A WORD FROM BONAVENTURE

BUT IF YOU WISH TO KNOW HOW THESE THINGS COME ABOUT, ASK GRACE, NOT INSTRUCTION; DESIRE, NOT UNDERSTANDING; THE GROANING OF PRAYER, NOT DILIGENT READING; THE SPOUSE, NOT THE TEACHER, GOD, NOT MAN; DARKNESS, NOT CLARITY....

ITINERARIUM MENTIS IN DEUM
VII:6

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1. MSS should be submitted on disk (or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced).
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 14th ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.
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4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:
   (1Cor. 13:6). (2Cel 5:8).
   (RegNB 23:2). (4LAg 2:13).

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

Cover design: Basil Valente, OFM and David Haack, OFM.

Editorial

When the cold of winter changes unexpectedly to temperatures fifteen degrees higher than normal (as it has today here in Allegany), one is reminded of the power of nature and the fact that, although we pretend to have control of many things in our lives, too often we practice the fine art of self-deception. Lenten conversion is the journey out of self-deception about oneself, about one's relationship with others, with society, and with God. This issue will arrive in our subscribers' hands as the season of Lent is drawing to a close, so we hope that its essays and poems will enrich the closing days that lead us into the season when we celebrate the Lord's Resurrection.

An article by David Flood, centering on three Franciscan Admonitions, invites us into deeper conversion. David addresses the need to move away from our self-centeredness in order to fully accept the invitation of the Lord to be part of a movement whose purpose "is economic, social, historical, and celebratory, [a movement which] begins with bread for the world and ends celebrating the work of the Spirit in time." We also offer a reflection rooted in the message of Bonaventure's *Soul's Journey Into God*, a classic work that challenges us to practice what both Francis and the Seraphic Doctor did: living as if we know "the reality that only through the crucified Christ can we make our journey into God." There are also poems by Murray Bodo, OFM, and Felicity Dorsett, OSF, two frequent contributors, and what I consider a prose-poem-prayer by Jude Rochford, OFM Conventual. We hope the variety of content touches the heart of the spiritual journey each of us is making.

Lastly, as many of our subscribers are members of one or the other of the Franciscan Orders, we present a reflection by Charles Finnegan, OFM, that reminds us of the custom of renewing our vows on April 16th each year, in solidarity with the profession of Francis himself. Simply written but profoundly meaningful in its examination of the meaning of the vows today, this final article, fittingly enough, calls us to rekindle our commitment to the gospel and the day-to-day witness that commitment requires.

One more thing. In the last issue we published an article by Tim Johnson, "Preaching and Praying on the Seine...." The genesis of the article was a presentation Tim made at the International Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo; he is currently working on a full length text focusing on Bonaventure's Sunday Sermons, with full critical apparatus, going to press in 2006. We thought it important to share that information with you.

May the Paschal Mystery be our light and our salvation!

Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF

The Cord, 55.2 (2005)

Social Designs and Admonitions IX-XI

David Flood, OFM

Among the early Franciscan writings we find a collection of brief considerations and instructions called the Admonitions.[1] There are twenty-eight of them. We do not know how they ended up as a collection, but we do know that they existed as a collection well before the middle of the thirteenth century.[2] Admonitions IX-XI form a small group within the collection. They propose that those of Franciscan mind hate the sin while loving the sinner. I argue that Francis and his brothers had good reason to recall this teaching.[3] Though Franciscans put themselves at the service of others, they did not put themselves at the service of others' social designs. Here are the three Admonitions, translated from the Latin:

> Admonition IX. *The Lord says: Love your enemies. He truly loves his enemy who does not bemoan the injury done him. Rather, in his love of God, he flares up at the sight of another in sin. He shows him his concern by the way he acts.*
>
> Admonition X. *People commonly lash out at others, friend or foe, when they go astray or suffer injury. That is a mistake. Each one has his enemy in his power, the body by which he sins. And so, blessed the servant who keeps a tight reign on the bodily enemy, given into his power, and wisely maintains his distance from him. As long as he does so, no other enemy, visible or invisible, can do him harm.*
>
> Admonition XI. *Nothing should displease the servant of God save sin. The servant of God stores up guilt when, seeing someone sin, he does not become uneasy, challenged as he is in his love for others. That servant of God rightly lives without possessions when he remains calm and untroubled among others/about things* [pro aliquo]. *Blessed is he who ends up with nothing, giving to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.*

The Structure of Admonitions IX-XI

Admonition IX tells the brother to love his enemy by combating his enemy's sin. Admonition X points out that, in truth, we have but one enemy, and that

enemy is our capacity for evil. Admonition XI tells the brother to fight against the sin that is destroying the sinner and his world. It's sort of like a three-act drama. The complication arises in Act One, where the servant of God immediately distinguishes between the wrong done him and the agent of that wrong. Act Two clarifies the field of combat by identifying the source of danger. Then, in Act Three, the servant of God focuses on and vanquishes the real enemy, confirming his initial response.

Admonition IX is clear enough. Those who have written on the Admonitions have pointed out the parallels between this text and Sermon 82 of Augustine of Hippo. However, we do not have to posit a dependence on Augustine's sermon. The sentiment proposed by the sermon and, much later, by the Admonition had become traditional, for it follows easily from Scripture. The novelty of our Admonition lies in the role it played in Franciscan life, and that is what we are exploring.

The translator of Admonition XI, the third in the series, has to decide what to do with "*pro aliquo*." The indefinite pronoun can refer to something or to someone. The interpretation of the Admonition determines the translation of the phrase. I read "for anyone" because I understand the claim of possession to involve social dynamics and not merely things. In the Franciscan dictionary, poverty means living outside the social conventions of the day (which has definite material consequences). It would lead us too far afield to explain in sufficient detail the grounds for this view.

Admonition X raises a problem we do better to face head on. It has to do with the body. The words body and flesh, *corpus* and *caro* in Latin, make a frequent appearance in the early Franciscan writings. At times the term *corpus* designates the quantitative extension of the human composite. It is the way God made us, and what God makes is good, and with that use we have no problem. At times, along with *caro*, *corpus* refers to cravings of the body and the ambitions of the spirit. These tendencies have to be reigned in, for they drag us into sin. But there is more to it than that. Basically, in the life of the movement and in the early writings, body opposes spirit. The spirit in question here is "the Spirit of the Lord," who, according to Early Rule, XVII: 14-16 and The Salutation of the Virtues, 14-18, inspires and strengthens and leads the Franciscan movement and those who belong to it. The Spirit turns the brother into the servant of the Lord, given to the transformation and completion of the world. The Spirit, finally, sees to the return of God's good creation to the source whence it arose.

We find the clearest and strongest expression of the brothers' involvement in the Spirit's action, making all new, at the end of Chapter XVII in the Early Rule: *omnia bona Deo reddere*, give God back all good things. At one moment the text ended here, for in these words Francis and his companions

had reached the final stage in their effort to define the movement's purpose. There exists a logic arising out of their commitment to work in Chapter VII and their social involvement with others in Chapter XIV; the logic led them to the final lines of Chapter Seventeen. For that reason, they finished the chapter with an Amen. K. Esser did not see fit to put the exclamation into his edition of the Early Rule, but the manuscripts censure the omission.[4]

When, however, a given brother accomplishes something good and claims authorship of the deed, he turns himself into someone in the eyes of society. He uses his good deed for his own social promotion. At that moment, he ascribes the deed to the body, not to the Spirit, and has gone astray.[5] In this sense, then, the body designates the individual's status in the world. It describes who he is in the eyes of the world's denizens and not before God. But a Franciscan has no status in the world. He is *servus Dei*, the servant of the divine will on the universe. In the terms of Augustine of Hippo, the brother is wholly given to realizing the city of God in time and is a stranger, a pilgrim, to the city of man. This is the full meaning of *corpus-caro* in early Franciscan history.

With that done, we can turn our attention to another word in Admonition X, and that is *servus*, servant. The term occurs in Admonition XI as well. In fact, it pervades the early writings. It arose out of the early experience of work. The early brothers developed a notion of work as service to others: first of all, there where they labored and eventually in setting the world right. (That required the help of everyone and so they called everyone to do penance.) Their service included both the common meaning of the word as well as the social role out of which the word arose: *servire* comes from *servare*; service is the immediate dimension of preserving the world, keeping it on course.[6] *Servire* and *servare* (serve and preserve) cover the Franciscan effort to sustain and keep intact the process whereby the Spirit of the Lord is leading us to, well, wherever we are going.

