the dwelling place of God; through following Him we can beget Christ within ourselves; through contemplation we are transformed into the divine image.

Dwelling Place of God and Maternity

The mystery of the Trinitarian presence in us is very much a part of Christian spirituality and has its foundation in Baptism. With Baptism the person becomes the dwelling place of God and is immersed in the Trinitarian life. These are two movements of the same mystery: God comes to us and we are assumed into God. Through divine grace and love, Clare affirms, we become the mansion of God. [He Who is] the Truth has said: *Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too shall love him, and we shall come to him and make our dwelling place with him* (3LAg 23; Jn. 14:21, 23).

But baptismal grace is a covenant and our response is the following of Jesus Christ, fidelity to God's project with the action of the Holy Spirit. The following renews not only a few aspects of the life of Jesus, as the proclamation of the Reign of God, but also the entire mystery of the Incarnation: Jesus Christ is born again for the life of the world. Clare writes further:

As the glorious Virgin of virgins carried [Him] materially, so you too, by following in her footprints, especially those of poverty and humility, can, without any doubt, carry Him spiritually in your chaste and virginal body . . .
(3LAg 24-26).

In Mary, the Trinitarian presence has an outcome which becomes exemplary: the Incarnation of the Son of God and discipleship. This approach allows us to perceive that the presence of God in a person is not only for the person's pleasure, but to generate new life in order to renew the Incarnation in every time and place. The connection between maternity and following shows that there is a way to generate new life: that way traveled by Jesus of Nazareth and followed by Mary, the faithful disciple.

Divine Image

Clare also emphasizes the "Christification" of the human being and participation in the divine life. It is this that she expresses in writing to Agnes:

Place your mind before the mirror of eternity! Place your soul in the brilliance of glory! Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance! And transform your entire being into the image of the Godhead Itself through contemplation (3LAg 12:1-3).

In the formulation of her thought Clare comes close to the passages in Wisdom 7:26 and Hebrews 1:3. But the principal supporting Biblical text is 2Cor. 3:18, which reads: "*And all of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit.*"

The Pauline context shows the superiority of the New Covenant in relation to the Old Law. The ministry of the Old Law had a passing luster; the ministry of the New Covenant, founded upon the Spirit of the living God, is much more glorious and this glory is lasting. Moses kept his face covered with a veil because the glory which shone on his face was transitory. But conversion takes away the veil and Christians, with unveiled faces, reflect in a lasting way the glory of the Lord and are transfigured into the same image (2Cor. 3:46).¹⁶

The transformation of which Clare speaks—as in the Pauline text—is a divinizing transformation. Agnes is transformed in the *divine image*. With this point Clare reaches one of the apexes of Christian anthropology: Christification.¹⁷

Woman, Image of Christ

Divine union is a fundamental theme within the entire Christian tradition as much in spirituality as in theology. But, in Clare's time, to what degree was there a consciousness that the gift of manifesting the "image of divinity" in her face was given to woman also?

"Christification" is intimately linked to the fundamental anthropological data of the image of God present in the human being since creation. This leads one to relate 2Cor. 3:18 with Gen 1:26 and also with 1 Cor. 11:7. The central message of the accounts of creation regarding the image of God present in man and woman was hidden by 1 Cor. 11:7. Paul begins by saying that a man should pray and prophecy with his head uncovered, to honor his head who is Christ; a woman, on the contrary, should cover herself with a veil in order to honor her head who is "man" (1 Cor. 11:4). After this he adds (vs. 7): "As for a man, he should not cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man." This Pauline affirmation, conditioned by the socio-cultural atmosphere of the time, prevailed over the affirmation in Genesis 1:26 which explicitly confers also on a woman the dignity of carrying within herself the image of God.¹⁸

The Pauline texts which speak of the new creation in Christ and of the restoration of the divine image in the human being do not exclude woman. This is what we see in 2Cor. 3:18. But in a theology and exegesis strongly influenced by a patriarchal and andocentric vision, it was not difficult to ignore "*all of us*" in this text and push to the background the idea that woman is also given the gift to "remove the veil" and reflect the glory of the Lord with an unmasked face. This silence is enough to also allow, in the order of grace, the error of an exclusionary interpretation in the order of creation.

The consequences of this manner of thinking are evident in feminine hagiography. It was believed that women had much more difficulty than men in the quest for sanctity and even that they were incapable of developing spiritually. The monastic tradition had strengthened and divulged the thought of St. Jerome—an author well-known in the Middle Ages—regarding the special connection between woman and sin which impeded the grace of God from producing its fruit in her.¹⁹

In this context, Clare's certainty with respect to the divinization of woman in Jesus Christ is a pleasant surprise. Agnes is seen as the mirror and image of Jesus Christ, not only in the sense of an example, but also as a faithful disciple

who follows in the footprints of Jesus in his entire historical trajectory as well as a participant in the divine life, as a daughter of God who bears on her face the splendor of the glory/beauty of the Son. This new title is not the privilege of man. Acquired in baptism, it blooms by means of transforming contemplation, introducing woman to the Trinitarian communion and making her a revelation of God.

