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St. Bonaventure University
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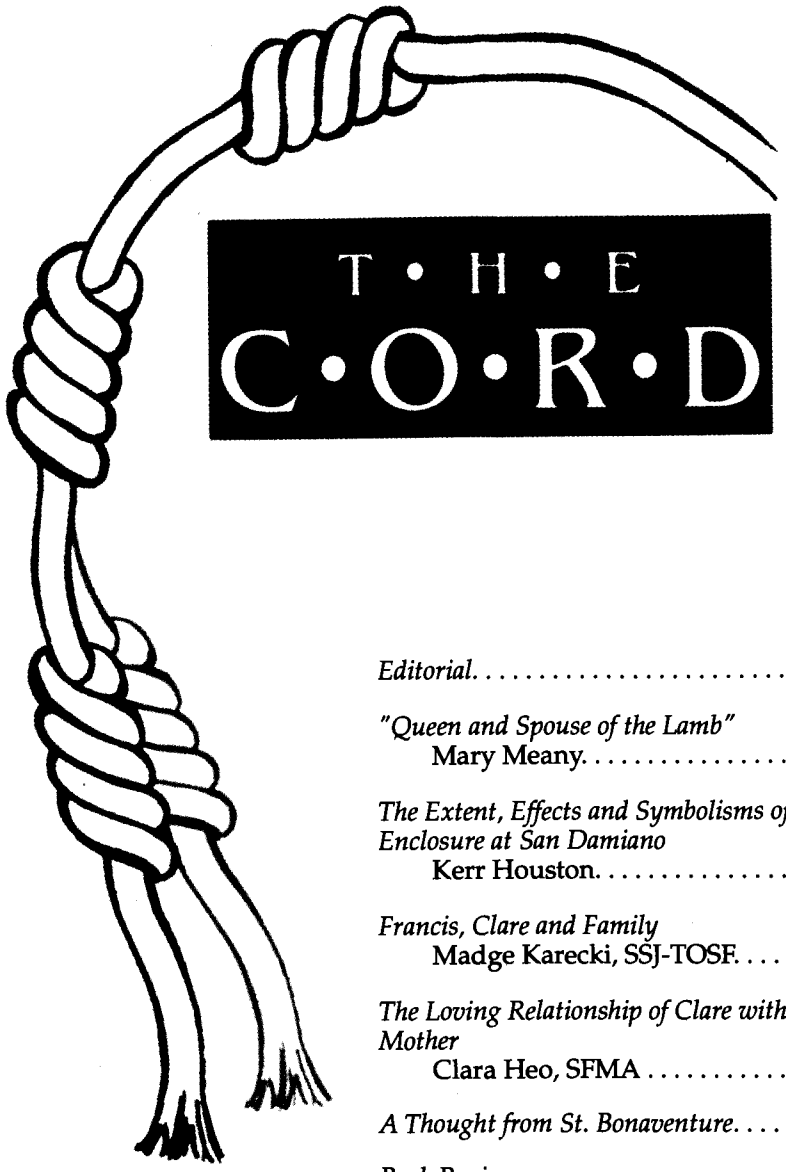
A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



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THE CORD
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3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.
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Editorial

It seems not that very long ago that many of us were converging on LaCrosse, Wisconsin, to celebrate "Clarefest '93." Can it really be ten years? Must we now move from awareness of the 800th anniversary of her birth to remembering the 750th anniversary of her death?

Much has changed in these ten years, yet much remains the same. Clare is, perhaps, even more significant to Franciscans than she was in 1993. Certainly, we can say that we have been given many opportunities to better know her, embrace her teaching, and emulate her sense of commitment to those with whom she lived and worked at San Damiano. Here at St. Bonaventure University we are about to complete a three-year cycle of "Poor Clare Enrichment" programs, attended by over 70 Clares from around the world. We have met new Sisters, laughed well and frequently, and prayed intensely over this time, and cherish the experience in many deep and inexplicable ways. It will be sad to see it end.

But will it *really* end? I think not, no more than the influence of Clare ended on August 11, 1253. She lives in every Franciscan heart, although we sometimes might forget that . . . Clare is our sister, our mother, our healer, our intercessor before God. We may not attend to her presence, but she never forgets us.

This issue, oddly enough, contains nothing written by a Poor Clare. Rather, it is comprised of articles from writers of widely varying persuasions: two American historians not members of the Franciscan Family in any canonical sense, and two Third Order Regular Franciscan women, one of whom ministers in Southern Africa, and one of whom has just completed studies in this country and returned to her native South Korea. It seems to me that in publishing their articles I am affirming both the breadth and depth of Clare's significance for people who do not live the form of life handed down by Clare and for the multitude of those who do.

Sometimes a point of view not internal to the tradition can open our eyes and stretch our perspectives in ways we do not expect. It was with this hope that the selections for this issue were made. In honoring Clare in this way, we join with the poet John Donne (and the apostle Paul) in asking, "O death, where is your victory, where is your sting?"

Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF

The Cord, 53.4 (2003)

"Queen and Spouse of the Lamb"

Mary Meany

"You took a spouse of a more noble lineage . . . [Now you are] Queen and Spouse of the Lamb."

This sentence, put in Clare's mouth, uses phrases from her extant letters to Agnes of Prague. Clare's use of the image "Queen and Spouse of the Lamb" is the key to Clare's understanding of the life she and Agnes have chosen. They deliberately rejected family status and an advantageous marriage in order to espouse themselves to the poor Crucified Christ who is, in fact, the triumphant Lamb.

We have four of Clare's letters to Agnes, but none of Agnes's letters to Clare; we have letters from Agnes to other correspondents, in particular to her brother King Wenceslas I of Bohemia, and to Popes who sought her intercession with her brother and, later with his successor, her nephew, Otakar I. Clare probably wrote her first letter to Agnes in 1234, when Agnes founded and entered the Monastery of the Most Holy Redeemer in Prague. The second and third letters from Clare belong within the context of Agnes' struggle for papal acceptance of her renunciation of involvement in a hospice, also of her foundation, whose endowment was to support the monastery. This struggle ran from 1235 until 1238 when Gregory IX accepted the renunciation. Clare wrote the fourth letter from her deathbed in 1253. Not surprisingly, it voices eschatological themes.[1] Each of Clare's four letters belongs in the context of the women's quest for "the privilege of poverty,"[2] and this context provides one key to understanding Clare's use of the image of spouse of the Lamb.

Timothy Johnson has demonstrated that Clare's letters belong in an epistolary tradition particularly important for women. He shows that these letters were not only an expression of Clare's friendship with Agnes but also were carefully designed to be read aloud to others. They express friendship, a friendship that is public as well as private. Letters were a way for women to establish the kind of personal network they might not be able to establish

through face to face encounters.[3] Certainly, for Clare and Agnes such a network could be created only through correspondence. These women were geographically distant, with responsibilities to the women with whom they lived in community. Their letters expressed and fostered spiritual insights; that is, insights into the particular Christian life each had chosen. Clare's letters do have coherence, but one can also see development from the first to the third. The fourth letter is a wonderful summation of Clare's spiritual insights. The loss of the full correspondence between these two women is our loss, indeed.

Biographical Background

Clare of Assisi, born 1193 or 1194, was the daughter of Offreduccio and Ortolana di Favarone, a family of the Assisian *maiores*, prominent enough to have been forced into exile in Perugia when Clare was a child.[4] The story of her conversion, her decision to enter into the "form of life" Francis of Assisi was developing is too well-known to need re-telling.[5] Some time in 1212 or 1213, Clare settled at the Church of San Damiano and essentially remained there until her death in 1253.

Agnes of Prague, or Agnes of Bohemia, born 1211, was the daughter of Premsyl Otakar I, king of Hungary, and his second wife, Constance; she was sister to Wenceslas I, also king, and cousin to Elizabeth of Hungary, a "Franciscan penitent," famous even in her own lifetime for her care of the poor and sick and of those stricken by famine. Agnes had been betrothed as a child to Henry, son of Frederick II. Later her father negotiated marriage alliances, first with Henry III of England, and, then, it seems, with Frederick himself. Agnes, meanwhile, had fallen under the influence of Franciscan friars, and finally appealed to Pope Gregory IX for permission to found a house of women who would live by the Franciscan form of life. Gregory granted his permission, and Clare sent five sisters from a monastery in Trent to join Agnes who was professed in 1234, becoming Abbess of the Monastery of the Most Holy Redeemer.[6]

Thus stand our two correspondents: women of good families who had, of their own volition, sought a life of religious virginity and poverty. Note that they might have chosen a life of religious virginity in a traditional monastery, an option that was socially acceptable, but each pursued a more radical consecrated life, following the example and inspiration of Francis of Assisi.

Clare died in 1253, worn out by fasting and by service to her sisters and to the community of Assisi–that is, by service to Jesus Christ. Agnes died in 1282, worn out by hunger and disease, by service to the poor, sick, hungry Bohemians who fled to the Monastery of the Most Holy Redeemer–that is, by service to Jesus Christ.

The circumstances of Agnes's death require some familiarity with the situation in Bohemia. Agnes's nephew Otakar II had succeeded her brother Wenceslas. Otakar led Bohemia into war against Rudolph of Hapsburg, dying in battle in 1278. Rudolph granted lordship of Bohemia to Agnes's great nephew Otto, the margrave of Brandenburg, who had no real ties to Bohemia. Otto imprisoned Otakar's immediate family and seized royal and ecclesiastical property. War, violence, floods, famine, inflation, and epidemic illnesses resulted in widespread poverty. The Monastery of the Holy Redeemer became both a center of resistance and a refuge for the hungry and sick. Agnes and her sisters shared what they had, but themselves suffered hunger, sickness, and oppression. Worn out, Agnes died. The Minister General of the Friars Minor presided at her funeral, but a crowd of the poor attended her to her grave.

Clare was canonized in 1255. Agnes was beatified in 1874 by Pius IX. John Paul II canonized her Nov. 12, 1989. In Prague the canonization triggered a popular novena to Agnes, and on the last day of that novena the Communist government of Czeckoslovakia resigned.[7]

These two correspondents chose and fashioned a radical religious life. Agnes played, perhaps, a more important part on the political stage of her time, but Clare shines as *magistra*, theologian and spiritual director. In the corpus of her writings and of the writings about her, Clare's letters to Agnes draw us into the dynamics of the choice she and Agnes made by developing the theme of the heavenly spouse, the desirable lover who is the eschatological Lord.

Traditional Spousal Imagery

Spousal imagery pervades medieval preaching and devotion. Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on the *Song of Songs* was the magisterial text, and some women mystics used bridal imagery to describe their experience of union with Christ. In her letters, however, Clare develops this theme in her own fashion. Bernard of Clairvaux drew on the *Song of Songs* in a series of sermons for his monks, for religious men whom he encouraged to imagine themselves in a marital union with Christ the Bridegroom so that they might engage in an affective union with Christ the Savior and Lord. Bernard's understanding of the Bride is, however, multivalent: the Bride may be the Christian soul, Mary, the Church.[8] Later preachers and male writers adapted the image of the Bride of Christ to designate religious women as the "brides of Christ." Barbara Newman has shown, however, that the themes these male clerics picked up from Bernard and elaborated for women religious are not adequate to explain the development of women writers' description of their own erotic experiences of Christ. These women adopted, Newman argues, the language of the courtly

lyric and romance, in which the male protagonist pursues the lady.[9] This charged, affective spirituality, whether in the classical Bernardic form, or in the more fervid courtly tradition was widely popular to express affective union. In these letters she uses traditional vocabulary, but speaks in a personal voice, from her lived experience.

Clare's Spousal Imagery

While Clare develops Bernard's themes of bridal love and desire, and plays with the erotic imagery of the courtly tradition in her letters to Agnes, she also introduces the familial element, the status the Bride acquires through marriage. Acquisition of status is central to Clare's description of the alliance she and Agnes enter into with their noble Spouse. They reject the acquisiton of status and the establishment of familial alliances in rejecting marriage. In doing so, they have won a new status: they become the spouse of the Lamb.

Clare's letters begin with her use of the theme of a *sacrum commercium*, an exchange, a bargain. The first letter introduces that theme. In the second and third letters Clare unfolds the meaning of the *commercium*, the exchange, by developing the importance of poverty as their bond with their Bridegroom. Finally, in the fourth letter, Clare describes the Bridegroom, the Lamb, the eschatological Lord.

Barbara Newman points out that bridal imagery did not always "evoke the refinements of mystical union; it could appeal to very earthly motives."[10] Newman cites Alain de L'Isle (d. 1202/03):

> If you want to marry an earthly husband for riches, consider that earthly riches are deceptive and transitory. . . .Therefore, marry him whose treasures are incomparable . . . immutable. If you want to marry an earthly man for beauty, consider that either sickness mars beauty, or old age destroys it, or at the very least, the moment of death annihilates it. Therefore, marry him at whose beauty the sun and moon marvel.[11]

Clare refers to this kind of "earthly motive" especially in her first letter to Agnes, when she describes Agnes's spouse as stronger, more generous, more beautiful, tender, courteous than any other, and reminds Agnes that her spouse will give her jewels and pearls. Clare then goes on to affirm that in espousing this Person, she can remain chaste, having loved him; more pure, having touched him; virginal, having accepted him.[12]

Could one also suggest that Clare may have been writing with a certain sense of humor, a sense of humor shared between one virgin and another, between two virgins who had found their own way to celibacy? Is it not possible to read vv. 9-11 of "The First Letter," as a play on the boasting a young lady

might make about her betrothed? He is powerful, generous, handsome, tender and courteous; he makes her presents of precious gems and pearls.[13] That is frivolous, but the *commercium* is serious, so Clare reminds Agnes that the result of her exchange of an earthly prince for a heavenly King means that she will be Queen because she will be the Spouse of the Lamb.

Queen and Spouse: the *Sacrum Commercium*

Joan Mueller has demonstrated that Clare drew on three sources in these letters, the liturgical office of Agnes of Rome, the "primitive Franciscan climate," and the papal "Privilege of Poverty."[14] Mueller's work informs my reading of the letters, although she does not highlight the image of the Lamb as I intend to do.

Writing to Agnes, a young woman courted for dynastic reasons by more than one powerful prince, Clare translates the bridal imagery into familial, spousal terms relevant to Agne's status. "Agnes is [taking] a spouse of a more noble lineage," even than the Emperor whose marital alliance her family had sought through her.[15]

In his bull *Sincerium animi* (1234), establishing the Monastery of the Most Holy Redeemer, and naming Agnes as its Abbess, Gregory IX praised Agnes for "rejecting all things transitory [so that] she might choose with a clean heart her heavenly Spouse . . . and become a handmaid instead of a Queen."[16] In contrast to Gregory's praise of Agnes' self-abasement, Clare reminds Agnes that she will be, the "spouse of Jesus Christ, and therefore, the very distinguished Queen" precisely because she is the spouse of Jesus.[17] Not debased or humiliated, Agnes is elevated in status. Clare's first letter praises Agnes for the decision she has made to reject the imperial suitor for the "nobler spouse, the Lord Jesus Christ." (1LAg7). Rejection of worldly power and wealth in order to attain higher benefits is a topos of the *commercium*.

Mueller calls Agnes's first letter "a hymn to the 'sacred exchange',"[18] to the practice of abandoning one's status and possessions precisely in order to obtain an eschatological reward. This abandonment is made with confidence that God will provide earthly necessities, a confidence that Francis dramatically embodied.[19] Clare develops the theme of the exchange precisely in the context of love. In her description of the generosity of her Beloved Lover, she brings together hope for the eschatological reward and her confidence in the Lover's present protection.

