

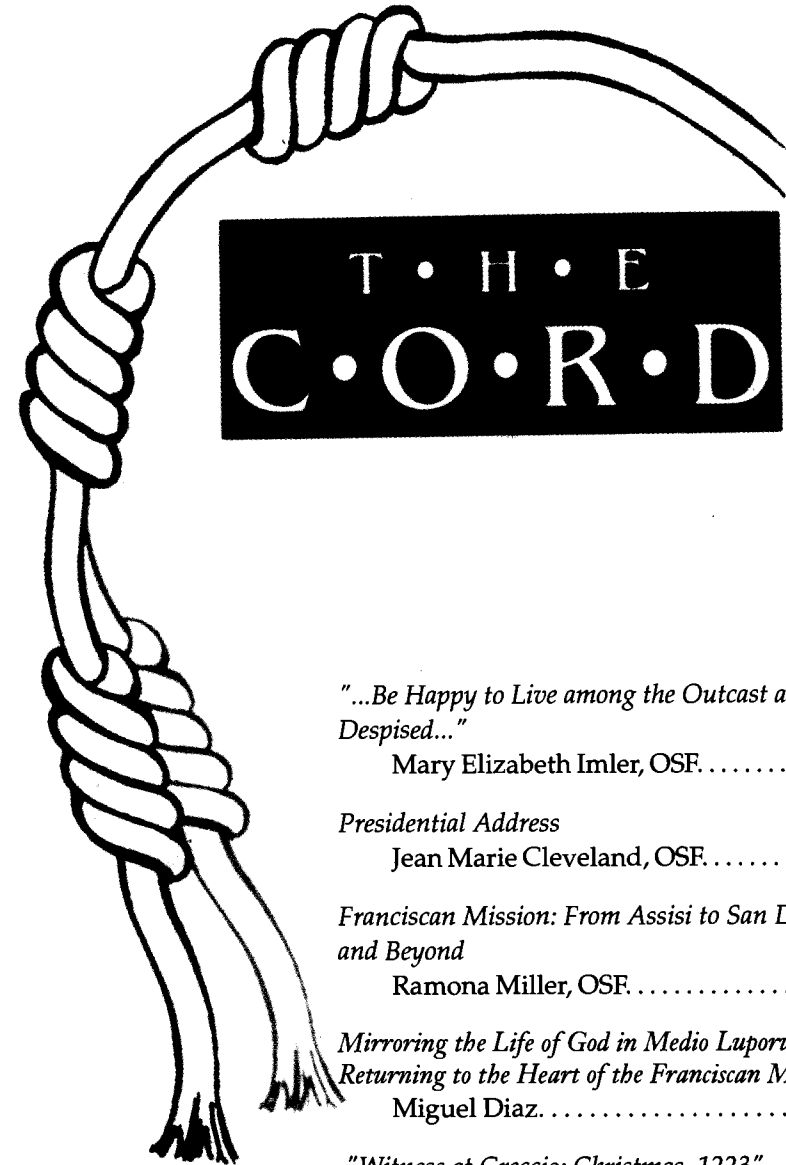
# A WORD FROM BONAVENTURE

Now there are three topics that we should consider with regard to the Incarnate Word: the union of natures, the fullness of gifts, and the suffering of the passion for the redemption of the human race. Concerning the union of natures, we have to ponder these . . . points in order to grasp the mystery of the Incarnation, namely, what occurred, how it occurred, and when it occurred.

St. Bonaventure's *Breviloquium*  
Part IV, Chap. 2.1

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**THE CORD**  
**A Franciscan Spiritual Review**

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To save unnecessary delay and expense, contributors are asked to observe the following directives:

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**.  
Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or **italicized**.
4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be **footnoted**, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, **with period** following the closed parenthesis. For example:

(1Cor. 13:6).      (2Cel 5:8).  
(RegNB 23:2).      (4LAg 2:13).

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

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*The Cord*, 55.6 (2005)

## Editorial

Most of the pages of this issue emanate from the proceedings of the Franciscan Federation Conference held in July, 2005, in San Diego. Each year we also try to highlight in the last issue of the year some level of focus upon Third Order Regular values. And, of course, it is the issue that leads us into the celebration of the feast of Christ's birth in our world. Linking all these together is a bit of a challenge.

The pieces by Jean Marie Cleveland, Miguel Diaz, and Ramona Miller, all based upon presentations at the Federation conference, provide us with insight into the common elements inherent in Franciscan Mission today, while also showing us how to welcome Christ into our lives through attention to the needs of the marginalized. We are called to return to the "heart" of Franciscan life by acknowledging how far from the ideal our daily life can be.

Mary Elizabeth Imler's piece, which opens this issue, recounts a moment of encountering the lepers who are with us still, 800 years after the time of Francis. Joy in the midst of pain is still possible, as she so eloquently reveals. And, lastly, Andrea Barone shares with us her thoughts on the first Greccio experience. We hope all of the authors touch you with grace!

And, who better to help me send out the best possible Christmas wishes to all our readers than Zachary Hayes? His comments about the theology of St. Bonaventure (found in *The Hidden Center*), will, I hope, set the tone for the coming of the Incarnate Word once again:

[I]n many sermons, the birth of Christ, the mystery of His earthly origin, opens up the mystery of origins in broader terms. In the literal sense the texts of Scripture present the historical elements of the birth-scene of Christ. . . . [And] the same scene evokes in the reader an awareness of origins in the spiritual life and presents the conditions for one's own birth in Christ. **Bethlehem is the house of bread; and the child in the manger is the bread of those who are simple and humble in spirit.** . . . The basic conditions of the following of Christ are given in the poverty and humility of Christ and in the poverty, simplicity and vigilance of the shepherds; for the signs of the divine presence can be found only by those who are poor and simple in spirit.

May we all become signs of the divine Presence!

*Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF*

**“... Be Happy to Live among the Outcast  
and Despised ...”**

Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF

There is a certain romantic feeling around the disease of leprosy for Franciscans. This is rooted in the legends of Francis and Clare and carried on down through the ages right into modernity, sadly because the disease continues to manifest itself. Since ancient times, leprosy has been recorded as a contagious, mutilating and incurable disease. On my most recent visit to our missions in northern Brazil, I felt the call to visit the neighboring leprosarium in Marituba, one of three active government-funded sites in the state of Para. As a novice in the 1980s, I remember cutting and rolling strips of old sheets to pack in mission barrels for the “lepers” where our Sisters would visit. Then, my heart was filled with that romantic zeal to follow in the footprints of Francis and Clare, but was I any different now?

It was an ordinary day, rising before the sun broke the horizon at six, refreshed by the cold shower in the morning warmth. It was my turn to walk to get breakfast bread and be back for prayers. Everyone gathered by eight o'clock to catch the connection of buses from Icoaraci to Marituba. The eight of us, including our two newest novices leading the way, traveled with ordinary commuters, on an ordinary bus route, but was ours any different?

Our arrival was rather quiet because this was not the ordinary time for visitors. The complex was quite modern-looking, different from the grass huts with branches to hang clothes on that I had heard about as a novice. The Brazilian government has been very active working since the 44<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly Resolution in May, 1991. The World Health Organization and its partners continue to work for the global elimination of leprosy as a public health problem as set in 1990. Although WHO hailed reaching the goal to decrease the level of leprosy in the world by over 90%, there are six countries in which full control has eluded them: Brazil, India, Madagascar, Mozambique, Myanmar and Nepal. In 1985, four million were affected; in 1997, there were an estimated 1.2 million cases in the world, most of them concentrated in Southeast Asia, Africa and the Americas. The number of new cases detected in

the new millennium worldwide each year is now about half a million. It is estimated that there are between one and two million people visibly and irreversibly disabled due to past and present leprosy who require care from the communities in which they live.

We were directed to the convent and greeted by the sisters, sharing diocesan news and, of course, a cup of *cafezinho*. The Sisters explained that today the diagnosis and treatment of leprosy is easy; however, access to correct information, diagnosis and early treatment is essential. When *M. leprae* was discovered by G.A. Hansen in 1873, it was the first bacterium to be identified as causing disease in humans. However, treatment for leprosy only appeared in the late 1940s with the introduction of dapsone and its derivatives. Leprosy bacilli resistant to dapsone gradually appeared and became widespread, but this form is now controllable with a multi-drug therapy though the effects are not reversible.

We were told about the disease and the treatments by the one Sister with medical background, “Leprosy is a chronic infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*, an acid-fast, rod-shaped bacillus.” Matter of factly, she added that the disease mainly affects the skin, beginning with a small patch, then peripheral nerves, mucosa of the upper respiratory tract and also the eyes, apart from some other structures. Leprosy has afflicted humanity since time immemorial. These are ways of suffering acutely, but in the early stages of the disease, perhaps before the victim knows s/he has been infected, no suffering whatsoever is experienced. It once affected every continent and it has left behind a terrifying image in history and human memory—of mutilation, rejection and exclusion from society.

We asked about contagion and were informed paradoxically that of all the communicable diseases, leprosy is the least contagious; it is probably spread by airborne droplet infection. It is difficult to catch and cannot be caught by a handshake. Over 95% of people are immune and after only a couple days' treatment, sufferers are no longer infectious. They can return to their families and homes, if they are welcomed. But then this is the work of the other twelve Sisters in residence.

Leprosy has struck fear into human beings for thousands of years, and was well recognized in the oldest civilizations of China, Egypt and India. Although leprosy can reduce one's life span, it is not a killer disease. It is chronic suffering and fear that drive the victim to despair, we were told. I remembered that one of the most tragic ways victims of leprosy suffer is to be outcast from society. Several of the patients have begged to be killed, to put an end to their torment. Not a few told that they could bear the loss of fingers, toes or even hands and feet, also eyes. What they could not tolerate is to be cut off from the human race. The Sisters do mostly counseling and spiritual companioning with the patients and for their families.

