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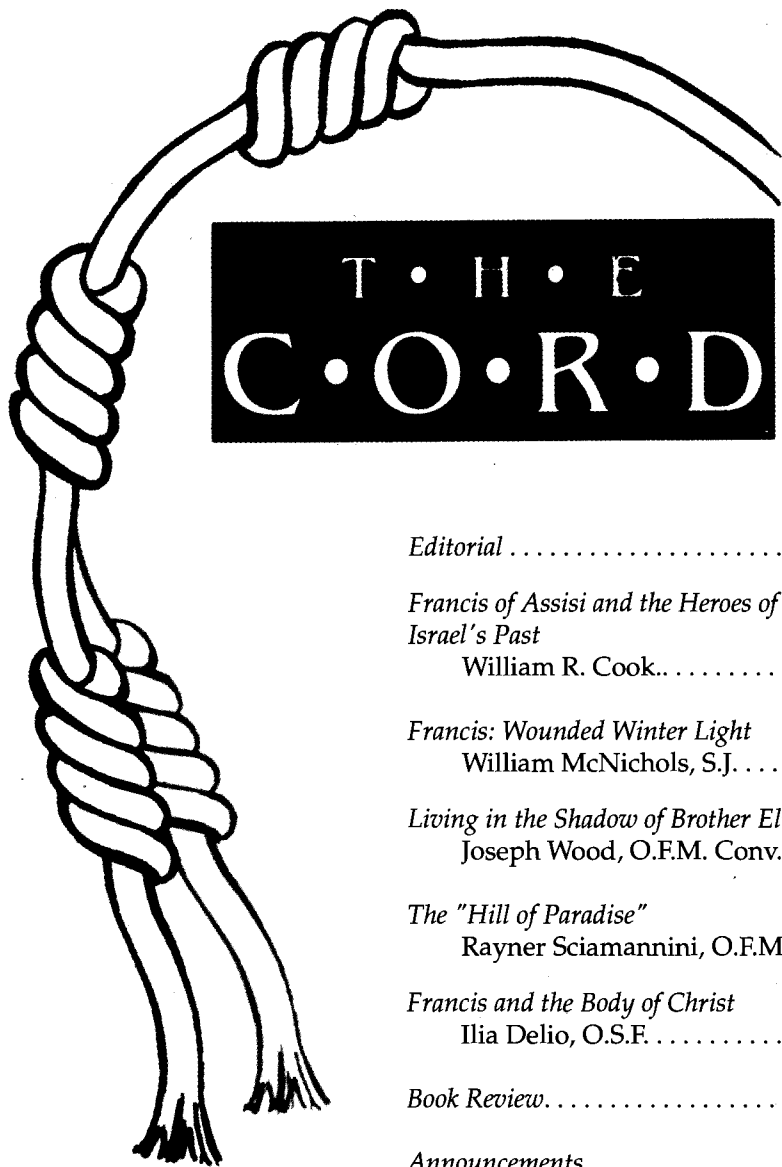
ST. BONAVENTURE'S COMMENTARY  
ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE  
PART II

Robert Karris, OFM

from the CFIT SERIES

FRANCISCAN IDENTITY AND POSTMODERN CULTURE  
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3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.  
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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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## Editorial

It is hard to believe that a full year has passed since my first "solo" with *The Cord*. Truthfully, it has been a year of learning the ins and outs of a different computer system and publishing program (with their very real pluses and just as real minuses), discovering the mishaps that can befall any editor or proofreader, enjoying moments of success and relishing the sense that this journal nourishes over a thousand subscribers, who like me, are "on the journey."

In the past year several new authors were introduced and some "old reliables" also graced these pages. It is my hope that a similar mix of new and old can continue in the year ahead. To that end, four of this year's issues will have "dedicated" topics: May/June will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Secular Franciscan Rule; July/August will again focus on Clare and Franciscan women; September/October belongs to Francis and the life of friars minor; and the November/December issue will be reserved for material about Third Order Regular life. As always, submissions will be happily received and evaluated! It seems to me that I can never have too many manuscripts from which to choose....

We begin 2003 with an issue that is a bit eclectic, bringing together a broad selection of articles ranging from a rich study of biblical sources used for sermons about Francis to a reminder about the importance of Brother Elias, to background of the place where the basilica dedicated to *Saint* Francis now stands, to a powerful reflection on the likeness of the Body of Christ and that of Francis . . . and their similar understanding of the meaning of suffering. Our authors offer us an immensely challenging view of the influence one person can have within a lifetime and in the centuries beyond.

Lastly, a request. There are two graphics for which I have no information (see pages 9 and 30). These items have no artist's name that I can identify. They were in the file and may have been used years ago; even so, I felt that they fit the current essays. If anyone has information about their origins, please let me know and I will give proper acknowledgment in a future issue.

May the God of peace and justice be with us!

*Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF.*

## Francis of Assisi and the Heroes of Israel's Past

William R. Cook

When we consider St. Francis, we often think of him not only as an individual Christian hero but also in relation to other holy men and women. Francis is placed with Clare, Anthony of Padua, and other early Franciscans in numerous works of art in the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi and all over the world.<sup>1</sup> Dante describes Francis as one of the two re-builders of the Church, the other being St. Dominic.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes Francis is thought of in the company of other great founders of religious orders; thus in Giotto's Last Judgment in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, Francis is in heaven with Augustine, Dominic, and Benedict.<sup>3</sup> Francis is considered a martyr because of his stigmata and was often represented with great martyrs of the early church, especially the deacon martyrs such as Stephen and Lawrence since Francis was also a deacon. There are of course many other categories in which we discover Francis. A few years ago, for example, I authored a book about the saint in a series called *The Way of the Christian Mystics*,<sup>4</sup> other volumes in the series were about holy men and women as diverse as St. Patrick, St. Ignatius Loyola, and Edith Stein.

From the thirteenth century until today, people have also associated Francis with a variety of biblical figures. Francis and Peter are often thought of together. While Peter the simple fisherman became the devoted disciple of Christ, so did Francis the simple merchant. And since the friars were often regarded as new apostolic men, it was obvious to parallel the prince of the apostles with the founder of the new apostolic order. Although it sometimes seems odd to people today, a number of medieval authors related Francis to Paul. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul writes of being crucified with Christ and of carrying Christ's wounds in his body. Of course Paul was not speaking literally in these passages; but these words of Paul were regarded as appropriate to describe the stigmatized Francis. Most obviously, Francis was likened to Christ himself. Bonaventure does this in a variety of ways in his Major Legend. More graphically, the artist who decorated the nave of the Lower Church in Assisi depicted

five stories from the life of Francis opposite five stories from Christ's passion.<sup>5</sup> Francis came to be referred to as an *alter Christus*, and in the late fourteenth century, Bartholomew of Pisa wrote a work that shows a one-to-one correspondence between events in Francis's and Christ's lives.<sup>6</sup>

In the thirteenth century, Francis was sometimes thought of in relationship to great men of the Old Testament. For example, in Gregory IX's bull of canonization of July 19, 1228, the pope relates Francis to the obscure Judge Shamgar and refers to Francis as a new Samson. Sometimes the early biographers made direct comparisons between Francis and Old Testament heroes, including, perhaps more obviously than Pope Gregory's choices, David and Elijah. In the fresco cycle of Francis in the Upper Church in Assisi, often ascribed to Giotto and most likely dating from the early 1290s, there are implicit links between Francis and Adam, Noah, Abraham, and others since their stories are frescoed above the first thirteen scenes from Francis's life.

There are several reasons for making such comparisons. One, of course, is simply to say that sacred history is still in progress and not limited to biblical times; there are still heroes today who have as much grace as the great figures of old. In our own time, when all public figures are inspected so carefully and continuously, it is difficult to imagine that anyone has the stature of a George Washington or a Francis of Assisi, let alone an Abraham or a Moses. In the Middle Ages, however, the age of heroes was not a matter only of the past. Another reason to draw relationships between past and present figures is to provide some sense of continuity between past and present. For example, Bonaventure draws a spiritual genealogy starting with David the simple shepherd, continuing with Peter the simple fisherman, and ending with Francis the simple merchant. None had much formal education, but each had a deep understanding of spiritual truth and became a leader in his time. Also, as implied in the example from Bonaventure, the linking of past and present figures is a shorthand way of telling us about the new person. Thus, if Francis is likened to David, we can think not only about their common lack of formal education but also about their struggles to defeat the enemies of God, their joy in the presence of God. Recall David dancing before the ark and Francis singing praises to God while using two sticks as a fiddle, and the hymns of praise that each created—David the Psalms, Francis the Canticle of the Creatures.

### Scriptural Sources for Sermons about Francis

When we ask about the sources that medieval writers used to develop these parallels between Old Testament heroes and Francis, we of course discover that the answer is scripture. Thus, for example, Gregory IX quotes brief passages from Judges when he likens Francis to Shamgar and Samson. It is

reasonable to assume, therefore, that when we find a reference to an Old Testament figure in relation to Francis, we should go to the Old Testament text that contains the most famous version of the story, I and II Samuel for David, I Kings for Elijah, and so on. However, there is good evidence to suggest that although the medieval figures who wrote about Francis knew all of the books of the Old Testament better than we can imagine, they often, in fact, used a rather obscure Old Testament passage as their immediate source.

In 1982, Jacques Guy Bougerol published a list of all the surviving Latin sermons preached about Francis from the earliest ones written in 1228, two years after the saint's death until 1350.<sup>7</sup> There are 540 sermons listed. All but a handful use a brief passage from scripture as the point of departure. Some of the most popular passages and books of the Bible were indeed commonly used as the bases for sermons on Francis. Texts from Matthew and Luke together are the sources for seventy-six of the sermons while sixty-five of the texts are taken from Paul's letters and fifty-six from Revelation. Still, there are some surprises. There is no sermon that takes as its starting point a text from Mark or Romans, and only seven times are texts from John employed. Acts of the Apostles is the source of only one sermon, a surprisingly low number since the friars were regarded as the re-builders of the Church. Although the number of texts from Revelation is not surprising, thirty-one of the fifty-six sermons based on that book use the same text, Rev 7:2, the text describing the angel bearing the seal of the living God. Since Bonaventure identifies the stigmatized Francis as that angel in the prologue to his Major Legend, it is not surprising that this passage is in fact the most often used as the basis for a sermon.

Allowing for a few sermons that have no identifiable text and a few that use two texts, we can count a total of 539 citations in the 540 sermons. While 227 come from the New Testament, 312 texts are from the Old Testament. Five Old Testament books are cited more than twenty times. Ezekiel is cited twenty-one times; however, seventeen of the twenty-one sermons based on Ezekiel use Ezek. 28:12, "You set your seal on perfection." Clearly medieval preachers regarded this text as prophetic of God putting his seal, the stigmata, on Francis.

Three of the most frequently cited books are to be expected—Genesis is cited thirty-one times, the Psalms thirty-five times, and Isaiah 36 times. All of these are long books and ones that still today are regarded as central. However, the book cited most often of all the books of the Bible is Ecclesiasticus, sometimes known as Sirach.<sup>8</sup> Its sixty-five citations are almost double the number of any other Old Testament book and exceed such obvious choices as Matthew, Luke, Revelation, and all the letters of Paul combined. The number of citations of Sirach is not due to one passage being used a great percentage of the time. In fact, there are twenty-seven different citations from Sirach. The

prominence of this book seems odd to modern Christians, for the book of Sirach is not well known or often read today, and, of course, it is not included in the canon of texts in Protestant Bibles.

There are fourteen texts from the first forty-three chapters of Sirach that are used for sermons on Francis;<sup>9</sup> however there are eleven different citations from Sirach 44-50 that begin a total of forty-three sermons. I will focus on this concentrated set of citations.

## The Heroes of Israel and Francis

In the *New English Bible*, this section of Sirach is entitled "Heroes of Israel's Past." This is a good description of these seven chapters. In some ways, these chapters are a sort of "Cliff Notes" of Hebrew history. In summary form, the stories of heroes from Enoch and Abraham to Simon the high priest in the time of the Maccabees are retold. From a modern standpoint, there are some odd imbalances and omissions. Caleb gets about as many lines as Joshua; Jeremiah is praised but Isaiah is not mentioned; none of the judges is named, and collectively they get six lines; Aaron gets more attention than Moses, and the high priest Simon receives more space than anyone.

It is clear from the number of citations to the "Heroes of Israel's Past" in the early sermons about St. Francis that this section of Sirach was well known and no doubt used as a quick reference to the whole of Hebrew history. And while many of the texts were selected because of a key word or phrase and without much regard to context (e.g. Ezek 28:10 discussed above), the passages selected from Sirach 44-50 identify Francis with specific people in Hebrew history and thus tell us something about how Francis was understood and remembered and incorporated into the whole scheme of salvation history.