These two terms have led us into the semantic system of the early Franciscans. The meaning of body comes from the contrast between the spirit of the world and the Spirit of the Lord,[7] while the meaning of service arises out of the experience of the brothers at work. Both terms take on their specific meaning as the brothers struggle to "leave all to follow Jesus." Their proposal of service and their reference to the Spirit could only function outside the world they had abjured in order to follow in the footsteps of the Lord. From these two meanings we can proceed to give a Franciscan definition to the other terms in these three Admonitions. I do point out the obvious, as we leave our explanation of terms, that a semantic system functions at the social level. The system belongs to and serves movement orientation.[8] This leads me to my thesis on Admonitions IX-XI.

The Danger of Social Assimilation

My thesis is that the early brothers needed the Admonitions to help them break free from the social mores they had absorbed prior to joining the association around Francis of Assisi. They had to do away with their good manners and the social proprieties of their education, just as they had stripped the fine (or commonplace) clothing of their social identities off their backs. Unless they disturbed Assisi, they remained subject to Assisi's ways and ambitions, its customs and rules.

As a first step in justifying this thesis and the three Admonitions, let us observe the company the brief texts keep. They are preceded by Admonitions VII and VIII and followed by Admonition XII. Admonitions VII, VIII, and XII have to do with the definition of purpose as put in Early Rule, XVII: 10-19. Chapter Seventeen in the movement's basic document first prepares the brothers for the distinction between the spirit of the world and the Spirit of the Lord. Francis urges his brothers to take responsibility for their failures; their successes result from the Spirit of the Lord doing good through them.[9] Then, to legitimate their doings, they distinguish between the two spirits and declare themselves led by the Spirit of the Lord. With that in place, finally, they dare interpret the work of the Spirit within them and fix the outlook of the movement: they resolve to see to it that all good returns to God. That covers what we today call distributive justice (while going much further). The brothers understand that their commitment brings them into conflict with other forces at play in the lives of their contemporaries and in the organization of Italian communal life.[10] They definitely accept the challenge.

Let us turn to the several other Admonitions with which IX-XI are grouped. Admonition VII lays down the policy on learning in the brotherhood. After setting aside learning that redounds to the individual's material and social advantage, the brothers acknowledge and encourage learning that sustains the commitment made by the brothers at the conclusion of Chapter Seventeen in their *vita*[11] (Early Rule, XVII: 17-19). There are three details in the final sentence of Admonition VII that integrate it into the action defined by the brothers in the conclusion to Chapter Seventeen. First of all, learned brothers are not to ascribe their knowledge to the body; they will authenticate its origins in the Spirit (detail two) when they see to it (third detail) that it sustains the return of all good things to God. They give God back their learning by using it to explain and justify, to correct and strengthen the life of the brothers who give God back all good things.

A movement such as that of Francis and his companions needed a set of ideas that justified the movement's existence, explained its values and ideals, and specified the rules by which the brothers agreed to abide. It was difficult

for the brothers to do this without, at the same time, identifying contrary currents that they opposed (the binary dialectic). Consequently they needed learning; they needed the study and the discussion that results in such learning. The result of learned labor sustained Franciscan culture, the system and practice of the brotherhood's basic meanings. The movement's basic document, formally termed the Early Rule, is the primary expression of those meanings. Inevitably, then, that text gives us the context in which we read the Admonitions.[12]

Francis and his companions could not leave the world, in the sense of drawing up their own ways of living, simply because they wanted to. They had to organize and they had to justify their different behavior. Otherwise their effort would not outlast an initial enthusiasm. They had to explain it first of all to themselves in order to extricate themselves effectively. To do that they readily turned to the gospels, which gave them the incentive as well as the language to do so.[13] Then, given the religious language of their explanations, they had to seek confirmation for their legitimacy from church authorities. Finally, they had to offer the people among whom they lived, officials as well as ordinary citizens, some explanation. They could not inhabit the same space as the population at large and go about a completely different way of seeing to their needs without offering some acceptable explanation. To do so was to court the designation heretic or lawbreaker.

They handled these matters first of all by getting clearance from Pope Innocent III. Insofar as the pope was ready to give them approval, he wanted to fit them into the Church's structure. At that moment the brothers had to know how to distinguish themselves from other forms of religious life. They needed to argue their distinctive case both theoretically and rhetorically, both clearly and persuasively. Otherwise Innocent would legislate their future (as did Pope Gregory IX when he got the chance). But then, once they had acquired papal recognition, how could any other authority not acknowledge their way of life? Had they contented themselves with the clearance of the local bishop, they would have been drawn too easily into his wake. Had they sought communal forbearance, it would have been worse. Their journey to Rome and its consequences did not happen serendipitously.

Once legitimated in the public eye, they had to elaborate the details of daily life themselves. The brothers would not last long without a conscious effort to systematize their life together. There they needed the inspiration and the confidence of someone like Francis. They also needed men with learning who knew where to look for arguments in their defense and how to get the common intentions into clear prose. Admonition VII, as are Admonitions IX-XI, is well put together. This takes training in logical process and not only a natural intelligence and a feel for words. It results in disciplinary principles rather than in poetry. Those who stood out when the movement needed textual clarity had to understand the role of learning in the common life. It did not come natural to learned brothers to turn their knowledge into a service of the brotherhood. They were deploying abilities that had their natural place in the circles of learning, abilities that gave them power. The brothers needed an Admonition VII.

In formulating a policy on learning, Francis and his associates had to see to it that all, and especially the learned among them, saw clearly the role of learning in their ranks. Admonition VII ends by flowing into an action larger than study, discussion, policy formulation, and so on. It finishes by declaring: Brothers must not give what they learn to the body, "but by speech and action return their learning to the Lord most high, to whom belongs every good." The Latin phrasing, *sed verbo et exemplo reddunt ea altissimo Domino Deo cuius est omne bonum*, belongs to the more encompassing action proposed in Chapter Seventeen of the Vita, *omnia bona . . . Deo reddamus . . . cuius est omne bonum.* Learning has its role within the explicit purpose of the movement. The movement's purpose is economic, social, historical, and celebratory. It begins with bread for the world and ends celebrating the work of the Spirit in time. Outside that perspective there is no place for learning in Franciscan life.

The commentary on the Rule drawn up by Alexander of Hales and his associates in Paris in 1241-1242 reverses the role of learning among Franciscans. To their mind, the brothers need an infusion of learning from outside their ranks, from the authoritative teachings of the church, in order to understand what the brothers have committed themselves to by professing the Rule. And woe if they do not heed the professors' learned lessons! Ignorance, they argue, without being able to apply their logic to learned ignorance, is no excuse for the debacle that will follow.[14]

Admonition VIII defines blasphemy. The term blasphemy, as noun and as verb, occurs four times in the early Franciscan writings, three in the Early Rule. The noun occurs in Chapter XXII in a list of sins. The verb occurs in Early Rule XI among a series of quotations from scripture. The two usages depend for their meaning on scripture passages. I concentrate on the verb blaspheme in Early Rule XVII and on the noun blasphemy in Admonition VIII. Here we have the word used in a specifically Franciscan way. So particular was its meaning in Chapter XVII of the Early Rule that it needed explanation, and that is what Admonition VIII supplies.[15]

It suffices to look at Admonition VIII and apply what we find to the passage in Chapter XVII, for the point of the brief text is to explain the meaning of blasphemy. One does not envy the good another does, the text explains, for in doing so one envies God, the author of that good, and that is blasphemy.[16] The Admonition strengthens the commitment made at the end of Chapter XVII. The brothers intend to contest and oppose those who blaspheme God. People blaspheme God when they do not recognize God as author of all good

things, to whom all good must return. Francis and his associates will not only correct those who act that way; they will act to see to it that the good things of life do in fact circulate as they should, seeing to the sustenance and welfare of all.