The time for talk was coming to an end. During the tour of the Sisters' house we were asked if we really wanted to visit the colony, and timidly we just kept following the path opening before us. The first stop was the small chapel with beautiful Brazilian green and yellow stained glass windows. These opened up onto a grassy knoll so that there was enough room for everyone to attend the services. My eye caught the wooden carved corpus hanging dominantly in the small space just beside the Blessed Sacrament. What was so remarkable was that it was only the corpus; there was no cross! The ordinary was extraordinary. "We carry Christ's cross!" she said. This was the realization of Francis: "Take up your bodies and carry his holy cross" (OfP Ps XV). This was not a Lenten admonition but a daily, very real call for the people here to walk the ways of ordinary times.

Slowly, we walked from the craft room where I purchased an incomplete set of hand-painted napkins and left a donation for the beautiful work. The woman had lost too many fingers to complete her painting project, the instructor remarked. We moved to the garden of banana trees and rows of vegetables tended by several men, each missing some extremity but working proudly for the day, laboring under the sun. At first everyone was at a distance; we simply looked on from afar. Slowly our gazing brought us to know that these people were not statistics and facts we had learned. Our eyes, through the grace of God, brought us to consider their humanity. Our minds, touched by the amazing grace of the moment—a desire to imitate—opened our mouths to speak a greeting or reach out to touch a shoulder, or shake a hand. Gently we were drawn into conversations. We were drawn beyond the threshold of the rooms and entered into the sacred space of the other by invitation. This ordinary movement felt extraordinarily courageous at the time.

From around the corner came music and songs and a name, Walter. Here, language differences dissolved into a harmony of humble making. I was moved beyond the gazing, past the considering into a contemplative space I will long remember. My fingers complemented his remaining digits, making chords on his small keyboard he could only remember. I was taken up into the holiness of this sacred time and place as my eyes met his. In that moment we were simply brother and sister united in the cosmic Christ. In my soul, I could feel the tears swelling in our eyes not in pity or sadness but in a harmony dreamt by our God in the beginning of time. How long we were elevated, I cannot know.

Just before I left, Walter and I embraced and he whispered in my ear, "*Lembra!*" (Remember!) Was it my privilege to make a chord for Walter to remember? Could it be that I was to remember the call of Clare to gaze, consider, and contemplate not just in prayers but in imitation on our daily travels? Was Christ begging each of us to remember Francis's call to "take up our bodies and carry his holy cross" as we came down from this sacred moment? I



only know I will never forget this very ordinary encounter on an ordinary day's visit to one of the ordinary leprosariums in northern Brazil. The departure was simple, the bus ride back very quiet. I understand differently what our TOR Rule and Life means to "be happy to live among the outcast and despised, among the poor, the weak, the sick, the unwanted, the oppressed, and the destitute" (#22). It was a great privilege to be among these "outcasts." There was such a sacred exchange, a mutuality as instruments helping find a measure of dignity in hearts now no longer ordinary. Nothing has changed, yet everything is different as I dare to enter the sacred space of my Sisters, when I dare to be drawn into that contemplative oneness of God. May I remember that romantic but very true Franciscan reality in the encounter with a leper whose name is brother/sister simply bearing their chronic illness, their cross whose name is also sister/brother. This is revealed to me, and in the now of every step I take to take up my body, my cross in my circumstances and time and place! May I always remember!

This reflection was inspired by the Central New York Gathering in Syracuse, NY, March 14-18, 2005, after touring the new shrine for Mother Marianne Cope. This Third Order Regular religious was beatified in Rome on May 14, 2005.



## Presidential Address

Jean Marie Cleveland, OSF

Peace and All Good! Welcome to San Diego! When the planning committee met here in January, we marveled at the significance of gathering at the Sheraton FOUR POINTS to discuss mission. Being sent to the Four corners of the earth—north, east, south, and west; preserving the four elements—earth, air, fire, and water; ministering with and for the four races—red, yellow, black (brown), white; looking forward to the four seasons—spring, summer, fall, winter; and pondering the four points of the Jerusalem Cross chosen for our logo! Coincidence? Or the Spirit's guiding us?

### Return To The Mission: Heart Filled World Of Exchange!

We Third Order Regular Sisters, Brothers, Friars, and our Associates and friends gather to examine our mission in today's world—the twenty-first century. We come from all corners of the country to reconnect with each other, to look at where we have been, and to contemplate where we are to go.

We return to San Diego the birthplace of the Franciscan mission in California. We pray in this place of Four Points and we ask for the grace to ponder with each other what we have pondered with our individual Congregations! What is our Mission?

Let us begin by looking at *The Rule and Life of The Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis and Commentary*. (Article 2)

With all in the holy Catholic and apostolic Church who wish to serve the Lord, the brothers and sisters of this order are to persevere in true faith and penance. They wish to live this evangelical conversion of life in a spirit of prayer, of poverty, and of humility. Therefore, let them abstain from all evil and persevere to the end in doing good because God the Son himself will come again in glory and will say to all who acknowledge, adore and serve him in sincere repentance: "Come blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world."

Sister Margaret Carney, OSF, and Father Thaddeus Horgan, SA who authored the Commentary on the Third Order Rule state, "This second article notes the centrality of *metanoia* (conversion) in our Order's spirituality. It is the root value of our tradition and flowers forth in poverty, minority and contemplation. This article, therefore, is the **charism statement** of the Third Order Regular."

For our Mission to be authentic it must be grounded in these four values: metanoia, poverty, minority, and contemplation. As we "Return to the Mission" we must "Return to the Rule". We must continue to do what our Congregations have been doing: "Return to our Roots"—"Return to our Franciscan Spirituality"—"Return to the vision of our foundresses/founders" but looking to the twenty-first century. What would they do if they were here today?

As I reflect on that question, my mind turns to **Freeing the Fire**, the process built on 2Tim: 1-6 "Fan into flame the gift you have been given" or, as another version reads: "Rekindle the gift of God that is within you." As part of its report to the Franciscan Federation Board and to you assembled here, the Freeing the Fire Task Force asks us to Imagine the Possibilities.

### Imagine the Possibilities

... of reaching through and beyond our individual charisms to embrace our common Third Order Regular Rule and Life;

... of incarnating collectively the goodness and love present in all God's creation;

... of igniting our passion to effect systemic change in our world.

These possibilities come from the work of the Task Force which conducted three assemblies—in Washington, in Frankfort, and in Hastings-on-the-Hudson. These assemblies concentrated on Sister Ilia Delio's message to us in a video made at the 2003 Annual Federation Conference and on the **four flames** identified by the Task Force:

The Flame of the Gospel

The Flame of Our Franciscan Evangelical Identity

The Flame of Our Global Community

The Flame of Our Ecclesial Relationship

**These flames spring from our Rule.**

### The Flame of the Gospel from Article 11

Since the sisters and brothers are to be totally conformed to the Gospel, they should reflect upon and keep in their hearts the words of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the word of God, as well as the words of the Holy Spirit which are "spirit and life" (Jn 6:63).

### The Flame of Our Franciscan Evangelical Identity from Article 1:

The form of life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis is this: to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience, in poverty and in chastity.

### The Flame of Our Global Community from Article 29:

Sent into the whole world, they should give witness by word and work to God's voice and make known to all that only God is all-powerful.

### The Flame of Our Ecclesial Relationship from Article 2 and Article 32:

With all in the holy Catholic and apostolic Church who wish to serve God, the brothers and sisters of this Order are to persevere in true faith and penance.

Always obedient to the church and firmly established in the Catholic faith, let them live according to the poverty, the humility and the holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ which they have solemnly promised to observe.

Knowing the basis for our flames (the Rule), we connect them with the possibilities (mentioned above) and realize the importance of these possibilities. The Freeing the Fire Task Force, in cooperation with the co-chairs for each flame group, prioritized the twenty-three recommendations from the flame groups. The Task Force suggests that we concentrate on the first nine. How do these possibilities and recommendations lead us to examine our lives and our mission?

**Imagine the possibilities** of reaching through and beyond our individual charisms to embrace our common Third Order Regular Rule and Life. In examining this possibility, we are asked to:

Develop a process like base communities (like *Christ Renews His Parish*, etc.) to bring Franciscans together to share regularly—Franciscan life groups—that will enable Franciscan congregations to work together on a common purpose. (Evangelical Identity)

Research and use resources already available to provide specialized education programs to get Franciscans exposed to the intellectual tradition (similar to three years of programs for the Poor Clares. (Evangelical Identity)  
Provide continued education and study on our Franciscan Third Order Regular Rule and Our Third Order charism and the integration of our

individual congregations' charisms within the Third Order Charism. (Evangelical Identity)

**Imagine the possibilities** of incarnating collectively the goodness and love present in all God's creation. In examining this possibility, we are asked to:

Identify and develop a networking system for Franciscan art, symbol, and ritual. (Gospel)

Develop reflection tools focusing on incarnational theology as expressed in scripture and Franciscan sources. (Gospel)

Invite a Franciscan to create a "white paper" that addresses the process of gaze upon, consider, contemplate and live the Gospels, as a template to approach life for action. (Gospel)

Develop/conduct a retreat or assembly experience for educating and reflecting on incarnational and Christological dimensions of the gospels. (Gospel)

**Imagine the possibilities** of igniting our passion to effect systemic change in our world. In examining this possibility, we are asked to:

Hire a national Justice and Peace Coordinator at the Franciscan Federation. (Global Community)

Create healing services for use in groups: parishes, retreats, etc. (Ecclesial Relationships)

During the next two years, the continuing Freeing the Fire Task Force (appointed by the National Board at its July 10 meeting), the National Board, and the National Office will determine which of the possibilities are feasible at this time. They will continue to present assemblies using Sister Ilia Delio's video on Religious Life and Sister Mary Elizabeth Imler's video on Franciscan Life and Federating which she made during the 2004 Federation Conference. The Spirit and Life Committee and our Franciscan scholars have already been working on similar ideas. Regional gatherings have focused on some of them. What if we determined to turn these possibilities into realities? What if we dreamed of making a difference—together?