Clare creates a marvelous interplay of contrasts between poverty and riches, bringing this to a climax in her focus on the poor Crucified Lover who is the heavenly King and who "reigns from the Cross," as Laurent Gallant says.[20]

The *commercium* structures the first letter. Verses 5-7 introduce the theme of the spousal exchange. Verses 8-11 describe the benefits which the Lover

confers on His Beloved: chastity; gems, especially pearls, symbols of purity; and the crown which carries the seal of holiness. Verses 15-16 connect poverty with eschatological hope. Verses 19-24 develop the theme of the fundamental *commercium*, the Incarnate Word's kenotic entry into the Virgin's womb so that humans might enter into heavenly riches: Verse 30 states this meaning clearly, using the word *commercium*. It is indeed a great and praiseworthy exchange [*commercium*]:

> To give up the temporal for the everlasting,
> To merit the heavenly rather than the earthly,
> To receive a hundredfold instead of one,
> To have a happy, eternal life.[21]

When Clare opens her first letter to Agnes by saying that Agnes could have enjoyed worldly status but made a different choice, we remember, of course, that women of Agnes's or Clare's familial status were usually disposed of in marital alliances, or in convents, for the benefit of the family. We should not be surprised Clare's statement in the first letter as serious praise, not a conventional acknowledgement:

> *You have rejected [the magnificence and honor and dignity of the world, and marriage to the illustrious emperor], and have chosen with your whole heart and soul a life of holy poverty and destitution.*[22]

Where did Clare find this theme of the *commercium*? The theme was common enough, but where did Clare pick it up? In *Light Shining through the Veil*, Edith Van den Goorbergh and Theodore Zweerman show the relationship between Clare's letter and the Franciscan text known as the *Sacrum Commercium*,[23] and Michael Cusato has suggested that the author [illegible]m Commercium, whom he identifies as Ceasar of Speyer, in fact [illegible] in the writing of this letter.[24] It is not clear how the line of influence [illegible] Clare and Caesar. The image may have been Clare's, or she may [illegible]it with Caesar who then developed it into an allegory, using his [illegible]dge of the history and affairs of the Church. What seems clear is [illegible]d Caesar belonged to the same "circle of discourse."[25]

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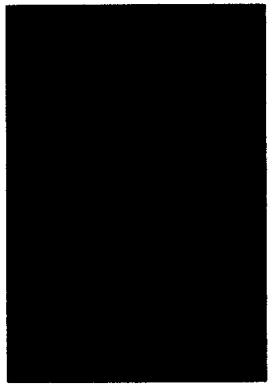

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Clare's own experience included a direct knowledge of the importance of marriage alliances and family status. It also included familiarity with texts celebrating the *commercium* a professed Virgin made with Christ when she gave up family status and marital alliances.[26] Mueller has demonstrated that Clare knew liturgical texts celebrating this exchange; specifically, Mueller shows

that Clare drew on the Office of St. Agnes of Rome, and that she knew the *Legenda* of Agnes.[27]

Desire and Decision

Ordinarily, families arranged marriages, but Clare reminds Agnes that they have made this bridal bargain themselves because of "a burning desire for the Poor Crucified."[28] This burning desire, love, is the most important note Clare sounds in the letter, the note which echoes through the four letters. By her fourth letter she elaborates more fully, enriching her description of desire. Contemplating the mirror, the Crucified on the Cross, Agnes must "burn ever more strongly with the fervor of charity."[29] Here Clare turns to the *Song of Songs*. "Your left hand is under my head, and your right arm blissfully embraces me, and you kiss me with the most blissful kiss of your mouth. . . " (Cant. 2:6, 1,1).

While the *Song of Songs* was enormously popular in medieval devotions, it may be possible to be more specific about Clare's source. These verses appear in the liturgy for the Nativity of Mary, and Clare would have known them from that Office. Mueller makes a more interesting connection, however. The descriptors "blissfully" and "blissful" do not appear in the Scriptural text, nor in the liturgical text. In the *Privilege of Poverty*, however, which describes the Bridegroom's left arm as His protection of the Ladies in this life, and His right arm as His promise of eternal reward, the right arm "more blissfully rewards" the Spouse.[30]

Thus, desire for the Bridegroom is explicitly related to poverty, and to the reward for making the nuptial agreement Clare and Agnes have negotiated. They have desired this Lover, and they have chosen with their whole heart and soul, the life of holy poverty. Their desire for poverty results from their desire for the royal Bridegroom. They profess the life of poverty because they decide to espouse the royal, poor King. Clare's reflections on the espousal of a Queen to the Heavenly King who is the Lamb resonate with the spirituality of poverty, that is, of a King and of a Queen who chose poverty rather than power, and, further, with the theological and eschatological undertones of the image of the Lamb.

Ingrid Peterson's seminal study, *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study*, demonstrates that Clare's spousal imagery focuses on the poverty of the bridegroom.[31] The powerful, rich, generous King "chose to appear despised, needy, and poor in this world."[32] To emphasize the importance Clare gives to following the poor Jesus, Peterson cites Clare's Second Letter to Agnes:

> The King himself will take you to Himself in the heavenly bridal chamber . . . because you have despised the splendor of an earthly kingdom. . . .Instead, as someone zealous for the holiest poverty, in a spirit of great humility and the most ardent charity, you have held fast to the footprints of Him to Whom you have merited to be joined as spouse.[33]

As Peterson points out, the connection of spouse and poverty is focused through the lens of union with the Crucified, especially as developed in Clare's second and fourth letters. In the fourth letter, as we have seen, Clare uses the *Song of Songs*, "[instructing] Agnes in an intelligent, affective understanding . . . as a preparation for contemplation. . . . .Prayer . . . must be affective, for the Word who comes to visit will be clothed in beauty, as is the soul's bridegroom."[34] Using the common image of the mirror, the *speculum*, and relating this to the soul's desire for the bridegroom, Clare urges Agnes to look into the center of the mirror, the mirror of poverty, where she will find "the Crucified Lover who redeemed humanity on the wood of the Cross." Clare's desire for this bridegroom is desire for the Poor and Crucified Christ.[35]

Peterson further makes the point that "For Clare, poverty primarily meant identity with the poor Christ." Francis undertook participation in the kenosis, the poverty of Christ, as an imitation of Christ's life of service, of humility; Clare focused on her spousal relationship with the King who had chosen to be poor. As his Bride and Queen, she is also poor, follows Him in poverty. Maria Victoria Triviño, O.S.C., makes this point in the context of a contrast between Clare's understanding of what constitutes appropriate clothing for a "Poor Lady," arguing that Clare understood the habit as the dress of a spouse, a bride awaiting her bridegroom. Since the Bridegroom is the Poor King, the appropriate bridal raiment is a poor garment.[36]

Clare does not enter into the life of poverty as a life of mortification but as an act of love. The identity she seeks is the union expressed in the metaphor of the embrace. This is characteristic of Clare's spirituality as we know it from her Rule, from the *Acts* of her canonization, and from the *Legenda*. She desires, follows, the Crucified, giving up earthly status and wealth to be his Spouse and Queen. She urges and encourages Agnes to embrace this Bridegroom.[37]

For Clare, this is not an act of abasement because the Bridegroom, the Spouse is King; Crucified, he is the Lamb of God, the eschatological Lord. Clare's image of the Spouse is akin to Francis's celebration of the Trinity, of the triumphant Lord, a theocentric spirituality which did not, in fact, dominate later Franciscan devotion, but which has been reintroduced to our attention, most notably in the Franciscan Institute's publication of *The Geste of the Great King*,[38] with its attendant commentaries.

The Figure of the Lamb

It is, of course, obvious that the lamb, *agnus*, is a suitable image for Agnes of Rome in her *Office*. Mueller's study provides evidence for the importance of

the story of Agnes of Rome, famous in medieval devotional literature as the fourth century Christian Roman virgin of noble family who refused marriage to "the Emperor's son." Mueller directs attention to Clare's use of the *Legend of St. Agnes* in her letters to Agnes of Prague. Like Agnes of Prague, Agnes of Rome chose a "nobler spouse," who gifts her with jewels and is a chaste, magnificent lover. When Clare reminds Agnes of Prague of the benefits of having chosen such a spouse, she draws very directly on the language of the *Legend of St. Agnes*, using not only the readings from the annual liturgical *Office of St. Agnes*, but also material from the fuller legend.[39]

In her fourth letter to Agnes of Prague, Clare explicitly plays on the name Agnes and the *agnus* to whom she is espoused, like the other virgin Agnes:

> . . . I rejoice and exult for you . . . , spouse of Christ, because like that other most holy virgin, Saint Agnes, you have been in an astonishing way espoused to the immaculate Lamb.[40]

In the *Legenda*, and in the first lesson for the octave of the feast of St. Agnes of Rome, Agnes's parents see their daughter amid a "crowd of virgins, all clothed in robes of state woven in gold, . . . standing at her right hand a Lamb whiter than snow."[41] They see their daughter follow the Lamb. While this is not bridal or spousal imagery, in her fourth and last letter, the letter written at the end of her life, as she writes to the new Agnes, Agnes of Prague, Clare moves beyond the image of Agnes of Rome following the Lamb in the company of virgins. In an original, classic insight, Clare associates the Lamb with the Spouse of the first letter, with the poor Crucified of the second and third letters, thus making Agnes of Prague not the follower (Gregory IX's handmaid), but the Spouse of the Lamb.

In the Book of Revelation the Lamb is an eschatological figure, and in *The Legend of St. Agnes* and in the liturgical Office for the Feast of St. Agnes, the Lamb is associated with the Virgin. Christian commentaries on Exodus and on Isaiah associate the lamb with Christ, with the *locus classicus* being John 1:29: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (. . . *agno immaculato, qui tollit peccata mundi*).[42] This immaculate lamb is the sacrificial, Paschal Lamb, and that is a theme that the later Franciscan author of the *Meditaciones vite Christi* will use when he writes for a Poor Clare nun, a later daughter of St. Clare.[43] Clare herself highlights the poverty of the Bridegroom, but not in the context of the image of the Lamb. The Lamb functions in these letters not as a sacrifice, but as a figure of glory, as in Revelation 14: 1-5, 9-11:

> Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mt. Zion! And standing with Him were 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. . . .[Those] who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins, follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been redeemed from humankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb. [The third angel who appears in the series of visions described in 14:1-20 cries out] with a loud voice [against those who worship the beast and receive a mark and] drink the wine of God's wrath . . . [in] the cup of His anger . . . .They will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and the presence of the Lamb.

This is the text that Clare uses in her fourth letter to Agnes:

> To her . . . the illustrious Queen and Bride [sponsae/ spouse] of the Lamb of the eternal King: to the Lady Agnes, [Agnae . . . sponsae/ dominae Agneti] . . . Clare, an unworthy servant of Christ, and a useless handmaid of His handmaids in the monastery of San Damiano of Assisi: health, and [a prayer] that she may sing a new song with the other holy virgins before the throne of God and the Lamb and follow the Lamb wherever he may go.[44]

We note that Clare does not cite the text of Revelations as it stands. First, obviously, she changes the Scriptural reference to virgins who do not defile themselves with women, to include women who are virgins. This was probably not a conscious change since Clare knew the use of this form of the text to describe Agnes of Rome. In this liturgical use, the virgin is female, because she is Agnes. Second, Clare does not use the bloody, vengeful image of those marked with the sign of the Beast who drink the cup of wrath, suffering in the presence of the Lamb. This image has nothing to do with the point she is making to Agnes. Clare is reflecting on the desire, the joy, the triumph of betrothal to the Lamb.

Clare is directing Agnes's attention to the Resurrection and Ascension, the Triumph of the Lamb, in order to remind Agnes that she will share in this Triumph, as the Spouse of the Lamb. The Scriptural text does not include a *sponsa agni*, nor does that image appear in the *Legenda* or office of Agnes of Rome, but Clare uses it as the culmination of the theme of the bridal imagery which first sounded in her first letter.

Francis's "Office of the Passion"

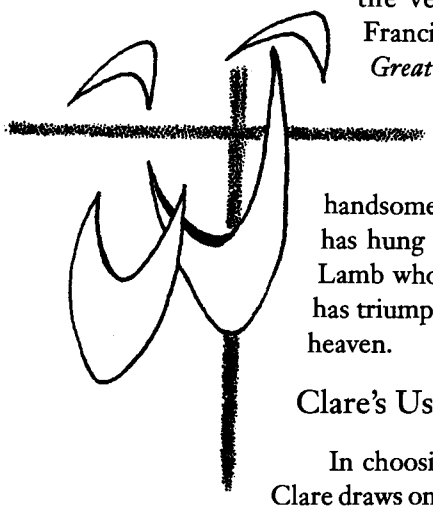
Clare's understanding of the Lamb as an icon of triumph, of eschatological lordship was inspired, or at least stimulated by, Francis's *Office of the Passion*, a "votive or devotional Office" Francis composed over the course of several years as he developed his own meditations on the Liturgical Office. In 2001 the Franciscan Institute published a marvelous edition of this text, under the carefully chosen title *The Geste of the Great King*.[45] The newly published text

made its academic debut at the International Congress of Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo, Michigan. As part of the presentation of the text, Sr. Margaret Carney, Director of the Institute, delivered a paper on Clare's use of this devotional Office. As Carney said, Clare appropriated this text, made it her own, owned it by praying it regularly. The *Legenda Sanctae Clare Virginis* dwells on Clare's devotion to the Crucified Christ, and Carney explicated that in the context of Clare's life in Assisi, drawing on the *Legenda Sanctae Clare Virginis*.[46] I am suggesting that Clare's *Letters to Agnes* show us another dimension of Clare's appropriation of Francis's text: the triumph of the Lamb.

In 1978 Laurent Gallant, in his dissertation aptly titled *Dominus Regnavit a Ligno*,[47]edited and commented on Francis's *Office of the Passion*; this dissertsation became the nucleus of the commentary in the Franciscan Institute volume. What we learn from this scholarship is that Francis, and then Clare, did not dwell on the suffering of the Lamb, but on the triumph. The *Office* begins with Francis's "Praises to Be Said at All the Hours," which draws on the text of Rev. 5:12, and sets the tone for the entire Office:

> Worthy is the slain Lamb to receive power and divinity
> And wisdom and strength, honor, glory and blessing:
> Let us praise and exalt God above all forever! [48]

As Gallant says, here Francis "[sings] the conquering mystery of Christ, the conquering Lamb."[49] The full Scriptural context is the vision in Rev. 4 and 5 of the one seated on the throne, surrounded by the living creatures and the elders, and of the Lamb standing between the throne and the creatures, the Lamb who had been slaughtered, but who takes the scroll sealed with seven seals and opens it. The chorus of creatures "sing a new song," culminating in the verse Francis uses. The title of the Franciscan Institute edition, *The Geste of the Great King*, unites the figure of the Lamb worthy of praise with the Hero who defeats his enemy. The Bridegroom Clare describes in the first letter as handsome, generous, desirable, is the Lamb who has hung on the Cross. Now he appears as the Lamb who reigns from the Cross, the hero who has triumphed over the enemy and now reigns in heaven.



Clare's Use of the Image of the Lamb

In choosing the image of Spouse of the Lamb, Clare draws on this triumphant image. Further, in this

Fourth Letter, having called Agnes spouse of the Lamb, Clare also specifically calls her the spouse of Christ, and of the King. Ingrid Peterson, as cited above, has shown us that Clare urges Agnes to relish marriage to the Poor Christ; but here, at the end, Clare reminds Agnes that marriage to the slain Lamb is marriage to the Triumphant Lamb. She further reminds Agnes that the eschatological triumph is reserved for those who are Poor in Spirit for they shall inherit the earth.