Contemplation and Witness

The great masters of spirituality in the twelfth century point out the apostolic fruitfulness of contemplation. It helps develop love of neighbor and fills one with zeal and ardor for the cause of the Kingdom of God. But contemplation and the apostolic life are two distinct realities though intimately related.

Clare's perception is different. Implanted in the perspective of the following, Clare's contemplation has, in its own fiber, the dimension of witness, commitment, and the proclamation of the Gospel. Whoever is transformed in the mirror of Christ, by this fact alone, radiates and manifests his image. This means to testify to the Risen Christ and to announce that the human being is called to the fullness of life and communion with God.

In her *Testament* Clare again uses the metaphor of the mirror to highlight this dimension of witness. She says that the Lord has placed the Damianites as an example and mirror and that this illumination goes beyond the limits of the religious community and reaches the entire world (TestCl 19-22).

One can point out three aspects in Clare's testimony: participation in God's project as realized in Jesus Christ, insertion within the Church, and form of life. In Clare there exists a burning desire that the redeeming work of Jesus Christ be expanded and completed in such a way that all of humanity could experience the gift of God.

The "mysticism of maternity" follows this thought. It expresses a participation in God's project as a gift and duty to continue bringing Christ to life for the life of the world (1LAg 12:24; 3LAg 24-26).

Insertion within the Church is likewise strongly emphasized by Clare. As did Francis, she also felt called to rebuild the Church, to build up the Body of Christ. This vocation became a veritable challenge for the Damianites. Other groups at that time assumed the same task but vacillated or became discouraged along the way. Clare always insisted on remaining faithful to the Church and struggled very much to see her form of life approved by the Church. She was not interested in building another group on the margins of the ecclesial community.

Clare's fidelity to the Church, however, was a prophetic and active fidelity. She searched for "loopholes" and did not hesitate to resist even the Pope himself when she felt that the project which she assumed was threatened. At the

same time that she promised obedience she remembered that the Church should accept that which is born of the Spirit, encouraging her sons and daughters in the following of Jesus Christ.

Clare's strongest and most eloquent witness, however, is her own "form of life" practiced in San Damiano. Clare's broad vision in respect to the social and ecclesial reality of her day permitted her to perceive that poverty and the sisterhood were the dimensions of Christian life most needed at that moment, the areas in which she needed to concentrate the most energy in order that the gospel could become a living and transforming force.

In a selective and excluding society where ownership constituted a barrier separating the social classes, and in a Church which was strongly and powerfully hierarchical, the community of San Damiano appeared as a prophetic sign: renunciation of all property, not establishing class distinctions among the members, and organizing community along democratic and participative lines. The community of the Church, born under the sign of sharing and brother/sisterhood (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35), was reborn with that group of women who put themselves among the minors of their day, assuming the posture of those who serve (Mt. 20:25-28; 23:8).

Conclusion

Women like Clare of Assisi demonstrate the importance of the feminine presence in the area of spirituality that even today continues to accentuate the masculine. This presence is fundamental so that women discover their own ways to express faith and to experience the transcendent. In addition, such women can contribute by pointing out aspects which are often unnoticed by men, so that the feminine dimension can be integrated into spirituality.

Clare of Assisi revealed herself a great woman and great Christian spiritual leader. Her proposal is of great importance not only for the Franciscan family but for the entire Church and can establish for our times also, a branch of spirituality which is alive and fertile. Her witness has sufficient power to cross over the boundaries of time and continue to awaken many young and old, men and women, to the following of Jesus Christ.

Endnotes

¹Clare is one of the few women of the Middle Ages whose writings were preserved. We have a Rule, a Testament, a Blessing and Five Letters, four to Agnes of Prague and one to Ermentrude of Bruges. For the writings of Clare of Assisi, in Portuguese, see: *Fontes Clarianas*, translation, introduction and notes by Fr. Jose Carlos Perdosio (Petropolis: Vozes/CEFEPAL, 1994).

²Clare leaves her paternal house on Palm Sunday in 1212, at 18 years of age. After a few days, she is followed by her sister Agnes [Catherine]; they soon go to live next to the church of San Damiano, rebuilt by Francis. In August, with the arrival of Pacifica, the group begins to grow.

³The theme proposed here is part of a broader study to be published by Editora Vozes under the title "He Became the Way and the Mirror."