Each of the eighty Congregations belonging to the Franciscan Federation was asked to send the Federation a copy of its Mission statement. Throughout the conference you will find these statements shown on the screens. Look at them. What do you see? Sister Dianne Kaimann, OSF studied them and discovered that they contain eight main threads:

Following the example of Francis, Clare, and our Foundresses/founders  
 Being centered in God  
 Living the Gospel–Evangelical Life  
 Living in Simplicity and Joy  
 Meeting the Needs of Our Time  
 Serving the Poor  
 Committing Ourselves to Peace and Justice  
 Respecting All Creation

It seems to me that if we look at our main threads, we have a common Mission Statement:

*We, the members of the Franciscan Federation, follow the example of Francis, Clare, and our own Foundresses/Founders. Centered in God, we base our lives on the Gospel, living in simplicity and joy. We strive to meet the needs of our time through serving the poor, committing ourselves to peace and justice, and respecting all creation.*

I wonder if there will come a time when we recognize our unity while celebrating our diversity. When Federating will be a way of being for us. I believe that by working with Freeing the Fire, by cooperating in regional areas, by participating in National Conferences, by finding ways to support the Federation with the resources of personnel and finances, we will find ways to be one while remaining different Congregations.

There are some concerns for us working with the Federation and for you the members. How do we balance the role of the regions with that of the whole Federation? How do we determine the role of leadership in the Federation? Who is eligible to become an officer? How do we see our organization changing with regard to leadership and grassroots participation? How do we want it to be in the future? What should we include in our statutes? How much should we be governed by Robert's Rules of Order? Is there another way? How do we establish a realistic budget and live by it? How do we find more resources and sources of income? How do we establish guidelines for socially-conscious fund raising and financial investment?

These and other questions face us in the future. They will be addressed at Board meetings beginning Friday and will be topics for leadership assemblies in the years to come. My hope is that there will be involvement from both leadership and grassroots in the future. I believe, however, that leaders need a place to meet and discuss topics of concern to them. We in leadership are placed there – for a time – by the members of our Congregations. We gain much from gathering once a year to discuss issues facing us as Franciscan leaders.

Next July will be a special time for us as we gather in Rochester, NY, to devote time to prayer and spirituality. We await the distribution of the Franciscan Prayer Book which is scheduled to be a part of that assembly. We look forward, too, each year to the pre-conference reflection materials which are prepared for us by the Spirit and Life Committee. Post-conference materials are available to the regions and to the Congregations.

We thank those who help with the finances of the Federation—a never ending battle of long standing. Much has been done during the past years to determine a realistic budget. It seems that we have accomplished that. Now we need to find the funding to meet the income needs.

It has been an incredible three years for me on the Executive Committee of the Franciscan Federation. I cannot explain all that I have experienced during that time—both as a President and as a member of the Freeing the Fire Task Force. I have met wonderful people—especially in your convents around the country. I realize ever more the joy of being Franciscan—of working with other Franciscans whose values I share. It is impossible to tell you how much I have learned from each of you. Or to share with you how much is contributed by our Congregations so that we can have a Federation that has endured for forty years.

I would like to recognize some people who make all this possible.

- National Office
- Executive Committee
- Region Representatives to the National Board
- Prayerbook Committee and those who labored with the prayerbook
- Freeing the Fire Committee, those who developed the Culture and Tradition section, the flame co-chairs, those who have attended an Assembly
- The Spirit and Life Committee, and all who designed and wrote
- The Finance, Scholarship, Investment Committees and all who shared wisdom
- Office help
- Region VI and all who are coordinating this Assembly

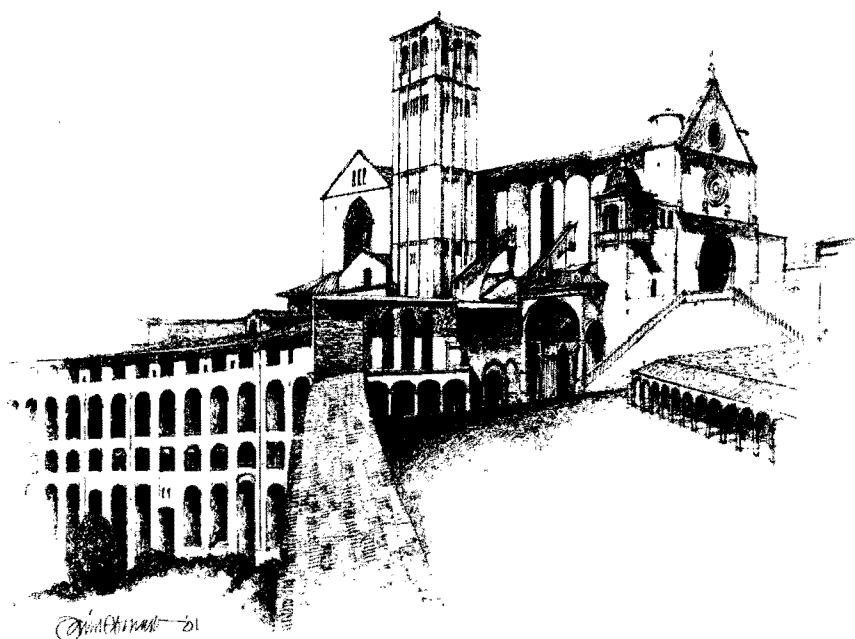
Thank you, all of you who have come to explore our Franciscan Mission in the twenty-first century. We have much to do to absorb what we hear and to make it part of our lives. Let us determine to work together to build the City of God. Let us challenge one another. . . .

Awake from your slumber! Arise from your sleep!  
 A new day is dawning for all those who weep.  
 The people in darkness have seen a great light.  
 The Lord of our longing has conquered the night.

Let us build the city of God.  
 May our tears be turned into dancing!  
 For the Lord, our light and our love,  
 Has turned the night into day!

We are sons of the morning; we are daughters of day.  
 The One who has loved us has brightened our way.  
 The Lord of all kindness has called us to be  
 A light for his people to set their hearts free.

Daniel L. Schutte  
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## Franciscan Mission: From Assisi to San Diego and Beyond

Ramona Miller, OSF

What a great moment for us here in San Diego celebrating 236 years since the beginning of Franciscan mission in this city. My dear sisters and brothers, it is such a privilege for me to speak about our lives, about our Franciscan mission, about the progress we are making for God that builds on the past missionary activity of such great persons as Father Junipero Serra. Fr. Serra arrived here on July 1 in 1769 and on July 16<sup>th</sup> celebrated the first Mass for the Mission San Diego de Alcala.<sup>1</sup> His life and ours have similarities in our Franciscan mission.

### Mission

So what makes mission Franciscan? Christianity is missionary by its very nature. Each baptized person participates in God's mission of communicating God's love for the entire world. Mission has its origin in the heart of God; God, *fontalis plenitudo*, the fountain of love.<sup>2</sup> I propose that Franciscan mission is a refraction of Christian mission, and that Franciscan mission particularly reveals God's love in three ways: 1) Heart transformation, 2) Life with the marginalized, and 3) Cosmic horizons. As we meditate on the Gospels for heart transformation, live with the marginalized and peer toward the expanding cosmic horizons, we share in God's love, which is generative and self-diffusing. These qualities set in motion an energy that resonates with the goodness in others. In this presentation, I will offer an overview of Franciscan mission from Assisi to San Diego. I will speak about the beginnings of Third Order Regular mission in the United States, and I will suggest how our future may further exemplify heart transformation and life with the marginalized while having our eye on cosmic horizons.

### Heart Transformation

Franciscan mission expressing heart transformation began in February 1208 when Francis of Assisi attending Mass at the Portiuncula *heard those things which Christ tells the disciples who were sent to preach, instructing them to carry no*



gold or silver, a wallet or a purse, bread, walking stick, or shoes, or two tunics. (L3C 25).<sup>3</sup> Francis heard the Gospel as a personal directive and his life was forever changed, changing history and the mode of missionary activity of the Church.<sup>4</sup> Much has been written about the dramatic conversion stories of Francis, the events that transformed his heart from an ambitious knight in Assisi's army to the poor beggar with the lepers. The effectiveness of Francis's explicit preaching of the Word was because his life as well was a sermon. In addition, his itinerant lifestyle reflected his desire to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, which in turn developed his passionate love of God. His passion for God overflows in the Exhortation to the Faithful:

O how glorious it is to have a holy and great Father in heaven! O how holy, consoling to have such a beautiful and wonderful Spouse! O how holy and how loving, gratifying, humbling, peace-giving, sweet, worthy of love [...] to have such a Brother and such a Son, our Lord Jesus Christ (1LtF 11-13).

Francis concludes the exhortation by paraphrasing Jesus' prayer for unity as found in John's Gospel, "*may they all be one, as You and I are one*" (John 17:21). The longing that Jesus has for all to be with Him in heaven becomes Francis's longing, a desire that all who hear the Word of God will turn away from vice and be happy and blessed in living the Gospel life. The Gospels resonated in Francis's heart setting up his agenda for living and preaching.

His preaching flowed from his prayer life, and from his meditation on the Gospels. Heart transformation took place in daily increments as he sought *to live according to the pattern of the holy Gospel* (Test 14). He unsettled those who enjoyed entitlements with positions of leadership and power because he taught that we *must never desire to be above others, but instead, we must be servant and subject to every human creature for God's sake* (2LtF 47). The starting point in Francis's mission was the greeting: *May the Lord give you peace* (1 Cel 23).<sup>5</sup> Francis's voice served as a bell that brought people together to hear this messenger of the Gospel. Chances are the preaching took place in the town's piazza, where persons of all economic stations mingled.<sup>6</sup> The people responded and their hearts and lives were changed. The Franciscan movement expanded rapidly and these new penitents literally brought about peace in their towns and villages by laying down their military arms, refusing to be conscripted for war. This medieval societal change of choosing nonviolence resulted from the preaching of the early Franciscans which demonstrates the influence of the power of the Word of God *proclaimed by those whose hearts have been transformed by the Gospel*.