I will examine each of the eleven texts from Sirach 44-50 selected by preachers on the life of Francis, look at the story referred to, and try to suggest some ways in which the preachers' and their audiences' understanding of Francis was expanded by reference to the heroes of Hebrew history. I will also explain how even today those medieval perceptions of Francis can broaden our understanding of the saint and also other great Christian heroes of the past and of the present.

There is one sermon preached on the first words of the "Heroes of Israel's Past," Sirach 44:1: "Let us now sing the praises of famous men."<sup>10</sup> This is a passage about remembrance. In verse 2, the author mentions that these are the men through whom God has revealed himself in each succeeding age. Indeed, the author of Sirach brings the stories of Israel's heroes up to his present by including Simon the high priest. Just so, it follows this tradition that those who praise Francis continue the practice of celebrating those through whom

God reveals himself to the different ages. The author continues by describing various categories of famous men: kings, counsellors, prophets, composers and writers, the wealthy and strong. Certainly Francis can be understood as a counsellor, prophet and composer and writer. This text also reminds us that although Francis was someone who revealed God in his time and lived in poverty and simplicity, his is not the only sort of life in which God acts to reveal his nature and will to people. This is an important principle for preachers, since many in their audiences would not have been friars.

Eleven sermons were preached on Sirach 44:16: "Enoch pleased the Lord and was carried off to heaven."<sup>11</sup> The text goes on to say that Enoch was an example of repentance for future generations. There is no sense of Enoch as a penitent in the original version of the Enoch story found in Genesis 5:21-24. The addition of the phrase about Enoch as an example of repentance by Sirach is probably why this text and the figure of Enoch drew so much attention from preachers about Francis. Just as one of the earliest humans pleased God by repentance, so Francis, in his day, was the one who so pleased God by repentance; like Enoch he is an example for future generations.

In medieval thinking, Enoch and Elijah were special because they are not described as dying. God took Enoch away, and Elijah ascended to heaven in a fiery chariot. Thus, there were those who expected Enoch and Elijah to return to earth as a sign of the coming apocalypse. Since there were many friars, including many fully orthodox ones such as Bonaventure, who believed that Francis was a sign of the second coming of Christ, there may be an apocalyptic element to the popularity of a connection between Enoch and Francis.

Bonaventure likened Francis to Enoch and Elijah at the end of *The Major Legend*, where he describes the 1230 translation of Francis's body.<sup>12</sup> According to the Seraphic Doctor, Francis was like Enoch who "had been borne into paradise by the grace of contemplation and carried off to heaven" (LM 15:8). Thus too, in the medieval imagination, Enoch was a contemplative who was taken to heaven. Certainly, too, Francis was a contemplative, especially toward the end of his life. Further, as unlikely as the Enoch of Genesis is as a figure to whom Francis is likened, the Enoch of Sirach and of Bonaventure's understanding of him as a contemplative (probably based on the statement that Enoch walked with God in Genesis 5) make him a figure related to the *Poverello* of Assisi.

There are two sermons about Francis based on Sirach 44:19-20, which begins: "Great Abraham was the father of many nations."<sup>13</sup> In the following verses, Abraham is said to be the most famous of all men. He kept the law, made a covenant with the Lord, his body was marked with the sign of the covenant, and he proved faithful when tested. The remainder of Sirach's account of Abraham deals with his descendants. Of course, Francis was the father of the Franciscan Order, which became enormously large and by the end

of the thirteenth century had friars at the ends of the earth—North Africa and even as far as Beijing. If the surviving art is an indicator, Francis was possibly the most famous of men other than Christ himself, appearing in more thirteenth-century paintings in Italy than anyone other than Christ and the Virgin Mary.<sup>14</sup>

Especially important in Sirach's description of Abraham is that his body bore the mark of the covenant, a reference to circumcision (Gen. 17:11ff). Just as Abraham carried the mark of the old covenant in his body, so did Francis bear the stigmata, the marks from which flowed the blood of the new covenant, in his. And although Francis was not called to sacrifice his own son as Abraham was, he nevertheless was tested with bodily afflictions and concerns about changes in the Order. Like Abraham, Francis remained faithful to God:

In Sirach 45:1-2, the author writes that, "The Lord made [Moses] equal in glory to the angels."<sup>15</sup> Six sermons on Francis use this text as their starting point. Much of the rest of the passage concerning Moses deals with his power. However, there are two mentions of Moses encountering God, references to the meeting at the burning bush and Moses' reception of the law on Mt. Sinai. Sirach also says that God consecrated Moses because of "his loyalty and humility." There is the connection between Moses the lawgiver and Francis the author of the Rule for the friars. However, the relationship between Francis and Moses is more subtle than that. Moses was made equal in glory to the angels, and Francis was prophesied under the image of an angel, the one bearing the seal of the living God (Rev. 7:2). Like Moses, Francis met God in fire (the fiery wings of the seraph) and on a mountain (La Verna, site of the stigmatization). And yet, the virtue of humility is central to the lives of both Moses and Francis. There is even a story of Francis's humility in which a friar has a vision of a great throne in heaven, once occupied by a rebellious angel, but now reserved for Francis because of his great humility. As we read Exodus or watch "The Ten Commandments," we might easily lose sight of Moses' humility before God. This brief synopsis of Moses' life in Sirach wisely reminds us not just of Moses' power and grace but also of humility. Thus, one who met God face to face, who was equal in glory to the angels, and who was chosen for his loyalty and humility can describe both Moses and Francis of Assisi.

Two sermons about Francis begin with Sirach 46:1: "He lived up to his name as a great liberator of the Lord's chosen people."<sup>16</sup> This is the second part of the verse and refers to Joshua, the conqueror of the Promised Land. To us, Joshua the military hero seems to have little in common with Francis the peacemaker. And indeed this section of Sirach mostly deals with his military victories, although it emphasizes that he called on the Lord for help.

In the Vulgate, the Latin version of the Bible used in the Middle Ages, Joshua's name is written as "Jesus Nave," and of course writers would immediately think of the relationship between Joshua and Jesus of Nazareth. Since

Francis is so often likened to Christ, it is natural that writers would look for links between Joshua and Francis. From the time of the first crusade, Joshua was understood as an Old Testament figure of the crusader because Joshua conquered the Promised Land, and the purpose of the crusaders was to reconquer the same territory. Francis, too, is often represented as a knight of Christ, in part because he did have a brief career as a worldly knight. He is also seen as a crusader because of his visit to the Holy Land in 1219 and his encounter with the Sultan. Later, most of the holy sites in the Holy Land were given to the friars.

Francis also lived up to his name. According to 2 Celano 3, Francis was originally named John, later changed to Francis (*Francesco* = the French one) when his father returned from a business trip. Celano explains that Francis lived up to the name John through his ministry. Francis lived an ascetic life, preached penance, and prepared for the coming of Christ, just as John the Baptist did. Celano understands Francis's living up to his more familiar name because of the spread of his fame. Francis's name was "foreign," and thus he lived up to it by his fame spreading beyond Italy. From this part of the Franciscan heritage, we can understand why the text "[Joshua] lived up to his name" was one that would have led preachers to thoughts of Francis of Assisi.

Just as Joshua was a conqueror of land over a physical enemy, so Francis was seen as victorious over spiritual enemies and a conqueror for Christ against his Adversary. As Joshua freed God's people from political and military subservience to a foreign power, so did Francis free people from spiritual subservience to Satan and his army.

There is a brief passage (Sir. 46: 7-10) that summarizes the life of Caleb, one of two Hebrews from the Exodus who lived to enter the Promised Land. Two sermons about Francis begin with, "The Lord gave Caleb strength."<sup>17</sup> According to Joshua 14, Caleb received strength from God so that he could enter the Promised Land and win possession of a part of it for his descendants, thus showing Israel that it is good to be faithful to the Lord. This is a reference to Joshua and Caleb standing up to the rest of the Hebrews, who wished to return to Egypt.

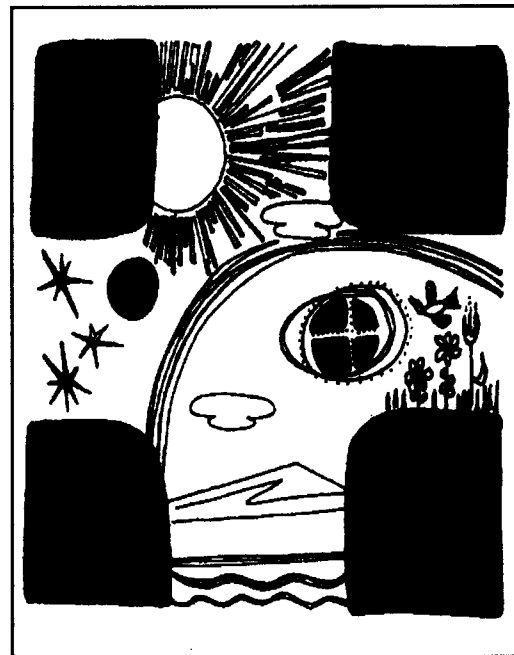
There is obviously a general comparison between Caleb's and Francis's fidelity to God and a relationship between Caleb's physical strength and Francis's strong faith. However, the version of Caleb standing up to the Hebrews in Numbers 14 may suggest a more specific connection. Caleb went to the Promised Land, returned to the Hebrews in the desert to tell them about it, and then lived long enough to enter the Promised Land again, this time permanently. Francis's mystical life is an interesting parallel. In several mystical encounters, he found himself in the presence of God. In the Upper Basilica there is even a fresco portraying Francis, while still alive, lifted up on a cloud toward

God in heaven. And the stigmatization was a unique mystical encounter with God. But Francis, as Bonaventure says with regard to the stigmatization, always came down from the mountain; that is, to preach and teach by word and example about the kingdom of God. And, of course, Francis finally got there permanently. In a later fresco in the same cycle as the one mentioned above, the soul of Francis is carried to heaven on a cloud. Thus Caleb the spy and Francis the mystic have the same pattern to their lives—exploring the permanent home while still in exile, describing that home and encouraging others to prepare to enter it, and then permanently entering it himself.

Bonaventure in the Major Legend drew a connection between Francis and David (11, 14). So also do two sermons based on Sirach 47: 8: "With his whole heart he sang hymns of praise."<sup>18</sup> This line is toward the end of a fairly lengthy passage about David. It emphasizes that he played with wild animals as if they were lambs, that he was a victor over the Hebrews' enemies, and that he established the festivals that the Hebrews later celebrated. Even these twelve verses hardly do justice to the subject of half of I Samuel and all of II Samuel plus the retelling of his story in I Chronicles. And in the Middle Ages David was regarded as the author of all of the Psalms.

There is a clear connection between David's and Francis's control over wild creatures. There are many stories in the "official" lives of Francis of how he tamed various animals, although probably the most famous of these stories, Francis and the wolf of Gubbio, appears only in the later Little Flowers. The

imagery of triumphing over enemies was no doubt thought of in spiritual terms with regard to Francis, as we have seen in the example of Joshua. However, the text quoted in the two Franciscan sermons refers specifically to David as author of the psalms. In Sirach they are described specifically as praise to God. Not all of the psalms are joyful, but they ultimately all are praises of God. This connection between David and Francis as writers of songs refers principally to Francis as the author of the *Canticle of the Creatures*.



The canticle begins as a song of praise of the created world. It is worth remembering, however, that Francis wrote this famous song in three distinct parts. The first part consists of a series of praises. The second segment was for the reconciliation of the bishop and *podestà* of Assisi and praises God for those who give pardon and bear infirmity and tribulation. The last section was written at the end of his life and praises Sister Bodily Death but also contains "Woe to those who die in mortal sin." Thus there are changes in what is praised and even a warning to those who die in mortal sins. Therefore, the entire Canticum can be read or sung as a mini-psalter.

The Sirach version of David's life also credits him with establishing festivals. If we look at Francis's writings today, we find among them an Office for the Passion, a liturgical work that primarily consists of selections from the Psalter. In this way Francis both uses David's psalms and continues his work in creating "times when the sanctuary resounds from morning to night" (Sir. 45:10).

One of the most popular texts from Sirach for preachers about Francis of Assisi was the beginning of the summary of the life of Elijah: "Then Elijah appeared, a prophet like fire" (Sir. 48:1).<sup>19</sup> There were ten sermons preached on this text. In the verses following the one just quoted, Sirach writes a lot about Elijah's miracles. Although these include raising a corpse from the dead, there is also the miracle of bringing a famine to the land. Sirach also summarizes the prophecies of doom that Elijah called down upon the king of Israel. Although Bonaventure narrates stories of Francis raising people from the dead, most of this Elijah material sounds little like the gentle and humble saint of Assisi. However, Sirach also tells of Elijah being taken to heaven in a fiery chariot and says that Elijah will return to earth to reconcile father and son and to restore the tribes of Jacob.