⁴Among others cf.: L. Boff, "Contemplativus in liberatione," in *REB* 39 (1979): 571-580; P. Casaldaliga-J.M. Vigil, *The Spirituality of Liberation*. (Petropolis: Vozes, 1994), 129-146; CRB. *A Prayerful Reading of the Bible*. (São Paulo: Loyola/CRB, 1990), 20-36; S. Galilea, "Liberation as an Encounter of Politics and Contemplation," in *Concilium* 96 (1974): 702-713.

⁵Cf. A. Blasucci, B. Calati, R. Gregoire, "La spiritualita del Medioevo," in *The History of Spirituality*, vol. 4 (Rome: Borla, 1988), 35-38; St. Bonaventure, "The Triple Way" in *The Works of Saint Bonaventure*, vol. IV (Madrid: B.A.C., 1947), 114-163; CRB, *A Prayerful Reading of the Bible*. Op. cit., 16-32.

⁶An abbreviated study of these four words as used in the New Testament can be found in A.M. Tepedino, *The Disciples of Jesus* (Petropolis: Vozes, 1990), 23-55.

⁷In the contemplative way, according to diverse trends in spirituality, sensible realities receive little emphasis. To look at the humanity of Christ appears, at most, as a necessary step for beginners, or as the first degree which should quickly be surpassed by the mind. See J. M. Dechanet, "Contemplation in the XIIIth century," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite Ascetique et Mystique*, vol. II/2, 1956 and 1962.

⁸For St. Bernard, the first stage is that the monk become conscious of his misery in the exercise of humility by trying to conquer the vices and passions. CC, "de gradibus humilitatis et superbie," 4:13-15; PL 182, 948d-950c. Cited in: J.M. Dechanet, "Contemplation in the XIIIth Century," op. cit., 1949.

⁹This theme of the disciples not understanding is particularly emphasized by Mark, but also appears in Matthew and Luke. Cf. *The Jerusalem Bible*, Mk. 4:13, note b.

¹⁰The association of poverty-humility is frequent in Francis and permeates all the Franciscan sources. Cf. G. Iammarrone, "The 'Following of Christ' in the Franciscan Sources" in *Miscellanea Francescana* 82 (1982): 421-58, esp. 430-32; F. Uribe, "Cristo en la experienci y en las enseñanzas de Santa Clara," in *Selecciones de Franciscanismo* 22 (1993): 461s.

¹¹The participation of the heart in the contemplative life was accentuated, in the twelfth century, in the Benedictine and Cistercian path. William of St. Thierry highlighted "the eyes of the heart" more than intelligence. Cf. *Le Miroir de la Foi* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1982), 96-122. Already by the time of the Victorines a great emphasis was given to intelligence. Cf. J.M. Déchanet, op. cit.

¹²Tepedino, 94.

¹³R. Fisichella, "Beauty," in *The Dictionary of Fundamental Theology* (Petropolis: Vozes, 1994), 107.

¹⁴D. Dozzi, "Clare and the Mirror," in D. Covi, D. Dozzi, eds. *Clare: Franciscanism and Femininity* (Rome: Collegio S. Lorenzo, 1992), 296.

¹⁵M. Bartoli affirms that Clare was "tempted" by the "secluded religiosity" which characterized feminine piety at the beginning of the 13th century and was expressed through the practice of fasting and harsh penances. But she achieved a balance in the measure that she assumed, in fact, a communitarian (communal) body and was also concerned about the physical needs of the sisters (what to eat, what to wear, where to sleep, how to care for the sick). In addition to this, Clare's spirituality is devoid of that

rejection of the body, through physical beauty and through everything material which characterized the mystical experience of other women, for example, Maria d'Oignies and Margaret of Cortona. See Bartoli's *Clare of Assisi* (Rome: The Capuchin Historical Institute, 1989), 134-47; available in English translation (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993).

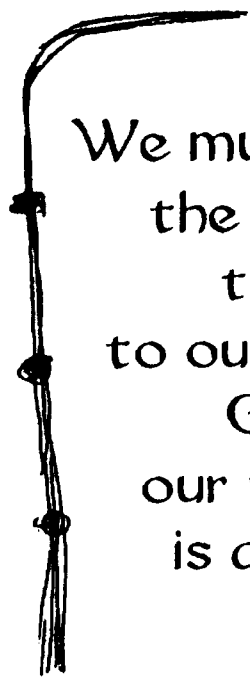
¹⁶J. Dupont, "Le chretien, miroir de la gloire divine d'apres II Cor III, 18," in *Revue Biblique* 56 (1949): 398-400.

¹⁷S. Lopez, "A Theological Lecture on the Third Letter of Saint Clare," in: *Selecciones de Franciscanismo* 22 (1993): 431.