Clare's spirituality of Queen and Bride of the Lamb reflects her engagement in the "circles of discourse" among the friars and sisters. Their discourse evolved "in the primitive environment" of the early Franciscan world, shaped by the "Privilege of Poverty," by the liturgical hours, especially those celebrated for Agnes of Rome and for the Purification and Nativity of Mary; and by the devotional hours Francis developed in his own meditation on the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus the Lord. As she wrote over several years, Clare increased her understanding of the decision she and Agnes had both made to exchange a worldly suitor and husband for the heavenly spouse, her understanding of the importance of the poverty of the King they wed, her understanding not only of the religious relationship of the Spouse to the Lamb, and of the Person of the Lamb. Clare developed her own eschatalogical insight into the gospel dictum, "the poor shall inherit the earth." Praying Francis's *Office of the Passion* through the years, she came to understand the Passion as Christ's triumph and to associate herself with that triumph as His spouse.

The four letters we have work together to reveal Clare's deepening insight. In the first letter, she celebrates the choice, the *commercium* she and Agnes have made. Their desire for the Bridegroom dominates their lives: they reject earthly spouses in order to enjoy the embrace of the Beloved; they choose of their own volition the heavenly Spouse. In the second letter, Clare encourages Agnes as she enters into the bridal chamber, a heavenly chamber. In the third letter Clare directs Agnes to contemplate the image of Christ in the mirror and to reflect on her mission in the Church, comparing the enclosure to the womb of the pregnant Virgin. In the fourth letter, Clare returns to the theme of desire, desire for the embrace of the Beloved whose left hand supports them, whose right arm brings them to the heavenly embrace, who kisses them blissfully. But then, sharing her deathbed insights, Clare identifies the Spouse with the image of the Lamb, evoking both the eschatological triumph, the glory, the Lordship and the kenotic poverty of the Lamb. Here Clare explicitly affirms that those who are poor will inherit the earth, but does not focus on the mortification of the poor. Instead, she focuses on their triumphant inheritance. "You are Queen and Spouse of the Lamb" remains an epitaph equally sutiable for Clare of Assisi as for Agnes of Prague.

Endnotes

[1]Joan Mueller, *Clare's Letters to Agnes: Texts and Sources*, (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Press, 2001), pp. 27, 53, 73, 89. Regis Armstrong ed. and trans., *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (NY: Paulist Press, 1988), pp. 33, 43, and 47. Hereafter cited as *Clare: Early Documents.*

[2]Mueller, pp. 207-249.

[3]Timothy Johnson, "To Her Who Is Half of Her Soul: Clare of Assisi and the Medieval Epistolary Tradition," Paper presented at the Thirtieth International Congress of Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI, 1994.

[4]Marco Bartoli, *Clare of Assisi*, (Quincy, IL: Franciscian Press of Quincy Univ., 1993), p. 13, points out that the tradition of Clare's nobility was not a literary hagiographical device.

[5]Roberta McKelvie, "Clare's Conversion: A Counter-Cultural Choice," *The Cord*, 41 (July-August, 1991): 202-207.

[6]Mueller, pp. 5-11, summarizes Agnes's biography.

[7]Mueller, p. 11, points out that Agnes was acting as a peacemaker in the twentieth century as she did in the thirteenth.

[8]E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity*, (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), devotes a chapter each to the Church, the soul, and Mary as the Bride of Christ. Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Mysticism*, Vol. II: *The Growth of Mysticism*, (New York: Crossroad, 1994), pp. 198-223, summarizes Bernard's elaboration of the image of Bridal Love.

[9]Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature*, Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), p. 138, pp. 137-167, *passim*. See also McGinn, Vol. III: *The Flowering of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), pp. 153-317, esp. pp. 198-244.

[10]Newman, p. 32.

[11]Newman, p. 32, Alain's *Summa de arte predicatoria.*

[12]*Clare: Early Documents*, Letter 1, p. 35.

[13]*Clare: Early Documents*, Letter 1, p. 35.

[14]Mueller, pp. 107-252, provides essays on each of these sources. Her work informs my reading of the letters throughout this paper. The "Privilege of Poverty" refers to the letter of 1215 or 1216 in which Innocent III permitted Clare and her sisters the privilege of living as a community without property. See "The Privilege of Poverty of Pope Innocent III," in *Clare: Early Documents*, pp. 85-86.

[15]*Clare: Early Documents*, p. 35, n. 3, on the question of whom Clare means by her reference to the *Caesar* whom Agnes refused. Mueller, pp. 6-7 describes Agnes's father's negotiations for her marriage.

[16]Qtd. Armstrong, "Starting Points: Images of Women in the Letters of Clare," *Greyfriars Review*, Vol. VII, (1993), p. 350.

[17]2LAg, 1. Mueller, p. 55, n. 4.

[18]Mueller, p. 27.

[19]Thomas of Celano *The Life of St. Francis*, Book I, chp. XIV, *Francis of Assisi Early Documents*, rds. Regis J. Armstong, O.F.M. Cap., J.A. Wayne Hellman, O.F.M. Conv. and William J. Short, O.F.M. Vol. 1: *The Saint* (New York: New City Press, 1991), p. 213.

[20]Laurent Gallant, O.F.M. *Dominus regnavit a ligno: L' "Officium Passionis" de saint Francois d'Assise.* (*These pour le Doctorat en Science Theologique*), Institute Catholique de Paris, U.E.R. de Theologie et Sciences religieuses, Institut Superieur de Liturgie, 1978.

[21]1LAg, 30, Mueller p. 37. "*Magnum quippe ac laudabile commercium.*" I have slightly modified Mueller's breakdown of the text.

[22]*Clare: Early Documents*, p. 35, n. 3.

[23]Edith van den Goorbergh and Theodore H. Zweerman, *Light Shining through a Veil: on St. Clare's Letters to St. Agnes of Prague* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), n.p.

[24]Michael Cusato, in conversation, May, 2002.

[25]Cusato, as above.

[26]Clare does not situate this exchange in the context of the woman's status in the Church.

[27]Mueller, pp. 107-148. Mueller prints Julia Fleming's English translation of the *Legend*, pp. 251-265.

[28]1LAg48.

[29]4LAg27. Clare refers explicitly in v. 28 to the *commercium.*

[30]Mueller, pp. 102-103, notes 34-36. In *Clare: Early Documents*, p. 84, *felicitas amplexabitur* in the *Privilege of Poverty* is translated "more happily," and in the translation of the phrase in Clare's Fourth Letter, p. 50, n. 10, directs attention to Innocent's use of the adjective in the *Privilege of Poverty.*

[31]Ingrid Peterson, OSF, *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993).

[32]*Clare: Early Documents*, Letter 1 p. 36.

[33]*Clare: Early Documents*, Letter 2, p. 40, cited in Peterson, *Biographical Study*, p. 292. Peterson points out, p. 177, that "this passage . . . is a recurrent theme of Clare's writing." Peterson, p. 295. Peterson acknowledges the similarity of Clare's reading of the *Song of Songs* to Bernard's reading. She does not address the question of what sources Clare actually used. I remain convinced that Clare did not use Bernard directly from his texts.

[34]Peterson, *Biographical Study*, p. 294, citing Letter 4. In this Letter Clare urges Agnes to study the mirror which is Jesus Christ: in the border she will find the poverty of the infant; in the surface, she will find the labor Jesus undertook, as well as his humility and poverty; in the depth, or center, she will find "the ineffable charity that led Him to suffer . . . and die." *Clare: Early Documents*, Letter 4, p. 48-49, see p. 48, n. 5, and Armstrong, "Clare of Assisi: The Mirror Mystic," *The Cord*, 35 (July-Aug., 1985): 195-202.

[35]Peterson, *Biographical Study*, p. 177.

[36]Maria Victoria Triviño, O.S.C., "El Compartir Esponsal de la Pobreza de Clara de Asis," *Selecciones de Franciscanismo*, Vol. VIII (1979): 393, 399, 414-415. I am grateful to Rev. Joseph Chinnici, O.F.M., for bringing this article to my attention, and to Brother Brian Belanger, O.F.M., for translating the article for me. I have discussed Clare's understanding of religious dress more fully in a paper presented at a meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Denver, 2001.

[37]Commentators have speculated that Clare was concerned to encourage Agnes who might have become discouraged by the hardships of the life of poverty. Clare's letters could bear that interpretation, especially the second letter which suggests that Agnes rely on advice from Elias of Cortona, at that time minister general of the friars. Other evidence, however, indicates that Agnes was actively engaged as mediator between the papacy and her brother Wenceslas, arguing to her brother that he support the pope in his conflicts with Frederick II. The price of her alliance was papal support for Agnes's program at Prague: divestiture of the endowment connected with the hospice, acknowledgment of the friars' responsibility to act as chaplains for the sisters, and authorization for fasts. Agnes does not seem to have been uncertain or reluctant in her constant efforts to secure the "privilege of poverty." Joan Mueller, "Agnes' Contribution to the Acceptance of Clare's Rule," International Congress for Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI, May 2002.

[38]Laurent Gallant, O.F.M. and André Cirino, eds., *The Geste of the Great King: Office of the Passion of Francis of Assisi* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2001).

[39]Mueller, p. 107-49, esp. 120-122, and 134-137. Clare uses the Office, but also the full *Legenda* which she assumes Agnes will recognize, p. 144.

[40]Mueller, p. 91.

[41]Mueller, p. 263, p. 141.

[42]"The Bestiary of Christ," in *Dictionnaire d'archeologie chretienne et de liturgie*, vol. I (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1913), col. 877-878.

[43]Mary Meany, "The *Meditaciones vite Christi* as a Franciscan Text," paper given at theThirty-seventh International Medieval Congress, Kalamazoo, Michigan in May, 2001.

[44]See Armstrong, *Letter IV*, p. 47; Mueller *Letter IV*, p. 91; see p. 90 for the Latin.

[45]Laurent Gallant, and Andre Cirino, ed., *The Geste of the Great King: Office of the Passion of Francis of Assisi* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2001), p 194.

[46]Margaret Carney, presentation at the 36th International Congress of Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI, May, 2001. Sr. Carney cites in particular *Legenda*, 30-32. See *Greyfriars Review*, 1993.

[47]Laurent Gallant, *Dominus Regnavit a Ligno: L' "Officium Passionis" de saint Francois d'Assise*, as in note 20.

[48]*Geste*, repeated at the beginning of each Hour.

[49]See Mueller, n. 4, p. 100: "In this letter, Clare refers to Agnes as Queen or Spouse of Christ or of the king seven times, *4Lag*, 1, 4, 7, 8, 15, 17, 27.

Continually cleave to God who is our possession of eternal value.

St. Bonaventure to the Clares of Assisi

The Cord, 53.4 (2003)

The Extent, Effects, and Symbolisms of Enclosure at San Damiano, 1212-1253

Kerr Houston

The subject of enclosure at San Damiano has inspired a relatively extensive literature, but studies on the subject have tended to focus on legislative policies and norms, instead of the concrete meanings, for the sisters, and the symbolic meanings, within medieval Italian culture, of these policies.[1] Two recent articles by Caroline Bruzelius thus mark an important contribution to the field, as she relates early Clarissan sisters' limited visual access to the liturgy to contemporary interest in the elevation of the host, and to a broader medieval prioritization of the unseen over the seen.[2] And yet, her focus on the fourteenth century means that her comments on San Damiano are brief, and her emphasis on the Mass renders her conclusions necessarily partial; after all, the Divine Office was more common than the Mass within the sisters' routine, and sermons and meditation were also usual in early Clarissan houses. In short, then, an evaluation of the contours, and of the consequences, of enclosure among the first Franciscan sisters remains a *desideratum*.

What follows is an attempt at just such a discussion, rooted in comments about the first Clarissan house: San Damiano in Assisi. Although heavily altered, San Damiano still stands, and a number of extant documents–early legislation, canonization hearings, and contemporary Franciscan writings–can be used to reconstruct the limits of, and attitudes towards, enclosure in the convent. Generally, then, the sisters seem to have practiced, by 1219, a conservative brand of active enclosure that restricted them to the monastery and denied them any view of the adjacent church. And yet, the boundary between convent and outside world was apparently not absolute; several early sources indicate that friars and the severely ill occasionally entered the monastery, implying a flexible, or pragmatic, attitude towards passive enclosure. Furthermore, San Damiano seems to have hosted a lively, dynamic oral culture, as sisters could listen to sermons delivered in the convent church–or, less commonly, listen as Clare spoke to laity gathered on the other side of the wall between monastery and church. In fact, it is also clear that the opaque divi-

sions between convent and church did not obviate a lively visual culture in the convent; denied a view of the liturgy in the church, the sisters could nevertheless view a refined pyx that housed the consecrated host, within enclosure. Ultimately, however, such devotion seems to have been tempered by an emerging Franciscan emphasis on the unseen: an emphasis that offered, in turn, a powerful justification of the enclosure practiced by the Damianites, who became, in their very isolation, emblems of a discrete sanctity rather than victims of perceived deprivation.

San Damiano is a difficult structure. Lying among olive groves on the slope of Monte Subasio, the convent is a modest and yet complicated complex, due to a series of changes in form and function. Built on the remains of monastic structures that likely date from the seventh century, the complex originally housed a Benedictine farming community, and later served as a small parish church. In roughly 1206, the church was modified by Francis, who shouted to a group of nearby peasants, in French, to "Come and help me in the work [of building] the monastery of San Damiano, because ladies will again dwell here who will glorify our heavenly Father throughout His holy, universal Church by their celebrated and holy manner of life" (Test Cl 13-4).[3] Those ladies arrived in 1211 or 1212, when Clare and then her sister Agnes were led to San Damiano after being tonsured. Clare and Agnes were soon joined by other women, and the community of sisters remained at San Damiano for nearly half a century, finally ceding the complex to local friars after the completion of Santa Chiara. To this day, the structure, though damaged by the earthquake of 1997, houses a small group of Franciscan friars.

This complicated history renders an attempt at an exact reconstruction of practices in the convent thorny, and architectural historians have differed in their treatments of the convent's exact morphology.[4] It does seem likely, however, that Francis made significant changes to the complex in readying it for female usage, and a combination of pragmatism and archaeological evidence suggests that the dormitory, located directly above the nave of the church, was one of the first additions. The room would have answered one of the new community's most pressing needs, and the generous application of mortar in the elevation of the western wall seems to point to a quick campaign, or to the hand of an amateur mason. Further early additions included an oratory, built above the eastern end of the church and connected to the dormitory by a door, and the sisters' choir, which stands on ground level and abuts the apse of the church. The dormitory and the oratory still survive, largely unchanged, but the choir has apparently undergone severe alterations; originally, it probably wrapped around the entire eastern end of the church, and communicated with the apse through an opening in the wall.[5] This opening still exists, but has been dated variously, and in any case now corresponds to a portion of the monastery used by the friars, rather than to the diminished choir. Such changes,

accompanied by persistent frictions between posited chronologies, temper the usefulness of the extant structure as a piece of evidence regarding the precise extent of enclosure at San Damiano.