Francis was a "prophet like fire." Dante refers to him in relationship with the highest order of angels, the seraphs, who are burning with love.<sup>20</sup> Francis's stigmatization followed the vision of the fiery seraph at La Verna.<sup>21</sup> Thomas of Celano told the story of Francis appearing in a fiery chariot in a vision to some brothers at Rivo Torto,<sup>22</sup> but does not specifically liken Francis to Elijah. However, Bonaventure retells the story and specifically refers to Francis as like a second Elijah.<sup>23</sup> In the Prologue to The Major Legend, Bonaventure had already introduced Francis as a man who was "lifted up in a fiery chariot" and who thus "came in the spirit and power of Elijah."<sup>24</sup> These words are borrowed directly not from the Old Testament but from Luke's description of John the Baptist. Furthermore, at the conclusion of the main part of Francis's life, Bonaventure mentions Elijah together with Enoch as the two great men who had been taken to heaven without dying. As suggested above, there are clear apocalyptic resonances in this passage.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the identification of Francis

with Elijah and indirectly with John the Baptist establishes a series of prophets and forerunners of Christ.

The image of Francis as Elijah enters the visual tradition at least as early as 1280 when Francis in the fiery chariot at Rivo Torto is included among eight scenes from Francis's life in a panel painting in Siena.<sup>26</sup> The story is also one of the twenty-eight stories from the Franciscan legend in the monumental fresco cycle in the Upper church in Assisi. Clearly it was the view of the Order that Francis was both a great prophet in the Old Testament tradition and that he was a prophet of the coming of Christ. Furthermore, despite some problems with friars who carried the apocalyptic meaning of Francis's life to extremes, it is clear that Francis was perceived as a figure of significance in the entire history of salvation, and that meant bringing the world closer in time to the reign of God.

There was also one sermon preached on the last words of the passage in Sirach concerning Elijah: "Happy are those who saw you and were honored by your love" (Sir. 48:11).<sup>27</sup> Here the "lineage" is from Elijah to Christ (his words to Thomas in John 20:29 for example) to Francis.

"The memory of Josiah is as fragrant as incense" (Sir. 49:1).<sup>28</sup> This introductory statement to the brief synopsis of the life of one of Judah's great kings was used as the basis of one sermon on Francis. Josiah is remembered as one of the great reformer-kings of Judah, and Sirach ends his description of Josiah this way: "In lawless times [he] made godliness prevail" (Sir. 49:3). Francis was described in quite similar terms in the early accounts of his life. At a time in which the world had grown corrupt, Francis came along to restore godliness. In fact, he is presented as a reformer and not an innovator, a restorer rather than a builder of new edifices. In describing Francis's rebuilding of San Damiano, Celano stresses that he, "did not try to build one anew, but he repaired an old one, restored an ancient one. He did not tear out the foundation but built upon it."<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Josiah is described in II Kings 22 as carrying out repairs in the Temple in Jerusalem, and in the following chapter he purifies the Temple of pagan elements that had been added over several centuries. Thus starting with Sirach, a medieval preacher could find significant connections between King Josiah of Judah and Francis of Assisi, for just as Josiah repaired the temple, Francis appeared in a dream to Pope Innocent III, holding up the cathedral of Rome, St. John Lateran.<sup>30</sup>

The final hero from Sirach that Francis is likened to is the High Priest Simon. As mentioned above, his story gets fuller treatment than any of the other heroes, no doubt because he was a contemporary of Sirach. Most of the chapter devoted to his deeds recounts him carrying out his functions in the Temple. The passage that served as the starting point of four sermons on Francis is Sirach 50:6-7: "He was like the morning star appearing through the clouds or the moon at the full; like the sun shining on the temple of the Most High or

the light of the rainbow on the gleaming clouds.”<sup>31</sup> Bonaventure used this passage in the Prologue to the Major Legend:

Shining with the splendour of his life and teaching,  
like the morning star in the midst of clouds,  
by his resplendent rays he guided into the light  
those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
and like the rainbow shining among clouds of glory  
he made manifest in himself  
the sign of the Lord's covenant.

Here Bonaventure has blended together a number of elements with the text from Sirach. The fourth line of this passage is taken from the end of the Song of Zachariah in Luke. He uses the image of the rainbow from Sirach to refer to the covenant of Noah and then relates that to the stigmata, sign of the Lord's covenant that was manifest in the flesh of Francis.

Francis is thus in some ways a new high priest who protects his people and offers sacrifices. There are two other details in Sirach's version of the Simon story that have resonances with Francis. First, “he stood with his brothers round him like a garland” (Sir. 50:12). This certainly is a fraternal image that would spark a connection with Francis and his brotherhood. Second, he is described after the ritual as “coming down” to pronounce the Lord's blessing (Sir. 50:20). Christ is described as descending from a mountain after the Sermon on the Mount and again after the Transfiguration. Clearly Bonaventure has the latter in mind when he tells of Francis's descent from La Verna after the stigmatization. Just as Simon descended to the people to bless them, so did Francis.

## Conclusion

There are several lessons to be gleaned from an examination of Francis of Assisi and the heroes of Israel's past as presented in Sirach. On a rather simple level, the use of Sirach by learned preachers about St. Francis remind us that biblical books that today appear to be of secondary importance have not always been regarded in that matter. Just the fact that more sermons about Francis are based on texts of Sirach than on any other biblical book of either testament is clear evidence. I suggest that in fact the entire book of Sirach is worth the time it takes to read and meditate upon it. This is especially true of Sirach 44-50, “The Heroes of Israel's Past.” Not only is this a good summary of the highlights of Hebrew history, but it sometimes presents figures somewhat differently than they are presented in the fuller versions of their stories. Furthermore, some of these figures' stories are in rather obscure parts of the Old

Testament (Caleb in Numbers, Simon in I Maccabees, for example) and thus are not very well known today.

Second, we come to appreciate St. Francis in new ways by seeing him in the traditions of the priests, kings, and prophets of the Old Testament. The stories of the great men of Israel's past offer an opportunity to examine *Il Poverello* in ways that seemed obvious to people in the Middle Ages. We sometimes romanticize Francis into a sixties hippie as we find him in Franco Zeffirelli's film “Brother Sun, Sister Moon” or as something of a wimp such as Mickey Rourke's portrayal of the saint in “*Francesco*.” Seeing Francis as in the line of Moses or Joshua or David, hardly hippies or wimps, helps us to recapture a sense of this man's strength and persistence, qualities that often are minimized in popular images of the saint.

Perhaps the most important message of these sermons on St. Francis is a theological one. Modern people are better at seeing discontinuities than continuity. We almost worship change and are attracted to phrases like “totally redesigned.” And we often think of history as a series of essentially disjointed pieces—the ancient world gave way to the Middle Ages which gave way to the Renaissance which gave way to the modern world. Even if we examine history in sacred terms, there appear to be great barriers between the world of the Old Testament, the times of the New Testament, and the world after the Bible was completed. This latter period is certainly prominent in Protestant thought.

However, we learn throughout scripture that God constantly does new things but in ways that are related to God's deeds of the past. Even in God's newness there is continuity. The most obvious example is the coming of Christ, a new thing to be sure, but also not fully comprehended without knowledge of God's work that prepares people for that event. We must hear the prophets and know of the lineage of David in order to grasp fully the work that God has done in Christ. To illustrate this relationship of newness to continuity, let us turn for a moment to Deutero-Isaiah, the anonymous author of Is. 40-55. In Isaiah 43:19 God declares through the prophet: “Here and now I will do a new thing.” This passage is in reference to clearing the way for the Hebrews to return to Israel from exile in Babylon. Yet just before the passage cited, God retells the story of the Exodus, God's great act of leading the Hebrews toward Israel from bondage in Egypt. Clearly what God is doing is new, but it cannot be understood unless in a sense we can also see that God is at the same time doing what God has done before but in a new set of circumstances.

The examination of Francis in light of Israel's great heroes allows us to grasp the biblical relationship between continuity and discontinuity. In a literal sense, Francis is quite unlike any of the Old Testament figures to whom he is likened. He was neither a priest nor a king nor a conqueror nor a spy nor the father of a great people. Francis is something new. Indeed, when Brother Elias



sent a letter to the friars announcing Francis's death, he described the stigmata as "a new thing among miracles." Of course, that new miracle takes its meaning from the marks made on Christ's body at Calvary.

Relating Francis to Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, David, Elijah, Josiah, and Simon is a good way for us to look at God at work in history. God endows certain people with certain qualities and graces that are appropriate to their times. Sometimes those gifts are used to capture a piece of land or defeat an enemy or perform ritual functions. Sometimes those same gifts, for example of humility or perseverance, are used in quite different ways. Francis was a man who sought to capture the Sultan's heart and to win his soul rather than to subdue his land. We see the hand of God at work in all sorts of ways in different times, and we believe that God is always doing new things. Yet those new things are, like the old things, a manifestation of the one God. We must be open always to God's newness, but equally we must be aware of how God has prepared us for what is new in what God has done in the past. To look upon Francis in the light of the heroes of Israel's past is thus not just a way of gaining some new insight into who Francis is but also about gaining insight into who God is and how God is active in space and time.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Examples include Francis and Anthony at the foot of the cross in a late thirteenth-century processional cross now in the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria in Perugia and two panels with Francis opposite Clare by Ugolino di Nerio and the Master of Città di Castello now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena. See William Cook, *Images of St. Francis of Assisi in Painting, Stone and Glass from the Earliest Images to ca. 1320 in Italy: A Catalogue* (Florence: Casa Editrice Leo S. Olschki, 1999): #135, #183, #182.

<sup>2</sup>*Paradiso* XI: 28-42; *Paradiso* XII: 31-45.

<sup>3</sup>See Cook, *Images*: #121.

<sup>4</sup>Francis of Assisi: *The Way of Poverty and Humility* (Dover, DE: Michael Glazier and Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989).

<sup>5</sup>For the frescoes, see Cook, *Images* #11.

<sup>6</sup>Earlier in the fourteenth century, the Florentine painter Taddeo Gaddi painted a series of panels for the sacristy of Santa Croce in Florence with corresponding stories from the lives of Francis and Christ. Most of those panels today are in the *Accademia* in Florence and displayed so that viewers can see the parallels that Gaddi constructed.

<sup>7</sup>Jacques Guy Bougerol, "Initia latinorum sermonum in lauden S. Francisci," *Antonianum* 57 (1982): 706-794.

<sup>8</sup>Editor's note: Ecclesiasticus is the name that would have been used by medieval people; our contemporary usage is Sirach. For the sake of familiarity, we have substituted Sirach throughout. The abbreviation used for the remainder of this article will be that for Sirach (Sir.).

<sup>9</sup>8:1, 9:14 (3 Sermons), 10:24 (2 Sermons), 17:1, 24:20 (2 Sermons), 23:38 (mis-cited in Bougerol as 38:1), 30:4 (2 Sermons), 31:9 (2 Sermons), 31:10. 34:3, 36:6 (2 Sermons), 38:28, 43:1, 43:9.

<sup>10</sup>Sermon 246 in Bougerol's catalogue.

<sup>11</sup>Sermons 173 to 184 and sermon 306.

<sup>12</sup>Several of the sermons preached on the Enoch text in Sirach were for the feast of the translation of the relics of St. Francis.

<sup>13</sup>Sermons 4 and 253.

<sup>14</sup>There are about 200 surviving paintings from Italy containing images of St. Francis; they date between 1230-1315. Since it may well be that only about one percent of thirteenth-century paintings survive, that could mean that there were as many as 20,000 images created of Francis in Italy alone within 90 years of his death.

<sup>15</sup>Sermons 128, 129, 390-393.

<sup>16</sup>Sermons 209, 210.

<sup>17</sup>Sermons 121, 122.

<sup>18</sup>Sermons 114, 115.

<sup>19</sup>Sermons 417 to 426.

<sup>20</sup>*Paradiso* X: 37.

<sup>21</sup>IC 94.

<sup>22</sup>IC 47.

<sup>23</sup>LMj 4:4.

<sup>24</sup>LMj Prologue:1.

<sup>25</sup>LMj 15:8.

<sup>26</sup>For a discussion of this panel see Cook, *Images*: #180. There is more discussion of this panel and imagery associated with Elijah in Cook, "The St. Francis Dossal in Siena: An Important Interpretation of the Life of Francis of Assisi," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 88 (1994): 3-20.

<sup>27</sup>Sermon 63.

<sup>28</sup>Sermon 254.

<sup>29</sup>IC 18.

<sup>30</sup>LMj 3:10.

<sup>31</sup>Sermons 329 to 332.

*Francis was a "prophet like fire."  
Dante refers to him in a relationship with the highest order of angels, the seraphs, who are burning with love.*

William R. Cook

## Francis: Wounded Winter Light



## Living in the Shadow of Brother Elias

Joseph Wood, O.F.M. Conv.

One of the greatest mysteries of love within the Franciscan epic is the role of Br. Elias of Assisi (\*22 April 1253). First the vicar of St. Francis and then his successor as minister general, this character looms large in the puzzling scenes that were played out in the early years following Francis's death. The high drama of those days has intrigued generations of Franciscans and continues to shape our consciousness. Even today.