Francis of Assisi modeled a new missionary approach of conversation as exemplified in his encounter with the Sultan, Al-Malik al-Kamil. Francis put

himself at the service of Christ—who came to bring peace to the world—when he dared to go visit the Sultan in Jerusalem whom the Christians were fighting with the support of the papacy. Francis's simplicity and piety impressed the Sultan who himself was a man desiring peace. The two of them spent days in conversation with each other growing in respect for each other's faith, a model for today's need for interreligious dialogue. The image of Francis and the Sultan in conversation reminds us that when our hearts are aligned with God's love we are able to converse with those who think differently than us. Mission for the future flows from a new consciousness, that of having hearts transformed so that we consciously convey God's love and grow in our capability of developing harmonious relationships with others whose worldview might be very different from ours. This dialogic stance takes great faith that God moves in ways we cannot comprehend, and God is free to move in ways that God so chooses. Entering into dialogue is a vulnerable disposition because it means abandoning one's right "to be right" and to be open to change.

Did his dialogue with the Sultan change Francis of Assisi? Yes. While visiting the Sultan, one of the observations that Francis made and that influenced his thinking was the way that the muezzins called out from the high minarets several times a day inviting the Muslims to turn to God in prayer. In a letter written to the Custodians after his return from the Holy Land, he says,

May you announce and preach His praise to all nations in such a way that praise and thanks may always be given to the all-powerful God by all people throughout the world at every hour and whenever bells are rung (1LtCus 8).

Bells have the purpose, according to Francis, of directing hearts and minds toward God in praise and thanksgiving. The use of Mission bells probably had their beginning in the encounter of Francis with the Sultan.<sup>7</sup>

## Life with the Marginalized

The second way that Franciscan mission reveals God's love is life with the marginalized. At the end of Francis's life he wrote that his conversion occurred when he was led among the lepers. This encounter directed him toward the marginalized and life outside the safety of the city walls. In fact, the early band of brothers would not have any fixed abode but spent much of their time as "pilgrims and strangers," as marginalized themselves.<sup>8</sup> In this manner, Francis's love for Jesus deepened as he pondered how God chose to become poor and a pilgrim descending to live among us. For Francis, there was nothing else to do but to follow in the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to live poor with the poor, and to teach his followers "to respond to the divine *love by their poor* human love, seeking to love one another as brothers."<sup>9</sup>

Clare of Assisi exemplifies life with the marginalized in her interpretation of the cloister of the Poor Ladies as being for the world, not hidden from the world.<sup>10</sup> Living outside the safety of the walls of Assisi with the marginalized required the Poor Ladies to depend on the providence of God made manifest through the goodness of the people. In exchange for materials from the townsfolk to sustain their community living, Clare and the Sisters provided a witness of evangelical life, that life of relationality exemplified by Jesus of the Gospels. Their lives enlivened the faith and generated hope in the presence of God with the people who were suffering tumultuous social change at the end of feudalism. The lifestyle of humble work and prayer lived outside the protection of the city walls preached its own sermon to those who knew the privileges that these noble women left behind to join the Franciscan movement. Clare witnessed in her writings and in her life the joy that flowed from recognizing that indeed the Word was made flesh and dwells among us.

The subtitle of this year's conference, "A Heart-filled World of Exchange" is typified by Clare's life of contemplative prayer that overflowed in her ministry of writing and healing in exchange for care from others. Her witness with the Poor Ladies who were not hidden from the world invited conversation among women to re-examine their roles in society and to risk new ways of living among the marginalized. Because of Clare's example, the princess of Bohemia, Agnes of Prague, left her citadel on the mountain to move across the Vltava River down onto the lowland with the poor. Francis and Clare had set the example for future Franciscans that mission among the poor and the outcasts is the way to walk in the footsteps of Jesus who came to live among us.

## Cosmic Horizons

The third way that Franciscan mission reveals God's love is with cosmic horizons. The Umbrian valley is an artist's delight that holds the rays of sunlight in its basin warming the earth and the stones of the caves. In the 1200s, without electricity the night sky flickered with the brilliance of the stars and planets. It is easy to imagine Francis and Clare gazing upon the ceiling of the cosmos and having their thoughts directed to the beauty and majesty of the Creator. What an overwhelming feeling of gratitude arises within us when we ponder our shared relationship with other creatures within this great creation. Francis's canticle expresses his relationality with all of creation: Praised be *You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful* (CtC 5).

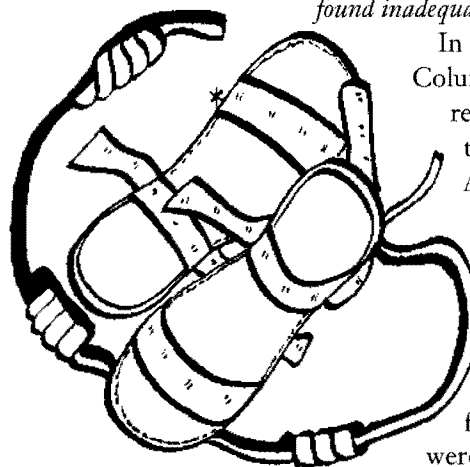
One of the Poor Ladies at San Damiano, Sister Angeluccia, said that when Clare sent the serving Sisters out from there, she reminded them to praise God when they saw beautiful trees, flowers, and bushes; and, likewise, always

to praise Him for and in all things when they saw all peoples and creatures (Proc XIV, 9).

These co-founders of the Franciscan movement provide us the example for our own lives of mission: to ponder creation and to give respect to each created being and thing as sister and brother, members of one family.

## Junipero Serra

Now I would like to offer an overview of Franciscan mission from Assisi to San Diego. I've been sharing the early beginnings of the Franciscan mission enunciated in the lives of Francis and Clare. In your imagination, fast-forward over three hundred years, and come to America. Let us recall the stories of the first Franciscans on this continent. Many of the first missionaries in America were Spanish friars of the Observant movement. These men, known for their lifestyle of poverty and prayer, were much respected by the Spanish monarchy.<sup>11</sup> When Christopher Columbus was searching for someone to sponsor his desired voyage to reach the East by traveling west across the ocean, it was a Franciscan friar that advocated for him by going to Queen Isabella and persuading her to offer this opportunity to Columbus. At the time, Spain was feeling some success in their victory after 800 years of struggle against the Moors and they perhaps were ready for a new extension of their territorial reign. Queen Isabella's sponsorship of Columbus initiated centuries of Spanish colonization including the funding of the Franciscan missions in California. Visitors to the California state capitol are reminded of Spain's influence by a large statue in the rotunda depicting Columbus kneeling before the Queen. The sculptor engraved Queen Isabella's response to Columbus: *"I will assume the undertaking for my own crown of Castille, and am ready to pawn my jewels to defray the expenses of it, if the funds of the treasury shall be found inadequate."*<sup>12</sup>



In the flurry of communication after Columbus returned from his first trip, we read the enthusiasm in papal letters for the new horizons of mission. Pope Alexander VI desired that the Catholic faith be spread everywhere and encouraged searching for new islands "so that the natives and inhabitants thereof be brought to the service of our Redeemer and the blessings of the Catholic faith."<sup>13</sup> Spain's colonization efforts were conducted as a mandate from the

pope who blessed the Spanish *conquista*. Today we are horrified to read of the military conquest of the Aztecs and other indigenous peoples done in the name of the Church. This could lead us to reflect upon our contemporary American dominant behavior and consideration of how we will be judged by future generations.

Spanish friars evangelized thousands of Indians in the Caribbean, in the southeastern United States, and in southern Texas and Arizona in the 1550s, two hundred years before Junipero Serra arrived in San Diego. Miguel Diaz, Cuban-American here, reminds us that the first Franciscan missionaries to the United States arrived in Florida from Cuba in 1526. Those early Franciscan missionaries were able to establish a rapport with the Indians because of the friars' evangelical poverty, a simple lifestyle akin to the natives. This rapport contributed significantly to the friars' ability to minister among the Indians.

The life of Junipero Serra (1713-1784) manifests a heart transformed while seeking to live the Gospel. He joined the friars at age seventeen. He was a good student. His studies earned him a doctorate as well as the Chair of Scotist Theology at the University of Palma. It was there that he felt the call to come to the New World. About his calling, Father Serra recorded:

I have had no other motive but to revive in my soul those intense longings which I have had since my novitiate when I read the lives of the saints. These longings had become deadened because of the pre-occupation I had with studies.<sup>14</sup>

When he landed on the eastern shores of Mexico, Serra and another friar obtained permission to walk the 270 miles to Mexico City. Walking was being faithful to the Rule of St. Francis, which forbade friars to ride on horseback except in cases of real necessity. In addition, Junipero wanted to offer the penance of a journey on foot so as to win graces for the great endeavor he knew he was undertaking.

After a few years of Serra's ministry in Mexico, the Jesuits were expelled from all parts of the Spanish empire in 1767. This gave new direction to Serra's life because he received the assignment to become president of the former Jesuit missions of Lower California, the Baja peninsula. There he was approached by Count de Galvez, appointed by the Spanish crown for the work of Spanish colonization on the west coast of North America. Serra and Galvez met from October 1768 to January 1769, to plan to secure the west coast of America for Spain through colonization by Franciscan missions.

Junipero Serra traveled by land from Mission Loretto in Baja to meet up with the Spanish ships anchored in the bay of San Diego. He arrived on July 1, 1769.<sup>15</sup> A couple of weeks later, "on the morning of July 16, 1769, Fray Junipero

Serra, the Father President, founded Mission San Diego de Alcalá, California's first."<sup>16</sup> The soldiers raised the cross, and Serra blessed it; on that same day Serra inscribed the initial pages of the baptismal, marriage, and burial records of the mission. Thus began the development of the California missions. Junipero Serra would administer these missions for fifteen years before his death at Mission San Carlos in Carmel.

Each "mission" came to mean an economic and agricultural enterprise under the control of the missionaries. This concept of creating villages for the Indians was part of a larger enterprise, the Franciscan mission in the New World. The operational plan was to have the baptized Indians move into villages, places of common residence and work, with a chapel for worship.