Early written sources are somewhat more helpful, but still far from conclusive. The convent seems to have operated without a proper rule until 1215, instead following, at least as far as was feasible, the same precepts as the friars. Indeed, it may be true, as John Moorman has suggested, that Clare did not originally intend to practice strict claustration. The Franciscan ideal, after all, necessitated travel, and Clare may have left San Damiano to perform acts of charity in the earliest years of the house.[6] Two early anecdotes seem to support such a possibility. Franciscan historians have long read the saint's stated intentions to travel to Morocco in 1219, after the martyrdom of several friars, as evidence that the saint did not consider herself bound to the convent, and the account of Clare and Francis sharing a dinner at the Portiuncola would seem to offer evidence in the same direction. Furthermore, Francis wrote a formal rule for the sisters in 1215, and although the document, like the first rule of the friars, has long since been lost, the few portions known through oblique references in other documents certainly do not advance a strict policy regarding enclosure.[7] Finally, Clare's own rule of 1253, which may well reflect practice at San Damiano, includes a passage that permits sisters to travel outside the monastery in the event of "a useful, reasonable, evident, and approved purpose" (RCl 2:12).[8] None of these sources obviates the possibility of a rigid brand of enclosure, but they do leave open the possibility that enclosure, in the early years of the convent, was not considered absolute.

Such claims, though, should be fully contextualized before they are taken too far. If anything, the fact that Clare never did travel to Africa may be as important as, or even more so, than the fact that she even considered the voyage. Celano, in his life of Clare, claims that she never left the convent, and at least one of the sisters interviewed in Clare's canonization proceedings supported his contention: a Sister Cecilia stated that she did not know anyone cured by the saint, apparently because she had always been enclosed in the monastery (ActsPC 6:9). The legend of the dinner, likewise, dates from a relatively late source, and in any case refers to a unique event, rather than a typical occurrence. Finally, and perhaps more importantly, strict active enclosure had become a rather explicit focus in 1219, with the introduction of Cardinal Ugolino's rule. Written for the Damianites, the cardinal's rule was intended to supplement the Benedictine form. As a result, Ugolino's additions to the ancient rule would seem to represent especially pressing concerns (at least in his view). And these concerns clearly included a strict degree of enclosure, as Ugolino stated that the sisters were not to be granted "any permission or faculty to leave, unless perhaps some are transferred to another place" (RCH 4).

Even Ugolino's rule, however, did not explicitly bar the sisters from entering the convent church; it prescribed a material separation from the world and the laity, but refers generically to enclosure, rather than to specific portions of the complex. This silence regarding the precise extent of enclosure, is frustrating in relation to San Damiano, where the church might fairly be viewed as part of the monastery, or, equally validly, as a purely public space that lay beyond the bounds of enclosure. Of course, Ugolino's silence regarding the church might well be read as indicating a common consensus; perhaps the cardinal assumed that the boundaries of the monastery were quite clear, and thus did not need to be spelled out. If this were indeed the case, then it seems likely that he thought of the church as beyond the boundaries of enclosure, for several earlier medieval policies, remote in point of origin but broadly influential and probably known to Ugolino, had already equated enclosure with the monastery buildings but not the adjacent church. In the *Regula ad virgines*, for example, written in 513 by Caesarius of Arles for his sister, the church stands outside the realm of permitted motion: "If a girl leaving her parents desires to renounce the world and enter the holy fold to escape the jaws of the spiritual wolves by the help of God, she must never, up to the time of her death, go out of the monastery, nor into the basilica where there is a door." Along the same lines, the Capitulary of Theodulf, an important document of Carolingian reform, notes that the faithful are to come to the church to hear the mass and the sermon, with the sole exception of the enclosed female religious, who are not to circulate in public, but rather to remain within the monastery.[9] In both of these early cases, which seem to be typical in their assumptions, the enclosed sisters are denied all use of the church, and Ugolino's notion of strict enclosure may well have relied upon a similar premise, restricting the sisters to their choir and living quarters.[10]

If the sisters at San Damiano did not leave their convent, though, was access to their convent denied to outsiders? Early accounts suggest, in fact, that the boundaries between the convent and the outside world were occasionally permeable. Although Clare's well-known thaumaturgic work seems not to have carried her outside the house, and thus did not involve a violation of active enclosure, it did require a rather flexible interpretation of passive enclosure, as Celano describes a stream of unhealthy pilgrims who made their way to, and occasionally also into, San Damiano. One particularly intriguing anecdote involves a friar Stephen, who had gone mad and was thus sent to Clare in the apparent hope that she could cure him. Clare, indeed, made the sign of the cross over him, and then, according to Celano, "she let him sleep a little in the place where she herself usually prayed" (LCl 32). Although vague, Celano is probably referring to the oratory, or possibly to the saint's own cell. And while the seriousness of the friar's illness might explain the obvious violation of enclosure, the presence of a friar within the boundaries of enclosure

does not seem to have been completely exceptional; Celano also notes that at least two friars stood by her bed as Clare died (LCl 45). Finally, he also offers a striking description in his second life of Francis of an appearance before the sisters by Francis; after being asked to preach to the sisters, Francis instead remained temporarily mute, raising his eyes to heaven, and then sprinkling ashes upon his head. This was clearly witnessed by the sisters, and–assuming, again, that they were not in the church–likely took place in the monastery proper, with Francis thus within the boundaries of enclosure (3C 207).[11]

Even a relatively flexible interpretation of the sisters' enclosure, however, cannot deny the fact that visual relations between the church and the convent were extensively regulated. Cloistered in their convent, the sisters may have greeted, in exceptional circumstances, the sick, but conservative architectural design and applied policy meant that the sisters were not only unable to move freely into the church, but were also denied any clear view of the world beyond their convent walls. At San Damiano, the small opening in the wall that stood between the sisters' choir and the apse represented an important site of potential interaction between the sisters and the world beyond the monastery. But the size of the window and the disposition of the choir may have limited this contact. In her first treatment of the choir, Bruzelius stressed the position of the three banks of oaken choir stalls, which line the southern end of the choir. From such a position, the sisters could not have viewed the celebration of the mass in the adjacent church; the low angle between the stalls and the opening, and the distance between the seated sisters and the apse would have rendered the priest's gestures invisible to the enclosed sisters.[12]

Such an argument is not entirely convincing. The stalls, after all, may well have been moved in the reconfiguration of the choir; again, the original layout of the choir, and the relationship between choir and apse, have been modified, rendering conclusions regarding viewing angles suspect. Furthermore, the sisters were not bound to their stalls, even during the Mass. In fact, Celano, in his life of Clare, indicates that the saint, when receiving the consecrated host, left her seat:

> When receiving the Body of the Lord, however, she at first shed burning tears and, approaching with trembling, she feared [Him who was] hiding in the Sacrament no less than [Him who was] ruling heaven and earth. (LCl 28).

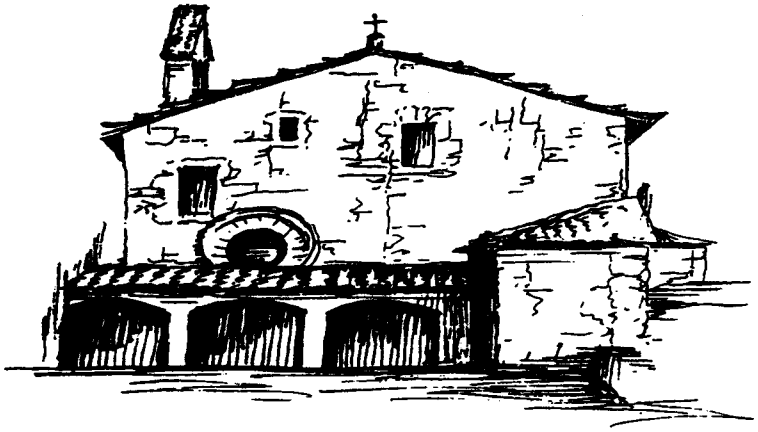
Even if the sisters did approach the opening, however, it is unlikely that they could have witnessed much of the church beyond. The small window was furnished with an iron grille that survives as part of a collection of early Franciscan objects in Santa Chiara, and which features an imposing design and conservative apertures that seem designed to frustrate any communica-

tion between the church and the choirstalls.[13] Likewise, as Bruzelius has noted, the relevant legislative passages are explicit regarding the subject of visual relations between choir and church. In his rule of 1219, Ugolino stipulated that conversations should be conducted through the grille only "for a reasonable cause or when necessity demands it." Furthermore, he insisted that "cloth should be placed on the inside of these iron grilles in such a way that no sister is able to see anything in the chapel outside." Finally, the grille was to feature wooden doors with iron bars, which could be closed except when approved sermons were delivered in the adjacent church (RCH 12). Clare, in turn, would accept these standards in composing her own rule in 1253, writing that a curtain was to "be hung inside the grille which may not be removed except when the Word of God is preached or when a sister is speaking with someone" (RCl 5:10).

How strictly was this followed? Interestingly, early sources do mention one moment in which the curtain and the grille were apparently removed. In his 1229 description of the funeral procession of Francis, Celano describes the stop made at San Damiano:

> When . . . they came to the place where he himself had planted the religion and order of poor ladies and holy virgins, they placed him in the church of San Damiano. They paused there, and the little window–through which the servants of Christ were accustomed to receive the sacrament of the Body of the Lord at the appointed time–was opened. So, divided between sorrow and joy, [the sisters] kissed his most radiant hands, adorned with the most precious gems and shining pearls. (1C 116).

Nearly twenty years later, a testimony sent in response to a call for further materials on the life of Francis (the so-called Assisi compilation of 1246) included a similar, but slightly different, description of the scene:



> The iron grating through which God's servants used to communicate and at times hear the word of God was removed. The brothers took the holy body from its bed and, for a good hour, held it at the window in their arms. Meanwhile the Lady Clare and her sisters received the greatest consolation from him... (AC 109).

The two accounts, although they differ in their exact terminology, agree that a window, presumably the one between church and choir, was opened in order to facilitate greater access to the body of Francis; the shared implication, of course, is that the window, or grate, in its normal position would not have allowed a similar degree of access. In short, then, it seems safe to conclude that even if the sisters neared the grate, the small size and narrow gauge of the grille must have resulted in a fragmented view of the world beyond. And this severely limited access did not only apply during liturgical moments; rather, it was a constant that regularly delimited the experiences of the sisters. Modified at an understandably unique moment in Franciscan history, the opening between convent and church was, at less exceptional moments, apparently a solid barrier.

But this broad claim can be refined. For instance, the Assisi compilation states that the sisters heard the word of God through the grated opening. This parallels the wording of Clare's rule of 1253, which stipulated, as noted above, that the curtain hung inside the grille was only to be removed "when the Word of God is preached or when a sister is speaking with someone" (RCl 10). Bruzelius assumed that Clare, in referring to the word of God, meant the Mass, but it seems more likely that she was referring to the sermons that often took place at San Damiano.[14] Clare's fondness for sermons is well documented; Celano, in fact, gave a chapter of his life of Clare to a description of her "eager desire to hear the word of holy preaching," and notes that she made sure that, through preachers, the sisters received "the nourishment of the Word of God" (LCl 37). Thus, when Gregory forbade friars to visit San Damiano without his permission, Clare protested by citing reduced opportunities to listen to the friars speak. It seems reasonable to assume that some of these sermons were delivered in the church, rather than the convent; in turn, it would seem that the grated openings did not, in fact, preclude the passage of spoken words. Even more interestingly, such passage was not necessarily unidirectional. San Damiano, even after the arrival of the sisters, continued to serve as a parish church, and it seems clear that Clare, at least at times, spoke to the uncloistered laity. In Clare's canonization hearings, Cecilia stated that she had professed partly due of the exhortations of Clare, and another nun, named Filippa, claimed that Clare had spoken regarding the Passion (ActsPC 6:1 and 3:1). The spoken word, then, could create a measure of shared experience in a realm in

which the two primary populations were separated by walls and irreconcilable visual experiences.[15]

But were the visual experiences of sisters and laity in fact completely divergent? In this vein, it is important to note that the sisters were hardly unique, in early thirteenth-century Italy, in finding their view of the church or the altar obstructed. Bruzelius, in fact, wondered if the mass, in the thirteenth century, might not have been intended primarily for the clergy; her question is a good one, and one that can be answered, in some cases, relatively specifically.[16] Admittedly, this is tricky terrain due to the loss of much relevant physical evidence, but it seems true that lay access to the eastern ends of churches was commonly limited by concrete physical barriers. A long tradition of veils and shrouds, with its origins in early Judaic practice, continued to influence medieval practice, and the altar was often framed by curtains hung from rods, and by a backing reredos, thus hiding the altar from lay view, at least at times.[17] Other thirteenth-century churches were divided by sizable screens that stood between the nave, or the congregation, and the altar end of the church. The best evidence for such screens, interestingly, stems from mendicant churches: stone barriers once straddled the naves of Santa Croce and Santa Maria Novella in Florence, and it is now clear that the nave of the lower basilica of San Francesco in Assisi was also divided by such a screen.[18] As the thirteenth-century symbolist William Durandus implies, such screens may have represented an alternative to the veils, but both achieved a similar end: "*interponatur velum aut murus inter clerum et populum.*"[19]

This division between laity and clergy was often echoed, in turn, in gendered divisions. The famed fresco, in San Francesco, of the mass at Greccio is too often treated as a transparent document of medieval practice, but it seems basically reliable in its placement of the women beyond a firm screen. Thus Durandus notes that men usually occupied the southern side of the nave, which was associated with temptation, but adds that some thinkers insist that the men should stand to the east of the women.[20] This latter arrangement, documented in medieval miniatures, relegated women to the western end of the church, leaving them to follow the liturgy from a distance by peering over the heads of men, if not through even more imposing barriers. Practice at tiny San Damiano, where there is no hard evidence of a screen, or even veils, may not have been as rigid, but the point stands: the visual divide between church and convent at San Damiano was rooted in, or related to, broader *duecento* divisions.

Interestingly, such divisions may help to explain certain patterns of thirteenth-century devotion, as they seem to have intensified, rather than frustrated, lay and convent interest in the eucharist.[21] Thus, it is possible that the gesture of elevation (which likely originated in the 1100s, but was only institutionalized in the *Indutus planeta*, dated variously between 1243 and 1260) may

have stemmed from a desire to render a portion of the largely unseen mass visible to the laity.[22] And in this regard, too, practice in the convent of San Damiano seems to have echoed lay behavior. Within the bounds of enclosure, the sisters enjoyed clear access to a pyx that contained the consecrated host and was kept in a niche to the left of the oratory apse. Celano describes the pyx in his account of the arrival of the Saracens; he writes that Clare appeared before them, carrying a silver pyx "enclosed in ivory in which the Body of the Holy of Holies was most devotedly reserved" (LCl 21). Although built around an exceptional event, Celano's summary points to a developed cult of the eucharist–and, one might argue, to a developed visual culture–within the walls of the convent. Walls did not frustrate, in short, an interest in seeing.