¹⁸"In reality, Paul does not negate that a woman is in the image of God; but with his argumentation, he does not react to the Judaic exegesis referring to the biblical affirmation that only man (the masculine) is the image of God." See R. Fabris and V. Gozzini, *Woman in the Primitive Church* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1986), 98.

¹⁹A. Vauchez, *Sanctity in the Middle Ages* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 1989), 356s.

²⁰The *Form of Life (Rule)* of Clare of Assisi was approved August 9, 1253, by Pope Innocent IV. The bull was presented to Clare on the 10th, the vespers of her death.



We must express
the deepest
thanks
to our glorious
GOD,
our vocation
is a great
gift.

-Testament

Mary Connor, OSC

The Cord, 52.4 (2002)

On a Sunny Afternoon

Tom Barton, O.S.F., Murray Bodo, O.F.M. and
Joanne Schatzlein, O.S.F.

On a sunny afternoon in late June, Joanne Schatzlein, O.S.F., Murray Bodo, O.F.M., and Tom Barton, O.S.F., sat at a table in the café opposite Santa Maria Sopre Minerva, in Assisi. There for a little while they dreamed. As the staff for the Franciscan Study Pilgrimage that summer, they were trying to create something which would coalesce their experience and material on the Lady Clare. What appears below is what they dreamed and then did themselves that afternoon. Several days later they led their group of pilgrims in this prayer ritual through the streets of Assisi. We are offering it to you today as we prepare to celebrate the 750th anniversary of the death of Clare of Assisi.

The ritual involves movement through the city of Assisi, stopping at specific sites important for tracing the route of Clare on the night she left home for the last time in March, 1212. Each "station" is introduced by an imaginative description in order to set the scene for us.

Meditation on Clare's Departure

Station 1 Early Life of Clare

Imagine yourself at the piazza in front of the present-day Cathedral of San Rufino. Facing the cathedral, the rose windows catch your attention; then your gaze moves to the left, and you see the marker commemorating the buildings on the left side of the piazza as the family home of Clare, daughter of Offreduccio.

How many good-byes did Clare say? When did she say those goodbyes? Reluctantly, good-bye to Assisi when her family fled to Perugia. Good-bye to toys, to other things in the abandoned house, to friends in Assisi.

On this Palm Sunday at midnight, good-bye to Papa and Mama Offreduccio.
Good-bye to her very own life,
with all its security, and power, and status.
Good-bye to nobility, good-bye.

But, for Clare there were hellos too.
Hello to Jesus, whom she met through Francis.
Hello to the penitents, right at this very spot.
Hello to the faces of the Perugians who distrusted her family,
but still allowed them to resettle for a time in Perugia.
Hello to Francis and his brothers, right here in Assisi.
And on Palm Sunday at the hour of midnight,
Hello to Christ her Beloved: "draw me after you, oh
Heavenly Spouse,
And I will run to the aroma of your perfume and
I WILL NOT TIRE."

Good-bye. Hello! Clare ran to her Beloved Spouse.

Station 2 Nobility and Family Status

Clare crept out of the house on Palm Sunday night, with no light but that of the moon. She crossed the piazza to the other side and moved to the first step leading down into the lower part of the city. One last time, she turned to look at the entrance to her home.

Clare, like other noble women of Assisi, has defined herself in terms of her own family.

The men of the family are knights, and so the women are the very summit of the social scale.

The downside is that they live very restricted lives, enclosed within the boundaries of their own homes; and the customs of the nobility, like arranged marriages; and no juridical guarantees once their spouse died.

The women were defined in terms of the feudal lords.

Now Clare is leaving that prestigious but confining world.

What are her thoughts?

How will she define herself now?

What boundaries and parameters will still confine her?

Will this new freedom still be circumscribed by the feudal Church of the Middle Ages?

How will she keep alive and continue to live out the new gospel-freedom she has found?

Station 3 Awakening to Francis

Midway down into the neighborhood, Clare began to feel that she might succeed in her escape. She prayed that no one would see her, and that none of the neighbors have heard anything. What would she do if someone came out of one of the houses? Clare stayed close to the walls of the houses as she descended the hill.

Francis' deeds were known to the entire city.

Word spreads quickly in this small town.

What do the neighbors know about what is going on?

What has Clare heard about Francis? Does she know of

- the sale of the cloth at Foligno
- the encounter before the San Damiano Crucifix . . .
(did she go down and gaze on this same face of Christ?)
- Francis begging for stones to rebuild San Damiano?
- the stripping before Bishop Guido?
- Pietro's wrath?

Did the mothers, Ortolana and Pica, speak to each other during these days, trying to understand what was happening to their children?

When and where did Clare first hear Francis preach?

In this neighborhood somewhere?