Elias was a man who was loved by Francis and revered by Clare. He was an ambassador and friend to a pope and an emperor. He was an architect of castles and churches. He promoted missions and education. He was even noted as being "the most learned man in Italy." Francis himself called Elias his own mother and the father of the community. Although many would be at pains to admit it, Francis's health improved whenever Elias was with him (1C 98). At the end, when Francis lay dying, Elias was the one who received a special blessing from the Poverello (1C 108).

But this beloved of Francis has been anything but the favorite son of the Franciscan Family. Controversy swirls around this man whose very name has evoked a shudder of suspicion through the centuries. Given the constantly negative portrayal of Br. Elias in later sources, it would be quite easy to continue casting this friar as the pure villain, the Judas, in the annals of Franciscan development. Elias has curiously become the literary, if not the literal archetypal antithesis of Francis; he is regarded as the antagonist bent on destroying the ideals of the hero. Yet a deeper analysis suggests that it would be historically immature to simply join the chorus of condemnation and imprison Elias as the eminent traitor in the seraphic drama.

Early on, the large number of vocations had unleashed a flood of wandering friars who first begged for food and then quite often returned the favor by feeding heretical ideas to their benefactors. As the minister general of this mostly untrained and undisciplined army of mendicants, Br. Elias took up the

necessary—and terribly unpopular—task of demanding order in the ranks. In return, he was despised by the more free-spirited friars and by the educated clerics who resented a layman having charge over them. These men effectively burned Elias's reputation and his memory at the stake.

Ironically, these flames of outrage never seemed to burn subsequent leaders who went much further than Elias in discipline and legislating structure. At the Chapter of Anagni (1240), the minister general following Elias, Haymo of Faversham, discouraged lay recruitment and legislated against lay brothers holding any position of leadership within the community (even though most of Francis's early followers were educated lay noblemen). From that point on, equality of voice (universal suffrage) was no longer the hallmark of the Friars Minor—a decision only reversed with the Second Vatican Council. St. Bonaventure, whose administrative skills earned him the unofficial title of “the second founder,” planned a *coup d'état* against his minister general, John of Parma. Citing John's heretical Joachimist tendencies, Bonaventure had him confined in the hermitage of Greccio for thirty-two years. As the new minister general, Bonaventure complained at the Chapter of Narbonne (1260) that people were more afraid to meet a friar begging on the road than a robber! (At least they could fight off the robber.) Acting to enforce stricter discipline, “to punish the incorrigible and to prevent schism” within the community, Bonaventure legislated that humane places of detention (prison cells) be erected in all friaries of the Order.

If, then, these succeeding leaders were compelled to impose a stricter discipline, why is Elias still considered the only dour stepmother in the perfect fairy tale of the Troubadours of the Great King?

Consider the following: from the beginning Franciscans had raised spirits and gladdened hearts because they were charged with the common, simple joy of being alive, as well as the simple belief that their founder, as the “angel of the sixth seal” of the Apocalypse, had heralded the new age of the spirit. They were filled with such joy that the friars were later accused of laughing too often, a reference to one side of an on-going debate in the universities that proposed the opposite view: the second person of the Trinity could never have participated in such shallow human behavior.

But Christ had to laugh, the friars zealously proclaimed. Laughter was the great proof of an existence beyond the present confused reality. Laughter became the healing balm for a world grown tired of papal and imperial wars and the sermonizing of natural disasters as being the result of divine retribution. For these merry characters, whether high born or low, even unappetizing leftovers became banquets because the friars were friends together, and because they were free from the burden of their former status.

So, what went wrong? How could the glory of the Order, of being itinerant *jongleurs de Dieu*, of finding God in the marketplace, somehow also become its downfall?

The followers of Francis, reformers sanctioned by papal decree, had been given a precarious gift, a gift that most people of the Middle Ages were not prepared to receive: freedom. One must realize that people of the Middle Ages were bound to each other by a labyrinthine system of dependence. Every person was obligated by a vow to a higher liege—to a landlord—be they civil or religious. One could only escape the mundane limitations of a predetermined social rank by going to war, by going on pilgrimage, or more commonly, through the “freedom” of drunkenness during festivals. Basically, the nobility was bored with life, the merchant class was obsessed with regulating it, the peasantry was exhausted from it. None were enamored of it.

Then, unexpectedly, a new way of living appeared. Suddenly, it was possible to wander anywhere without the responsibility of “belonging” to anyone or any place (or at least, one's superior was far away). At first the followers of Francis could even preach in a diocese without the local bishop's consent. Yet such freedom was an overly indulgent gift for so many with untrained powers of reasoning. Some of these troubadours became intoxicated with their influence, publicly criticizing the clergy and civil officials—perhaps with good reason—but nevertheless, an offense to Francis's desire for reform without revolution. Some friars even began founding new communities of their own. Too many of these free-thinking initiatives were simply out of control, dangerously compromising the integrity of the Franciscan movement, and threatening to make the Order a caricature of itself.

So, what was Brother Elias's sin? After witnessing the contagious lack of discipline in the ranks of the knights of poverty, was he wrong to recognize the expediency of an ordered life quartered in friary-barracks as the necessary reharnessing of reckless energy? Was he unjust when he snatched the friars from their far-flung make-shift hermitages and their irresponsible wandering to make them feed and educate the poor—instead of just begging like them? Like it or not, all Franciscans are the inheritors of that seraphic original sin, that singular traitorous deed of Elias, who dared to institutionalize the charism of the *Poverello*. And even though someone had to do it, woe to him who was its instigator!

Although the “facts” of Br. Elias's generalate are blurred, it cannot be disputed by any party that there was enough discontent to finally warrant intervention by the pope himself. For the good of the community, Elias was asked to step down in 1239. So, without denying any of Elias's personal faults and failings (all of which are either exaggerated or excused depending on the political camp of a given author), we might ask if in fact he tried so hard to follow

in Francis's footsteps that he actually did not require as much structure as his successors necessarily did? Were some of the accusations against Elias heaped upon him because his organization and punishments merely lacked consistency?

Whatever the case, somehow we may surmise it was his early leadership that assured the continued vintage of Francis's refreshing new wine. Elias may have poured the ideals into casks with an immediacy that hurt even some of Francis's earliest friends, but by beginning the maturing process he has enabled countless souls to taste sweetness through eight centuries of time.

The Order has been given the heritage of a great man, but Francis was "the only Franciscan as Christ was the only Christian." And in reality, any-



thing short of genius will appear as glaring mediocrity whenever anyone is compared to him. Elias is not reviled for so many centuries after his death because of anything he did, but rather because of something he could never be, an "alter Franciscus."

Because Francis was a light-house of unsurpassed brilliance (somehow, despite his own limitations), whoever took up the reigns of government immediately after his death probably would have failed just as brilliantly.

In his initial, well-performed secondary role, Elias, and each succeeding guardian, provincial, and minister general may, on his own account, be dubbed a knight

and enter onto the field of leadership. But none of them will ever compare to the "once and future" hero-king of selective memory. No one will ever compare to the first love . . . not even the beloved of Francis himself.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The image of Elias is taken from *Fra Elia Compagno, Vicario e Successore di S. Francesco Serafico*, II<sup>a</sup> Edizione riveduta e coretta (Milano: Stab. Pontificio Arti Grafiche Sacre Bertarelli, 1923).

## The Hill of Paradise

From *La Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi*

Fr. Rayner Sciamannini, OFM Conv.  
Fr. Hugh DeCicco, OFM Conv. (trans.)

With the celebration of so many centenaries this year, we are likely to forget a most important one in the history of our Order—the seventh centenary of the Dedication of the Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi.

The church in Assisi arose at the express command of Pope Gregory IV who as Cardinal Bishop of Ostia had been a personal friend of the saint and the strongest supporter of the nascent Franciscan Order. On April 29, 1228, with the bull *Recolentes qualiter*, he announced to the entire world that it was his wish that a majestic temple be built on a "piece of territory," so runs the venerable text, "given to Us and the Roman Church for the permanent custody of the blessed body of Saint Francis," reserving to himself the inalienable proprietary rights over it together with the relative rights of immunity. To show his jurisdiction over it, he ordered the friars to renew each year to himself and his successors the homage of a pound of wax, to be given on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

The piece of land was the western slope of Assisi, presented legally on March 29 of the same year by Simone di Pucciarello in the presence of the communal judge, Guido, and six witnesses. The gift was completed the following year with the offering by Monaldo di Leonardo of the woodland stretching from the east to the Tescio River. These were the first gifts—the ones nearest the heart of the Saint since they were given by his own fellow citizens—destined to become a place of veneration for the whole world. On July 17 of the same year, 1228, after the canonization of the *Poverello*, the same pontiff, amid lights and music, laid the cornerstone.

A pious legend has the story that on this spot, popularly called *Colle dell'Inferno*, culprits were executed and buried. Saint Francis, as a last act of humil-

ity, had previously selected it as the place of his burial. Legend has woven a beautiful story about the ugly name of the hill. The hill was called *inferno* only because it was lower than the hill which dominated the city. At any rate, the solemn laying of the cornerstone canceled any apparent unseemliness in the name and transformed it into a veritable *Colle del Paradiso*, a hill of Paradise.

Emperors, princes, cardinals, Assisians, and faithful from all parts of the world visited the wonderful edifice planned and executed by the genius and love of Brother Elias, vicar and successor of the saint. The offerings in money and material literally poured in from everywhere, and in a way unprecedented in the construction of shrines and churches. The Pope himself authorized and solicited alms in a bull granting spiritual privileges to the benefactors. In less than two years, the church was ready to receive the sacred remains of the saint. This seems incredible when we think of the many shrines, begun with a like fervor, the building of which ran on for years or was never completed at all.

On April 22, 1230, with the consistorial document *Is qui Ecclesiam*, undersigned by thirteen cardinals, the Pontiff himself declared that it was his will that the cathedral and papal throne be placed in the Church, which he proclaimed the "Head and Mother of the Order of Friars Minor." He then made it immediately subject to the Holy See. On May 25, 1230, the vigil of Pentecost, the body of Saint Francis was finally transferred from its temporary resting place in the church of Saint George to the new church. The body, still in its stone sarcophagus, was drawn by a team of purple-clad oxen. The entourage was unparalleled. There were men from far and near, says Thomas of Celano, and the nearby hills were filled with their hosannas. More than one miracle occurred that day at the touch of the *Poverello's* bier.

When the procession reached the church, however, the doors were barred. The magistrates of Assisi, jealous of their treasure, did not want the people to witness the actual burial. Accordingly, they lowered the sacred relics into the bowels of the hard immobile rock under the main altar—the exact place known only to them.

Both because of the tremendous love and veneration of the people for Saint Francis, whose body they might have attempted to exhume, and because of the everlasting strife between Assisi and Perugia, such precautions were most necessary. The way in which the burial was carried out may seem to us somewhat violent; as a matter of fact, the pope did lament the procedure. Upon being apprised of the circumstances, however, he expressed his approval of what had been done.

Succeeding centuries proved that the fears of the Assisians had not been groundless. In the repeated invasions of Frederick the Second's soldiers from 1239 to 1246, of the Ghibellines in 1319, of Bracceschi in 1442, and of the Beglinoni in 1497, the body of Saint Francis was marked as prize booty to be taken from the sanctuary and from the city.

Rome, however, was ever watchful over this house of predilection. Innocent IV, leaving his exile in France to which Frederick the Second had constrained him, came to Assisi in 1253 for the consecration of the church. He himself presided over the ceremonies, and remained in Assisi from April to mid-October. It was during this time, also, that he blessed the convent. In the course of the succeeding years, with Alexander IV, Clement IV, Martin IV, the Franciscan Nicholas IV, Martin V, Sixtus IV, came a torrent of gifts and privileges, renewing the immediate jurisdiction of the Holy See over the church. The Franciscan Sixtus V, in 1585, instituted there the Confraternity of Cordbearers. In 1695 a papal bull granted a plenary indulgence to be gained once a day by the faithful who visited the church. This privilege is recorded in large letters inscribed over the door of the lower church.

The jurisdiction of the papacy over the sanctuary of Saint Francis became more and more emphatic. The Constitution of Benedict XIV, March 24, 1754, *Fidelis Dominus*, to dispel any possible doubts, gathered and codified all the rights and privileges granted by his predecessors. With this document, a monument of jurisprudence, the Church of Saint Francis was elevated to the rank of patriarchal basilica and papal chapel, equal to the major basilicas in Rome. Thus the pope became *de jure* the immediate ordinary. A ceremonial was compiled to regulate expressly the papal ritual to be followed there.