Bells were important for these missions to call the residents together. One of the stories conveying the importance of the bells for the missions is told about the Mission San Juan Capistrano. In 1775, Father Serra had sent Father Fermin Francisco de Lausen with eleven soldiers to establish a new mission halfway between San Diego and the San Gabriel mission. Lausen had erected a cross to mark the beginning of Mission San Juan Capistrano, but soon after received word of a violent Indian uprising at San Diego in which settlers were attacked. Lausen and his companions feared that further hostility from the Indians would endanger the colonization efforts at San Diego, so they went back to San Diego. A year later, Fr. Serra with more friars and soldiers returned to Capistrano and found the cross still standing. They dug up the bells that were hastily buried the year before and rang them, announcing the second founding of Mission San Juan Capistrano.<sup>17</sup> This bell, ringing into the wilderness, announced the faith of the friars and their missionary activity, which would build a community to give praise to God.

When Pope John Paul II beatified Serra September 25, 1988 and the nation celebrated the Columbus Quincentenary, the events brought forth publications criticizing the honor given to someone so complicit with the Spaniards in the oppression of the Native Americans.<sup>17</sup> Such criticism displays ignorance of Junipero Serra's commitment to the Indians, his vision for their quality of life, and his self-understanding of his role in California. When one reads Serra's diary and his correspondence, one learns of his compassion, his zeal to preach the Gospel, and his advocacy for the Indians' welfare. His concern for raising their standard of living is expressed in his petitions to acquire mules, cattle and plants for improved agriculture.

In our current political climate with thirty-eight of the fifty states legally executing criminals, Serra offers a beacon of light and wisdom for those opposing the death penalty. In a letter written to the viceroy, Don Antonio Maria Bucareli y Ursua, we see Serra's stance opposing execution. Serra had received news that Friar Luis Jayme had been murdered by Indians while they sacked

the San Diego mission. Therefore, Serra requested that a formal statement be drawn up that states:

If ever the Indians, whether they be gentile or Christian, killed me, they should be forgiven. . . . What I say is that, in order to prevent them from killing others, keep better guard over them than they did over the one who has been killed; and, as to the murderer, let him live, in order that he should be saved—which is the very purpose of our coming here, and the reason justifies it. Give him to understand, after a moderate amount of punishment, that he is being pardoned in accordance with our law, which commands us to forgive injuries; and let us prepare him, not for death, but for eternal life.<sup>18</sup>

The letter testifies to the dangers that the friars faced in their missionary activity, and the love that Serra had for the Indians. The friar's love fulfilled Jesus' prayer: may they be one just as we are (John 17:11). Serra's request for forgiveness was truly a proclamation of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ. Mission requires us to be constantly exchanging love in our conversation in order to widen the circle of love.

## Dialogue

It is difficult to converse with persons who desire revenge for the hurts they have endured, especially if they are relatives or friends of murder victims. Compassion for victims and perpetrators while trying to influence attitudes to end the death penalty requires a commitment to the asceticism of dialogue. Dialogue does not impose, but rather is an exchange of truth and love between uniquely different persons. God as a community of three distinct persons offers us a model for mission and exchange between persons, and between peoples. During dialogue, the nonverbal communication conveying freedom, respect for, and dignity of the other speaks as loud as the words that are spoken. Love is the only appropriate persuasive influence. Meaningful and respectful conversation offers a medium for the Word of God to flow between those engaged in the interchange. Dialogue is the norm of every form of Christian mission because mission is participation in the mission of God and God's being and action is dialogical.<sup>19</sup>

Junipero Serra died on August 28, 1784 at Mission San Carlos Borromeo in Carmel. The bells tolled announcing his death. The mournful sounds brought all the officers from the ship, and all the Indians of the Christian village together in mourning. Throughout the night, Indians and Spaniards entered the room where his body lay, praying to him, touching his face and hands with their rosaries and medals, saying "Santo Padre" and "Bendito Padre." Even though his body was laid out in the Church with a guard, there

were devotees who snipped pieces of cloth from his tunic to keep as relics.<sup>20</sup> The demonstration of such affection seems a convincing argument that Father Serra was a man of dialogue.

## TOR Beginnings in the U.S.

When Junipero Serra was founding the San Diego mission, the tensions were rising in the northeast of this continent that sparked the American Revolution. The birth of the United States in 1776 was seven years after Serra had begun the establishment of Spanish missions along the west coast. Missionary activity shifted drastically in the United States in the century following Serra's death. The bishops of the United States faced with great pastoral concerns for waves of immigrants placed evangelization to the Native Americans low on their priority list because of the immediacy of the needs of thousands of Catholic immigrants. The Church through the centuries is continually "reinventing" itself as it struggles with and approaches new situations, new peoples, new cultures and new questions.<sup>21</sup>

In the 1800s Third Order Franciscans in Europe responded to the invitation to leave their native land for unfamiliar territory to participate in the movement of God's love toward the immigrants in the United States. Three Irish brothers arrived in 1846, sixty-two years after Serra's death.<sup>22</sup> Three years later in 1849, a small band of Secular Franciscans, seven women and five men that included two diocesan priests, arrived in Milwaukee responding to an appeal that Bishop John Martin Henni, first bishop of Milwaukee, had made in Europe.<sup>23</sup> The women lived in community according to a rule written by a diocesan priest appointed by Archbishop Henni. This constituted the first Third Order Regular community of women in the United States. They faithfully lived the Word of the Gospel and over time there was a showing of the fruitfulness of their lives.

Just as the Friars had brought bells for the missions of California, so too the Third Order Franciscans brought bells for their convents, bells for ringing out the call to prayer including the devotional prayer of the Angelus. I can close my eyes and remember the distinct noonday ring of an Angelus bell on the campus of the College of Saint Teresa when I was a student there. That bell was hung on its frame near the original motherhouse, St. Mary Convent, of the School Sisters of St. Francis in Winona, Minnesota in 1885. The Sisters had built there by the invitation of Bishop Thomas Grace. Two years later, the new Archbishop Ireland who succeeded Bishop Grace in St. Paul, indicated to the German community of Sisters that he did not want them to be a German community receiving vocations from Germany, and he preferred that they would become a diocesan community. Mother Alexia and the School Sisters left and went to Milwaukee leaving behind their property with the Angelus

bell that came into the possession of the Rochester Franciscans who developed the College of St. Teresa on that property.

The devotional prayer of the *Angelus* affected the transformation of the heart of the Third Order immigrant religious. The ringing of the *Angelus* bell beckoned the religious to cease their immediate activity and to bring attention to God's mission, which gives meaning to all daily activity. *The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary, and she conceived by the Holy Spirit.* The angel of the Lord, revelation from God, broke through the silent longing of the Israelite people and was heard as clear as a bell by Mary. Mary's hearing of what God wanted of her and her affirmative response established a new and intimate relationship with God. She conceived the Word and pondered all things in her heart. Our Franciscan mission develops similarly; the Word of God is first conceived in our heart, and then it is shared in our communal life and ministry.

*Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to your word.* . . . In Milwaukee during the first year of the newly established community of Third Order Regular women, a cholera epidemic spread throughout the city. This epidemic left children orphans. The fledgling Franciscan community responded to these children by starting St. Aemilian's Orphanage for them. Similar stories of response to social conditions are a hallmark of Franciscans. Ministering in these new circumstances expanded previous concepts of being Church.

Another example of adapting to new circumstances is the life of Friar Pamfilo da Magliano. Friar Pamfilo was the leader of the small group of friars from Italy invited by Bishop Timon of Buffalo to come to western New York. Pamfilo started parishes, created a seminary and Catholic high school, which later became St. Bonaventure University. Pamfilo is credited with starting, we might say, co-founding the Allegany Franciscans and the Sisters of St. Francis of Joliet. Father Pamfilo carried out Franciscan hospitality differently than the European concept of cloister. In Bishop Timon's diary we can read: "I scolded Father Pamfilo because he admitted lay people into the Mass in the friars' house."<sup>24</sup> Both the bishop and Pamfilo came from a more traditional European concept of religious houses as cloisters removed from interaction with the laity. Father Pamfilo adjusted for the sake of evangelization in the New World, in new circumstances that the European Church could not imagine. His example of interaction with the laity indicated a new dimension of Franciscan mission in the United States.

*And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.* Each time that the *Angelus* is prayed, we have the opportunity to recall our Franciscan mission as God's mission. God *who so loved the world that he sent his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life* (John 3:16). Jesus, sent on mission to express God's love by his presence with us, as one of us, willingly

became a lowly servant, even giving his life for us (cf. Mt 20:28). Francis's affection for Jesus became appropriated as an internal identification with and a sharing in Jesus's mission. Our Third Order Rule holds up for us our daily mission: *Let them glorify the Lord in all they do. Sent into the whole world, they should give witness by word and work to God's voice and make known to all that only God is all-powerful* (TOR Rule #29).

Indeed, the Franciscan congregations founded in the nineteenth century in the United States birthed the presence of God in the United States in their missionary activities. They prospered in numbers and ministries. Then over forty-five years ago, on the brink of the announcement of the Second Vatican Council, a Major Superiors Conference in Rome in 1959 urged religious to send 10% of their members to Latin America as soon as possible. The major superiors identified needs that required assistance from well established North American religious. Some women in the United States burdened with institutionalization desired to go to Latin America to be among the poor. The pastoral shift of identification with the poor was not so easy for those who left the United States for Latin America. This move to a new culture brought great frustrations for missionaries when faced with the immensity of the situation they came into in Latin America.<sup>25</sup>

In the United States, the combined move out of institutions for education and health care along with the post-Vatican II decline in religious vocations meant some institutions closed, and others were sold to secular entities, or turned over to other non-profit groups. These social changes required a responsiveness to the demands of the gospel in a particular historical context, to be continually reframing, expanding and extending the influence of God's love. In the 1970s a new image of mission for American religious was developing; presence among the poor became the touchstone of authenticity.<sup>26</sup> Today, our challenge is to be constantly envisioning ourselves participating in the birthing of God's presence among us in the historic moment and place that we find ourselves in. Because societal changes require new responses, Franciscan mission will always be changing in its context, but not in the essence of heart transformation, life with the marginalized, and care for **Mother Earth**.