When did the fire within her begin to grow?

Where in this city did she and Francis meet as she continued to discern God's call?

And what did the neighbors say about this?

Did they even know?

Station 4 Crossing the Borders-Going among the Poor

At the bottom of the first hill, Clare turned to the right and moved toward the place where Francis had once lived, near that old stable which legend tells was his birth-place. This was a part of town not too familiar to her; she had never been there alone before.

Clare has now crossed the boundary between the *maiores* and the *minores*. She stops near the shop of Pietro Bernardone . . .

here the poor work, dyeing the cloth,
far removed from the knightly pursuits of her father's house.
Near here Francis is said to have been born in a stable
like his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to cross those invisible borders between
privilege and distinction, and disenfranchisement,
marginality, anonymity?

What is implied when this noble woman crosses over
to the other side,
where there is little or no education, no luxuries . . .
only the boredom of repetitive, uninteresting, and
demeaning work?

What gospel passages come to her mind?
Is there a further identification with Christ in this
small physical but large psychological and spiritual
border-crossing?

Station 5 Choices

Below the merchants' area, the street curved a bit, and Clare could breathe
a little more freely, because she was half-way down the length of the town. It
was cold, but her movement kept her from shivering. Then Clare was at the
curve which let her face the valley below the city; she hoped she was moving in
the right direction.

Did it ever occur to Clare before, how many choices she had?
When life seemed to be a pre-determined existence,
didn't she still have choices?
Didn't she choose the life of penance as a virgin?
Didn't she choose not to HATE the Assisani for driving
the noble families away?
Didn't she choose to give food to the poor and distribute her patrimony?
Looking at the people who live here in this part of Assisi-
how many choices did they ever have?
And seeing the lepers, MOTHER OF GOD,
what possible choices could they have?
"Unclean," people cry, "Unclean, Unclean."

How many times did Clare come to this very place,
always accompanied by a maid and a knight?

How many times did Clare turn back and run home?
Choices, yes, Clare made many choices.
She could still turn around now and run home,
but where would her home be now?
Would she even be able to get back inside?
Would she be able to return
after all these choices?

At this place, did she wonder if she had made the best choice this
Palm Sunday night?

Station 6 Commitment-the Future

Suddenly, Clare stood at the gate of Porto Moiano, near the house of
Bishop Guido. She was almost positive now that she would be able to get
through the gate with no interference. Once that happened, she would be met
by some of the brothers who had joined Francis. Perhaps even her cousin
Rufino would be there to escort her to the Portiuncola.

Before the gate:

Having made up her mind, did she pause to consider her decision
one more time?
From here, the valley must have looked very dark and foreboding.
Who was guarding the gate? Were they asleep?
The gate is close to Bishop Guido's house . . . the Bishop
who earlier this day gave her the palm at Mass.
Did he help her get past Porta Moiano?

Clare decides to walk through this gate, no longer able to
keep the fire which is blazing
contained within.

Passing Through the Gate:

As you imagine yourself standing in the center of Porta Moiano, recall the
many decisions you have made in your life. Ponder the consequences of these
decisions. As you pass through this gate in your imagination or memory, pray
for the grace to remain faithful to commitments you have made.

Opposite Side of the Gate:

Gaze upon the vast expanse of the valley, open and free-there are no boundaries.

Could Clare see the Madalena Chapel and the Portiuncola from here? Absolutely not.

She went into the unknown.

But looking back, see how narrow and confining this gate looks, with its tiny slit windows.

It is meant to keep people out.

Clare can never return here as a woman of nobility.

Now look at Santa Chiara. Clare could never have imagined that this new place would represent nearly 800 years of loyal discipleship on the part of her sisters.

Santa Chiara today holds two most precious Franciscan symbols:

- the San Damiano Crucifix
- the Body of Clare.

Haven't we also received the call to go and rebuild God's house, which we know is falling into ruin?

Aren't we called to be one as Franciscans, to be part of a family making up the Body of Christ who is the center and soul of both Francis and Clare?

This is our Call.

This is our Challenge.

*Clare decides to walk through
this gate, no longer able to keep
the fire which is blazing
contained within....*

**OPEN THOSE SHUTTERS
(Assisi Pilgrimage Revisited)**

Throw open those shutters; let it all in!

And in it all came:

The Spoleto Valley, sprawled in its splendor.
There, straight ahead, San Damiano, a simple delight,
Where the Lord started the journey.
And off to the right, dwarfed 'neath the dome,
Lay Francis' treasure, his home for all friars,
His Little Portion his, Mary's, the angels'.
And in between, sunk now from sight,
Lay the plain of the lepers,
Where he found refuge and Jesus after his fight.

A beautiful view, no one can doubt.