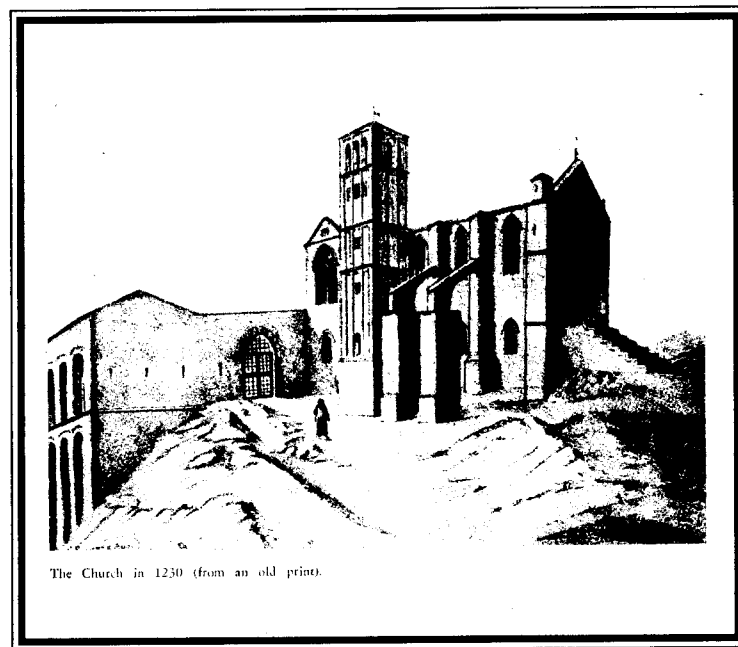
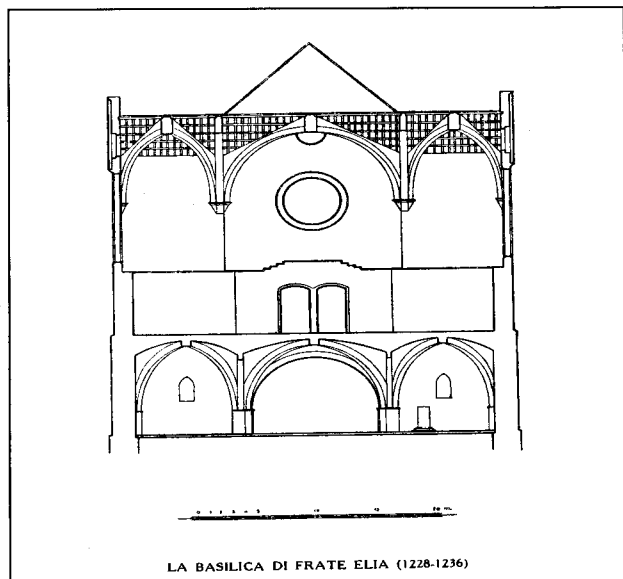
After the interest shown to the basilica by Clement XIII and the Franciscan Clement XIV, there came the revolutionary movements in France at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1798, while Pius VII was subjected to the most trying difficulties, the basilica was invaded by the military hordes of France and despoiled of practically all its gold and silver. In May of 1810 there followed the first suppression of religious orders. As a result, only seven priests with three lay brothers were allowed to remain as custodians of the Sanctuary. But at the fall of Napoleon, December 1814, the religious again took their place in the basilica.

The finding of the body of Saint Francis was the secret joy God prepared for the comfort of his children in their hour of trial. In 1818, at the fervent and repeated requests of the religious, Pius VII allowed the sepulcher of the Saint to be made accessible again to the faithful. The patient and secret search that followed was at length successfully ended. Behind layers of mortar and slabs of stone, an oblong opening was found, about six feet deep and nine feet wide, covered entirely with dark travertine. Deep within, as if buried in the bowels of the earth, and enclosed by an iron gate, lay the limestone tomb containing the body of the saint. To the tremendous joy of the Catholic world, the Pope announced by a brief that "the question of the identity of the body recently discovered under the main altar of the Basilica in Assisi is settled, and without doubt it is the body of Saint Francis, the Founder of the Orders of Friars Minor."

After the visits of Gregory XVI in 1841 and Pius IX in 1857, the Italian suppression brought new trials for the convent in Assisi. It was turned into an orphanage for the children of teachers employed by the government. The Holy See decried this unjust usurpation, invoking the Law of Guarantees. At the recovery of the convent in favor of the religious, October 2, 1927, the friars, with the help of the government and with offerings from all over the world, constructed a new building for the orphanage. Pius XII, finally, with the proclaiming of Saint Francis as the Patron of Italy (June 19, 1939) conferred upon the sanctuary a national character.

Every detail, every stone, every color breathes the august presence of the sovereign pontiff in this Franciscan basilica. The papal presence seems to be a very part of that chair, erected from the beginning, in the center of the tribune of the upper church; it stands as incontestable proof against the usurpers of the apostolic rights. *Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk; and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon* (Ps. 90).

Editor's note: The illustration below is taken from I. B. Supino, *La Basilica di S. Francesco di Assisi*, ed. N. Zanichelli (Bologna, 1924). The image on p. 25 is taken from R. Sciamannini, *The Church of St. Francis and Other Sanctuaries at Assisi* (Florence: Azienda Libreria Editoriale, 1953), p. 13. A similar description of the Hill of Paradise as the one that comprises this article, but not the same translation, is found in the Sciamannini book, pp. 10-13.



Therefore, we ask, counsel and exhort all of you in the Lord, . . . that you intently dedicate yourselves to the divine praises, to honor [the memory of Francis] and humbly implore his protection, so that, through his merits and intercession, we may attain fellowship with him by the help of God, who is blessed forever and ever.

*(Mira circa nos 10, decree of canonization of St. Francis)*

## Francis and the Body of Christ

Ilia Delio, O.S.F.

It is no secret that the body and blood of Christ hold a significant place in the writings of Francis. In no less than seven out of the ten letters he composed he speaks of the body and blood of Christ, although the word “eucharist” is nowhere to be found in these letters.<sup>1</sup> The emphasis on the body and blood of Christ points to the humanity of Christ, the real flesh and blood of God’s presence upon earth. In his first Admonition on the body of Christ Francis writes: “As he revealed himself to the holy apostles in true flesh, so he reveals himself to us now in sacred bread . . . let us, as we see bread and wine with our bodily eyes, see and firmly believe that they are his most holy body and blood living and true” (Adm 1).

The emphasis on the body of Christ as real flesh is given new interpretation in Thomas of Celano’s First Life. While remaining faithful to Francis’s emphasis on the body of Christ, Celano develops the theme of eucharist in the life of Francis as *imitatio Christi*. It is particularly after the reception of the Stigmata that Celano begins to translate the crucified body of Christ into the crucified body of Francis. Although neither Celano nor Francis use the word “eucharist,” the meaning of eucharist is present in the image of Francis as an *alter Christus*. Eucharist is the spirit of embracing love that flows from the flesh of a wounded body. Francis is a perfect image of the crucified Christ because, like Christ, he is willing to embrace the other in love for the sake of reconciliation and peace. According to Celano, it is in this sense that Francis’s life is a eucharistic life.

### Celano’s First Life

The notion of eucharist as the living body of Christ assumes a distinct focus in Thomas of Celano’s First Life of Francis. Following a Pauline understanding of eucharist as the crucified body of Christ, Celano develops a rela-

tionship between Christ’s crucified body and the body of Francis as the celebration of eucharist. According to Hellenic thought, commitment to the One or unity with God meant an erasure of difference, since the body was to be transcended or denied in the pursuit of spiritual perfection. In his letter to the Corinthians, however, Paul rejects the Hellenic notion that commitment to the One implies disdain for the body. The “One” in whom Paul seeks to locate the unity of all humanity is not disincarnate transcendence but the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ. The “principle” of unity has a name, and the name designates a person with a body that has suffered on the cross.<sup>2</sup> All are made one body of God’s children without regard to gender or race because of the cross (cf. Gal. 3:28). Paul writes: “Because there is one bread we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17). The “bread” that Paul refers to is the crucified body of Christ, the body that has refused to remain a self-enclosed singularity, but has opened itself up so that others can freely partake of it.<sup>3</sup> Miroslav Volf interprets this Pauline notion of the body of Christ by saying: “The grounding of unity and universality in the scandalous particularity of the suffering body of God’s Messiah is what makes Paul’s thought so profoundly different from the kinds of beliefs in the all-importance of the undifferentiated universal spirit that would make one ‘ashamed of being in the body’.”<sup>4</sup> Far from being one against the many, the significance of Christ crucified is the self-giving of the one for the many. Because Christ unites different bodies into one body through his suffering on the cross, it is the cross with its gift of self-giving love that is the basis of true Christian community. The crucified Messiah creates unity, therefore, by giving his own self.

This understanding of the body of Christ as the basis of unity plays out in Celano’s First Life where the underlying theme of eucharist is expressed in the relationship between the body of Christ and the body of Francis. The Pauline notion of eucharist as the crucified body of Christ is the background for the meaning of the Stigmata on the mountain of La Verna. Celano describes the event as a visual event whereby Francis “saw in the vision of God a man, having six wings like a seraph, standing over him, arms extended and feet joined, affixed to a cross” (1C 3). Francis was filled with a mixture of joy and sorrow as he tried to discern the meaning of the vision. According to Celano, the meaning of the vision was revealed in the body of Francis himself as he descended from the mountain marked with the wounds of Christ. Celano interprets the Stigmata in light of the Pauline notion of spirit and flesh. True spirituality is the harmony of spirit and flesh. The use of the word “flesh” (*sarx*) in Paul does not refer to the body but rather all those things that stand opposed to God. Francis, conformed to the crucified Christ, became a truly spiritual person because “there was in him such a harmony of flesh with spirit and such obedience that, as the spirit strove to reach all holiness, the flesh did not resist but

even tried to run on ahead" (1C 2). According to Celano, it is Francis's embrace of suffering that enabled his spirit to be set free for God. Thus, it is in light of the wounded body of Francis that Celano describes him as a truly spiritual person. He writes: "According to the laws of nature and the human condition day by day the body must decay though the inner being is renewed. So the precious vessel in which the heavenly treasure was hidden began to shatter all over and lose all its strength. . . . And so the spirit became willing in the flesh that was weak" (1C 2).

For Celano, Francis's frail and weakened body became a source of spiritual strength—salvific—in the same way that Christ's crucified body became the source of healing and wholeness for the world. The spirit that flowed from the wounded body of Christ is the same spirit that flowed from the wounded body of Francis. Despite the fact that his frail and weakened body was dying, Francis still maintained an inner desire to be with Christ for, as Celano writes, "he had not yet filled up in his flesh what was lacking in the sufferings of Christ" (1C 2). Celano, therefore, sees Francis's wounded flesh as a participation in the sufferings of Christ for the redemptive completion of the world. In this way, Francis became the exemplar of the true Christian life because he was willing, like Christ, to suffer for the sake of reconciliation and peace.

## The Body of Christ and the Body of Francis

The body of Francis as the body of Christ is given further emphasis in Celano's description of Francis's body after his death. Here he states that the brothers were filled with both sadness and joy at the sight of their dead father, a description reminiscent of the stigmata scene where Francis was filled with sadness and joy at the vision of the crucified seraph (cf. 1C 2). By juxtaposing the lamentation of Francis with the vision of the crucified man, Celano indicates that the body of Francis was indeed seen as the body of Christ. He writes:

In fact there appeared in him the form of the cross and passion of the spotless lamb who washed away the sins of the world. It seemed he had just been taken down from the cross, his hands and feet pierced by nails and his right side wounded by a lance (1C 2).

Just as the beauty of God shone through the crucified Christ, so too Francis marked with the wounds of martyrdom glowed "with remarkable beauty." Celano therefore affirmed that Francis was viewed as an *alter Christus*: "The wound in his side made them remember the One who poured out blood and water from his own side and reconciled the world to the Father" (1C 2). Just as Jesus was recognized as a son of God after his death (Mt. 27:54: "in truth this was a son of God"), so too Francis was recognized as another Christ. Celano

writes: "People considered it a great gift to be allowed to kiss or even to see the sacred marks of Jesus Christ which Saint Francis bore in his own body" (1C 2).

What makes Francis another Christ according to Celano is not spiritual perfection *per se*, but the excess of love which bore itself out in Francis's willingness to suffer like Christ. This love expressed in the wounds of suffering is "the mystery in which the blood of the spotless lamb, flowing abundantly through the five wounds, washed away the sins of the world" (1C 2). We might say that love transformed Francis's body into a crucified body in the same way that love transformed Jesus into the living Christ. The love that ultimately forged Francis into Christ was "the spring of radiant love that filled his heart within [and] gushed forth" (1C 2). It is through the power of love that Francis, transformed in Christ, became another Christ. For Celano, the visible presence of Christ in the person of Francis was a bodily presence, that is, it was the body of Francis itself which manifested the presence of Jesus. He writes:

He was always with Jesus: Jesus in his heart, Jesus in his mouth, Jesus in his ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands, he bore Jesus always in his whole body. . . . With amazing love he bore in his heart and always held onto Christ Jesus and him crucified (1C 2).