We need an explanation for the addition of this short text to the cultural material of Franciscan life. We find it in the fact that this particular, very Franciscan notion of blasphemy needed explanation. The brothers were using it, as in Chapter XVII, to contest the offense given God by not acknowledging good as necessarily of God. It is a telling use of the term, a valid determination of its implications, given the Franciscan perspective. If we did not have Admonition VIII, we might miss the implications of the verb at the end of Chapter XVII. We might even wonder what the word is doing there: it hardly fits the context, if we take it as abusive speech addressed to the divinity, which was its common meaning.[17] Admonition VIII can serve as an explanation of the term, should some brother have wondered what it meant in proposing the movement's basic purpose, and surely someone new to the brotherhood needed the explanation.[18]

On the other side of the three Admonitions we are studying (IX-XI), we have Admonition XII and its answer to the question: How can I know that I have the Spirit of the Lord? That it answers a question seems clear from the way it begins, as well as from the sound answer it delivers: *This is how a servant of God can know if he has something of the Spirit of the Lord.* (Question: How can I know that I have . . .) *Suppose the Lord does good through him. His flesh feels no elation, opposed as it always is to the good. Rather, he continues to look on himself as vile and hold himself as less than all others.*

We saw above how Francis and his brothers confessed (Early Rule, XVII: 14-16) that the Spirit of the Lord was guiding the brotherhood. They had rejected the spirit of the world, by which they meant, immediately, the politics of cooptation of Assisi's leading citizens. They had no intention of letting the commune's busy burghers pre-empt them as these busy burghers had pre-empted "the peace of 1210." By the spirit of the Lord, Francis and his friends meant, immediately, their own mind and their common determination about their Christian ways. They believed that God was at work in their lives. They had done their best to "walk in Jesus' footsteps" and, they were convinced, it was working. Forced by attempts of another spirit to claim them, they put their belief into words and confessed that the Spirit of the Lord was leading them. Once Francis and his brothers had declared that they followed God's will and not Assisian willfulness, they laid down the movement's purpose of "returning all good things to God." Forced by circumstances, they clarified and confirmed their practice of circulating life's good things.

From Theory to Praxis

How did that work in the consciousness of an individual brother? The individual might have been satisfied with the theory and purpose as stated in the Early Rule. The statement (Early Rule, XVII: 10-19) did suppose, all the same, that he was part of the action, which required the Spirit work within him. How could the individual brother know he was well placed in the transformation of the world underway? He asked, several asked, and, as answer, they got Admonition XII.[19]

In Franciscan language, the flesh feels elation when I seize on a deed as my own, as a means of placing myself advantageously among others. I wear it as a sweater that fits me well. I wear my help at a food kitchen as a brightly visible badge of my social conscience. That's my worldly me pursuing its advantage, diverting the good action to a foreign purpose and ruining the work of the Spirit. It is opposed to the good. However, when I focus my attention on what is transpiring and stay on purpose, I remain sensitive to me as flesh capable of ruining the good and keep the flesh's inclinations at bay. That's it. The whole admonition has to do with focusing on the good happening, of which I am not the author but the instrument, and my blessedness results from being involved in the action. If I do focus on myself, an entity constructed by my attention, then I harm others, for I induce them to live a lie. I use them, in sum, instead of loving them and battling their sin (in the terms of our study). I oppose our common good. I drop out of true human relations, out of the day's tasks, and out of history. I cannot do both, coordinate with the Spirit and live in my private world, trying to own the good. It cannot be done.

The brothers could offer this brief rule of discernment, for that is what Admonition XII is, because the development of Franciscan language made these words intelligible to movement members. Francis and a few others exemplified the practice. They were "useless servants" in deed and in mind. They showed that it worked, as an astounded public knew well. The brothers who raised the question had both explanation and encouragement to help them get into the swing of the jubilant service at the core of Franciscan life. Was the brother in truth not prompted by the Spirit to put the question to Francis and the others?

I propose that the immediate occasion of Admonitions IX-XI is the integration of Chapter XVII of the Early Rule, and especially its concluding section, into the life of the brotherhood.[20] As a principled statement of their ways and purposes, the early brothers had to work the implications of the chapter into their practices as well as they could. Along with Admonitions VII, VIII, and XII, Admonitions IX-XI form a group apart. Admonition XIII initiates a new series of Admonitions. The series, as distinct from Admonitions VII-XII, all begin with the term blessed.[21] Consequently, we pass from one gathering of

Admonitions to another when we turn to Admonition XIII. Admonition VII certainly has to do with Early Rule, XVII: 17-19, for the specific determination of Franciscan study fits it into the movement's basic action, as verbalized in Early Rule, XVII. This urges the conclusion that the Admonitions between VII and XII have to do with Early Rule, XVII. So let us look more closely at the interpretation of the three brief texts proposed above: They strengthen the brothers' sensitivity to the struggle in which they are engaged and offer further confirmation of the dialectics sketched out in Early Rule, XVII: 10-19.

The "wisdom of this world, "the prudence of the flesh," (Early Rule, XVII: 10) did not only offer the brothers admiration, respect, and a role in the Assisian organization of life. That wisdom also moved the good burghers of the commune to shame the brothers when they sought alms, as described dramatically in Chapter IX of the Early Rule. The first brothers also had to take heavy and constant flack given their mode of dress (Early Rule, II: 15). By their dress, they declared that they belonged to the Penitential movement. Their simple dress said that they belonged to those Christians who took their profession of faith seriously, beginning with their Baptismal vows. There were people who called their piety hypocrisy. So besides the approving names of Early Rule, XVII: 10-12, the brothers contended with other language not as admiring as the encomium of Chapter XVII. Language not only negotiates social life. It proposes and propagandizes a social design. The social design implies who people are; it names them, and some people, such as the early brothers, insisted on naming themselves. They were "useless servants."

Conclusion

In 1210, Assisi had emerged from the wars with Perugia and from internal tensions. It had set its sails for success as an influential, and wealthy, commune in Central Italy. Perugia's inner conflicts gave Assisi room to pursue the dream (until the 1230s). The city fathers of Assisi proclaimed their ambitions publicly in the municipal charter of 1210. They urged everyone, they pleaded with everyone to overcome differences and to pull together for the glory and growth of Assisi. (At the end of the charter, they threatened those who did not.) They pleaded with everyone to live *more bonorum civium*, to live "in the way of good citizens." With those words, the city fathers named the good people of Assisi. Behind the charter of 1210, there stood the charter of 1203, referred to at the end of the 1210 document. The defining sentence of the 1203 document was: "All the men of Assisi must help one another hold onto what they have and even acquire further possessions." ("All the men of Assisi," of course, have ample possessions.) In sum, "good citizens," as defined by Assisi's city fathers, labored and lived in a way that favored material acquisition, not for everyone and not justly.

The *more bonorum civium* infused the conventions of Assisi according to the design of the city's property-holders. The terms of good citizenry inspired both industry and celebration, both the politics of communal life and the worship of God. (The charter of 1210 began in the name of God and with an invocation of the Holy Spirit.) J. Butler has explored the power at play, the force of language, when a well-supported social design constitutes its subjects, stigmatizing those who do not go along. For his part, J. Habermas has explained our capacity to oppose the rule of convention and posit a new beginning.[22] These contemporary philosophers, in the context of new developments in communicative interaction,[23] help us analyze the experience of the early Franciscans, which led them to develop Chapter XVII of the Early Rule and to give it the supporting applications of the Admonitions under study. The brothers could not allow the social design that sought to fix them within "the public religion" (*religionem foris apparentem*, Early Rule XVII 12) of Assisi. The distinction between love for the sinner and resolute opposition to his/her sin clarifies the opposition at the end of Chapter XVII of the Early Rule: When we hear people blaspheme God, we will act in a way that praises him. The good behavior expected of Assisi's citizens goes by the board.

The three Admonitions culminate in a restatement of the commitment that ends Chapter Seventeen of the Early Rule. Admonition XI tells the brothers to rise in passionate disapproval of the social design being spread abroad in Assisi and elsewhere. They have to show their love for others by promoting the social design of "true peace" (Early Rule XVII, 15) promised by the movement. The Admonition ends with a new formulation of the Franciscan ideal of self and service. A brother has nothing when he lives wholly within the action of the Spirit, guiding history into the groove of blessedness. It is clear, then, what is given to God. That has been defined at the end of Chapter XVII of the Early Rule. By implication, there was no doubt about the resolute opposition to Caesar.

Endnotes

[1]I say the early Franciscan writings and not the writings of Francis of Assisi because the writings arose within a social movement as instructional texts for the movement. Francis belonged to that association; he did not sit on some mountain, commune with God, and by his words mold people to some high purpose. That we have good grounds for calling early Franciscan history a social movement I have explained in *Work for Everyone*, Manila/Quezon City, 1995. My thanks to *The Cord* editors and Michael Blastic for help with this essay.

[2]See L. Pellegrini's study of the manuscript: "La raccolta di testi francescani del codice assisano 338" in *Revirescunt chartae* I (Rome, 2002), 289-340.

[3]I say Francis and his brothers, without adding "and his sisters," because the terminology of early Franciscan life arose through elaboration of the Early Rule and its

appendices, of which I consider the Admonitions the foremost texts. These writings were unquestionably part of the brothers' common life. We have no evidence ready at hand that women played a role in the basic considerations of the movement's life. I believe they did, but here is not the place to develop the historical argument I would offer to explain and perhaps to justify that belief.

[4]For a longer explanation of this point, see: *Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan Movement* (Manila/Quezon City, 1989), 91-100.