But let it all in? It might pull me out!

Or worse still, inside out.

Isn't that what happened to him, "The Form for the Minors"?

He had prayed, "Who are you, O Lord, and who am I?"

And he stayed, searching the answer

In caves and in darkness at least for six years.

A dark disappointment he became to father and friends.

That brought on fears almost too fretful to face.

But face them he did, though it cost him that life.

He sold all he knew, to buy the unknown.

It left him poor and rejected, naked but clothed,

Filled him with freedom, embraced by a Father in heaven.

Let **that** all in?

Who wants to tread in the cave of one's fears?

It might rip off masks I've worked on for years.

I might be rejected by those I hold dear,

For I too might hear answers that get to the heart of the prayer

"Who are you, O Lord, and who am I?"

and they might not fit in the eyes of those standing near.

But I might find freedom, his freedom and joy-

And in freedom walk, naked,
wrapped in the arms of our Father in heaven.

Open those shutters, let it all in!

He was confronted, confused by the Cross:
"See my church falling to ruin."

His place in the family would fall into ruin.

If the church followed suit,

Where could he ever find his own spot?

Alone and unsure, he still trusted and acted.

Taunted and jeered, he never felt victim.

Let **that** all in?

I want to belong, secure in my place.

I don't want to walk, alone and unsure,
Into buildings half-empty, abandoned by many.

Shun them - they're shabby;

That's not where it's at.

But a less vocal voice still speaks from that cross.

I hear it when other voices I silence-

And those eyes, who'd want to run from those eyes?

Victory's sound may seem distant,

But its echo I hear when I listen.

So throw aside those robes of a victim.

Open those shutters; let it all in!

The lepers he loathed became his new lodging,
Learning from them how to know Love when degraded
He called them his "brothers" while washing their wounds.

Waves of healing it brought them;

To him, waves of wholeness.

Let **that** all in?

I'm used to my comfort,

To walking in paths

Which keep people put in their places.

Love's easier that way; I get my reward,

Warmly accepted by all those who count.

But what am I learning; where's any healing?

I do want wholeness,

When all will be "brothers" and all will belong.

Then be brother first to your discomfort and loathing.

Open those shutters; let it all in!

New brothers the Lord brought him,
Brothers to bear the burden of building the church
And washing the lepers.

Brothers to walk with him in the unknown,
Holding to nothing but the Lord and each other,
Listening together to Jesus and Mary, Queen of the Angels.

"It's too hard," the Pope said, "so cease and desist."

But the dream proved too strong; their joy was too real.

"So go into the whole world and preach this good news."

Let **that** all in?

When brothers come in, it only increases the burden.

You're no longer alone, yes;

But now you're surrounded with mess.

Who can say whose way is best, which way the Lord's?

Brothers add to the joy, but muddle things up.

But the Lord brought him brothers, and with brothers he'd walk

Though it still makes small sense to popes and some people.

The good news is there yet to proclaim,

And how else to believe we're one Body in Christ?

Open those shutters, let it all in!

All this came in when I opened the shutters.
Not just buildings, steeples, valleys, romance and dreams.

But life, real life, my life, his life

Francis, the form of all friars.

I drank it all in front of my window.

It did pull me out.

But first it invited,

"Go inside, then out."

Dan Crosby, O.F.M. Cap.



New
from The Franciscan Institute

*The Misadventure of Francis of
Assisi*

by Jacques Dalarun

The work of a major European scholar on the works that have been the standard for knowing the story of Francis of Assisi, this book brings a new perspective to the interpretation of the Franciscan Sources.

After a century of discoveries by dedicated Franciscanists, Dalarun re-examines the hagiographical tradition and offers an exciting perspective on the life of Francis and the texts that shape our view of him.



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**38th Franciscan Federation
Conference**

Theme:

*Harmony of Goodness:
Reconciliation as*

Franciscan Pilgrims and Strangers

Presenter: Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ

(John Duns Scotus scholar)

and Franciscan men and women Reflectors

Place: Marriott Renaissance Hotel

Detroit, Michigan

August 18-21-2003

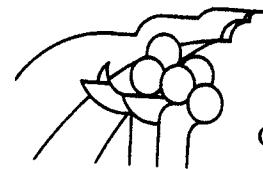
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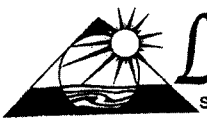
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For further information contact:



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Lourdes Wellness Center

Sponsored by Our Lady of Lourdes Health System, A Ministry of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY

Searching For Sacred Spaces:

Poetry, The Healing Language of Spirit

Poetic Medicine

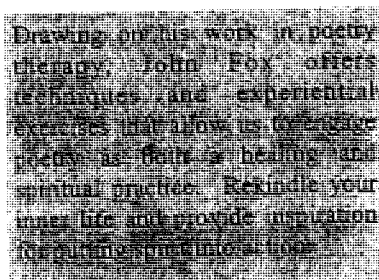
Introduction:	Friday, August 16, 2002	7-9:00pm	\$25
One-Day Workshop:	Saturday, August 17, 2002	10:00am - 4:00pm	\$55

Poetry, The Healing Language of Spirit

An Intensive:	Monday, August 19, 2002 - Thursday, August 22, 2002	10:00am - 4:00pm	\$195
	<i>Attend all Three Events</i>		\$250

The experience of meeting the sacred in the world, within community, in nature and within oneself is difficult to express in words. One way to revive this connection to Spirit is through poem-making, a process that is both healing and inspiring. This program is designed to evoke your unique soul voice through poem-making by asking the essential question:

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2002 RETREATS

- March 15-17th Come to the Quiet-Christian Meditation
Director: John Michael Talbot
- April 12-14th Charismatic Retreat *Director: Fr. Jim Mancini*
- April 26-28th The Joy of Music Ministry *Director: John Michael Talbot*
- May 3-5th and The Lessons of St. Francis
August 16-18th *Director: John Michael Talbot*
- May 24-16th The Jewish Roots of Catholicism
Director: Bob Fishman
- June 7-9th Troubadour for the Lord *Director: John Michael Talbot*
- June 20-23rd Simple Living Retreat
Director: John Michael Talbot and community
- June 28th-30th The Power of His Presence
Director: Monsignor Frank E. Chiodo
- July 12-14th Catholic, Evangelical and Eucharistic
Director: Dr. Scott Hahn
- July 19-21st Mary, Our Jewish Mother *Director: Bob Fishman*
- August 26-28th Togetherness: A Weekend for Married Couples
Director: Fr. Martin Wolter, OFM
- August 9-11th Healing the Wounds of Life *Director: Tonti Curtis*
- August 23-25th Christ and the Creative Process
Director: Michael Card
- Sept. 6-8th Are You Ready for A Miracle?
Director: Sr. Francis Clare, SSND
- Sept 27-29th Gospel Life in the Domestic Church
Director: Fr. Bob Dombrowski
- October 11-13th Men's Charismatic Retreat *Director: Dr. Dennis Holt*
- October 18-20th St. Therese of Lisieux *Director: Maureen O'Riordan*

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Contact: Mr. David Elliott
Telephone: 916.443.5717 Fax: 916.443.2019 e-mail: ofmcrway@att.net

FOURTH ANNUAL SIMON SCANLON WRITING AWARDS

- Open to all. (No Board Members, employees, or friars of the Province of Saint Barbara are eligible.)
- Applicants submit an *original* essay or feature-length article (1500-2000 words). Subject: any theme dealing with the influence and relevance of Franciscan life, spirituality, history, etc. in our world today. Must be oriented to a general reading public, not an academic audience. Profiles, essays, human interest stories, photo essays w/text, interviews, charitable projects, etc. are acceptable.
- Submissions must be typed in 12-point font and double-spaced, with 1" margins. 2,000 word maximum. Electronic submissions are strongly encouraged. Please send these as a PC compatible e-mail attachment and receipt of your submission will be acknowledged by return e-mail.
- Prizes are as follows — 1st: \$1000; 2nd: \$500; 3rd: \$250. (Prizes awarded when winners are informed and submit signed letter(s) of acceptance.)
- Submissions must be postmarked by October 4, 2002. All entries will be submitted to a jury. Decision announced by letter December 1, 2002.
- Applicants agree that, if chosen, their original work will be published in *The Way*, which holds first-time rights, and that winning entries may be posted on *The Way's* website. Award recipients agree to work with the Editor of *The Way* on all revisions required prior to publication. Authors are responsible for submitting essential photos and accompanying materials (photocopies, prints, drawings, etc). SASE required for return of any/all materials. No extra fee paid for photos/film/development.
- Applicants may send an SASE (6"x9", with four first-class stamps) for a sample copy of *The Way*. Send SASE and/or entry to: *The Way of St. Francis*, 1112 26th St., Sacramento, CA 95816-5610.

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New
from The Franciscan Institute

Franciscans in Urban Ministry

With an Introduction by Ken Himes, OFM
and
Edited by Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF

Since the dawn of the Franciscan movement in the early part of the 13th century, Franciscans have found themselves living and ministering in significant ways in the context of cities. This work explores some salient features of the Franciscan story and considers contemporary challenges to life and ministry in the city today.

Seven essays provide an overview of a Franciscan approach to urban life and ministry.