Through the years of European colonization, the word expansion was used to describe mission. Mission or expansion of Christianity meant the increased numbers of baptized persons in new geographic locations. Today expansion refers to raising consciousness of God and living Gospel values in all dimensions of our life. Living an authentic Christian life is the first means of evangelization.<sup>27</sup> Globalization requires a new sensitivity to our individual role in the global picture. This is summarized in the expression, *Think globally, act locally*. The reports of oppression of the poor of the world caused by capitalistic greed of the rich countries could tempt us to hopelessness. Our mission is hopeful because it is grounded in God's act of raising Jesus from the dead; "making all



things new" (Rev 21:5).<sup>28</sup> The entire Franciscan family has a praxis of hope in our networking through Franciscans International: all branches of the Franciscan family united together in a combined effort to influence global decision making for the Gospel values of concern for the poor, care for the earth and peacemaking.

## Mission in the Future

Having proposed that Franciscan mission is a refraction of Christian mission that reveals God's love in 1) Heart transformation, 2) Life with the marginalized, and 3) Cosmic horizons, I would like now to address the form our Franciscan mission might take in the tomorrow of our lives. **Heart transformation** happens in prayer, in the moments where we are receptive and our hearts are like clay in the potter's hand. Since our mission has its origin in the heart of God, we go to prayer so that our hearts will be set on fire with God's love. Our time of private prayer and communal prayer turns us toward the one on whom we have our hearts set. Our local communities, first of all, ought to be centers of prayer, an oasis for others to come from the desert of secular society.

Because our Franciscan mission is a collective endeavor to develop communal expression of God's love, we could and do engage in theological reflection. Margaret Wheatley, well known for her initiative in leadership training, says change is birthed when a few people start talking with one another about something they care about.<sup>29</sup> There are various processes of theological reflection, but what they have in common is the sharing of lived experience through the lens of Scripture and tradition. Theological reflection is not an intellectual exercise, but it is a conversation about meaning of our lives. After hearing the Gospel proclamation of Jesus sending out his disciples to preach, Francis of Assisi exclaimed "This is what I want with all my heart." Theological reflection is a means for our communal heart transformation because our meaningful exchange forms a united voice, "This is what **we** want with all our heart."

Our Franciscan mission is to strive for a social order that mirrors the love within the Trinity. This mission requires ongoing, daily conversion of each of us as well as collective transformation of our congregations. The quality of our community life must be congruent with our given mission. When there is dissonance in our congregations we must dialogue to develop harmony. Harmony is not uniformity but rather harmony mirrors the mutuality among distinctly different persons in the Trinity. Let us choose to truly listen to each other's lived experience for in doing so, we hear how the Spirit of God is working within the life of our brother or sister. Our very act of listening is mirroring the love of God. Without our vibrant sharing, our mission statements will remain mute. With ongoing dialog that ensues from our lived experience, our

mission statements come to life in each of us. In this manner, the Franciscan family lives its mission, and deepens and expands its understanding of mission.

## Life with the Marginalized II

At the heart of Franciscan mission we have Francis's words, *and I led me among them* [the lepers]. The 1982 TOR Rule expresses our mission life with the marginalized in paragraph 21: *let them be happy to live among the outcast and despised, among the poor, the weak, the sick, the lepers, and those on the street*. Authentic Franciscan mission beckons us to leave our comfortable dwellings to live with the marginalized. Our history abounds with the stories of those who have exemplified this charism.

Many founders of our congregations were immigrants to the United States. Wherever they settled, they responded to the social context. Around the world today, including in the United States, there are new waves of immigrants, refugees, and the marginalized that are causing major shifts in population, neighborhoods and cities have changed a great deal over the past fifty years. Do new immigrants who find their way to our doors receive the necessary hospitality to become at home among us? In California, 36% of the residents are foreign born. This reality requires an intellectual paradigm shift. We must think multiculturally.

In the past, we European descendants have considered ourselves superior, as having something to teach others. Today we have an opportunity to live the Franciscan charism of being the "little ones;" to be among new immigrants and refugees learning from them and building relationships with them. This requires us to have humility, a willingness to learn from others, and an openness to being changed by others. I predict that Franciscan mission of the future will find us less secure and more identifiable with the poor, living with them and among them. Our long range planning will require the arrangement for an increase in the percentage of our congregational material and human resources for life with the marginalized.

Religious life that prevails will be multicultural. Last year I entertained a small group of women who are graduate theology students. When I asked them if they had ever considered religious life, their answer was a wake-up call to me about becoming multicultural. The Latina and the Filipino women both responded that they felt uncomfortable with American women religious both had visited convents exploring their potential call. They described us as unable to converse with them in ways that allowed them to feel that they would be accepted and be at home with us, free to express their own cultural in her-ests.

The Franciscan Friars of the OFM Santa Barbara province consciously chose to become a multicultural community. This required some education

things new” (Rev 21:5).<sup>28</sup> The entire Franciscan family has a praxis of hope in our networking through Franciscans International: all branches of the Franciscan family united together in a combined effort to influence global decision making for the Gospel values of concern for the poor, care for the earth and peacemaking.

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Many founders of our congregations were immigrants to the United States. Wherever they settled, they responded to the social context. Around the world today, including in the United States, there are new waves of immigrants, refugees, and the marginalized that are causing major shifts in population. Our neighborhoods and cities have changed a great deal over the past fifty years. Do new immigrants who find their way to our doors receive the necessary hospitality to become at home among us? In California, 36% of the state’s residents are foreign born. This reality requires an intellectual paradigm shift. We must think multiculturally.

In the past, we European descendants have considered ourselves superior, as having something to teach others. Today we have an opportunity to live our Franciscan charism of being the “little ones;” to be among new immigrants and refugees learning from them and building relationships with them. This requires us to have humility, a willingness to learn from others, and an openness to being changed by others. I predict that Franciscan mission of the future will find us less secure and more identifiable with the poor, living with them and among them. Our long range planning will require the arrangement for an increase in the percentage of our congregational material and human resources for life with the marginalized.

Religious life that prevails will be multicultural. Last year I entertained a small group of women who are graduate theology students. When I asked them if they had ever considered religious life, their answer was a wake-up call to me about becoming multicultural. The Latina and the Filipino women both responded that they felt uncomfortable with American women religious and both had visited convents exploring their potential call. They described us as unable to converse with them in ways that allowed them to feel that they would be accepted and be at home with us, free to express their own cultural interests.

The Franciscan Friars of the OFM Santa Barbara province consciously chose to become a multicultural community. This required some education so

that the core community could learn cross-cultural perspectives in order to integrate new members into a multicultural fraternity.<sup>30</sup> Men from five languages are now in their formation program. The province exemplifies for us the effort to “widen our tents;” to lessen our white dominance, and to develop more inclusive ways of living with each other.

For us religious women with a median age in the seventies, we recognize that multicultural challenge is not all about ethnicity. It is also about the age differential impeding young persons from joining us. We who have lived through major lifestyle changes during the post-Vatican II era are now facing another major challenge: the incorporation of the millennials and the Echo generation who seek rituals and symbols that are more common to our pre-Vatican II lifestyle.<sup>31</sup>

A year ago I experienced one model for bridging both generational difference and cultural difference in a Franciscan House of Formation. I accompanied a lay graduate student to participate in Morning Prayer with a small community of Franciscan women in Oakland who live in a poor to moderate Latino neighborhood. The student was in a course on the Liturgy of the Hours and she had never prayed with a community. So I arranged for us to have a prayer experience with this community of Franciscan women.

We arrived at the house to be directed to the garage in the backyard that had been set up as the chapel. When we entered, we were invited to take off our shoes, and to sit on cushions. We were surrounded with sensual aids for prayer: candles, incense, bouquets of flowers, statues, banners, a small fountain, and soft music. The custom of this Spanish-speaking community was to have faith-sharing after the Gospel reading. The focus of the sharing was to relate the Scripture passage to their anticipated day’s activity. (They accommodated us who were not bilingual by speaking in English.) The immersion into the prayer life of that community of Franciscan women opened the eyes of the graduate student to the source of joy for Franciscan women. Their joyful daily missionary activity flowed from the Word of God. Their morning prayer experience impressed upon me another image of our future: our communities will become bilingual. This will be necessary for meaningful conversation in our communities. Extending God’s love by becoming bilingual enables us to be bridge builders with new immigrants offering hospitality that portrays inclusivity.

The way of establishing hope for the future is through simple conversations, not chit-chat but meaningful conversations that generate deep insights and actions, and a strong sense of community.<sup>32</sup> This type of conversation cuts beneath the impersonalism of our society to connect persons, to bring about communion, to fulfill Jesus’ prayer that we become one.

## Cosmic Horizons II

The third aspect of Franciscan mission, cosmic horizons, lifts us to a new level of consciousness of our interdependence with all of creation. Observing, paying attention to creation around us, develops our best practices for reverence of creation. The daily practice of careful recycling of our waste materials with the examination of the global significance of our lifestyle shifts our attitude. We change and become conscious of our interrelatedness with the cosmos. The dedication we have to care for the earth is more than a spiritual platitude. It is a matter of a sustainable future.

The Earth Charter offers four principles for developing praxis of living with cosmic horizons: 1) respect and care for the community of life, 2) ecological integrity, 3) social and economic justice, and 4) democracy, nonviolence and peace. Franciscan mission flows from the heart of God. God’s love informs our praxis in an infinite manner. Each one of us makes a personal and valuable contribution to the future of a sustainable community. Living with Cosmic horizons influences our thoughts and behaviors so that our day by day living contributes to the sustainability of the planet. No person’s actions are insignificant; every person gives or takes away from sustainability. The collective (corporate) response of our congregations to this concern will evolve from individual persons talking to other persons in a meaningful manner. House chapters might be held to identify the best local practices for adopting the principles of the Earth Charter. This is just a suggestion for continuing to keep our eye on the cosmic horizon.

## Conclusion

In summation, I would like to quote Gerard Manley Hopkins whose inspired poetry describes how each of us manifests Franciscan mission.