Quite probably, however, the host within the pyx was likely not visible.[23] And this, in turn, points to an important tendency in early Franciscan thought, which often devalued the plainly visible in favor of direct experience and private meditations. In his introduction to Clare's breviary, Leo wrote that Francis had once stated, "When I do not hear Mass I adore the Body of Christ in mental prayer; and I worship just as much as when I see it at Mass."[24] The mind's eye thus seems to be the equal of the eye physical. And neither, according to Alexander of Hales, a Franciscan writing in the 1240s, necessarily paralleled direct experience; upset by lay emphasis upon the elevation of the host, Alexander denied that viewing the host could replace sacramental communion.[25] Related to claims that images were useful to those who could not understand the written word (as in Gregory the Great's famous formulation), or to children (as in Giovanni Dominici's later comments), this Franciscan emphasis on meditation regarding, or on direct experience of, the body of Christ, paralleled a Roman emphasis on the actual reception of the host.[26]

Viewed in this context, the experiences of the enclosed sisters of San Damiano suddenly seem to imply a level of perceived privilege, or sanctity, rather than rote deprivation. Although their visual access to the mass may have been blocked, they often communed more often than the local laity–Clare's rule, in fact, prescribed twelve annual communions, where many laypeople received the host only once a year–and were able to follow scripture closely, through sermons and private study. At the same time, however, the very separation of the sisters seems to have been commonly read as a sign of their spirituality. The sacred was often, as Richard Trexler has argued, that which was set apart, and sisters, through isolation and virginal activism, could render a naturally profane space "attitudinally sacred."[27] Such an attitude can be found in medieval characterizations of the cloister as a paradise, and in the claims, in the slightly later canonization hearings of Clare of Montefalco, that a refusal to be seen by and to see the outside world was a sign of sanctity. Remoteness could act as a proof, it would seem, of piety, and the sisters of San Damiano were thus **improved**, rather than deprived, by their isolation.

Practice at San Damiano, an ancient, inherited structure occupied by Clare for several years before the Lateran Council established in 1215 norms of enclosure, was perhaps inevitably unique. Governed by the Benedictine Rule and a series of *addenda* issued by Cardinal Ugolino, the convent seems to have hosted an evolving set of attitudes towards enclosure–a set of attitudes that was rooted in traditional ideas but also influenced by Clare, a woman familiar with the real needs and contingencies of life in a monastery. But this very process of evolution may help to explain the broad applicability and influence of Damianite policy, inextricably related to contemporary attitudes about access to the sacred and characterized as it was by an interest in both Franciscan tradition and local necessity. Attitudes towards enclosure at San Damiano were both responsibly orthodox and understandably relevant. As a result, when Clare was given in 1253 the rare chance to forge her own legislation, she made no broad changes to the policies that had governed life at San Damiano. And so ideals that had evolved at San Damiano–a strict active enclosure, buttressed by concrete visual partitions and softened by a love of the word of God and an understanding application of passive enclosure–came to shape one of the most influential orders in late medieval Europe.

Endnotes

[1]The speculative literature regarding the degree of enclosure at San Damiano is often very interesting; see John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order from its Origins to the Year 1517* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 38, for a summary of early opinions. Two other works also deserve mention in this regard: S. Mary Angelina Filipiak, "The Plans of the Poor Clares' Convents in Central Italy from the 13th through the 15th Century," (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan, 1957); and Chiara Lainati, "The Enclosure of St. Clare and of the First Poor Clares in Canonical Legislation and in Practice," *The Cord* 28 (Jan.-Feb.,1978): 4-15 and 47-60.

[2]Caroline Bruzelius, "Hearing is Believing: Clarissan Architecture, ca. 1213-1340," *Gesta* 24, no. 2 (1992): 83-91; and "Sisters in Space: Strict Enclosure and the Architecture of the Clarisses in the Thirteenth Century," in Ingrid Peterson, ed., *Clare of Assisi: A Medieval and Modern Woman*, Clare Centenary Studies, VIII (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1996), pp. 53-74.

[3]All quotes from Clarissan sources are from Regis Armstrong, ed., *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1988). For a quick overview of the pre-Franciscan history of the complex, see Anita Volland, "Thirteenth-Century Poverty and the Life of the First Poor Clares," in *Clare of Assisi: A Medieval and Modern Woman* Clare Centenary Series, VIII (Saint Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1996), 35.

[4]See Antonio Cristofani, *Storia della chiesa e chiostro di S. Damiano* (Perugia: Santucci, 1876); Leone Bracaloni, *Storia di San Damiano in Assisi* (Tipografia Tudertino, 1926); Angiola Maria Romanini, "Il Francescanesimo nell'arte: l'architettura delle origini," in I. Baldelli and A.M. Romanini, eds., *Francesco, il Francescanesimo e la cultura delle nuova Europa* (Rome and Florence: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1986): 181-192; and Marino Bigaroni, "S. Damiano, Assisi," *Franciscan Studies* 47 (1987): 45-97.

[5]Bracaloni, 62, notes that the current disposition of the choir must date to after 1504, and agrees that it once stretched behind the apse. The position and appearance of the earliest sisters' choir is uncertain, but Bruzelius, in "Hearing Is . . ." 84, suggests that it may at first have been located in the easternmost of the three rooms that stand to the south of the original nave, and which seem to predate Franciscan intervention.

[6]Moorman, 36. Similarly, Bruzelius, in "Sisters in Space," 73-74, n. 6 writes, "If Clare had wished for strict claustration, there were many such convents near Assisi she could have chosen to join instead." Such an assertion, though, while true enough, overlooks her ties to Francis.

[7]See Moorman, 34-35, for portions of the text that can be reconstructed through one of Clare's letters to Agnes of Bohemia. Of slightly less direct relevance here is the reference, by Jacques de Vitry, to the "Lesser Sisters" of Umbria. Jacques mentions the evangelical work done by the sisters, and explicitly states that the women traveled into cities and villages by day, and then retired to their hermitages at night.

[8]Clare's insistence on the privilege of poverty was, of course, difficult to reconcile with a policy of strict enclosure; without institutional finances, the sisters were forced to beg, or to rely upon someone who could beg for them. They soon did the latter.

[9]Jane Tibbetts Schulenberg, "Strict Active Enclosure and its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience," in J. Nichols and L. Shank, eds., *Medieval Religious Women*, Vol. 1: *Distant Echoes* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publication,1984), p. 54.

[10]Admittedly, the degree to which Ugolino's legislation was actually followed at San Damiano is far from clear, and modern historians have occasionally questioned the local relevance of the cardinal's rule. But Clare's later rule, of 1253, although it employs a slightly qualified language, does indicate that the saint accepted Ugolino's standards. See too Lainati, pp. 4-5, who cites the reference to enclosure in Cardinal Rainaldo's letter of introduction to Clare's rule as evidence that the saint had accepted Ugolino's standards.

[11]Marion Habig, ed., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), p. 527: "But when the sisters had come together, according to their custom, to hear the word of God, though no less also to see their father, Francis raised his eyes to heaven, where his heart always was, and began to pray to Christ. He then commanded ashes to be brought to him...."

[12]Bruzelius "Hearing Is," p. 83.

[13]See here Filipiak, 100, who, like Bruzelius, argues that the sisters were "deprived of any visual assistance" during the Mass, but stresses the form of the grille rather than the location of the choir stalls.

[14]Bruzelius, "Sisters in Space," p. 61, seems to assume that Clare's reference to the Word of God being preached is meant to indicate Mass, rather than a sermon. Ugolino's earlier reference to preachers who had been approved, however, implies that Clare probably meant to refer to sermons.

[15]It seems possible that the fabric of San Damiano was modified, in certain ways, to accommodate the spoken word and facilitate verbal communication between otherwise separate spaces. A small aperture in the vault of the nave, now used as a light fixture, originally opened onto the floor of the oratory above, apparently allowing events in the church to be heard, if not seen, in the upper chambers of the convent; see Filipiak, 101. Similarly, a second, larger window cut into the right side of the nave vault opens onto the small garden above the cemetery.

[16]See Bruzelius, "Hearing Is," n. 41.

[17]On the use of veils in synagogues and the early Christian church, see Frederick Bligh, and Bede Camm, *Roodscreens and Roodlofts*, Vol. 1 (London, 1909), 4ff. With

time, veils appear to have been replaced by screens and rails, but surviving images suggest that the use of curtains was widespread through the fourteenth century.

[18]Marcia Hall, "The Tramezzo in Santa Croce, Florence, Reconsidered," *The Art Bulletin* 56, no. 3 (Sept. 1974): 325-340, and "The Italian Rood Screen: Some Implications for Liturgy and Function," in S. Bertelli and G. Ramakus, eds., *Essays Presented to Myron Gilmore*, Vol. 2 (Florence, 1978): 213-18. On Assisi, see Irene Hueck, "Der Lettner der Unterkirche von San Francesco in Assisi," *Mitteilungen der Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 28 (1984): 173-202.

[19]Quoted in Francis Bond, *Screens and Galleries in English Churches* (New York, 1908), 9.

[20]A. Davril and T.M. Thibodeau, eds., *Guillelmi Duranti Rationale Divinorum Officiorum I-IV* (Brepols, 1995: Corpus Christianorum CXL), 27: "Secundum alios uero uiri in parte anteriori, mulieres in posteriori parte manent, quia uir caput est mulieres ideoque dux eius." The barrier at Santa Croce may also have separated men from women; see Hall 1974, 339, for a documentary reference to a door at the center of the screen erected in the basilica, which was said to divide "the place of the men from the place of the women."

[21]See, for example, Caroline Walker Bynum *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 59: "The more church architecture, liturgical practice, and priestly power contrived to make the elements seem distant, the more some people luxuriated in them in private, ecstatic experiences."

[22]The history of the gesture has been traced several times, with different results. See especially Edouard Dumoutet, *Le désir de voir l'hostie et les origines de la dévotion au Saint-Sacrament* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1926), and Hall 1978, n. 10, 218.

[23]G.J.C. Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist: A Process of Mutual Interaction*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 63 (New York: Brill, 1995), p. 288, notes that reliquaries included peep-holes as early as 1215, but that the eucharist was generally stored in closed containers until roughly 1300.

[24]Habig, 1874.

[25]Dumoutet, 19ff.

[26]For further comments of a general late medieval interest in moving beyond images, and sight, in worship, see Jeffrey Hamburger, "The Visual and the Visionary: The Image in Late Medieval Monastic Devotions," *Viator* 20 (1989): 161-82.

[27]Richard Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 53ff.

Practice at San Damiano, an ancient, inherited structure occupied by Clare several years before the Lateran Council established, in 1215, norms of enclosure, was perhaps inevitably unique. . . . [T]he convent seems to have hosted an evolving set of attitudes towards enclosure–a set of attitudes that was rooted in traditional ideas, but also influenced by Clare, a woman familiar with the real needs and contingencies of life in a monastery.

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Francis, Clare and Family

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Introduction

In the post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa* (EA), Pope John Paul II summarized the discussion about the African church using the image of the family. He wrote:

> The Synod Fathers acknowledge the image of the Church as God's Family as an expression of the Church's nature particularly appropriate for Africa. For this image emphasises care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships acceptance, dialogue and trust. The new evangelisation will aim at *building up the Church as Family*, avoiding all ethnocentrism, and excessive particularism, trying instead to encourage reconciliation and true communion between ethnic groups, favouring solidarity and sharing of personnel and resources among particular Churches without undue ethnic considerations (EA 63).

Anyone who is aware of the ethnic, political and economic strife on the continent of Africa would agree that this is a visionary and prophetic challenge for the church in Africa. The bishops gathered for the synod on Africa recognized that the concept of family is an important one for building a sense of identity, solidarity and belonging among the people of Africa. I would add that this concept is an important one for the whole church because of the rampant individualism which is dominating life in almost every country and because it is what we are intended to be by reason of our baptism: the family of God.

My task in this essay is to reflect on Francis's and Clare's understanding of family. I want to do this with that text from *EA* in mind because the evangelisation which the synod mandated is urgent and it is the task of each of us who bears the names Christian and Franciscan. I have organised my reflection in terms of three points and hopefully, at the end of the essay, you will be per-

suaded that we, as Franciscans, have a unique opportunity to give witness to our charism by being "examples and mirrors" (TestCl 6) to the church and the world of what it means to live as a Franciscan family.

The Families of Francis and Clare

Clare and Francis were members of two very prominent families in Assisi. Unfortunately, their families did not share the same loyalties and so were rivals in shaping the society in which they grew up. Though Francis's family was part of the *nouveau riche* merchant class and Clare's family belonged to the Assisian aristocracy, their families endowed each of them with a strong spirit of commitment and idealism which served them well throughout their lives. But what do we know of the concrete circumstances of their families? Contemporary research has enabled us to piece together some important data by which we can get a sense of the values that shaped their respective families in spite of the fact that we do not have much historical evidence of their lineage.

The Bernardone Household

Though surnames as we know them today were not used until the end of the thirteenth century, we are able to trace at least some of Francis's family tree through his paternal relatives. The names *Pietro* and *Bernardo* seem to have been favorites in the Bernardone clan. Besides Pietro Bernardone, Francis's grandfather had two other sons, Angelo and Benencasa. We know nothing of these two uncles of Francis except that Benencasa's name appears as a witness on some legal documents in the archives of Assisi.[1] Pietro seems to have been the only one of the brothers who married. He had two sons, Giovanni (Francesco) and Angelo. We know the course which Francis's life took, and Angelo seems to have followed in Pietro's footsteps and assumed responsibility for the family business.

As for Pica, Francis's mother, we know far less. What we do know is that she was most probably named Giovanna, and Pica was a nickname given to her by Pietro as a sign of his affection not for her, but because the land of Picardy was the area in which Pietro had been able to make a sizeable fortune. Pica seems to have been a woman of considerable grace and charm which has led some authors to conclude that she came from a family that belonged to the ranks of French gentry. Fortini believed that Pica was "pious and fully attuned to the things of God" as well as "gentle and fragile."[2] Joan Mueller, commenting on the relationship between Pietro, Pica, and their eldest son made this point:

> Most ascribed Francis's innate charm and gentility to his mother, the refined and pious Pica. It was true that he had her delicate features, beautiful dark eyes, and radiant smile. Not that Pica Bernardone had many occasions to smile. Both mother and son were frequent victims of Pietro Bernardone's volcanic anger–Francis because he did so well at play and so poorly at work, and his mother because she attempted to defend him.[3]

Beyond this speculation about the personalities of Pietro and Pica, we have no firm evidence about their lives. The only other thing that we know from historical records is that Francis's brother Angelo had two sons, Giovanetto and Piccardo. It seems that Giovanetto was a devout Christian and served as a procurator for the friars at the Sacro Convento. Piccardo married a woman named Bonagrazia and had two children, a boy and a girl.[4] Nothing more is said in the early documents and historical records of the archives of Assisi about the family.

Whatever can be said about Francis's family, it seems that he did not have the acquisitive character of his father. Francis's first biographer, Thomas of Celano, trying to demonstrate Francis's need for conversion, described Francis not in terms of rapaciousness, but as a squanderer of money:

> He was an object of admiration to all, and he endeavoured to surpass others in his flamboyant display of vain accomplishments: wit, curiosity, practical jokes and foolish talk, songs, and soft and flowing garments. Since he was very rich, he was not greedy but extravagant, not a hoarder of money, but a squanderer of his property, a prudent dealer but a most unreliable steward (1C 2).

Francis's affable disposition made him likeable to many people and opened him to grace, but also angered his father. We know from the rest of Francis's story that after his conversion Francis could not identify with the values which were so ingrained in Pietro's personality and that eventually they parted under very painful circumstances. This rupture in familial relationships became the field in which the seed of a new family lineage would be sown in Francis's heart through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Offreduccio Household

Clare's family belonged to what has been called the new urbanised aristocracy of medieval Assisi.[5] They were members of the class of landed gentry and had enough money to have a home within the city walls and wealth invested in land holdings in the countryside. The gentry were an elite class of about twenty families who managed to keep their lands and titles with the help of the Perugians.