While Celano clearly describes the renewal of Christ in the life of Francis, he does not see this renewal as a strict *imitatio Christi*, that is, a renewal of the entire life of Christ. Rather, what seems to undergird Celano's relation between Christ crucified and Francis is a eucharistic theme. The crucified body of the stigmatized Francis is, like the body of Christ, a body given over to others for the sake of the gospel. At one point Celano writes: "he made of his whole body a tongue" (1C 2). It was in and through the body of Francis, who was willing to suffer out of love, that peace and reconciliation were brought about among those who opposed the truth or who were enemies of the cross. Celano writes:

[Francis] confounded the opponents of truth, refuted the enemies of the cross of Christ, led the strangers back to the way, made peace between those in conflict, and bound together those in peace in a stronger bond of love . . . he went asking for terms of peace . . . between neighbor and neighbor, and always between God and the people" (1C 2.5).

In Celano's view, Francis's life was eucharistic because his was the body of Christ given over to others in a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation, and for the sake of unity and peace. In this respect, Celano's description of the crucified Francis as the crucified Christ points to a deeper meaning of eucharist in the life of Francis, one that embraces the enemy in forgiveness. This idea takes



on more profound meaning in light of more recent historical studies on the early Franciscan movement.

## The Wounds of Brother Francis

The Italian scholar Grado Merlo has described the development of the Franciscan movement as one beginning with the fraternity of Brother Francis and developing into the Order of Friars Minor.<sup>5</sup> When and how the fraternity evolved into an Order cannot be determined with absolute precision, although most of the historical evidence points in this direction. According to Merlo, the acceptance of clerics and theologians into the Order changed the shape and original intuition of Francis. By the time the Earlier Rule was composed,

Francis resigned from government of the Order and began to distance himself from the Order due to deep conflicts with the theologians and lawyers who had entered and were forging a different path, contrary to his desires.<sup>6</sup> His sojourn on the mount of La Verna was a long period of resentful solitude, painfully dissatisfied at how the consequences of his “inspired” way of life were being expressed in the life of the Order.<sup>7</sup> It is in light of *this* experience that Francis received the Stigmata, perhaps facing the decisive and supreme sacrifice of his will by accepting and sharing in the great sufferings of Christ through his personal “passion.”<sup>8</sup> Francis descended the mountain at peace, yet a peace which involved suffering, the peace which follows the path of the crucified Christ (cf. *Itin.*, prologue). Descending the mountain of La Verna with the wounds of Christ engraved in his flesh, Francis began to take up again his ministry to the lepers, committed to his original inspiration of minority and fraternity despite

the new obstacles of the Order. At the same time he remained obedient to the leaders of the Order and placed himself into the hands of his minister general (Test 27).

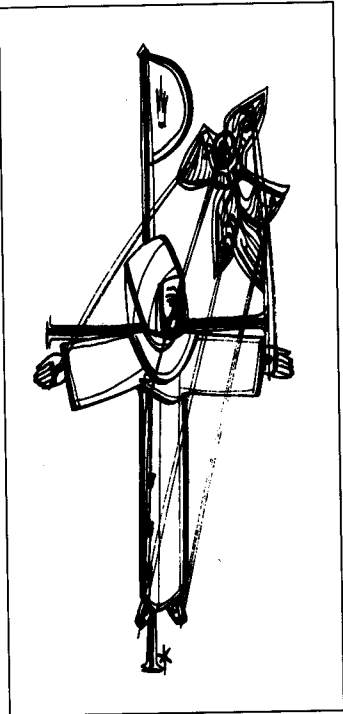
In his *First Life* Celano describes Francis as one who brought about reconciliation and peace “between those in conflict, and bound together those in peace in a stronger bond of love” (1C 2.5). Hidden in Celano’s text is the fact that Francis was involved in the conflict, indeed, probably at the center of

divisions in the developing Order. Celano’s account, with its *alter Christus* motif, read against the backdrop of Merlo’s historical account leads me to suggest that Francis’s wounded body of Christ is *wounded* precisely because he had to learn to embrace his enemies within the Order, those who had betrayed his initial ideals. Francis’s life became, like Christ’s, eucharistic, because he was willing to accept sacrifice out of love for the sake of the Gospel. He became a source of unity and peace precisely because he bore within his own flesh the suffering of forgiveness. Celano’s parallel between the wounded body of Francis and the wounded body of Christ, therefore, is no mere piety. Rather, in Celano’s view only a wounded body can bring about peace and the spirit of reconciling love.

## Eucharist: Embrace and Forgiveness

In his book *Exclusion and Embrace* the Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf states that the open arms of the crucified Christ signify a space in God’s self for the other and an invitation for the enemy to come in.<sup>9</sup> The cross is not merely Christ’s passion, Volf writes, but it is God’s passion. It reveals the total self-giving love of God that reaches out to estranged humanity and embraces every stranger as the beloved.<sup>10</sup> In the cross we are embraced by the trinity of love who loves us with the same love with which the persons of the trinity love each other. In the cross, therefore, we are taken up in the eternal embrace of the triune God of love.<sup>11</sup> This embrace in love by the crucified Christ in which the arms of Christ are the arms of the triune God is, according to Volf, the meaning of eucharist. “The eucharist,” he writes, “is the ritual time in which we celebrate this divine ‘making-space-for-us-and-inviting-us-in.’” However, it is not simply a being embraced by God but an empowering of God’s love by which we are to embrace others, including our enemies. That is, “having been embraced by God, we must make space for others in ourselves and invite them in—even our enemies.”<sup>12</sup>

Understanding the eucharist as the internalization of God’s love leads to the centrality of the eucharist as the basis of Catholic life. According to Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas the truly catholic personality is one centered around the mystery of the eucharist. In receiving the eucharist each person receives the whole Christ-head and members—so that the entire body is present in each member.<sup>13</sup> In this way, each person who partakes of the eucharist is made into an ecclesial person and all persons are internal to the very being of each other. The eucharist therefore signifies that each member is not external to the other members but rather internally related to the other members of the body of Christ. Our relationship to Christ is our relationship to one another. If we say “yes” to the embrace of the crucified Christ then we must be willing to offer that embrace to our neighbor, our brother or sister, whoever



he or she might be. For the person we willingly embrace has already been embraced by Christ.

Eucharist, as mutual indwelling in the body of Christ, means celebrating the giving of self to the other and the receiving of the other into the self.<sup>14</sup> But this giving and receiving entails suffering. The Spirit of love that unites separate bodies in a unity of love is the Spirit that flows from the wounded side of Christ. It is the same Spirit that Celano highlights in the life of Francis, that is, the spirit of unifying love emanating from the depths of a dying man. If eucharist means being embraced by God and embracing the other in God, then such embrace will bear the marks of the wounded Christ. Francis's Canticle of the Creatures, composed at the end of his life, points to the relation between woundedness and peace: "Praise be you, my Lord, through those who give pardon for your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation. Blessed are those who endure in peace for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned" (Ctc 10).

Perhaps what makes Francis's life so meaningful is not the idea that he was a devoted follower of Christ (which he was) but rather that he allowed himself to be embraced by the crucified God and was willing to bear the wounds of reconciling love in his own body. As Volf states, "we who have been embraced by the outstretched arms of the crucified God [must] open our arms even for the enemies—to make space in ourselves for them and to invite them in—so that together we may rejoice in the eternal embrace of the triune God."<sup>15</sup> Francis, marked with the wounds of Christ, became an *alter Christus* because he continued to love his brothers to the end, including those who hated him. Celano writes:

He grieved over those who now sank to the level of what was low and cheap, although they once had striven for higher things with all their desire. . . so he prayed for God's mercy to set his sons free and fervently begged that they persevere in the grace given to them (1C 2).

If eucharist means finding oneself internally related to every other, including one's enemies, and embracing the other in love, then it is indeed the source of a truly catholic personality and the seed of a new creation, whereby all humanity is bound in a unity of love. It is no wonder that Francis's biographers described him as the *vir catholicus*, the one as Bonaventure writes, who symbolically returned to the state of original innocence through reconciliation with each and every thing (LMj 8:1).<sup>16</sup> Francis, living in the body of Christ, became the body of Christ through the mystery of suffering and love. Embraced by God's compassionate love in the cross, Francis strove to respond to that embrace by embracing the other, the leper or his enemy brother, and to receive that other within, even though forgiveness and reconciliation entailed the wounds of suffering.

The example of Francis as the eucharistic body of Christ speaks to us today in a world of violence and hatred. Whether it is enmity within our families or religious communities or the hatred that has spiraled in recent times among religions and nations, such enmity can only be overcome by a willingness to embrace the other in love. Albert Haase, in his book *Swimming in the Sun*, recounts the story of Corrie ten Boom who, with her family, was sent to the concentration camp at Ravensbruck for sheltering Jews. Only Corrie survived. After the war she committed herself to lecturing on the topic of forgiveness and reconciliation. Haase writes:

One day after giving her talk in Munich, Germany, a man came forward to thank her for her talk. Corrie couldn't believe her eyes. He was one of the Nazi guards who used to stand duty in the women's shower room at Ravensbruck. The man reached for her hand in friendship. Her physical body remembered too sharply the horror of the camp and the death of her beloved sister. Corrie was blocked emotionally, stuck in the crippling and debilitating rut of resentment, bitterness, hatred. As Corrie stood there, frozen with shock, the battle raged inside of her. She was torn between the seductive desire to balance the scales of justice with violence and revenge and to heed Jesus' challenge of forgiveness which she herself had preached so often. So she prayed silently to herself, "Jesus, I cannot forgive this man. Give me your forgiveness." As she prayed that prayer and as her mind's eye reviewed the years of brutality, suffering, humiliation, death, her hand suddenly lifted from her side! This former prisoner found herself offering the former shower guard the one thing she thought she did not know how to give. "I forgive you, brother, with all my heart!"<sup>17</sup>

The German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said that forgiveness is a form of suffering because it means denying the gratifying desire for revenge.<sup>18</sup> It is a type of suffering that Francis knew as he strove to forgive those who betrayed his ideals, that Corrie ten Boom knew as she faced her prison guard, and Bonhoeffer himself knew in the darkness of a concentration camp. In Celano's First Life Francis became what he received, the body of Christ, broken and poured out so that others might have life. In his own writings Francis challenged his followers to do the same: "Are we not moved by piety at these things when the pious Lord offers Himself into our hands and we touch Him and receive Him daily with our mouth? Do we refuse to recognize that we must come into His hands?" (1LtCl 8-9). Similarly, in his Letter to the Faithful, Francis draws a link between receiving the body and blood of Christ and giving birth to that body in one's own life:

All those who . . . receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . are mothers when we carry him in our heart and body through a

divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and give birth to him through a holy activity which must shine as an example before others. . . . O how holy and how loving . . . to have such a brother and such a son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for his sheep" (1LtF 1, 3, 10, 13).

In a similar letter, he also indicates that it is better not to partake of the body and blood of Christ if we are unable to find ourselves internally related to one another and to embrace one another in love. He writes: "let him eat and drink worthily because anyone who receives unworthily, not distinguishing, that is, not discerning, the body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment on himself" (2LtF 24).

Understanding the eucharist as the "fleshly" body of Christ places the eucharist at the center of Francis's way of life. This life is an evangelical life focused on being a "person in relationship" and a sharing among persons of the experience of Christ.<sup>19</sup> Because the mission of evangelical life is to imitate Christ and to make that experience of Christ available to others, it is bound up with the body of Christ and the bodies of all those who follow Christ. In this way, evangelical life is a eucharistic life. It offers to its followers Jesus' words, "do this in memory of me" (1 Cor. 11:25). These words which took on flesh in the life of Francis must continue to take on flesh in our lives today. Haase writes: "By virtue of our baptism, we are the body of Christ on earth. And everyday, in some way, we are challenged to become the bread that is broken for the hungry of the world."<sup>20</sup> Christian life, lived to its full, is a mystery of suffering, love and reconciliation. It is the life that proclaims peace and justice at the heart of the world. Peace is not the absence of violence but the unity of love. It is the love that flows from the wounds of the crucified Christ and the love that embraces us in the eucharist. As followers of Francis, we are called to be that love, that eucharistic embrace of forgiveness and reconciliation in a broken world. Such love may bear the marks of woundedness, but only through the wounds of those willing to suffer out of love will peace be a reality in our world.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>These letters include: Exhortations to the Clergy, 11; A Letter to the Entire Order, 12; Earlier Exhortation, 1-5; Later Admonition and Exhortation, 22-23; The First Letter to the Custodians, 2-4; The Second Letter to the Custodians, 4; and A Letter to the Rulers of the People, 6. See *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. 1, *The Saint*, ed. by Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short (New York: New City Press). All citations of the writings of Francis or the other Sources are taken from this volume.

<sup>2</sup>Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 47.

<sup>3</sup>Volf.