[5] See Early Rule XVII 12: "The spirit of the flesh . . . wants a public religion and a holiness that men can see." (*"Spiritus enim carnis . . . desiderat habere religionem et sanctitatem foris apparentem hominibus."*)

[6]See a longer development on *servire* and *servare* in: "And Never Talk to Strangers!," in process of publication.

[7]We find the contrast drawn sharply in Early Rule XVII 10-16.

[8]See the development "Constructing communication" in C. Grant's introduction to Rethinking Communicative Interaction (Philadelphia, 2003), 18.

[9]This is a psychologically healthy way of understanding the Franciscan life of service. We participate in goodness. It would, again, take us too far afield to lay that out in detail.

[10]See note 4.

[11]That is the term Francis uses for the text when he attaches a cover letter to its recent edition: Study what's in ista vita, study what's in the preceding chapters. See Early Rule XXIV.

[12]The idea of a Franciscan culture lies at the heart of the argument on the Rule of 1223 in: "Regulam melius observare," *Verba Domini Mei* (Rome, 2003), 329-61. Out of the learned labor sustaining the system came "the early Franciscan writings."

[13]This does not mean that they used the gospel texts without any involvement in the texts. It also does not mean that the gospels did not fit their need.

[14]In his study on Admonition VII ("'Dem Geist des Buchstabens folgen' Schriftlesung nach Admonitio VII des hl. Franziskus von Assisi" in *Domini Vestigia Sequi. Miscellanea . . . Boccali* (Poziuncola, 2003), 229-69), Johannes Schneider brings Chapter XVII of the Early Rule into play in his discussion of the Admonition's conclusion (262-63). However, he is reading the Admonition as a lesson in studying Scripture and not as a definition of the role of study in movement life. His context is theology and not history.

[15]Its occurrence there tells us that it belonged to the Franciscan vocabulary. It certainly works well in branding the implications of opposing the return of all good things to God.

[16]We have here a good example of a misleading title. The text does not counsel against envy; it explains that envy is blasphemy, for the reasons the text gives. As titles, "No Envy" speaks morally to the individual, whereas "No Blasphemy" strengthens the encompassing purpose of the Franciscan movement.

[17]See for example *Legenda maior*, III:9.

[18]Admonition VIII has to do with the terminology of Chapter XVII in the Early Rule. Admonition XVIII recalls the individual brother's commitment to return all that he has to God. In Admonition XVIII we have again a title at odds with the text's contents.

[19]See the essay on Admonition XII in the 1997 volume of *Vita Minorum*, pages 29-42. It presents this argument in more detail.

[20]We do not have Chapter XVII of the Early Rule as originally formulated, but as reworked. It was reworked in order to heed determinations made at the fourth Lateran council (November 1215). The vita was a living document, trying to keep up with a dynamic way of life as well as with the times.

[21]There is a reason for that, which has to do with the role of these Admonitions in Franciscan life, but that argument deserves an essay of its own.

[22]See J. Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford U. Press, 1997), Chapter 3, "Subjection, Resistance, Resignification," 83ff. See also J. Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* (MIT Press, 1992), Chapter 7: "Individuation through Socialization," 149ff.

[23]See note 8, above.

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The Cord, 55.2 (2005)

The Soul's Journey into God

Errol Kissinger

With Christ crucified
let us pass out of this world to the Father
so that when the Father is shown to us,
We may say with Phillip:
It is enough for us.
Let us hear with Paul:
My grace is sufficient for you.
Let us rejoice with David saying:
My flesh and my heart have grown faint;
You are the God of my heart, and the God who is my portion forever.
Blessed be the Lord forever and all the people will say:
Let it be; Let it be.
Amen.

In surveying Christian mystics through the medieval period, Bonaventure's *The Soul's Journey into God* re-appropriates a radical spirituality that is best articulated as wisdom theology. Excerpts from Bonaventure's major work will be used to illustrate an investigation of his spirituality. Harvey Egan describes this spirituality as an "integration of the Franciscan love of Christ's humanity with the Dionysian joy of finding God ultimately beyond all things in a mystical ecstasy of superluminous darkness."[1] This investigation of Bonaventure's spirituality begins by situating the text within its historical context and demonstrates Bonaventure's meaning of God, the human person, and how the God-human relationship is integrated with themes of creation theology and Trinitarian love mysticism.

From these understandings, it will become clear how Bonaventure empowers personal spirituality through what can be experienced as a power of radical contradictions–a recurring theme in Bonaventure's theology that communicates the authentic paradox, the parabolic experience, and the radical irony that inspires faith.

Bonaventure (c.1221-1274), following the spiritual path of St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226), stood at the crossroads of a new emerging spirituality. This

spirituality is situated in the thirteenth century, at the height of the development of medieval mysticism. This was a period of tension and transition in the realm of theology and spirituality. The monastic tradition of the prior era began to be transformed by an emerging scholastic theology that was highly influenced by Aristotle. Zachary Hayes explains that during the late eleventh century and on into the twelfth century, Aristotle's logic became better known. "This encouraged a more critical approach to human knowledge and a far more systematic approach to logical argumentation. This also offered different ways of developing ideas and thought through logic, physics, metaphysics, ethics, and so on. As this approach influenced the field of theology, it led to a far more dialectical style of theological development."[2]

This dialectical style of theological development united the Franciscan love of Christ's humanity with the tradition of intellectual theology. These two paths converged in the work of Bonaventure and created a form of wisdom theology, to be discussed below. Although Bonaventure's spiritual orientation is significantly Franciscan, there are many other pre-Franciscan Christian mystics who also influenced his spirituality.

Early Christian mystics influential in the works of Bonaventure include Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine of Hippo, and Pseudo-Dionysius. He was also significantly influenced by the symbolic character of creation and the spirituality of the inner way of Augustine, the dark apophatic mysticism of Pseudo-Dionysius as well as the threefold way of purgation, illumination, and consummation of Gregory of Nyssa.[3] From these diverse sources, Bonaventure developed a positive metaphysical significance of the external world of creation and human experience. Other medieval mystical writers such as Christian mystic Bernard of Clairvaux also contributed various themes on the primacy of love and living in the Trinity. This became expressive of a Trinitarian love mysticism that would shape Bonaventure's Christocentric mysticism. One may appropriate in Bonaventure's masterpiece, an understanding of his spirituality that combines the dominant themes of purgation, illumination, and consummation with St. Francis's submissive themes of love, humility, and humanity.

Bonaventure experienced the power of Francis's submissive forces of love, humility, and humanity in his extraordinary mystical experience on Mount LaVerna. Hayes employs the story of Bonaventure's miraculous vision on Mount LaVerna to elucidate the inspiration of his mystical theology and Christocentric spirituality. When Bonaventure ascends Mount LaVerna, in the footsteps of St. Francis, he experienced the same miraculous vision of the crucified seraph; a six-winged angel, whose three pairs of wings came to symbolize for him the three major phases of the soul's ascent to God. Bonaventure recounts his mystical experience in the prologue of his *The Soul's Journey into God* to which he gave the subtitle *The Mendicant's Vision in the Wilderness*. (Because of this vision

of the seraph, Bonaventure was later called "The Seraphic Doctor.") The mystical experience on Mount LaVerna became a mystical theology; which provided spiritual instruction centering on the unifying experience of the divine illumination. The trans-formative experience that Francis and Bonaventure received on Mount LaVerna is representative of the mystery of intellect and humanity that yearns for God.

The overall structure of *The Soul's Journey into God* takes its shape from the spiritual allegory of the seraph with six wings grouped in three pairs symbolizing the three major phases of illumination in the soul's ascent to God. Louis Dupré and James Wiseman provide a helpful analysis of the spiritual treatise:

> The first six of its seven chapters deal with six steps or degrees of ascent to mystical union with God: in the first two the mind turns outside itself to find God through the vestiges in the universe (chap. 1) and in the world of the senses (chap. 2); in the next two the mind turns within itself to contemplate God both through his image imprinted on our natural powers of memory, understanding, and will (chap. 3) and in this image reformed and purified by the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity (chap. 4); and in the last two the mind rises above itself to consider the divine Unity through its primary name, "being" (chap. 5), and also the blessed Trinity through its name, "the good" (chap. 6). Having here reached "the perfection of its illuminations," the mind is drawn on to mystical ecstasy.[4]

Bonaventure provides a body of spiritual wisdom for those who seek the knowledge needed for the ascent to the divine. King explains that "the six stages of ascent correspond to the six stages of the soul's power through which the ascent is made: sense, imagination, reason, intellect, intelligence and the illumination of conscience. The final ultimate goal beyond the six stages is not within the soul's power to reach. It is given as a gratuitous gift: a seventh stage of repose and illumination by supreme wisdom made possible through Christ as mediator. It is the seventh stage of mental and mystical elevation where all-intellectual operations cease, and one is confronted with the ultimate revelation of God.[5] The final goal of the seventh stage where this supreme wisdom is only made possible through Christ as mediator is expressed in the following passage from *The Soul's Journey*:

> But if you wish to know how these things come about,
> Ask grace not instruction,
> desire not understanding,
> the groaning of prayer not diligent reading,
> the Spouse not the teacher,

> God not man,
> darkness not clarity,
> not light but the fire
> that totally inflames and carries us into God
> by ecstatic unctions and burning affections.
> (Chapter 7, Section 6)

With this language one begins to experience Bonaventure's use of contradictory images (e.g., *desire not understanding, the groaning of prayer not diligent reading, the Spouse not the teacher, and God not man)*, which foretells what is to come. On the final stage of the journey a glimpse is given of another path where one can only ascend to Christ's divinity by descending to His humanity. Paradox. The final stage where one surrenders one's imagination, reason, intellect, intelligence and the illumination of conscience to arrive at the same place with the crucified Christ.