Authors include
Joe Chinnici, OFM; Dominic Monti, OFM;
Beverly A. Carroll, Paticia Keefe, OSF;
Herbert A. Johnson & James A. Wallace, CSsR



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On the Franciscan Circuit Coming Events 2002

Wednesday, July 31 - Wednesday, August 7, 2002

Guided Retreat: "Experiencing Francis and Clare." Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston, PA. Leader: Madonna Hoying, SFP. Call 610-558-6152.

Friday, August 9 - Sunday, August 11, 2002

Weekend Retreat: "Healing the Wounds of Life." Director: Toni Curtis. Little Portion Retreat and Training Center, 171 Hummingbird Lane, Eureka Springs, AR. Call 479-253-7379 or e-mail: retreats@LittlePortion.org. (See ad, p. 183).

Friday, August 16 - Saturday, August 17, 2002

One-Day Workshop: "Poetry, The Healing Language of Spirit." With John Fox, Poet and Certified Poetry Therapist. Lourdes Wellness Center, 900 Haddon Avenue - Suite 100, Collingswood, NJ. Call 865-869-3125, or see: www.lourdeswellnesscenter.org. See ad, p. 182).

Friday, August 23 - Sunday, August 25, 2002

Weekend Retreat: "Christ and the Creative Process." Director: Michael Card. Little Portion Retreat and Training Center, 171 Hummingbird Lane, Eureka Springs, AR. Call 479-253-7379 or e-mail: retreats@LittlePortion.org. (See ad, p. 183).

Friday, September 6 - Sunday, September 8, 2002

Weekend Retreat: "Are You Ready for a Miracle?" Director: Sr. Francis Clare, SSND. Little Portion Retreat and Training Center, 171 Hummingbird Lane, Eureka Springs, AR. Call 479-253-7379 or e-mail: retreats@LittlePortion.org. (See ad, p. 183).

Friday, October 20 - Friday, October 27, 2002

Franciscan Pilgrimage to the California Missions. The mission sites of central California are the focus of this pilgrimage. Contact Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs, P.O. Box 321490, Franklin, WI. Call 414-427-0570 or visit www.FranciscanPilgrimages.com.

Thursday, October 10 - Sunday, October 13, 2002

The Franciscan Connection. With Elizabeth Imler, OSF and Diane Jamison, OSF. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation, Regions 4 & 5. At Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, Joliet, IL. Contact Sr. Margaret Kelly, OSF at 309-829-0455.

Abbreviations

Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	The Admonitions
BIL	A Blessing for Brother Leo
Ctc	The Canticle of the Creatures
CtExh	The Canticle of Exhortation
1Frg	Fragments of Worcester Manuscript
2Frg	Fragments of Thomas of Celano
3Frg	Fragments of Hugh of Digne
LtAnt	A Letter to Br. Anthony of Padua
1LtCl	First Letter to the Clergy (Earlier Edition)
2LtCl	Second Letter to the Clergy (Later Edition)
1LtCus	The First Letter to the Custodians
2LtCus	The Second Letter to the Custodians
1LtF	The First Letter to the Faithful
2LtF	The Second Letter to the Faithful
LtL	A Letter to Brother Leo
LtMin	A Letter to a Minister
LtOrd	A Letter to the Entire Order
LtR	A Letter to the Rulers of the People
ExhP	Exhortation of the Praise of God
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
PrsG	The Praises of God
OP	The Office of the Passion
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix
ER	The Earlier Rule (<i>Regula non bullata</i>)
LR	The Later Rule (<i>Regula bullata</i>)
RH	A Rule for Hermitages
SalBVM	A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SalV	A Salutation of Virtues
Test	The Testament
TPJ	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

Franciscan Sources

1C	The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano
2C	The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul
3C	The Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
LCh	The Legend for Use in the Choir
Off	The Divine Office of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
LJS	The Life of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
VL	The Versified Life of St. Francis by Henri d'Avranches
1-3JT	The Praises by Jacopone da Todi
DCom	The Divine Comedy by Dante Alighieri
TL	Tree of Life by Ubertino da Casale
1MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Smaller Version
2MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Larger Version
HTrb	The History of the Seven Tribulations by Angelo of Clareno
ScEx	The Sacred Exchange between St. Francis and Lady Poverty
AP	The Anonymous of Perugia
L3C	The Legend of the Three Companions
AC	The Assisi Compilation
1-4Srm	The Sermons of Bonaventure
LMj	The Major Legend by Bonaventure
LMn	The Minor Legend by Bonaventure
BPr	The Book of Praises by Bernard of Besse
ABF	The Deeds of St. Francis and His Companions
LF1	The Little Flowers of Saint Francis
KnSF	The Knowing of Saint Francis
ChrTE	The Chronicle of Thomas of Eccleston
ChrJG	The Chronicle of Jordan of Giano