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;  
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells  
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell’s  
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;  
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:  
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;  
Selves—goes its self; *myself* it speaks and spells,  
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*<sup>33</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Carmelites who accompanied a Spanish expedition to map the California coastline in 1602 had offered Mass and named the site San Diego de Alcalá. Saint Didacus

(Diego) of Alcala (1400-1463) lived as a hermit devoting himself to prayer and work before joining the Franciscan Order. He went as a missionary to the Canary Islands in 1441 where he held the office of superior and faced many difficulties. In 1450 he lived for a time in Rome where he cared for the sick afflicted with a pestilential illness and restored many to health by his prayers. He returned to Spain and died there on November 12, 1463.

<sup>2</sup>David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 390-92.

<sup>3</sup>Charles V. Finnegan, "Franciscans and the 'New Evangelization,'" *Mission in the Franciscan Tradition* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1994), 4.

<sup>4</sup>Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, "Mission and the Mendicant Movement," *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), 137-70.

<sup>5</sup>Kathleen Warren, *Daring to Cross the Threshold: Francis of Assisi Encounters Sultan Malek al-Kamil* (Rochester, MN: Sisters of St. Francis, 2003), 103.

<sup>6</sup>Angelyn Dries, "Mission and Marginalization: The Franciscan Heritage," *Missiology* XXVI/1 (January 1998): 3-13.

<sup>7</sup>"The Angelus," *Greyfriars Review* 6/1 (1992): 127-28; Also a discussion of the impact of Islam on Francis including the practice of the use of bells to call all people to prayer can be found in Warren, *Daring to Cross the Threshold*, 81-85.

<sup>8</sup>Regis J. Armstrong, "If My Words Remain in You...": Foundations of the Evangelical Life," *Francis of Assisi: History, Hagiography and Hermeneutics in the Early Documents* (New York: New City Press, 2004): 81.

<sup>9</sup>Chiara Frugoni, *Francis of Assisi* (London: SMC Press, 1998), 24.

<sup>10</sup>Dries, "Mission and Marginalization," 8-11.

<sup>11</sup>Lino Gomez Canedo, *Franciscan Presence in the Americas* (Potomac, MD: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1983), 6; Francisco Morales, "Franciscan Evangelization in America," *Mission in the Franciscan Tradition* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1994), 185; Edwin Edward Sylvest, Jr., *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory in Sixteenth Century New Spain, Province of the Holy Gospel* (Washington, DC: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1975), 25-41.

<sup>12</sup>D.O. Mills, who donated the statue in 1883, was a successful banker who had loaned the money for the construction of the capitol building. He purchased the statue for the capitol rotunda for the sum of \$30,000.00 from an American sculptor, Locke Goldsmith Meade, an artist fascinated with the story of Columbus. (This account from the capitol tour guide 12/29/04). For further reading on Isabella's role in sponsoring the Castilian expeditions, see Hugh Thomas, *Conquest: Montezuma, Cortés, and the Fall of Old Mexico* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 82-83.

<sup>13</sup>Sylvest, *Motifs of Franciscan Mission*, 13.

<sup>14</sup>For a biography of Serra, see Maynard J. Geiger, *The Life and Times of Junipero Serra* (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1959); M. N. L. Couve de Murville, *The Man Who Founded California* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000); Eric O'Brien, "The Life of Padre Serra," *Writings of Junipero Serra*, vol. I, ed. Antonine Tibesar (Washington, DC: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1955), xxiii - xlv.

<sup>15</sup>Although Serra died on August 28, the Church celebrates his memorial on July 1 because St. Augustine's feast is observed on August 28 and July 1 marks the anniversary of Serra's entry into Alta California. See *The Way of St. Francis*, (July-August 2004):10.

<sup>16</sup>Geiger, *The Life and Times of Junipero Serra*, vol. I, 233.

<sup>17</sup>See David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World* (NY: Oxford, 1992) and George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: the Gospel and Native American Genocide* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993).

<sup>18</sup>*Writings of Junipero Serra*, vol. II, 405-407.

<sup>19</sup>Bevans and Schroeder, 378-379.

<sup>20</sup>See the complete description in Geiger's *The Life and Times of Junipero Serra*, 380-88.

<sup>21</sup>Bevans and Schroeder, 31.

<sup>22</sup>Margaret A. Slowick, *The Franciscan Third Order Regular in the United States: Origins, Early Years, and Recent Developments* (Tiffin, OH: Sisters of St. Francis, 1999), 2.

<sup>23</sup>For a description of this influential bishop, see Angelyn Dries, *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998), 24-26.

<sup>24</sup>Dominic Monti, Video presentation, (Rochester, MN: Sisters of St. Francis, 2004).

<sup>25</sup>Dries, *The Missionary Movement*, 242.

<sup>26</sup>Dries, *The Missionary Movement*, 242.

<sup>27</sup>Pope Paul VI, *On Evangelization in the Modern World* (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1975), 41.

<sup>28</sup>R.A. Kanyoro Musimbi, "Called to One Hope: The Gospel in Diverse Cultures," *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization: Faith and Culture*, eds. James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992): 134-45.

<sup>29</sup>Margaret J. Wheatley, *Turning to One Another* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2002), 9.

<sup>30</sup>For background and witness of one province's efforts, see Finian McGinn, *Toward "Multiculturalizing" a Religious Community!* (San Juan Bautista, CA: Westfriars, 1996).

<sup>31</sup>For an overview on embracing members from the younger generations, see *Dialogue on Community* (Chicago: Center for the Study of Religious Life, 2001).

<sup>32</sup>Wheatley, *Turning to One Another*, 28.

<sup>33</sup>John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne, eds., *Mortal Beauty, God's Grace: Major Poems and Spiritual Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 23.

*Heart transformation happens in prayer, in the moments where we are receptive and our hearts are like clay in the potter's hand. . . . Since our mission has its origin in the heart of God, we go to prayer so that our hearts will be set on fire with God's love.*

**Mirroring the Life of God  
in Medio Luporum:  
Returning to the Heart  
of the Franciscan Mission**

Miguel H. Díaz, Ph.D.

Introduction

The Early Rule of Francis (1221) contains a chapter in which Francis reflects on the nature of mission to the Saracens and unbelievers.<sup>1</sup> As is well known, this is the first time that a founder of a religious order included in his rule reflections on the nature of mission to non-Christians.<sup>2</sup> This chapter opens with a citation from Matthew 10:16: "Behold I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be prudent as serpents and simple as doves."<sup>3</sup> A number of Franciscan scholars have argued that this chapter and its opening biblical citation were inspired by Francis's personal missionary experiences, namely, his journey to Egypt and his conversations with sultan Al-Malik al-Kamil.<sup>4</sup>

Francis offers two ways of carrying out Christian missionary activity. The first and most essential way calls for building fraternal ties at the level of inter-communal relations. In dealing with Muslims or unbelievers, Francis invites his brothers not "to engage in arguments or disputes but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake."<sup>5</sup> In other words, Francis calls his followers to embrace and be willing to receive from the humanity of others.<sup>6</sup> The second way invites the brothers "to proclaim the word of God openly, when they see that it is God's will, calling on their hearers to believe in God almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. . . ."<sup>7</sup> Francis's emphasis on embodied proclamation (his rejection of violence and his desire to subject himself to other creatures) over the mere proclamation of words has found expression in the oft-cited saying attributed to him: "Preach always, and if necessary, use words."

Francis's emphasis on personal Christian example also finds expression in Clare's missionary vision that calls her sisters to "mirror" the unity of mutual love for others to follow.<sup>8</sup> Clare's vision, however, suggests a way to broaden

Christian missionary activity to include Christian witness at the level of intra-communal relations.<sup>9</sup> Thus in speaking to her sisters, Clare writes:

For the Lord himself has placed us *not only as a form for others in being an example and mirror, but even for our sisters whom the Lord has called to our way of life as well*, that they in turn might be a mirror and example to those living in the world. Since the Lord has called us to such great things that those who are to be a mirror an example to others may be reflected in us, we are greatly bound to bless and praise God and be all the more strengthened to do good in the Lord. Therefore, if we live according to the form mentioned above, we shall leave others a noble example and gain, with little effort, the prize of eternal happiness.<sup>10</sup>

The following reflections return to the heart of the Franciscan mission: Mirroring the life of God in the midst of "wolves." This is the approach to mission that Francis and Clare set forth when they embodied inter and intra-personal relations in the midst of personal, communal, social, and religious violence and various forms of human marginalization. As a way to discuss this Franciscan approach, I will structure the following reflections around three central themes found in the writings of contemporary missiologists: 1) To be Church is to be in mission and vice versa, 2) To be in mission is to mirror God's missionary Triune life, and 3) To mirror God's missionary life is to walk preferentially with the poor and marginalized. I will conclude this essay with a brief discussion on some of the contemporary implications that follow from this approach to mission.

To Be Church Is to Be in Mission (and Vice Versa)

In their groundbreaking theological work on mission Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder argue that "to be church is to be in mission," and "to be in mission is to be responsible to the demands of the gospel in particular contexts."<sup>11</sup> This means that the Church is called to be continually 'reinventing' itself as it struggles with and approaches new cultures and new questions.<sup>12</sup> Bevans and Schroeder go on to affirm "an inevitable link "between the need for Christian mission on the one hand, and the need for that mission to be radically contextual."<sup>13</sup> Indeed, as they point out, the very survival of Christianity has always been linked to the ability of the church to cross-over into various human boundaries, including new social, cultural, racial, generational, gender and religious landscapes.