The *Soul's Journey into God* contains the description of God, the human person, and the God-human relationship. These realities are integrated with Bonaventure's themes of creation theology and Trinitarian love mysticism. Like his spiritual father, Bonaventure found God in all of creation; like Augustine, he also experienced God in the depths of the soul, and like Dionysius, he experienced God in all created reality articulating a creation theology of all matter and spirit flowing from God and returning to God. Egan describes Bonaventure's creation theology where "all creatures are shadows, echoes, pictures, vestiges, representations, footprints of the Trinity."[6] Furthermore Bonaventure connected the affective Franciscan love of Christ's humanity with the psychologically oriented Dionysian metaphysical joy of God. This dialogue of opposites is exemplified in the following passage:

> For if you are the Cherub
> contemplating God's essential attributes,
> and if you are amazed
> because the divine Being is both
> first and last,
> eternal and most present,
> utterly simple and the greatest or boundless,
> totally present everywhere and nowhere contained,
> most actual and never moved,
> most perfect and having nothing superfluous or lacking,
> and yet immense and infinite without bounds,
> supremely one and yet all-inclusive,
> containing all things in himself,
> being all power, all truth, all goodness –
> (Chapter 6, Section 6)

Here, the language of contradiction appeals to the intellect. This intellectual language appears in the six stages of the soul's power through which the ascent is made. In contrast to the language of the intellect is Bonaventure's language of Christ's humanity:

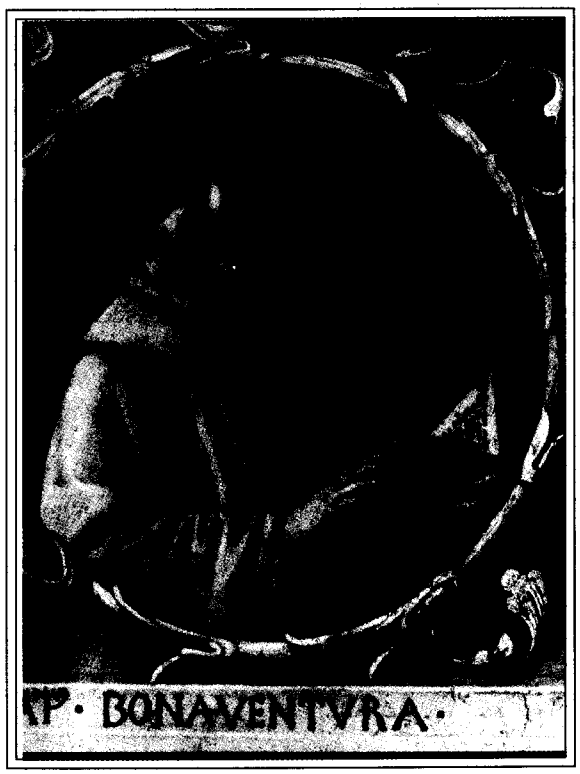
if you are this Cherub,
look at the Mercy Seat and wonder
that in him there is joined
the First Principle with the last,
God with man, who was formed on the sixth day;
the eternal is joined with temporal man,
born of the Virgin in the fullness of time,
the most simple with the most composite,
the most actual with the one who suffered supremely and died,
the most perfect and immense with the lowly,
the supreme and all-inclusive one
with a composite individual distinct from others,
that is, the man Jesus Christ.
(Chapter 6, Section 6)

Here, Bonaventure brings us to a seventh stage of Divine lumination. It is only "*the man Jesus Christ*" and not imagination, reason, intellect, intelligence and the illumination of conscience that can deliver one to God. Bonaventure makes the appeal that a supreme love must transcend our very being and radically surrender us in order to make the final ascent to divine illumination. His usage of contradictory language brings together the critical paths to divine ascent by way of both heart and mind. But it is precisely here that reason and love are mutually dependent on each other in order to make the journey home to God. In this affirmation, Bonaventure begins to articulate for us an image of the God-human relationship to be further explored below.

The language of *The Soul's Journey* for the God-human relationship, expressed in wisdom theology, overwhelmingly expands one's image of the journey to God through Christ. Just as Francis before him, Bonaventure presents the reality that only through the crucified Christ can we make our journey into God. Ursula King states that Bonaventure's spirituality is "inspired and motivated by the Franciscan devotion to the humanity and passion of the crucified Christ."[7] It is this wisdom theology that opened new insights into the humanity and passion of the crucified Christ together with a mysticism of Trinitarian love. This expanded image of the journey to God through Christ would not have come about if it were not for an awareness of Bonaventure's wisdom theology, which will be discussed below.

The convergence of the intellectual and spiritual traditions within the Aristotelian movement of Bonaventure's time articulated such a wisdom theology, which enhanced an understanding of the distinction between wisdom and knowledge. As alluded above, the monastic tradition of *doing* theology was giving way to a new style of thought developing within the university context, which pursued a study of pure theoretical knowledge. Hayes states that the convergence of the intellectual and the spiritual traditions developed a unique wisdom tradition that was concerned with the integration of all levels of reality into a unified vision of the world and multiple levels of human experience into a unified sense of the spiritual journey of humanity.[8] Hayes further remarks that *the goal of the journey is not to be a knower, but above all to be a lover.*[9]

As will be discussed below, Bonaventure insists that knowledge is not the ultimate goal in the spiritual quest, but rather one element along the way. Hayes states that "one can ask questions; one can make use of all classical disciplines to come to a deeper understanding of what it means to be a person of faith and what it is that Christians believe in and one can wish to have a deeper understanding of that which one loves."[10] Franciscan wisdom, as King states, "touches on the heart of human, cosmic and divine reality. Therefore, entering into the poverty of the cross of Jesus is to know and find there the compassionate wisdom of God from within God."[11] In an eleventh-century monastic context, Anselm of Canterbury described theology as "faith seeking understanding." Bonaventure's wisdom theology amplifies this definition.



A discussion of the Trinity and of Trinitarian love mysticism includes the Christocentric event in which the Christian faith journey begins. Bonaventure's account of the experience of Francis's experience on Mount LaVerna significantly influenced his image of the mystical Christ. The following passage from his *Life of St. Francis* provides a further clue in this context. He writes:

> Francis saw a seraph with six fiery and splendid wings descending from the highest point in the heavens. When the vision in swift flight came to rest in the air near the man of God, there appeared in the midst of the wings the image of a man crucified, with his hands and feet stretched out and nailed to a cross. Two of the wings were raised above his head and two were stretched out in flight, and two shielded his body. Seeing this, Francis was overwhelmed, and his heart was flooded with a mixture of joy and sorrow. He was overjoyed at the gracious way Christ looked upon him under the form of the seraph, but the fact that he was nailed to a cross pierced his soul with a sword of compassionate sorrow. . . .As the vision disappeared, it left his heart burning with a marvelous ardor and impressed upon his body an image of the signs which was no less marvelous. There and then the marks of nails began to appear in his hands and feet, just as he had seen them in his vision of the crucified man. (Chapter 13, Section 3)

This description of the crucified Christ presents an eschatological crossroad where divinity and humanity intersect. Following Bonaventure's description of the seraph, one may imagine an ascent by one's own intellectual illumination. At the moment when the seraph comes to rest on the cross, the anticipated glory of intellect and reason begins to fade into a thin mist where one is confronted with the crucified Christ. It is here that the power of the intellect becomes powerless and the weakness of vulnerable love becomes powerful. The radical reversal of the power and weakness can transform one's entire being. This can only be expressed by the ecstasy of the moment where one drops to one's knees in adoration and tears before God.