Clare's father, Favarone, came from a family of knights. Marco Bartoli contends that he was the second oldest of the Offreduccio sons; Monaldo was

the eldest and therefore head of the family when Clare was born.[6] There were seven brothers in all and each of them had their own homes and estates. It was a tightly-knit family which was organised along the line of male descendants. Fortini maintained that the Offreduccio clan "surpassed all others in power and wealth, courage, prudence and wisdom."[7]

Clare's mother was also a woman of some status as can be seen by her exploits:

> Ortolana was far from being a woman of no importance. She had herself come from an aristocratic family and been given in marriage to Favarone, a member of one of the most important families of Assisi. In addition to this, she was well travelled. She had been to Rome, to St. James at Compostella, to St. Michael at Monte Gargano, and finally to the Holy Land.[8]

This text confirms Clare's social status as a member of an aristocratic family, but her father passes out of the story of the family and it is her uncle Monaldo who exerted authority over and took responsibility for her family. Despite the patriarchal structure of the family and Monaldo's dominance, it was Ortolana who emerged as the strongest influence in Clare's early development. Clare's first biographer noted that:

> From the mouth of her mother she (Clare) first received with a docile heart the fundamentals of the faith and, with the Spirit inflaming and molding her interiorly, she became known as a most pure vessel, a vessel of graces (LegCl 2).

The same author noted that Ortolana devoted herself to divine worship and to works of piety (LegCl 1). Though Bartoli, commenting on the *Legenda*, noted that "the link between holiness and nobility of blood" is a constant theme in medieval hagiography, I think that something more is being expressed, namely, that holiness has to do with nobility of spirit and generous self-giving, especially to those in need.[9] Clare's first "mirror" was her mother from whom she learned not only how to maintain an organised household and the virtues expected of aristocratic women, but the ways of the Spirit and the grace that comes to one who is serious about "putting on Christ." Ortolana was a woman who was aware of the religious renewal taking place in thirteenth century Christendom. She imbibed the spiritual energy of the age with enthusiasm and devotion and conveyed to Clare through her personal dedication Christ, her serious concern about spiritual growth and her generosity to poor people. In this way she prepared the ground in which the little plant of Francis could take root.

Aside from the facts that we can obtain from historical records about the Offreduccio family, we know that Clare had two sisters, Catherine and Beatrice.

In less than three weeks Catherine joined Clare in her pursuit of a new way of evangelical life at Sant' Angelo in Panzo where a small group of women were leading a penitential life. Years later at San Damiano Beatrice joined her sisters as did Ortolana herself. There was a remarkable and attractive power about the community of San Damiano that drew young women from the elite of Assisian society. Like Francis these seekers of truth found that the early community did not "shirk deprivation, poverty, hard work, trial, or the shame or contempt of the world – rather they considered them as great delights" (TestCl 27-28) and so the community grew from strength to strength.

Both Clare and Francis were shaped by their biological families. The unique mix of personalities in each extended family had its effect on their lives as did the particular context in which they lived. Both families were caught up, albeit in different ways, in the power relationships that were brought to bear on life in Assisi. Francis and Clare were called to extricate themselves from that web of relationships so that their lives and their communities could witness to another kind of relationships based not on power, but on life in Christ. Their conversion stories serve to illustrate this point very well.

Clare's Conversion

Given what we know about Clare's growth and development, can we say that Clare had undergone a conversion? We can speak of Clare's conversion because she herself mentioned it twice in her *Testament*. The first instance is in sentence 8 where she expressed her conviction that God was working in her through Francis even before her conversion while she was "still living among the vanities of the world" (TestCl 8). The second reference to her conversion was made in the context of her retelling how she and the early community promised obedience to Francis and how the "Lord gave them the light of His grace through Francis's wonderful life and teaching" (TestCl 27).

So what was the nature of Clare's conversion? Donald Gelpi, a Jesuit, has outlined five types of conversion: the intellectual, personal-moral, affective, socio-political and religious.[10] These types can be helpful, I think, in taking a fresh look at Clare's conversion.

As she matured in faith she learned the real value of things and was able to "place a worthless price upon worthless things" (LegCl 4) which is a concrete indication that an **intellectual** conversion through the "wonderful life and teachings" of Francis had taken place. In light of this interpretation it becomes obvious why Clare met with Francis in the company of her friend, Bona di Guelfuccio, for over a year before fleeing from her family's home. Francis articulated for her his own religious experience and his description made immense sense to her. Clare knew through faith and reason the evangelical logic of Francis's radical understanding of what it meant "to follow in the footprints of Jesus."

The **personal-moral** dimension of conversion requires one to act on the strength of her/his convictions and to make ethical decisions about important matters in life, realising that these always have some impact on social relationships. This kind of conversion does not allow one to simply "follow the crowd." It engenders a commitment to values and respect for human rights and duties. It builds strength of character and endows the person with courage.

The fruits of this aspect of conversion are obvious when we look at Clare's life. The decisions that she made in regard to fidelity to the charism are confirmation enough of the courageous ethical stance she adopted when the friars and church leaders tried to dissuade her from her commitment to the vision which she and Francis had given birth to in their lives and communities.

The **affective** dimension of conversion is concerned with healthy intuitive perceptions of reality and for this reason can animate the other forms of conversion with warmth and feeling. It requires a person to deal with feelings that are living deep within him/herself and see how these feelings are related to conscious behaviour. Affective conversion animates other forms of conversion with a sense of imaginative freedom in which a person experiences a certain flexibility to be open to the yet unknown. It also nurtures a depth of sensitivity to beauty and goodness of life.[11]

Even a superficial reading of Clare's writings would be enough to indicate that she had experienced a conversion at the affective level of her personality. What she had learned intuitively from the example of her mother was expressed in concrete choices and behaviour by which she shaped her life. Clare's letters to Agnes of Prague are embroidered throughout with images of God's beauty and goodness which she knew through her own religious experience. In choosing poverty she opened herself to the riches of God through meditation on the beauty reflected in the face of Christ by focusing her gaze on icon of the San Damiano Cross.

Socio-political conversion de-privatizes or makes public the other forms of conversion.[12] It brings to light the social implications of the other forms of conversion. This type of conversion calls for a commitment to some cause of universal, human significance that takes place in the social order. It radicalises religious faith and endows it with a prophetic character. This form of conversion highlights the contextual dimension of faith that will not allow social realities to be obscured.

This description of the socio-political dimension became obvious in Clare's life from the night she left her family home to join Francis and the brothers at the Portiuncula. In choosing to respond to the grace of her vocation made known to her through Francis she took decisive and prophetic action. That action placed her at the margins of medieval Italian society and it spoke loudly and clearly to her contemporaries about the values that lay at the heart of the way of life she desired to live.

Gelpi describes **religious** conversion as a response to an encounter with God that affects one's experience of life. It creates a way of perceiving reality different from any other human mode of perception.[13] In the context of the Christian faith an experience of being in relationship with Jesus Christ enables us to perceive reality intuitively with our hearts. Through the interplay between the grace of conversion and faith we begin to experience the presence of God in our lives. This experience calls for some form of change in our lives; it is inescapable because we cannot be drawn closer to God without being purified. Since this process is never complete, religious conversion like all other forms of conversion is ongoing. Persons grasp the connection between the present and the "what might be" of the future and see their place in God's reign.

Clare expressed her new perception of reality over and over in her letters to Agnes of Prague. In the 1953 translation of *The First Letter to Agnes of Prague* by the late Franciscan scholar, Ignatius Brady, we find this beautiful passage:

> You know, I firmly believe, that the kingdom of heaven is promised and given by the Lord only to the poor: for he who loves the things of time loses the fruit of charity; and that one cannot serve God and mammon, for either the one is loved and the other hated, or the one is served and the other despised (Mt 6:24). (1LAg 4)

How well Clare understood the things of time! She grew up in a household where she came into daily contact with issues of status, wealth and property and in the experience of union with God all of reality had been changed for her. She began to see people, things and events through the eyes of faith. This ability to see was the fruit of charity, of Christ's transforming love. In choosing Christ as her spouse and lover nothing was the same for her ever again:

> Clare's relationship to the Second Person, the Word made flesh, was spousal: Christ was her bridegroom and she His spouse. Her relationship to the Lord was above all a relationship of spousal love, expressed through prayer, through the following of Christ and through the gift of her whole being to the One she loved. How did she arrive at this spousal love? By the contemplation of the human Christ. Her love, in

other words, was kindled by contemplating Jesus who made visible the invisible, as we read in the Christmas Preface: "In Him we see our God made visible and so are caught up in the love of the God we cannot see."[14]

Clare not only loved Christ, but was in love with Christ. This love sustained her ongoing conversion and enabled her to see not only reality in a new way, but to give birth to Christ in her life. I have spent so much time on the nature of Clare's conversion because it is less well known than Francis's, but it is now time to turn to his conversion and examine its transformative effect.

Francis's Conversion

Francis's conversion is perhaps one of the most well documented stories among the lives of the saints of the church, but we must always bear in mind the intent of the author writing the account and the purpose of medieval hagiography. Hagiography differs from what we know as modern biography because its intent is "inspired by devotion to the saints and intended to increase that devotion."[15] This is evident in each of the medieval biographies of Francis because each author was working with a common model of sainthood. Hagiographers used accepted models so that they could more easily convince their readers of the holiness of their subjects. For our purposes here we will use the *First Life of Francis* by Thomas of Celano.

The late Duane Lapsanski believed that Celano presents his readers with an account that is "clear and unprejudiced and contains a historically truthful picture of Francis."[16] Nevertheless, Lapsanski admitted that Celano intended to draw a sharp contrast "between the 'unconverted' Francis and the later 'saint' to show how mightily and effectively the grace of God worked in him."[17]

The conversion of Francis, like that of Clare, could be analysed using Gelpi's typology. Suffice it to say that Francis went through a rigorous process of conversion lasting over a period of six years from 1202 to 1208. During this period he experienced both the subtle promptings and the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit in his life.

Under the Lord's personal tutelage he underwent an **intellectual** conversion during the early stage of his conversion when he was in prison. During that time he began to reassess the values and life-style that he learned from his father and the cultural and economic context in which he lived. Francis learned to look critically at reality and to establish new criteria for making judgements and choices. This new way of evaluating reality in the ultimate truth of the Gospel gave Francis the courage to act on his convictions. This **personal-moral** conversion is quite clearly seen in his ready obedience to the instructions of the voice he heard at Spoleto that told him to return to Assisi (2C 6)

and his embrace of the leper (Test 1-3). These actions called for courage and strength of character which served him well throughout his life.

A change in how a person sees the social order of reality that is associated with the **socio-political** dimension of conversion is clearly evident in what is called the Great Renunciation (LMj 2:4). In this incident Francis renounced his rightful patrimony as a first-born son and committed himself to a life in which he was ever-committed to following in the footprints of the poor and humble Christ. The universal significance of his actions were not immediately clear, but he nevertheless acted on his faith in the Providence of God.

The **affective** and **religious** dimensions of Francis's conversion are immediately evident to anyone familiar with his writings and life. His writings are laced through with the warmth and generosity of one who is on fire with the God of his life. He experienced a new kind of freedom that enabled him to see the presence of God in everyone and in everything. It is the affective dimension of conversion that enabled him to see everything as gift and in response to God's gracious care he was filled with gratitude. We get a sense of this from the words of chapter 23 of the Earlier Rule:

> All-powerful, most holy, Almighty and supreme God, Holy and just Father, Lord King of heaven and earth we thank You for Yourself for through Your holy will and through Your only Son with the Holy Spirit You have created everything spiritual and corporal and, after making us in Your own image and likeness, You placed us in paradise (ER 23:1).

Francis was totally taken up with the goodness of God. In the experience of his conversion he knew at the deepest level of his being that everything comes to one by way of God's providential care; we merit nothing, everything is gift, the most precious is the gift of God himself. Francis came to know God as father and in a profound sense of God's generativity he could exclaim, "O how glorious and holy and great to have a Father in heaven" (2LtF 54). This was the reason why Francis continued to be open to whatever God wanted to accomplish in him and through him. He knew the joy of union with the Most High God. This experience of the fatherhood of God led him to shape his vision of Gospel life in a new way. It was a vision that he shared with Clare and together they gave birth to a new religious family in the church.

Francis and Clare as "Mothers"

Francis's use of feminine imagery in his writings is a well known fact and Clare's writings are clear examples of an understanding of the mystical life from the viewpoint of a woman. Now I want to demonstrate how Francis and Clare patterned their religious family on their experience of God as father and

as a consequence saw all other relationships in this light. This is necessary because it illustrates how they tried to incarnate their religious experience in concrete ways.

Francis's vibrant and life-redefining experience of God as Father engendered in him a new sense of his own identity and he expressed it in terms of feminine imagery. One of the most famous stories in which this is illustrated is the one in which Francis and the brothers go to Rome to seek approval for their way of life from Pope Innocent III. In *The First Life of Saint Francis* Celano gave a straightforward account of the meeting which was arranged through Bishop Guido's friend, Cardinal John of St Paul. This same story is recorded by John of Perugia, but in his account he adds a parable that is believe to have been told by Francis to the pope. Francis and the friars had a meeting with Innocent III during which they described their plan for living the Gospel. The pope felt that their life-style was too rigorous and the poverty they aspired to live too stringent. He urged Francis to spend some time in prayer to discern God's will for the community and then return to tell him what the Lord revealed to him and in turn the pope promised to grant whatever the Lord directed.

After spending time in prayer Francis and the brothers came back to see Innocent III. It was then that Francis told this parable:

> There lived in the realm of a great king a very poor but beautiful woman, who caught the king's eye and by whom he fathered many sons. One day that woman began to think to herself: "What am I to do, a poor woman with so many sons? I have no possessions to provide them with a livelihood!" While she was pondering all these things in her heart, her face became sad. When the king arrived, he said to her "What is the matter? I see that you are lost in thought and sad." With her whole heart she told him all her thoughts. The king told her: "Do not be afraid of your dire poverty, nor of the sons you have, and the many you will have. If the many hired hands in my house have their fill of food, I certainly do not want my own sons to die of hunger. No, I want them to have even more than the others."
> The man of God, Francis, immediately understood that the poor woman symbolised him. As a result, the man of God strengthened his resolve to observe most holy poverty in the future (AP 35-36).

This parable addresses two points: first, that the approval sought from the pope concerned the question of radical Gospel poverty as one of the foundation stones of Francis's vision of evangelical life. The second point is that Francis had a very clear sense of himself as the "mother" of a family which came to birth through the grace of God, the Father. The image of the mother became integral to Francis's consciousness of his vocation as protector and defender of

the early community. In still another parable Francis compared himself to a mother hen who had constantly to run after her chicks (2C 23-24).

Francis used the image of mother twenty-four times in his writings to describe not only his role in the community, but also how the friars should act toward one another and all others. The relationships in the community were not hierarchical, but familial and all were to give birth to Christ in their lives.

> We are spouses when the faithful soul is united by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are brothers, moreover, when we do the will of His Father Who is in heaven; mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through love and a pure and sincere conscience; and give Him birth through a holy activity, which must shine before others by example (2LtF 51-53).

This text reveals Francis's profound conviction that we are spiritually fruitful when we are united to the Lord by the action of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who enables us to give birth to Christ in our lives. Clare expressed the same idea about giving birth to Christ in her letters to Agnes of Prague:

> Most beloved sister, or should I say, Lady, worthy of great respect: because You are the spouse and mother and sister of my Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 2Cor 11:2; Mt 12:50)...You have truly merited to be called a sister, spouse and mother of the Son of the Most High Father and of the glorious Virgin (1LAg 12 & 24).

Perhaps the most beautiful expression of Clare's understanding of the dignity of the human person can be found in her third letter to Agnes of Prague. In it she singled out the ability to make a home for Christ within us as Mary did within herself as the greatest honour God could bestow on us.