<sup>4</sup>Volf.

<sup>5</sup>Grado Giovanni Merlo, "The Story of Brother Francis and the Order of Friars Minor," trans. Edward Hagman, OFM, *Greyfriars Review* 15.1 (2001): 10.

<sup>6</sup>Merlo, 7.

<sup>7</sup>Merlo, 9.

<sup>8</sup>Merlo, 9.

<sup>9</sup>Volf, 126.

<sup>10</sup>Volf, 127.

<sup>11</sup>Volf, 129.

<sup>12</sup>Volf, 129.

<sup>13</sup>John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 58.

<sup>14</sup>Volf, 130.

<sup>15</sup>Volf, 131.

<sup>16</sup>Bonaventure writes: "True piety . . . drew him up to God through devotion, transformed him into Christ through compassion, attracted him to his neighbor through condescension and symbolically showed a return to the state of original innocence through universal reconciliation with each and every thing." Engl. trans. Ewert Cousins, *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey Into God, The Tree of Life, The Major Life of Saint Francis* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 250.

<sup>17</sup>Albert Haase, *Swimming in the Sun: Discovering the Lord's Prayer with Francis of Assisi and Thomas Merton* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1993), 162-63.

<sup>18</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1963), 100.

<sup>19</sup>Joseph P. Chinnici, "Evangelical and Apostolic Tensions," 7.

<sup>20</sup>Haase, 144.

God is the fullness of good, all good, every good, the true and supreme good, [God] alone is good, merciful, gentle, delightful, and sweet, [God] alone is holy, just, true . . . kind, innocent, clean. . . . (ER XXIII 9)

## Book Review

Gerard Thomas Straub. *The Sun and Moon Over Assisi: A Personal Encounter with Francis and Clare*. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press. ISBN: 0-86716-393-3. Hardback, 614 pages, \$29.95.

“While historical accuracy was an utmost concern of mine, the story I’m about to tell is hardly a complete history of the two beloved saints. *The Sun and Moon Over Assisi* is simply a bouquet to a friend . . . and [to] his best friend.” And what a bouquet this book is! It amazes me how much material Straub has managed to include. By integrating his own pilgrimage to Assisi with Francis’s and Clare’s pilgrimages to God, Straub’s pilgrimage becomes a metaphor for conversion, an inner pilgrimage from the world of agnosticism and atheism, from the power and self-importance of a television producer, to Christ, who is present (as for Francis and Clare) in the poor and rejected of the earth. Straub’s recent film, *When Did I See You Hungry?* and a soon-to-be-published book of black-and-white photographs with the same title attest to the genuineness of the impact the Christ of Francis and Clare has made on Straub’s life.

*The Sun and Moon Over Assisi* is an artful compendium of just about everything one would want to know about Francis and Clare; about Assisi’s art and people and culture; and about a vast selection of books that lead the interested reader to other sources and places that will enrich one’s understanding of the Franciscan charism and of Franciscans, ancient and new.

Straub’s technique of intertwining essays and his own pilgrimage diary with the outer and inner pilgrimages of Francis and Clare and their followers, the different narratives playing off one another, gives energy and new insights not only into the early Franciscans but also into little personal touches in the Franciscan story.

A pilgrim is a stranger, always on the move, never feeling at home. I miss my own coffee in the morning. . . . Yesterday, I bought some fruit at an outdoor market. I couldn’t help but think of the merchant at a fruit-and-juice bar near my home in Los Angeles. Two or three times a week I enter his tiny store. He smiles at me, and without a word he begins to prepare a fruit salad for me, knowing exactly how I like it. (287)

While lying prostrate on a cot, Francis had a very unusual thought: He wanted a sweet cake made by his Brother Jacoba, the noble-woman from Rome who loved Francis and the brothers dearly. Francis knew she would be saddened if he died before she had a chance to say good-

bye. And so he dictated a letter to be given to her. At the same time, Lady Jacoba had a premonition about his impending death, and so she set out for Assisi, bringing with her Francis’[s] favorite sweet dessert, an almond cake known as *mostacciuolo*. (289)

It is evident from the above passages that Straub’s hefty volume is about more than his personal encounter with Francis and Clare. Like a true pilgrim, Straub reflects along the way on whatever intrigues and inspires him, from his nephew’s wedding in Albany, New York, which Straub remembers while sitting alone in Brother Maseo’s cave, to a homeless man sitting on the steps of a church, to Don Aldo Brunacci and the rescue of Jews during World War II; from a soup kitchen in the impoverished Kensington section of Philadelphia to the soap opera, *General Hospital*, and then to the writings of Thomas Merton, Hildegard of Bingen, Meister Eckhart, and a score of others, making this book a pilgrimage of reading, as well, a *Lectio Divina* of texts ancient and new.

Straub also meditates on art. His meditations, for example, on the Basilica of St. Francis and on the Giotto frescoes, in particular, are detailed and informative and provide the reader (by means of words) a visual pilgrimage through the basilica. And as with everything else medieval in his book, Straub includes enough history for the reader to contextualize what he is writing about.

Another interesting dimension of *The Sun and Moon Over Assisi* is the author’s deepening understanding of Francis and Clare and their modern counterparts, as well as showing us how that knowledge gradually convinced him that his move from being a television producer to embracing Christ is not enough. Readers are shown by the author how he reaches the conviction that he must himself become a modern pilgrim and go where Francis and Clare found Christ. He begins to notice more and more those whom he passed by when he began his pilgrimage, the poor and the beggars and the homeless.

We know from Straub’s subsequent work that when the book ends, he continues his own pilgrimage: he goes among the poor of the world, talks with them, and through word, photograph and film, brings their story back to those who don’t know it or who prefer to shut it out of their lives. Though we know this further development only outside the pages of this book, it is the text of *The Sun and Moon Over Assisi* that shows us how that journey began and what it will inevitably lead to if Straub’s words are indeed more than words. As he himself writes at the end of the book:

I can’t imagine what life will be like without the book as an active part of my life. I will have the rest of my life to try to implement all that Saint Francis and Saint Clare have taught me. It is time for me to shut up and start living what I have written. Pray for me. (594)

And then with an eye once more to the reader, Straub quotes St. Bonaventure's words at the end of *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*: "Be granted the experience of that about which we have spoken." *The Sun and Moon Over Assisi* is a book that illustrates and extends that invitation to the reader in 594 packed pages.

Murray Bodo, O.F.M.

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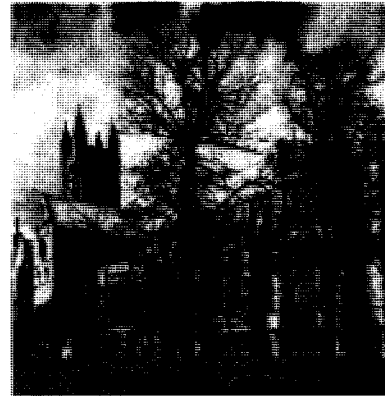
**Ilia Delio, OSF**, a member of the Franciscan Servants of the Holy Child Jesus, North Plainfield, New Jersey, received her doctorate in theology from Fordham University. She presently is at Washington Theological Union, Washington, DC, serving as assistant professor of ecclesial history and Franciscan studies as well as Director of the Franciscan Center. She has also been a visiting professor at the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University. Her published works include *Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1998) and *Simply Bonaventure: An Introduction to His Life, Thought, and Writings* (New York: New City Press, 2001).

**William Hart McNichols, SJ**, is a Jesuit priest, poet, artist, and iconographer. The image published here was an original black-and-white line drawing; it is also now an icon which can be found at the St. Andre Rublev Icon Studio site on the world wide web.

**Rayner Schiamannini, OFM Conv.**, is an Italian Conventual friar who edited *The Basilica of St. Francis and the Other Sanctuaries of Assisi*, published in the United States in 1953. The original work was titled *La Basilica di San Francesco e gli altri santuari di Assisi*.

**Joseph Wood, OFM Conv.**, is a friar of the St. Anthony Province. He ministered in Italy from 1990-1998, serving as a retreat and vocation director at the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi and as archivist at the General Curia in Rome. He is presently a team member for the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program and an editorial board member for *The Cord*. He is stationed at Marytown in Libertyville, Illinois, a Marian shrine and retreat center.

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**FRANCISCAN  
SISTERS**  
OF LITTLE FALLS  
MINNESOTA

Winter/Spring/Summer Programs\*

Feb. 5 (7:00 p.m.) – 11 (12:00 noon), 2003

**Retreat... "A Journey into the Paschal Mystery with  
Saints Francis & Clare"**

Directed by Donald Blaeser, O.F.M.

Cost: \$300, register by Jan. 22 with non-refundable \$50 deposit

Sat., April 26, 2003, 9:30 – 4:00 p.m.

**Earth Day Celebration...raising consciousness  
about justice, ecology and peace**

Presenter: William Short, O.F.M.

Cost: \$25, register by April 18 with non-refundable \$10 deposit

June 9 (7:00 p.m.) – 13 (noon), 2003

**Contemplative Retreat**

Directed by Lillian Kroll, O.S.F.

Cost: \$185, register by May 26 with non-refundable \$30 deposit

August 11 (7:00 p.m.) – 17 (noon), 2003

**Retreat – Journeying with the story of Francis**

Facilitated by Ingrid Peterson, O.S.F. and Kathy Warren, O.S.F.

Based on Francis of Assisi: Early Documents – 3 Volumes

The Saint... The Founder... The Prophet

Cost: \$300, register by July 28 with non-refundable \$50 deposit

#### **Franciscan Scripture Retreat**

Facilitated by Joyce Brandl, O.S.F.

Private retreat of one to eight days based on favorite stories  
from Franciscan Early Documents with related Scriptures.

**THEMES:** Nature; Conversion; Minority/Simplicity; Poverty;  
Prayer; Obedience; Fraternity/Community; Mission  
(Reflection Questions - to recall how God has been  
and is present.)

A DIRECTOR can be available to facilitate either an individual or a  
small group retreat. Cost will depend on requested number of days  
and/or person(s) making the retreat.

\*For more information on these or other programs, or to register, write to:

Franciscan Life Office,

116 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.E. Little Falls, MN 56345-3597

Phone: 320-632-0668, e-mail: franciscanlife@fslf.org

Visit our website: www.fslf.org

## *Junípero Serra Retreat*

### *A Franciscan Renewal Center*

*Malibu, California*

*Established in 1942 by the Franciscan Friars of California,  
Serra Retreat is nestled between the ocean and the  
mountains in serene Malibu, conveniently accessible from  
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- Private retreats
- Married couples
- Recovery retreats
- Days of Recollection
- Specialized retreats
- High school and college groups
- Women's and men's weekends
- Conferences

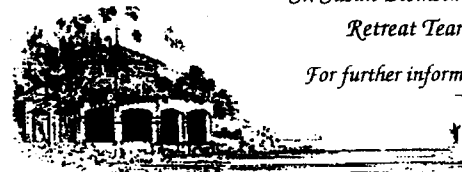
*With a maximum occupancy of 100 guests, Serra Retreat  
provides a chapel with a panoramic view,  
large and small conference rooms,  
a fully staffed dining room,  
and grounds for walking and silent reflection.*

*Fr. Warren Rouse, OFM  
Director*

*Fr. Michael Doherty, OFM  
Retreat Master*

*Sr. Susan Blomstad, OSF  
Retreat Team*

*For further information:*



*Serra Retreat  
A Franciscan Retreat Center*

*Serra Retreat  
3401 Serra Road  
Malibu, CA 90265  
Ph: 310-456-6631 (Reservations)  
Fax: 310-456-9417  
srmalibu@aol.com  
www: sbfranciscans.org or  
globalretreats.com*

*Franciscan Spiritual Center*  
609 S. Convent Road  
Aston PA 19014

**Summer Retreat Offerings**

**Preached Retreats:**

**Holy Week With the Beloved Disciple** April 13-20, 2003

Director: Jude Winkler OFM Conv \$310 (\$50 deposit)

**Walking with Franciscan Women** May 25-June 1, 2003

Director: Giles Schinelli TOR \$310 (\$50 deposit)

**Directed Retreats:**

**June 10-17, 2003 and July 13-20, 2003**

Directors:

**(June 10)** Mary Walsh OSF, Frank Doyle OSA, John Malich FMS,  
Julie McCole OSF

**(July 13)** Celeste Crine OSF, Mary Walsh OSF, Bernard Tickerhoff TOR,  
Mary Killoran OSF

Registration Deadline: two weeks before the retreat \$350 (\$50 deposit)

**Guided Retreats:**

**Renewing the Face of the Earth** July 22-29, 2003

Paula Gonzalez SC \$300 (\$50 deposit)

**Following in the Footprints of Francis and Clare**

**July 31 - August 7, 2003**

Anne H. Amati OSF \$300 (\$50 deposit)

**Franciscan Solitude Extended Experience - at Clare House**

June 10-17, 2003 Helen Budzik OSF and Jean Ustasiewski OSF

Registration Deadline: May 26, 2003 \$275.00

For more information on these or other programs or to register, write to the above address, call (610) 558-6152, e-mail "fsc@osfphila.org" or visit our website: [www.fscaston.org](http://www.fscaston.org)

The Franciscan Spiritual Center is situated in the southeast wing of Our Lady of Angels Convent, the motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. Located about 20 miles south of Philadelphia and just north of the Delaware state line, the Center consists of 21 bedrooms with private bath, 10 bedrooms sharing a common bath, lounge, kitchenette, large meeting space, spiritual direction rooms, prayer room, and a ground-level multipurpose space which houses a second lounge as well as library, listening center, arts and crafts area, and exercise corner. There is an elevator to all levels but a few additional stairs to the multipurpose space and some spiritual direction rooms. The Center is fully climate controlled and is handicapped accessible from the outside. Quiet, shaded grounds provide ample space for walking and solitude. Reservations are requested.