Bonaventure's synthesis of the compassion of Christ with the metaphysical mystical Christ demonstrates the supreme coincidence of opposites. He appropriates the humanity of Jesus and the divinity of the Christ into a mystical theology that allows one to ascend to the divinity of God by descending to one's humanity in Jesus. The following passage exemplifies this radical contradiction that is the paschal mystery:

> This fire is God,
> and his furnace is in Jerusalem;
> and Christ enkindles it
> in the heat of his burning passion,
> which only he truly perceives who says;
> My soul chooses hanging and my bones death.
> Whoever loves this death
> can see God because it is true beyond doubt that
> man will not see me and live.
> Let us, then, die

> and enter into the darkness;
> let us impose silence
> upon our cares, our desires and our imaginings.
> (Chapter 7, Section 6)

Bonaventure's phrase "Whoever loves this death can see God" presents the text's treatment of the human person. These words speak a new language in order to describe what is essential about dying in Christ. The text affirms the spiritual conviction that Christ is our journey, which brings about two realities; the reign of God to come and the reign of God now. In the reign of God to come, one is confronted with the eschatological reality of death and judgment. However, in the reign of God now, one knows that personal sinfulness must suffer and die in order for one to rise again. The paschal mystery essentially calls for suffering and death on some spiritual level before physical death. Only by dying to self can one obtain the poverty that God intended for His creation.

Bonaventure's use of contradictory language describes wisdom as a union in which "immensity is tempered by smallness; strength by weakness; clarity by obscurity; immortality by mortality; divinity by humanity; and riches by poverty."[12] Like the Greek Fathers, says Egan, "Bonaventure views the Father as the womb, or the "fontal fullness" of divine fecundity, the Son as the Father's perfect image, and the Holy Spirit as the mutual love of the Father and Son, or Gift, in and through whom all gifts are given."[13] It is within the Trinity that Bonaventure again contemplates the greatest coincidence of opposites.

In contemporary theological reflection, mirroring medieval era, Richard Rohr provides a description of the Trinity, articulating a Trinitarian love mysticism that expands the imagination through the "coincidence of opposites:"

> The Father symbolizes that part of God that demands and desires his sons and daughters to become all they can be, that demanding expectant part of God. . . .It's the expectant part of love, that part of love that pushes a bit. It's tough love. It is a necessary part of love. . . .Jesus for me represents that part of God that is wounded, that part of God that is losing, that part of God that is failing, that part of God that doesn't get his way, that part of God that is broken and that we celebrate in every Eucharist. That part of God who has involved himself in love and therefore is involved in the suffering of the world: the Lamb of God. . . .The Father and the Son perfectly accept one another from their different positions–the Son, the weak part of God, if you'll allow me that word, and the Father, the powerful part of God. Maybe the Father is the powerlessness of power and the Son is the power of powerlessness, which is precisely the image of Jesus. They complement one another. . . .In that relationship, is the dove symbolizing the

Holy Spirit. In that relationship, when each accepts the other, there is a huge explosion and release of power we call the Holy Spirit, the relationship between strength and vulnerability. There is the power. There is the passion. There is the water, there is the breadth, and there is the air, the wind. The Church is born in that creative love and tension between the Father and the Son.[14]

It is clear that Rohr's description of the Trinity was significantly influenced by the likes of Dionysius and Bonaventure. Nonetheless, Rohr appropriates a contemporary worldview of the Trinity using contradictory imagery to raise our consciousness of a relational Trinity. His description of Trinity illustrates the notion of "radical grace" which can comfort those wanting a deeper spirituality of love. The use of the term "radical grace" refers to both Bonaventure's and Rohr's appeal to this wisdom theology. It is through radical grace that the tension between the Father (the powerlessness of power) and the Son (the power of powerlessness) is reconciled by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, only faith sheds light on why the tension must exist.

The survey of Christian Mystics through Bonaventure's *The Soul's Journey into God*[15] articulates an unspoken spirituality of Trinity, Christ, and Creation and re-appropriates an image of God in all creation. One may find in Bonaventure's work a Franciscan journey from the crucified Christ, to the mystical Christ, to the unfathomable grasp that all creation is God. Through Bonaventure's *Soul's Journey*, the Trinity can significantly enrich and enhance the Christian tradition of theology.

Endnotes

[1]Harvey Egan, *An Anthology of Christian Mysticism* (New York: Liturgical Press, 1991), 235.
[2]Zachary Hayes, *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 20.
[3]Ursula King, *Christian Mystics: Their Lives and Legacies Throughout the Ages* (Mahwah: Hidden Spring, 2001), 78.
[4]Louis Dupré and James Wiseman, *Light from Light: An Anthology of Christian Mysticism* (New York: Paulist, 2001), 134.
[5]King, 78.
[6]Egan, 237.
[7]King, 78.
[8]Hayes, 38.
[9]Hayes, 38.
[10]Hayes, 39.
[11]King, 78-79.
[12]Egan, 237.
[13]Egan, 237.
[14]Richard Rohr, *Radical Grace: Daily Meditations* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony, 1995), 203-04.

[15]See Works of St, Bonaventure, Vol. II, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, ed. Philotheus Boehner, OFM and Zacahry Hayes, OFM (St. Bonaventure, NY:: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002).

Source of image on p. 67: *S. Bonaventura da Bagnoregio* (Rome: Ed. Antonianum), no date, 13. Artist: Benozzo Gozzoli, in the church of St. Francis in Montefalco.

Beyond the Pale

I. The brothers had no buildings at first
cloister unconsidered
not so the sisters
contained
(were they constrained?)
by stone and wood
sturdy enough
still standing after centuries

The grate, the grille
under lock and key
something precious
(not Gollum's but God's)
safe haven
sanctuary
nest
school of sanctity

II. The brothers pushing the envelope
outside the box
(Francis, really)
from the outside of enough
to the back of beyond and beyond

The sisters radiant within
glowing like a hearth
(Clare, bright exemplar)
warming
all nearby

Felicity Dorsett, OSF

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A Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving

Jude M. Rochford, OFM Conv.

My Lord, heavenly Father, we honor, praise and worship you. "You are our God, and we give thanks to you; our God, we extol you" (Ps 118: 28).

You, Oh Lord God, are the most good, the most powerful, the most loving and merciful. You are the Master of life, the Artist and Planner of all creation. Each form molded by your hands is good, beautiful in all its existence.

O Lord, the magnificent One, you created the sun, which guides us unto the morrow; the moon to change the seasons; the millions and millions of stars in their galaxies to guide our faltering steps. "He spoke and it was made; he commanded and it stood forth" (Ps 33:9).

You are the One, who nourishes the red earth with rain. It makes the grass grow for a variety of animals. You make the seed to unfurl, blossom and ripen, one fold, two fold, and a hundred fold. You fill the oceans and rivers with many aquatic species.

You, our Creator, have formed man and woman alone of all your creation into your own image and likeness to continue the work begun in Eden. As a sign of your love and trust you told them: "Taste and see how good the Lord is; happy the person who takes refuge in him" (Ps 34:9).

You calm the mighty storms; the savage beasts. At times we are prisoners of drought with nasty tongues. Stillness quiets the varied insects and birds of the air in pity as we languish in famine slowly lifting our beseeching eyes and our bare palms heavenward. Other times you give us a plentiful harvest to fill our bellies, calabashes, and bins overflowing.

O Lord our God, we thank you for these adverse and prosperous times. When abundant food is given our families you make us happy, cheerful, and thankful. Our "daily bread" makes us strong, healthy and wise as our ancestors of yesteryear. When we languish in hopelessness and brittleness of spirit, we hope to find your presence in our brothers and sisters to help us as we are unable to help ourselves.

As You give to us may we, too, give and share what we enjoy with others: truth, justice, mercy, righteousness, and unselfishness.

Humbled before You, O infinite God, hear our simple prayers. If it is your will in these times of scientific and technical progress as we prepare anew the planting of various, resourceful fields, may the seeds sowed enrich and better our lives and those of your many sons and daughters.

We depend upon You, O Lord, as your beloved creatures, to feed, clothe and care for us. If you turn your face away, darkness engulfs us. If you stop our breathing, we turn to fine dust. Only with your breath, new life begins and goes on and on into eternity.

Finally, we ask You, Ruler of heaven and earth, to bless the fruits of our labors. Bless us, our friends and strangers too. Let your love fall upon us and the whole universe like a soft, fine rain to gladden our hearts and grateful spirits. May we recognize and proclaim your goodness and love in our conversation in Faith over sin and weakness of the human will. We ask your forgiveness. Pardon us.


N. Parrendo

You created us for joy, O Lord of Creation. We thank You for the gift of creation and we ask you to listen to the prayerful hymns of the tillers of your various fields, as the work of creation continues with many hands.