> Indeed, it is now clear that the soul of a faithful person, the most worthy of all creatures because of the grace of God, is greater than heaven itself, since the heavens and the rest of creation cannot contain their Creator and only the faithful soul is His dwelling place and throne, and this only through the charity that the wicked lack...As the glorious Virgin of virgins carried Him materially, so you, too, by following in her footprints (cf 1Pet 2:21), especially those of poverty and humility, can, without any doubt, always carry Him spiritually in your chaste and virginal body, holding Him by Whom you and all things are held together (Wis 1:7) possessing that which, in comparison with the other transitory possessions of this world you will possess more securely (3LAg 21-22; 24-26).

Clare wanted not only Agnes, but also each of her sisters, to exemplify spiritual motherhood in their lives; to give Christ birth through all their actions

and attitudes. We see again the link between poverty, humility and the ability to carry Christ within ourselves. Like Francis, Clare saw God as Father. She saw her vocation and that of the sisters as a gift from God the Father and for which they needed "to express the deepest thanks to the glorious Father of Christ" (TestCl 2). It was a gift of the Father given to them through Francis (TestCl 7) so that together they might give birth to a religious family in the church that would redefine family not in terms of biological, ethnic, cultural or economic bonds, but rather by bonds created among them by the Holy Spirit.

Francis and Clare believed that they were the "mothers" who gave birth to countless sons and daughters because they were overshadowed by the Holy Spirit who made them fruitful. God the Father's, generative love gave birth to all of creation in Christ and they were mothers giving Christ birth in themselves for the good of others. Their new family was not conceived as a juridical entity for the purpose of some apostolic work. Instead they were a family held together in Christ as spouses, brothers, sisters, spouses and mothers with God as Father.

Both Clare and Francis urged their sisters and brothers to care for one another as a mother cherishes her children (RCl 8:16; ER 11:11; LR 6:8) and give witness that they are members of the same family (LR 6:7). Spiritual mothers beget spiritual children who in turn become spiritual mothers. In this way the family is built-up in love, a love that mirrors Christ to the rest of the church and the whole world. In fact, Francis saw these familial bonds extending to all of creation, as is evident in his *Canticle of the Creatures* where God is Father, Earth is mother and all the elements of the created world live in harmony as brothers and sisters. Indeed, these familial relationships are the ideal Francis and Clare believed would restore harmony among all people and the created world. Francis and Clare learned that life in Christ creates the deepest bonds possible between people. These bonds cut across nationality, gender and biological relationships. It is our common origin in God the Father, our spousal relationship with Christ and the love of the Holy Spirit which makes bonds within the Franciscan family possible.

Some Implications for the Franciscan Family Today

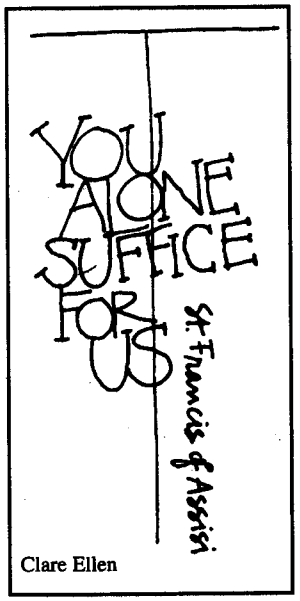
One of the most obvious implications of Francis and Clare's vision of family is that we have to be serious about claiming our unity in Christ Jesus. This is easier said than done because our biological, racial, ethnic and cultural differences are often more apparent. We have to work at building relationships within our communities and fraternities that reflect our common birthright as members of the Franciscan family. Though it would not be healthy to forget

our biological families, we must see ourselves firstly as members of our Franciscan family.

A second implication is that since the spiritual teaching of Francis and Clare about how we give birth to Christ is inherent to an understanding of our charism we need to reflect on the practical challenges this teaching presents to us as individuals and as communities. If we do I think we will begin to see that building-up bonds among ourselves is easier said than done. It takes effort to relate to one another beyond the superficial aspects of our lives and give expression to our deeper unity in our common vocation.

A further implication which Francis and Clare's vision of family presents to us is that of mutuality, working together as equals and as sisters and brothers. Our very charism was born out of the grace given to Francis and Clare for the renewal of the church. Wherever possible we should work together in ministries that will give witness to the fact that we are indeed members of the same family (LR 6:7) because we are not in competition, but see our feminine and masculine gifts as complementary.

Finally, we need to deepen our understanding of our charism so that we can give witness to the family spirit that is needed in the church today. We need to take seriously the writings of Francis and Clare and make them our own so that they become the norm of our life together.



Clare Ellen

Francis and Clare went through a learning process in which they gradually came to understand that they were called to give birth to a religious family by which the church was to be renewed. They had to struggle with the concept of family engendered in them through their social development. God was able to work within them because like Mary, they consented to the action of the Holy Spirit in their lives. If we are going to give birth to new members of the Franciscan family, especially in areas where the Franciscan Family is relatively new (as in certain parts of the African continent where people will be intent on building up the church in love), then our own conception of family must be as inclusive and as deep as Francis and Clare's; it must be rooted not in our ethnic heritage, but in our life in Christ.

Endnotes

[1]Arnaldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, trans. Helen Moak (New York: Crossroads Publishing Co., 1981), 84.

[2]Fortini, 87-88.

[3]Joan Mueller, *Francis, the Saint of Assisi* (Allen, TX: Thomas More Publishing, 2000), 19.

[4]Omer Englebert, *Francis of Assisi: A Biography*, 2nd ed., trans. E.M. Cooper, revised and augmented by Ignatius Brady and Raphael Brown (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1965), pp. 399-401.

[5]Marco Bartoli, *Clare of Assisi*, trans. Sr. Frances Teresa (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), pp.13-14.

[6]Bartoli, p.14.

[7]Fortini, p. 328.

[8]Bartoli, p. 15.

[9]Bartoli, p. 31.

[10]Donald L. Gelpi, *The Conversion Experience* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), p. 42.

[11]Gelpi, pp. 43-44.

[12]Gelpi, p. 54.

[13]Gelpi, p. 37.

[14]Sergius Wroblewski, OFM, "Clare, Christ's Spouse," *New Serafika*, 5.1(Nov. 1998): 2-15.

[15]H. Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, trans. Donald Attwater (New York: Fordham University Press, 1962), 3.

[16]Duane V. Lapsanki, *Evangelical Perfection: An Historical Examination of the Concept in the Early Franciscan Sources* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1977), p. 94.

[17]Lapsanski, p. 95.

CLARE, *a handmaid of Christ and of the Poor Sisters of the Monastery of San Damiano. . . .*

CLARE, *declining the name and office of abbess. . . wished in her humility to be placed under others rather than above them, and among the servants of Christ, to serve more willingly than to be served. . . .*

CLARE, *during the sickness from which she passed from this life, never stopped praising God. . . .*

(Excerpts from writings by and about Clare of Assisi)

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The Loving Relationship of Clare with Her Mother

Clara Heo, SFMA

Human beings start their relationship with their mother from within the womb. Women share God's creation through their giving birth to a newborn baby. This creation is not only a physical collaboration but also a spiritual one. Many Asian traditions believe that during her pregnancy a woman has to be discreet and prudent in all her thoughts and behavior because her good or bad thoughts will affect the baby's future thoughts and behavior. For instance, the mother's peace or insecurity goes into the baby's feeling of inner peace or insecurity within the womb.

When the mother accepts her pregnancy, the mother begins to be aware that the embryo is a part of herself. At the same time, the mother is aware that the embryo is a separate individual being. Both mother and baby have their own unique character which is "the self." What is the self? The self is "essentially relational, inseparable from the limiting and enriching contexts of body, feeling, relationship, community, history, and the web of life."[1]

The relationship between the mother and the baby in her womb is fundamental. This fundamental relationship is like our relationship with God. We all came from God, but we are individual. "In the first stage of life, Erickson says that the central goal is the infant's development of a sense of basic trust."[2] The role of mother is important:

> because through the special relationship uniting a mother and her child, particularly in its first years of life, she gives the child that sense of security and trust without which the child would find it difficult to develop properly its own personal identity and, subsequently, to establish positive and fruitful relationships with others.[3]

The relationship between Clare and Ortulana is unique and special because their relationship includes not only the biological mother-daughter relationship but also discipleship with Jesus. Their biological loving relationship also developed into a very spiritual loving relationship. Ortulana taught Clare

religious manners and later Ortulana joined her daughter's new religious movement as a sister serving with humility under her daughter's guidance. Recently, the relationship between mother and daughter has been studied by Eichenbaum and Orbach:

> Positive interactions between mother and daughter established a pattern of relating and a feeling of closeness between them. As a relationship forms, the mother experiences great pleasure in seeing her daughter's daily developments. Mother's time and care and tiring long hours of work through the day and night have moments of overpowering reward as she sees her daughter grow, and she continues to express her feelings of competence, strength, and ability to care and protect within the relationship. In this nurturing relationship the mother gives her daughter the essential emotional food that helps the infant establish her very sense of existence as well as her security and well-being. The daughter's psychological development is built on the feeling of acceptance and love in this first and most important relationship.[4]

This study shows that the relationship of mother and daughter is reciprocal and affects both lives. The Legend about Clare speaks about this relationship:

> From the mouth of her mother she first received with a docile heart the fundamentals of the faith and with the Spirit inflaming and molding her interiorly, she became as a most pure vessel, a vessel of graces....Thus, from her infancy, as mercy was growing with her, she bore a compassionate attitude, merciful towards the miseries of the destitute (LegCl 3).

Ortulana would follow her daughter into the monastery during her later years. The Bull of Canonization states that "Her mother, named Ortulana, intent upon pious deeds, followed her daughter's footprints and afterwards accepted this religious way of life"(BC 8). It is unusual that a saint's mother was so praised in canonization documents and legend. Not only is Ortulana's name in the Bull of Canonization, it also appears in The Legend of Clare.

The relationship between Clare and Ortulana was profoundly reciprocal and spiritual. Their relationship was dynamic, intimate, and transparent. "The interplay between a woman's conscious and unconscious feeling about being both a daughter and a mother is an essential part of what she brings to the maternal nurturance."[5]

What Did Ortulana Teach Her Daughter?

Clare had been molded by her mother's holy example and Ortulana had been affected by her daughter's sanctity. Ingrid J. Peterson has said:

> Ortulana was a noble, independent, faithful, and extraordinary woman in her time. Ortulana lived on the edge of great social and economic turmoil which empowered her. As other members of society began to gain freedom, so did women. Devotion to the humanity of Jesus changed both religion and culture. Ortulana's pilgrim journeys, her dominant position in a household of knights, and the vagueness of her husband's role indicate that she seized several new opportunities as a woman to become an individual person, rather than to assume the prescriptions for an aristocratic medieval woman.[6]

Ortulana's pilgrimages to Rome, Jerusalem, and the Shrine of Saint Michael at Monte Gargano show that she was not an ordinary person and "indicates her importance as mother of Clare."[7] Ortulana's journey to the Shrine of Saint Michael where she received the prophecy from the cross while she was praying about the child in her womb must have affected her throughout her life. Ingrid Peterson wrote: "Because she had been a pilgrim to the Holy Land, Ortulana may have walked the journey taken by Joseph and the pregnant Mary from Galilee to Bethlehem more than a thousand years earlier. Ortulana's faith demanded this kind of action, for Pacifica described her as a woman 'adorned by religious and holy deeds'"(Proc 1.5).[8] Peterson also has noted:

> Clare's mother and the women who surrounded her were models of holiness, for Pietro Di Damiano said it was well known in Assisi that both Ortulana and Pacifica lived in a spiritual way (Proc 19.2). As pilgrims, both were marked as converted women in the social community, penitents, or *conversi*.[9]

Ortulana led women who lived in her house into the spiritual life and stimulated them with the desire to be holy. Among these women was her friend, Pacifica. Before leaving her family home, Clare had already experienced a religious atmosphere among the many women in her own house, including her mother as leader of that group.

How Clare Emulated Her Mother

Clare was described as independent, honest, kind and affable, courteous, and generous towards the poor. These characteristics are similar to Ortulana, who was also described as "a woman of prayer, dedicated to work, open to acts of mercy, even beyond her own surroundings."[10] Clare's spiritual mothering while caring for her religious sisters and her loving concern for the poor and all people were reflections of Ortulana's good manner of life. Clare's mother was the actual root of the Poor Ladies and "she [Ortulana] was the spring of new life, the protector of women, who having raised her daughters in womanly skills and after joining Clare at San Damiano, was summoned as healer."[11]

Clare learned from her mother as much as she could. "The legend relates that Ortulana gave to Clare what culture could not transmit or measure. At birth, the daughter of Ortulana received more than a noble state in life, for Clare was given the heritage of her mother's sanctity."[12] One study about the relationship between mother and daughter shows us how a mother's role powerfully affects her daughter's growth:

> The picture of mother that the daughter takes into herself is complex. Mother is the person who gives her what she needs-feeds her, cuddles her, plays with her, talks to her, responds to her. She opens up wider and wider horizons. At the same time, mother is the person who can say no, who can disappoint or withhold, who can be short-tempered and can misunderstand. Mother holds tremendous power to please and to hurt.[13]

Both Ortulana's physical motherhood, through which she offered herself to her special, precious child and her spiritual manner nurtured Clare throughout her life.

Clare's Sensitvity to Others

Ortulana's sensitivity for both Clare's physical and spiritual needs led Clare to develop sensitivity towards others' needs. Clare learned these lessons through her childhood from her mother who was both model and guide. Ronda Chervin uses the words of Karl Stern to highlight how women respond in relationships:

> An idea of Karl Stern...when men express their ideas, they concentrate on concepts, moving from concepts to concrete examples and then returning to the concept. A woman is concerned about the listener's needs: she hunts for a truth that will be relevant to her listener and explains her thoughts in terms of that truth.[14]

A mother's sensitivity can also be developed by nurturing her baby, but not every mother is sensitive or tender. The relationship between Ortulana and Clare, however, was a dynamic give and take relationship. Their intimate relationship led to their transparent relationship when Ortulana was living in the monastery with Clare. While Clare was alive, many sick people came to the monastery for healing from their sicknesses, and Clare healed them by her sanctity. Sister Amata, who also lived in the monastery, stated that:

> A young boy from Perugia had a certain film over his eye which covered all of it. Then he was brought to Saint Clare who touched the eyes of the boy and then made the sign of the cross over him. Then she said: 'Bring him to my mother, Sister Ortulana (who was in the monastery of San Damiano) and let her make the sign of the cross over him'. After this had been done, the young boy was cured, so that Saint Clare said her mother had cured him. On the contrary, her mother said Lady Clare, her daughter, had cured him. Thus each one attributed this grace to the other (Proc 4.11).

Clare followed her mother's loving relationship with God and others by loving everyone she came in contact with. Clare reflected her mother's caring mothering relationship which was passed down to her religious sisters. Sister Lucia, a fellow sister who testified at Clare's canonization, said that there is no way to tell of Clare's holiness. When she was asked

> . . . what this holiness and goodness consisted of, she replied "in her very great humility, kindness, uprightness, and patience....She had great compassion for the sisters, both their body and soul" (Proc 8.1-3).

Clare's great compassion for the sisters can be seen in her healing them. She healed many sisters within her community while she was alive. Also those outsiders who came to her for healing were all healed. Many sisters testified that "Clare would come to their bedsides in a motherly way to pull warm covers over them as they slept."[15] Clare nurtured others, meeting both physical and spiritual needs just as her mother had done for her and others.