**ANNOUNCING  
A NATIONAL SUMMER SYMPOSIUM**

***BONAVENTURE FEST***

August 7, 2003 (7:00 P.M.) – August 9, 2003 (9:00 P.M.)

Sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia,  
Aston, PA

"Perhaps no one in the history of Western thought has glimpsed the profound unity between the created world and Christ as consistently as did St. Bonaventure, for whom the whole of the world and its history constitutes a magnificent Christophany."

Zachary Hayes, OFM

A Window to the Divine: Creation Theology, p. 25

We welcome you to a very special Symposium designed to help us delight in the remarkable teachings of St. Bonaventure and their implications for the deepest concerns of our times.

Zachary Hayes, OFM, (as keynote presenter), together with Ed Coughlin, OFM; Ilia Delio, OSF; Kenan Osborne, OFM; André Cirino, OFM; Josef Raischl, SFO; and Diane Jamison, OSF, will introduce us to the works of Bonaventure that are key to the worldview we sometimes call "Franciscan." They will share precious insights of our Tradition that sharpen the focus of our response to the many crucial problems that "tear at the heart of humanity, and give us a reason for the hope within us."

PLACE: Neumann College, Aston, PA

HOUSING: Living-Learning Center of Neumann College

COST: \$200.00 . . . Symposium, housing, and meals

REGISTRATION brochure: ready in January, 2003

CONTACT: Kathleen Moffatt, OSF - [skmoffatt@aol.com](mailto:skmoffatt@aol.com)

## YOU ARE INVITED TO

### The Tenth Annual Central New York Franciscan Experience

#### Meeting Francis and Clare At Home and on the Journey (A Virtual Pilgrimage to Assisi)

**PRESENTERS:** Anne Amati, OSF and Giles Schinelli, TOR  
**GUEST CHOIR:** Our Lady of Pompei Children's Choir

**DATE:** Friday, February 28, 2003 (6:00 P.M.) and  
Saturday, March 1, 2003 (8:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.)

**PLACE:** The Franciscan Center, 2500 Grant Blvd., Syracuse, NY 13208

**REGISTRATION FEE:** \$20.00/person or \$30.00/couple (by Feb. 1, 2003)  
\$25.00/person or \$35.00/couple (after Feb. 1, 2003)

**OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS:** Available upon request

For information/registration/forms:  
Email to [cwalter@osfsyr.org](mailto:cwalter@osfsyr.org)  
Phone: 315.634.7000 Fax: 315.634.7023

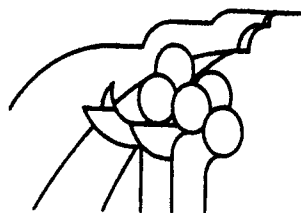
## FRANCISCAN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

in  
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A three-month ministerial and experiential program born out of  
the conviction that our Franciscan charism enables us  
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to our ministries.

For further information contact:

David Connolly, ofm Cap.  
Mt Alverno Retreat Centre  
20704 Heart Lake Rd.  
Caledon, Ont.  
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Email:  
[david\\_cap@hotmail.com](mailto:david_cap@hotmail.com)



## THE 40 DAY FRANCISCAN HERMITAGE RETREAT

2003

MARCH 1-APRIL 11 JUNE 14-JULY 25

NOVEMBER 8-DECEMBER 19

2004

FEBRUARY 28-APRIL 8

NOVEMBER 13-DECEMBER 23

The PORTIUNCULA Center for Prayer, in collaboration with Mary Elizabeth Imler, ofm, is pleased to add additional opportunities to experience the uniquely Franciscan way of being with God in solitude and in community.

Using Mary Elizabeth's text, *A Franciscan Solitude Experience: The Pilgrim's Journal*, this retreat is based on and uses selections from the Third Order Rule, the writings of Francis and Clare, and readings from our rich Franciscan heritage. This experience is formatted in a way faithful to that of the Rule for Hermitages, providing a time and way for solitude as modeled by Francis, in his imitation of the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness.

Participants are invited into the freedom to simply be, using the journal as a guide, with a theme reflection every ten days and opportunities to be accompanied by a spiritual director as one wishes. For more information and brochure packet, contact **Kathleen Anne Copp, ofm** (815)-464-3850 Email [SKACOPP@aol.com](mailto:SKACOPP@aol.com) Fax (815)-469-4880

## THE PORTIUNCULA CENTER FOR PRAYER SUMMER 2003 RETREATS

June 20-26 Come to the Woods: A Directed Retreat Led by a Franciscan  
Team: Tod Laverty, ofm, Marianne Selig, ofm, Joanne Haney, ofm

June 27-July 3 Praying with the Franciscan Sources:

A Retreat with Michael Blastic, ofm conv & Mary Elizabeth Imler, ofm

July 19-25 Enter the Center: A Directed Retreat:

Georgen Wilson, ofm, Kathleen Anne Copp, ofm, Marie Bohn, hm

Contact: Mary Ann Hamilton Ph: 815.464.3880 email: [ORTC4P@aol.com](mailto:ORTC4P@aol.com)

## PORTIUNCULA CENTER FOR PRAYER

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WASHINGTON THEOLOGICAL UNION

CORDIALLY INVITES YOU TO ATTEND

THE SIXTH ANNUAL FRANCISCAN SYMPOSIUM

**"FRANCISCANS AND CREATION:  
WHAT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY?"**

*As Franciscans we are called in a special way to a healthy relationship with creation. We are heirs to a rich theological tradition that can provide a framework for incorporating environmental sensitivity into religious practice and activity.*

*We are a resource for the Church, and we are capable of embodying Francis's passionate love of creation in our word and in our example.*

Keith Warner, OFM

**MAY 23 – 25, 2003**

*Featuring lectures, prayers and conversation exploring the interaction between Franciscans and creation, and the relationship we share.*

Speakers include: John Haught, Ph. D., Gabriele Uhlein, OSF, Keith Warner, OFM, James Lockman, OFM, Franklin Fong, OFM, and Zachary Hayes, OFM

For information contact:  
Kathy Dempsey  
Washington Theological Union  
6896 Laurel Street, N. W.  
Washington, D.C. 20012  
Dempsey@wtu.edu

## The Franciscan Way



The Franciscan Way is an innovative adult education program that concentrates on the history, spirituality, and theology of Sts. Francis and Clare of Assisi. We hope you will join us for our new Winter programs.

January 19 - 22

### **POVERTY & JOY ~ The Franciscan Tradition**

Bill Short, OFM, author of *"The Franciscans: Poverty and Joy"*  
Joe Schwab, OFM, Executive Director of the Franciscan Renewal Center & Ramona Miller, OSF, Director of Spiritual Formation at the Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley, will discuss how Francis & Clare of Assisi discovered poverty, chosen for the sake of love, as the key to joy and freedom in following Christ. They will explore what it means for these saints and for us to live "without claiming anything as my own." How does such a way of living reflect the God who is All Good? What is the connection between generosity and asceticism? How can Francis speak of God's poverty?

February 28—March 2

### **Franciscan Values & Personal Conversion**

Sr. Madonna Hoying, FSP, a Franciscan Sister of the Poor will focus on Franciscan values such as: conversion, prayer and contemplation, and living as sisters and brothers, with each other and all of creation. There will be conferences that will help make these values practical and there will also be time for sharing and quiet reflection.

*Come Join Us...*

THE FRANCISCAN RENEWAL CENTER  
5802 E. Lincoln Dr., Scottsdale, AZ 85253  
Toll Free: 1-800-356-3247  
E-Mail: [Casa@TheCasa.org](mailto:Casa@TheCasa.org)  
Call (480) 948-7460 for information/reservations  
Website: [www.thecasa.org](http://www.thecasa.org)



## On the Franciscan Circuit Coming Events 2003

**Wednesday, February 5-Thursday, February 11, 2003**

**Retreat: A Journey into the Paschal Mystery with Saints Francis and Clare.** Directed by Donald Blaeser, OFM. (See ad, p. 40).

**Sunday, February 16-Friday, February 21, 2003**

**Conference Retreat for Sisters.** James Gavin, OFM Cap. Franciscan Center, 49 Jackson Avenue, Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706. Contact Sr. Marie Patrice, OSF. Ph: 914.478.3696 or 914.478. 3930, ext. 121.

**Friday, February 28-Saturday, March 1, 2003**

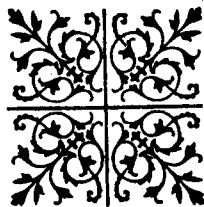
**Meeting Francis and Clare At Home and on the Journey (A Virtual Pilgrimage to Assisi).** Presenters: Anne Amati, OSF and Giles Schinelli, TOR. The Franciscan Center, 2500 Grant Street, Syracuse, NY 13208. (See ad, p. 44).

**Friday, March 21-Sunday, March 23, 2003**

**Lenten Retreat.** Franciscan Center, 49 Jackson Avenue, Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706. Contact Sr. Marie Patrice, OSF. Ph: 914.478.3696 or 914.478. 3930, ext. 121.

**Saturday, March 1-Tuesday, April 11, 2003**

**The 40 Day Franciscan Hermitage Retreat.** The Portiuncula Center for Prayer, 9263 W. St. Francis Rd., Frankfort, IL: 60423-8330. (See ad, p. 45).



## Abbreviations

<i>Writings of Saint Francis</i>		<i>Franciscan Sources</i>	
Adm	The Admonitions	1C	The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano
BIL	A Blessing for Brother Leo	2C	The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul
Ctc	The Canticle of the Creatures	3C	The Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
CtExh	The Canticle of Exhortation	LCh	The Legend for Use in the Choir
1Frg	Fragments of Worcester Manuscript	Off	The Divine Office of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
2Frg	Fragments of Thomas of Celano	LJS	The Life of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
3Frg	Fragments of Hugh of Digne	VL	The Versified Life of St. Francis by Henri d'Avranches
LtAnt	A Letter to Br. Anthony of Padua	1-3JT	The Praises by Jacopone da Todi
1LtCl	First Letter to the Clergy (Earlier Edition)	DCom	The Divine Comedy by Dante Aliegheri
2LtCl	Second Letter to the Clergy (Later Edition)	TL	Tree of Life by Ubertino da Casale
1LtCus	The First Letter to the Custodians	1MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Smaller Version
2LtCus	The Second Letter to the Custodians	2MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Larger Version
1LtF	The First Letter to the Faithful	HTrb	The History of the Seven Tribulations by Angelo of Clareno
2LtF	The Second Letter to the Faithful	ScEx	The Sacred Exchange between St. Francis and Lady Poverty
LtL	A Letter to Brother Leo	AP	The Anonymous of Perugia
LtMin	A Letter to a Minister	L3C	The Legend of the Three Companions
LtOrd	A Letter to the Entire Order	AC	The Assisi Compilation
LtR	A Letter to the Rulers of the People	1-4Srm	The Sermons of Bonaventure
ExhP	Exhortation o the Praise of God	LMj	The Major Legend by Bonaventure
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father	LMn	The Minor Legend by Bonaventure
PrsG	The Praises of God	BPr	The Book of Praises by Bernard of Besse
OfP	The Office of the Passion	ABF	The Deeds of St. Francis and His Companions
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix	LFl	The Little Flowers of Saint Francis
ER	The Earlier Rule ( <i>Regula non bullata</i> )	KnSF	The Knowing of Saint Francis
LR	The Later Rule ( <i>Regula bullata</i> )	ChrTE	The Chronicle of Thomas of Eccleston
RH	A Rule for Hermitages	ChrJG	The Chronicle of Jordan of Giano
SalBVM	A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary		
SalV	A Salutation of Virtues		
Test	The Testament		
TPJ	True and Perfect Joy		
 <i>Writings of Saint Clare</i> 			
1LAg	First Letter to Agnes of Prague		
2LAg	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague		
3LAg	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague		
4LAg	Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague		
LEr	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges		
RCI	Rule of Clare		
TestCl	Testament of Clare		
BCI	Blessing of Clare		