Let heaven rejoice to invite and welcome us to your house and sit at table with You, your Son, Jesus, and the Spirit of Truth, with Mary, our mother, and all the angels and saints especially with Francis of Assisi, the patron of Ecology and the environment. Amen.

The Cord, 55.2 (2005)

"Make Vows To Your God And Fulfill Them" (Ps. 76)

Charles Finnegan, OFM

For many years it has been customary for a number of Franciscan communities to make a devotional renewal of profession on April 16th. On that date in 1208 Brothers Bernard and Peter became Francis's first followers, to be joined a few days later by Brother Giles. It was around that date a year or two later that Francis and his first eleven followers went to Rome and obtained verbal approval from Pope Innocent III for their way of life–radical gospel living, so radical that at first the Pope hesitated to approve it. On returning from Rome Francis and his brothers lived for some two years in Rivo Torto, the "first Franciscan friary." What Francis's first biographer recalls about those years of extreme poverty and first fervor was how happy Francis and his brothers were. (Cf. 1C 42). We could call it "Rivo Torto happiness." April 16th then is a date that reminds us of our humble and joyful beginnings as a Franciscan family. May it not also remind us of the joy we too experienced when we first made our profession as Franciscans? Of the sincerity with which we made that commitment? As the years go by should not each anniversary find us even more committed to the way of life we promised God we would observe all the days of our lives?

As an aid to the renewal of our Franciscan profession (whenever customary in your community) we review briefly St. Francis's very rich teaching on the religious vows. He mentions them explicitly in the first sentence of the Rule: we are to observe the holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ "by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity." That is the way we give God the whole of our life for all of our life. Since the virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience, according to each one's state in life, are important for all Franciscans, this reflection is offered to Secular Franciscans also.

In Obedience

Vatican II sees the vows not as ends in themselves but as ways to foster a life that is preeminently characterized by love. *Perfectae caritatis* is the title of

the council's Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life. The purpose of religious life is described in that Decree's first sentence: "the pursuit of perfect charity by means of the evangelical counsels." The vows are not ends in themselves but means to an end: living the great gospel command of love. In other words, if our religious vows do not help us to live lives that are more loving, they are not fulfilling their purpose.

That is the way St. Francis views the vows, and particularly the vow of obedience. In his Salutation of the Virtues, Francis greets the virtues as "ladies" and "sisters." What is distinctive in his list of virtues are not the virtues he mentions but the way he couples them, choosing in each couplet the two virtues that uniquely belong together. In each couplet the first virtue is the more important of the two, the "lady." The second is the lady's "sister," her faithful companion. Verse 3 of the Salutation reads:

> Lady, holy Charity, may the Lord protect you
> with your sister, holy Obedience.

Obedience is at the service of love. Francis sees obedience not as an escape from assuming adult responsibilities in one's life but as an expression of love for the community. It is loving cooperation with the community: "through the charity of the Spirit, [we] are to voluntarily serve and obey one another." (ER 5:14) All obey, since all are called to love and service. Obedience enables us to transcend the self, and leads us to live generously, with our time and with our talents. By obedience we give ourselves in faith to a cause bigger than we are: the Kingdom of God. Our Franciscan family exists to serve that Kingdom, and we are rightly convinced that by cooperating with it in cheerful obedience we do more for the Kingdom of God than by living independently, "doing my own thing."

Francis understands that obedience helps us to transcend that self-centeredness which is "living according to the flesh." Obedience helps us to live "according to the Spirit":

> Holy Obedience destroys every wish of the body
> and of the flesh,
> And binds its mortified body to obedience of the Spirit
> And to obedience of one's brother[/sister]. (SalV 14f)

"Obedience of the Spirit" and "obedience of one's brother/sister" go hand in hand, for faith-filled obedience frees us from our prejudices and biases, even our prejudices about what we are able to do or would be happy doing. Obedience stretches us, giving us opportunities to do things for the Kingdom of God that we would never have had outside our community.

Evangelical obedience is a call to generosity, not to passivity. Our documents call for obedience that is "responsible and active" and we are encour-

aged to "make our views known" to our ministers. The history of our Franciscan family is replete with examples of outstanding ministries that owe their beginning to the creativity and hard work of Franciscans at the grass roots and the wisdom of ministers who encouraged good creativity and approved those initiatives. In his letter on mission Pope John Paul II noted that the times we live in call for "new and bold endeavors" (*Redemptoris missio*, 66). Only obedience that is "responsible and active" will meet today's challenges.

Living "*Sine Proprio*"–Without Anything of One's Own

If anything is clear in the life of St. Francis, it is the absolute primacy of God. He expresses this clearly in his Praises written on Mount La Verna after receiving the Stigmata. Marveling at the stupendous grace given him he prays to God: "You are all our wealth. You are enough for us." Hence, the importance of poverty. If I am convinced that "God is enough," I will not clutter my life with things I do not need. Above all, I will not "appropriate anything, neither a house nor a place nor anything at all" (LR 6: 1).

What do I appropriate? Whatever impedes me from coming to God in prayer and saying honestly: "Lord God, you are all our wealth. You are enough for us." It need not be material things at all. Francis forbids appropriating an office, such as that of minister or preacher. (Cf. ER 17:4.) The sin of Adam consisted precisely in Adam's "appropriating his own will" to himself (Cf. 2nd Adm). Appropriating something so spiritual and close to us as our own will impede us from being poor, for appropriation takes away our freedom to focus totally on God and live an ever more God-centered life. When I appropriate, I am striving in some way to build up a kingdom for myself, rather than rejoice in being "the herald of the great King," as Francis wanted to think of himself (Cf. 1C 16.) So Francis does not appropriate even his own poverty, for then not having possessions could become his possession. History records instances of people who chose material poverty for reasons very different from those of Francis. For example, groups of Stoic philosophers chose very poor lives, saying in effect: "I don't need things, I only need me." Their poverty was a declaration of self-sufficiency; for Francis poverty is a declaration of God-sufficiency. Francis would say the Stoics were rich: they appropriated their own ego.

Evangelical poverty, much like living "in penance," frees us from idols that enslave us, promising fulfillment but failing to keep the promises they make. Poverty frees us to ground our whole existence on God and the free gift of God's love. Poverty convinces us that any other grounding is a false grounding. It is easy to believe St. Bonaventure's claim that Francis used to tell the friars that "we have chosen poverty as our only wealth" (LMj 7:6) and that "no man ever longed for wealth as much as Francis longed for poverty" (LtMin 3:5).

Evangelical poverty, while not calling us to live in destitution, will lead us to show compassion towards those who do. In his Testament Francis dates his conversion from his compassionate encounter with lepers–he then begins to redefine what is bitter and what is sweet. As Francis came to the end of his life he wanted to revisit the favorite places of prayer that had been especially dear to him, and go again among lepers and serve them. (Cf. 1C: 103.) These were the two great loves of his life. He lived in a radical way what we call today "the preferential option for the poor." That is an option, claims John Paul II "to which the whole tradition of the church bears witness" (On Social Concern, 42). To be Franciscan is to embrace that option whole-heartedly, even though the concrete ways of living that option will vary. Direct service to the poor is one way, and surely most Franciscans could do that at certain times. Another way is to study and proclaim the social teaching of the church, and see that teaching as "an essential part of the Christian message" (John Paul II in *Centesimus annus*, 5). We become God's own partners in the work of salvation when we strive to liberate the poor from degrading and dehumanizing poverty, for as Paul VI noted, salvation is "liberation from everything that oppresses human beings" (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, 9).

In Chastity

In his writings Francis uses the noun chastity twice, in both Rules: "living . . . in chastity." He speaks of a chaste body only once, in his 2nd Letter to the Faithful (v. 14). His major concern is to stress the importance of purity of mind and heart–of this he speaks often–by which he means a mind and heart totally focused on God, deeply in love with God and given to deep worship of God. Thus: "Let us love God therefore, and adore him with a pure heart and a pure mind, because he who seeks this above all else has said 'true worshippers will adore the Father in spirit and in truth'" (v. 19). Francis claims that "the pure of heart" are those "who despise the things of earth and seek the things of heaven, and who never cease to adore and behold the Lord God living and true with a pure heart and soul." (Adm 16) The pure of heart live *sine proprio*, totally free and available for God their only Lord, totally given to deep worship. To have a pure heart and mind is to "love the Lord God with all our powers, with every effort, every affection, every emotion, every desire, and every wish" (ER 23:8)–that is, completely, with everything we are and have. For St. Francis, bodily chastity follows from that.