Clare As Co-worker with God

Clare followed her mother's model of being a co-worker with God. Clare's daily contemplation echoed the lessons she learned when she was young. In the letters of Clare to Agnes of Prague, she addressed Agnes as daughter and mother (4 LAg 4). These feminine images are active, in that Agnes is encouraged to be a co-worker of God. Using Saint Paul's expression Clare said to Agnes, "I consider you as a co-worker of God Himself (cf. 1 Cor 3:9, Rm 16:3) and a support of the weak members of His ineffable Body" (3LAg 8). Clare's deep contemplation led her to see the original meaning of creation. Although society in her time still had class divisions, Clare made all members equal because she knew that human beings are all equal, since they are all part of Jesus' mystical body. Clare believed that a woman's discipleship to Christ could be fulfilled by every woman who is faithful to God as Mary of Nazareth and her mother Ortulana had been.

Conclusion

The mother and daughter relationship is a life-giving relationship. The love between Ortulana and Clare reminds us of how important the relation-

ship between mother and daughter is. Ortulana's and Clare's relationship started before Clare's birth. This is true for every human being since God had formed the human being before he or she was born–just as God had already planned for Clare's birth while she was in her mother's womb.

Clare learned trusting and caring in her mother's womb. These trusting and caring characteristics affected Clare's relationship with the God she trusted throughout her life. Ortulana and Clare shared their loving relationship with each other and others by nurturing, caring, loving, and nourishing those who came to them. Ortulana and Clare built up their loving relationship as God's co-workers reciprocally and dynamically for the kingdom of God. The mother and daughter relationship is naturally given by God, but it is up to the individuals to build it up lovingly.

Endnotes

[1]Introduction to "Self in Relation" section in *Weaving The Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, Judith Plaskow & Carol P. Christ., eds. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1989), p. 173.

[2]Jean Baker Miller, "The Development of Women's Sense of Self," in *Women's Spirituality: Resource for Christian Development.*, ed. Joann Wolski Conn., 2d ed. (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1986, 1996), p. 165.

[3]Pope John Paul II on *The Genius of Women* (United States Catholic Conference (Washington, D.C., 1997), pp. 13-14.

[4]Luise Eichenbaum & Susie Orbach, "The Construction of Femininity" in *Women's Spirituality: Resource for Christian Development*, ed. Joann Wolski Conn, 2d ed. (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1986, 1996), p.187.

[5]Eisenbaum and Orbach, p. 86.

[6]Ingrid J. Peterson, O.S.F. *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1993), p. 49.

[7]Peterson., p. 52.

[8]Peterson· p. 36.

[9]Peterson, p. 93.

[10]*Clare of Assisi: Letter of the Ministers General* (Franciscan Publishers, 1993), 12.

[11]Peterson, p. 51.

[12]Peterson., p. 368.

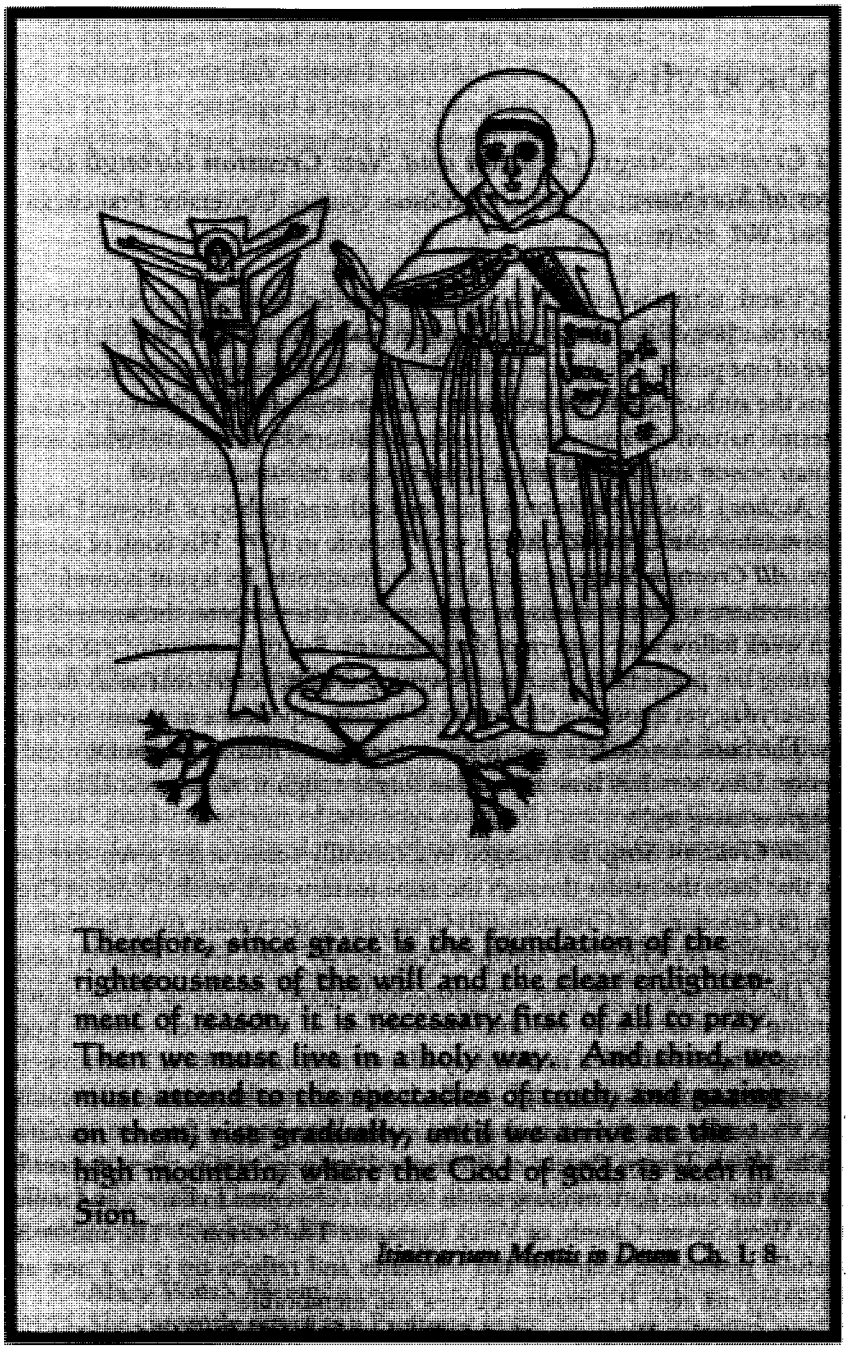
[13]Peterson, p. 368.

[14]Peterson, p. 368.

[15]Eichenbaum and Orbach, p. 192.

[16]Ronda Chervin, *Feminine, Free and Faithful* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 32.

[17]Leo Zanchettin, "The Story of St. Clare of Assisi: A Bright and Shining Light," in *The Word Among Us* (January 2003), p. 54.



BOOK REVIEW

All Creation Sings: Creation and New Creation through the Eyes of Scripture. J. Robert Jacobson. Quincy University: Franciscan Press, 2002. 567p.

"...(T)ruth is true whether it is natural (scientific) or supernatural (revealed). Truth that lies within the scope of human research and truth that lies beyond it are of one piece...the former concerns *data*...the latter concerns *meaning*...." Thus the author begins the brief introduction to his book with an apt contrast of terms: natural vis-à-vis supernatural; scientific truth or revealed truth; within human reason and beyond human reason; *data* versus *meaning*.

Author J. Robert Jacobson is a retired Lutheran Bishop of Alberta, Canada, received into the Catholic Church with his wife in 1999. His book of meditations, ***All Creation Sings***, is itself a book of contrasts. Its layout is careful and precise; there are meditations for every week of the year, and the seven days of each week follow a set pattern of development. But the content of the book is anything but predictable. Jacobson's writing is pure poetry that soars beyond the everyday, yet it touches the depths of human experience in a most ordinary way. The book has the feel of scripture, of poetry, of human psychology and of science. One wonders how a librarian might assign it to just one Library of Congress category!

All Creation Sings is arranged in a carefully constructed seven-day outline that leads the reader through the same pattern each week: (i) Act of Creation; (ii) Goodness of Creation; (iii) Creature as Sacrament; (iv) The Fall and the Creature; (v) The Cross and the Creature; (vi) The Creature and Worship; (vii) The Creature in the New Creation. So, for example, Week Thirty-Three: Naming Creatures, took me into the Garden of Eden; then outside Eden; finding glimpses of Eden in everyday life; turning my back on Eden; repenting; seeking reconciliation; and, finally, holding onto the promise of paradise. Lest the reader get the sense that this is usual meditation fare, let me direct you to Week Thirty: Beasts of Burden, wherein Jacobson takes the reader through the same pattern using seven biblical references to burros and mules! Or to Week Seven: Clouds, or Week Eighteen: The Seasons". The author has carefully researched scripture and translates and reflects on it in a new and refreshing manner. His images are new and memorable.

All Creation Sings is both delightful and profound and I found myself reading it in multiple ways. I read it simply for its poetic language and images. I found myself—contrary to the author's advice—reading a whole week's worth of meditations at one sitting, just to find out how the theme would be developed. Often I just lingered over a single line that lodged itself in my heart. And—taking the author's advice–I used the book for daily meditation. In the process my mind cataloged a litany of friends to whom I would like to introduce this book. I have succumbed to its depth and to its magic.

M. Catherine Gurley, O.S.F
St. Bonaventure, NY 14778

In this fallen world there is often a wide gap
between God's design for us
and the design we actually live by,
between God's call to us
and the voice we actually follow...

J. Robert Jacobson, p. 356

About Our Contributors

Kerr Houston is an assistant professor of art history at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. His dissertation (2001) studied the placement and gendered aspects of paintings executed for the early Clares. He also has worked on late medieval images of the martyrdom of Catherine as well as on the films of Spike Lee.

Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSF, is a graduate of the Franciscan Institute and serves as the Program Director of the Franciscan Institute of Southern Africa, established in 1994. She has been a frequent contributor to *The Cord*.

Clara Heo, SFMA, is a member of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi. The article is this issue is an excerpt from her Master's thesis ("Clare of Assisi: A Study of Her Loving Relationships in Light") written at the Collego of Our Lady of the Elms, in Chicopee, Massachusetts. In June, 2003, she returned to her native South Korea.

Mary Walsh Meany received her Ph. D. from Fordham University in 1975. She currently serves as a Professor in the Religious Studies Department of Siena College in Poughkeepsie, NY. Her areas of study include the medieval Franciscan tradition and the *Vita Christi* genré of medieval spirituality.

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AUGUST 11 (7:00 PM) — AUGUST 17 (NOON) — ST. FRANCIS CONVENT

Retreat: Journeying with the Story of Francis

Facilitated by Ingrid Peterson, OSF from Rochester, Minnesota. Sister Ingrid will be assisted by Elise Saggau, OSF from Little Falls, Minnesota.
The retreat will be based on the new three-volume edition of primary sources, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents (*The Saint, The Founder, The Prophet) to discover how our present-day understanding of Francis is shaped by the way his story was passed on during the first 150 years after his death. Reflections will focus on the way Francis's story as saint, founder, and prophet reflect our own spiritual journey. While persons who have access to the four volumes are advised to bring them as a resource, they are not required for the retreat.

Cost: $300. **Register by July 28 with non-refundable $50 deposit.**

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 (9:00 AM-3:00 PM) — ST. FRANCIS CENTER

Contemplative/Centering Prayer Workshop

Presenter: Sister Joan Tuberty, OSF. Come, spend a day learning about an ancient and contemporary prayer, "Centering Prayer," and "Lectio Dvina" (sacred reading)! Explore what Francis and Clare teach us about living our lives centered in Christ and lives that are more "centered."

Cost: $25 (includes lunch).
Register by September 17 with $10 non-refundable deposit.

OCTOBER 10 (6 PM) — OCTOBER 12 (NOON) — ST. FRANCIS CENTER

Franciscan Peacemaking and Nonviolence

This weekend workshop directed by a team from the Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service in Oakland, California will help participants claim a role as active peacemaker. Franciscans, following the spirit of Francis and Clare, have a strong tradition of peacemaking and reconciliation. The workshop is built on the Gospel and Franciscan value of nonviolence. Participants will be helped to creatively pursue peace by building just relationships based on respect, equality, and a search for harmony.

Cost: $130 (includes meals and two overnights.)
Register by September 1 with $30 non-refundable deposit.

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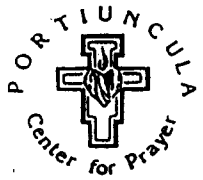

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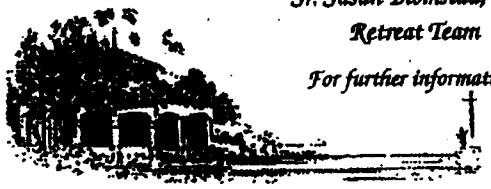

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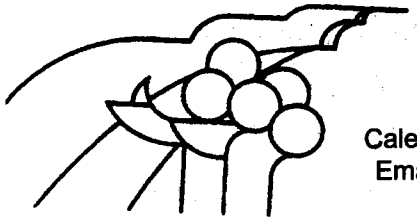

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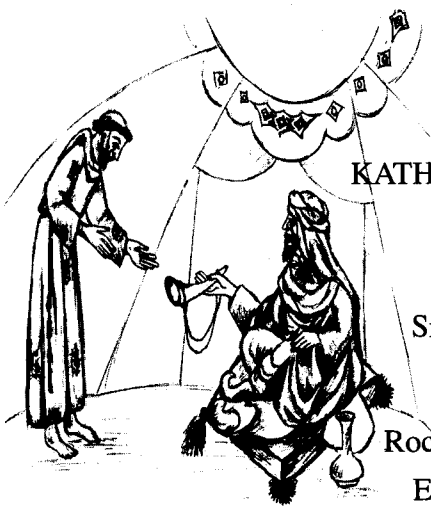

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T'ai Chi Chih Retreat. Antonia Cooper, OSF and Celeste Crine, OSF. At the Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston, PA. For information, call 610.558.6152 or email fsc@osfphila.org

Saturday, September 27, 2003. 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Contemplative/ Centering Prayer Workshop. Presenter: Sr. Jean Tuberty, OSF. For more information, see ad, p. 217.

Friday, October 10, 2003-Sunday, October 12, 2003. Franciscan Peacemaking and Nonviolence. For details, see ad, p. 217.

Thursday evening, October 23, 2003-Sunday noon, October 26, 2003. The Franciscan Connection, with Ann Weltin, OSF and Nancy Miller, OSF. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation, Regions, 4 and 5. At Portiuncula Center for Prayer, Franckfort, IL. For more information, contact Sr. Deborah Suddarth at 815.464.3873.

Friday, October 24, 2003-Sunday, October 26, 2003.
Painting and Poetry: Faces. Mary Lou Sleevi. At the Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston, PA. For information, call 610.558.6152 or send an e-mail to fsc@osfphila.org.

Saturday, November 8, 2003-Friday, December 19, 2003. The 40 Day Franciscan Hermitage Retreat. Portiuncula Center, Frankfort, IL. For details, see ad, p. 218.

Friday, November 14, 2003-Sunday, November 16.
The Formation of Lay Communities. Darleen Pryds, Ph.D. At the Franciscan Renewal Center, Scottsdale, AS 85253. For information, call 1.800.356.3247 or send an email to casa@thecasa.org.

Abbreviations

Writings of Saint. Francis

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

Writings of Saint Clare

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

Franciscan Sources

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