Similarly, St. Clare, who sees chastity, purity and virginity to be a question of love and attachment to Christ. For her too bodily chastity follows from that:

When you have loved [Him – Jesus Christ],
you are chaste.
When you have touched [Him],
you become more pure.
When you have accepted [Him],
you are a virgin. (1LAg 8)

Franciscan religious embrace a life of chaste celibacy "for the sake of the Kingdom of God." Celibacy frees us to take risks for the Kingdom and is thus quite different from worldly bachelorhood/spinsterhood whose aim is a carefree and comfortable existence. We give up that which is good (e.g. holy matrimony) for the sake of that which is the only Absolute Good: the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom is not an abstraction or an ideology; it is God making Himself present to us; it is God's saving presence in the world. Since that is what Jesus came to bring, the Kingdom is the one thing He talks about more than anything else: "I have to go to other towns also to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom, because that is what I was sent to do" (Lk 4:43). And: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his way of righteousness, and all the rest will be given you besides" (Mt 6:33). There is the Kingdom, and everything else is "the rest." The two shortest parables in the gospels (Mt 13:44-46–the buried treasure and the pearl of great price) make the same point: nothing can be compared in value with the kingdom of God. Nothing can be allowed to compete with the Kingdom of God. Paul VI drew the obvious conclusion: "Only the Kingdom of God is absolute, everything else is relative" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 8). Surely that is why Francis spoke to his first followers "at great length about the Kingdom of God" and traveled tirelessly "through towns and villages" proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom (Cf. 1C 29 and 36). We do things for the Kingdom of God that we would not do for anything else. The more we appreciate the centrality of the Kingdom, the more we will esteem celibacy for its sake.

The scandals and heartbreak that have so distressed the church in recent months are due to failures by some priests and religious to keep their promise and vow of chastity. We cannot allow this to blind us to the beauty and nobility of human sexuality. Sexual abuses are heinous precisely because they are a desecration of something sacred. That which in God's plan is to be at the service of love and life is turned into an instrument of domination and oppression. A human being is treated as an object, made into an instrument of the abuser's selfish pleasure.

A positive outlook on human sexuality is an important support in living chaste lives. Contemporary authors frequently distinguish three realities: sex–sexuality–genitality. As Fran Ferder and John Heagle (in their *Tender Fires: The Spiritual Promise of Sexuality*) note that sex increasingly means sexual intercourse, or "having sex," a use first recorded by D.H. Lawrence. Genitality specifies biological, physical, or genital sexuality. Sexuality is a much broader term, and is increasingly understood as

> . . . love energy. It refers to the spiritual [sic!], emotional, physical, psychological, social and cultural aspects of relating to one another as embodied male and female persons. Sexuality . . . has to do with all the ways we try to reach one another at the level of the heart. It involves our efforts to communicate, our acts of tenderness. . . .It is the constantly burning fire within us that compels us to turn towards one another.[1]

Sexuality is thus understood nowadays as energy for relationships. As the same authors state:

> Any healthy experience of sexuality summons our participation in this energy known by many names: Friendship, Play, Parenting, Mentoring, Making love, Prayer. Each involves a unique interpersonal connection, a sharing of self with another, joining of spirit with spirit. The energy inherent in sexuality tugs at the heart and preoccupies the mind as it invites us into all types of interactions and relationships.[2]

> We are all immersed in the fragile beauty of our sexuality. Male and female, young and old, gay and straight, . . . we are all sexual, all the time. Unlike our genital feelings, our sexuality does not wax and wane. It is always with us. Its omnipresent energy urges us to connect in some way and on some level to one another–indeed to all creation.[3]

By the vow of chaste celibacy for the sake of God's kingdom we who are Franciscan religious renounce genital sexual activity, even as we thank God for the great gift of sexuality–a gift which Jesus Himself as a true human being also had, since he was like us in everything except sin. By this gift we share in God's own loving and creative powers. We take the vow of chastity not to love less but to love more, and chastity lived for the sake of God's kingdom is indeed *life-giving* in its own unique way. In that light Vatican II sees chastity as "an outstanding gift of divine grace given to some by the Father" (LG, 42). It is obviously not given to all or even to very many. When with the eyes of faith we see it as a gift we will be able to treasure it as a gift, recognizing that it is a fragile gift, and take all the means necessary to keep the gift unsullied. Married secular Franciscans, living in loving fidelity, live the virtue of chastity according to their calling, and thus become human expressions of the love that Christ has for His bride, the Church. That witness is also a great service to the Kingdom of God.

Conclusion

As every baker knows, you need a lot of flour for baking but only a little yeast. We were never meant to be the flour in the church. We are meant to be yeast. To fulfill its purpose, yeast has to be alive. April 16th is a good opportunity to heed St. Paul's advice: "Rekindle the gift that is within you."

April 16th provides us again this year, perhaps with special urgency, the opportunity to undertake an examination of conscience, without scrupulosity but with honesty. If it is true that the much-publicized violation of vows has done terrible damage to the church, it is also true that living the religious vows with ever growing fidelity does enormous good. The same is true of fidelity in marriage. Contemporary men and women are very keen on authenticity and Paul VI was surely right when he claimed that people today "pay more attention to witnesses than to teachers." (EN, 41) The Franciscan approach to evangelization always gives priority to witness, including the witness of "a simple Franciscan presence." We need to ask the Holy Spirit to show us the ways in which we might live more faithfully and more joyfully the very high ideal St. Francis left us, and empower us "to begin to serve the Lord God, for until now we have done but little" (1C 103)–like Francis, "always new, always beginning again" as both Celano and Bonaventure say of him. All Franciscans are called to do nothing less than experience "the joy of the Gospel" and bring that joy to others.

If the devotional renewal of our Franciscan profession is really sincere we will surely experience again the joy we felt when we made our first profession, and by God's grace, perhaps even something of the "Rivo Torto joy" experienced by Francis with his first brothers. As we make this devotional renewal of profession, we pray to God with the psalmist: "So I will always praise your name, and day after day fulfill my vows" (Ps. 61).

Endnotes

[1]New York, 2002; see page 29.
[2]Ferder and Heagle, 34.
[3]Ferder and Heagle, 27.

Evangelical poverty, much like living "in penance," frees us from idols that enslave us, promising fulfillment but failing to keep the promises they make. Poverty frees us to ground our whole existence on God and the free gift of God's love. Poverty convinces us that any other grounding is a false grounding.

Writing in Assisi

Even now
nearing seventy,
there is the daily making:
pen against paper,
curling letters into words
solid and smooth as the wood
of the carver whose cave-like studio
I pass each morning
on my way for cappuccino and broche.
He keeps his mallet and chisel
warm against the chipping wood
to feed his family. But I suspect
he chips away every day,
mallet to chisel to wood,
to surprise himself
with something more than food.

Murray Bodo, OFM

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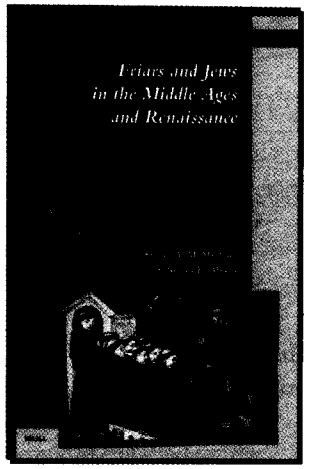

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Holy Week Preached Retreat. March 20-27, 2005. Sunday,7:00 p.m.-Sunday, 11:00 a.m.

Discovering Our Hope for New Life. Bernard Tickerhoof, TOR. Somewhere beneath the ground lies the seed that will sprout into new life. Somewhere within the Passion of Jesus lies the seed that will sprout into resurrection. This retreat will focus on the seed of hope that offers us transformation. At The Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston, PA. Contact Helen Budzik, OSF 610-558-6152 or email: fsc@osfphila.org.

Weekend Retreat. April 15-17, 2005. Friday 7:00 p.m.-Sunday 1:00 p.m.

Dancing with Disease. Ann Schehr, MS, CRC. this retreat uses presentations, group discussion, music, movement, guided imagery, and mindful eating to focus on identifying patterns that feed the disease of compulsive eating. At The Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston, PA. Contact Helen Budzik, OSF 610-558-6152 or email: fsc@osfphila.org.

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Fr. Loman MacAodha, OFM. This year's retreat centers on Jesus Christ, the Risen One, our mediator in the presence of the Father. His spirit draws us into the ministry of forgiveness and peacemaking. We join in the struggle to bring God's blessing to a pilgrim and struggling people. At The Franciscan Center, 3010 N. Perry Avenue, Tampa, FL 33603-5345.(813) 229-2695. E-mail: francntr@tampabay.rr.com.

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