The evangelical notion that the church comes to be constituted through missionary activity (see the Acts of the Apostles), an activity defined by particular contexts, is not at all foreign to the roots of Franciscan traditions. Francis



is believed by some to have anticipated contemporary approaches to missiology in his call for conversation with and appropriation of the goodness found in others.<sup>14</sup> Francis, we recall, challenged his followers to go throughout the world embodying the Good News and asked them to be "subject to every human creature for God's sake." Much has been made of this phrase, especially with respect to its origin and purpose for Franciscan understandings of mission.<sup>15</sup> The phrase likely originated as a result of Francis' missionary journey to Egypt. In this journey, Francis subjected himself to another, that is, he was sensitive to the Sultan and the ways of Islam. Thus, Francis received at least as much as he was able to give. As Lehmann points out,

... in a letter to all those holding office of responsibility in the Order, he urges them to preach the Islamic custom of the *salat*. He had experienced in the Orient how the Muezzin's call summoned the people to prayer and how they prostrated themselves before God. He was so taken by this Moslem (sic) praise of God that he wanted to introduce a similar sign to the West. The praise of God should link both Moslems (sic) and Christians.<sup>16</sup>

Just as the disciples "really do not fully *recognize* themselves as church—a separate reality from Judaism—until they recognize that they are called to a mission that has as its scope 'the ends of the earth'" (Acts 1:8),<sup>17</sup> Francis sensed that his followers would not fully recognize their ecclesial and Franciscan identity until they had been called into service, especially among the marginalized creatures of God. This intuition seems to be the reason why Francis places so much emphasis on sending forth his followers "into the world" and the foundation for understanding God's call to Francis to "rebuild" the Christian Church.<sup>18</sup> Undoubtedly, Francis came to realize that through missionary activity, the Church (understood as the people of God) would be "reinvented."

As stated above, the Franciscan tradition offers an inclusive approach to mission. For Franciscans, the kind of missionary activity that rebuilds and reinvents the Church is not merely comprised of service to human creatures abiding in distant lands. Rather, as the example of Clare makes clear, the missionary activity, the sending forth into the world that rebuilds the Church can also take localized forms of presence and service. In this sense, it is significant to point out that "Clare never referred to her sisters as *reclusae* (recluses) but as *inclusae*, that is, she did not view the sisters as secluded, immured, or isolated from others. Rather, she considered all the community house and garden as sacred and invitational space."<sup>19</sup>

To prophetically welcome others is central to defining the mission that constitutes the Franciscan community. This activity can take the form of going out of comfort zones and landscapes in order to search for the distinct gift

of other human beings (as was the case with Francis) or it can simply take the form of working to create local places where others in our midst are welcomed (as was the case with Clare).

Going out into someone's world or welcoming another into our world does not come naturally. Fears of encountering the otherness of others (gender, racial, social, cultural, sexual orientation, etc.), fears of letting go our positions of privilege in order to empower others, or fears of prophetically denouncing personal and social evils that exclude others often stand in the way of authentic efforts to re-build the Church and society. Yet, as the legend of Francis who converted the very fierce wolf of Gubbio suggests (Fioretti 21), these "wolves" or fears must be tamed. No authentic re-building of the people of God can occur without first facing, befriending, and making peace with these fears.

### To Be in Mission Is to Mirror God's Missionary Life

The same biblical tradition that affirms that the Church comes into existence and is reconstituted again and again through Christian mission, suggests that the mission of the church is inextricably linked to the affirmation of human diversity. For instance, in Acts 2: 1-4, we see the emergence and growth of the Church associated with the mission to recognize the diversity of the human family. The Pentecostal image of hearing the speaking of many tongues suggests how authentic communal unity comes about through the affirmation of being-with others. This biblical image invites us to consider how the mission of the Church participates in the missionary life of God.

For us in the West, we have a tendency to conceive of the Church in more institutional terms. This is still the case for many Roman Catholics even after Vatican II when the image of the Church as the people of God has become so prevalent. In the East, however, the reality of the Church is not understood just as an institutional reality. The Church, Greek-Orthodox theologians underscore, is best conceived as a way of relating and existing in the world.<sup>20</sup> The Church is called to exist as God exists. And God "exists" as a being who not only gives but also *receives* from others. When the Church embraces this way of existence, the Church participates in and mirrors the missionary life of God.

Within the Franciscan tradition, Bonaventure's understanding of God as an overflowing fountain of water (*fontalis plenitudo*) also provides another dynamic way to conceive mission and the ongoing rebuilding of the Church. Just like a fountain cannot be conceived without over-flowing water, the Church cannot be conceived without mission.<sup>21</sup> Like God, the Church comes to exist and expresses the nature of this existence in diffusive acts of love. Thus, by reaching out in self-diffusion, and receiving from others, the Church comes into existence and participates the life of God.

This trinitarian notion of reaching out to and receiving from other creatures resonates well with Francis's approach to mission. Commenting on Francis's instruction to his followers "to be subject to every human creature" a number of scholars have underscored the personal and missionary implications of this instruction. In this instruction, Francis calls his followers to renounce power over others and any claim to elitism.<sup>22</sup> This way of being with others rather than above others, which is so characteristic of divine life, is paradigmatically expressed in Francis's filial relationship with all of God's creatures (not just human creatures). Latin American liberation theologian Leonardo Boff expresses this Franciscan way of relating in the following way:

Here is made clear a distinct way of being-in-the-world, not over things, but together with them, like brothers and sisters of the same family. To his own agonies and sufferings "he gave not the name of pains but of brothers." Death itself was for him a friend and a sister. Because of this, the Franciscan world is full of magic, of reverence, of respect. It is not a dead and inanimate universe; things are not tossed here, within the reach of possessive appetites of hunger; nor are they placed one beside another. They are alive and have their own personality; they have blood ties with humanity. And because they are brothers and sisters, they cannot be violated, but rather must be respected.<sup>23</sup>

Being-with, giving to and receiving from things and persons in the world defines the heart of the Franciscan mission. Elsewhere I have reflected upon the significance of the oft-cited aphorism in Spanish: "Dime con quién andas y te dire' quién eres" (Tell me who you walk with and I will tell you who you are).<sup>24</sup> I have pointed out that this aphorism suggests that ultimately it is not what persons have or know that determines who they are but human relationships. Relationship to others and not power, wealth or possession ultimately constitutes personal identity. Francis's egalitarian way of relating to all creatures offers an important qualification to this aphorism. It is not only relationship that is of utmost importance to defining who persons are, above all what defines persons is *how* they relate to others.

In his missionary call to be-with other creatures, and not above them, Francis mirrors how God walks-with others. As a communion of equal and distinct persons, God's life is characterized by being-with others, so much so that God diffuses God-self to us and the rest of creation in Jesus Christ. Jesus revealed God in the various ways he reached out to others and was present to their needs. Above all, he called his followers friends, and placed himself at the side of, rather than above them. Following the lead of Jesus, Francis envisions an ecclesial community called to exist through a mission that is defined by peace-filled embraces of human distinctiveness and service to others.

## To Mirror God's Missionary Life Is to Walk Preferentially with the Poor and Marginalized

Although Francis embraced all of God's creatures, there is an indisputable option that he made: To walk with and learn first and foremost from the poor, oppressed, and marginalized. "What was extraordinary about the teaching of Francis," writes Leonardo Boff "was his intent to live in complete fraternity under the presupposition of a poverty voluntarily accepted in order to be at the side of the poor, and with them, to build all human relationships, always beginning with those who have least, with concern for those who are least."<sup>25</sup> "The poor" continues Boff, "are seen as an apparition of divinity."<sup>26</sup> The justification for this preferential option, which privileges the poor and marginalized as a source of divine revelation, can be rooted in the Galilean identity of Jesus.

In recent times there has been much interest in the Galilean identity of Jesus. Few would take issue with the notion that Nazareth of Galilee is the place in the Gospel that most defines the human identity of Jesus. Virgilio Elizondo, the founder of contemporary U.S. Latino/a theology, argues that the human meaning of the Incarnation is to be sought in the socio-cultural analysis of the place and persons associated with Jesus: Galilee and the Galileans. As a number of scholars have argued, Galilee is a symbol of multiple rejection and marginalization. It is a place where "The domestic architecture of Galilean village homes indicates that these agricultural peasant communities occupied the lower rung of the social and economic ladder."<sup>27</sup>

Elizondo turns to Jesus' Galilean identity to derive three basic principles. In turn, these principles can be used to inform a Christian understanding of mission.<sup>28</sup> Elizondo argues that in Jesus, the Galilean has taken the side of the marginalized. From this divine-human solidarity, Elizondo proposes his Galilean principle, which advocates for human solidarity with the poor and marginalized. Elizondo goes on to point out how the Galilean travels to Jerusalem to challenge oppressive religious and political authority, and all that dehumanizes and denies the dignity of human persons. From this journey to Jerusalem, Elizondo derives the Jerusalem principle. This principle maintains that God chooses a marginalized people as agents of personal and social transformation. Finally, Elizondo argues that the transformation and birth into new life for the marginalized as well as those who cause marginalization can only be brought about as a result of the power of unlimited love. This peace-filled and transforming action grounds what Elizondo characterizes as the resurrection principle, a principle that underscores love as the only means to usher life-giving and inclusive human communities.

These ideas, which lie at the heart of Latino/a theology, also resonate well with the heart of the Franciscan tradition. Above all, the lives of Francis and

Clare exemplify the Christian call to be in solidarity with the poor and marginalized. Just as God in Jesus Christ identified in a preferential way with the poor and marginalized, so do Francis and Clare see as their central mission the need to identify themselves with the poor and marginalized members of their society. Just as the Galilean challenged religious and political injustices, so did Francis and Clare challenge the ecclesial and social situation of their times through their embrace of radical poverty and inclusive relationships. Lastly, just as in Jesus, God invites us to embrace a new social order through the power of love, so do Francis and Clare's peace-filled mission signal an alternative vision for humanity. Thus Boff writes:

Faced with a feudal system centered on the "greatness," Francis becomes a "lesser" and wants his order to be called the "lesser brothers," subject to every human creature. Faced with the bourgeoisie, organized on the backbone of wealth, Francis proposes the idea of radical poverty and complete rejection of the use of money. Faced with the Church of the time, the hegemony of the *sacerdotium*, Francis is a lay person; and even though he becomes a deacon later on, he is not tied to any benefits. . . . *The meaning of mission for Francis is not, above all, to convert the infidels and to expand Christianity, but rather to live the Gospel of universal fraternity* by submitting to all men through the Lord and professing that they are Christians." Because of all this, the living of fraternity and service beyond differences of religion and culture is closer to the truth of the Gospel than its mere doctrinal substance. Only afterward, "when they see what pleases the Lord, may they proclaim the Word of God." Thus, the criterion is not ecclesiastical, reinforcing the Christian system, but rather theological, "to please God." This perspective of nonviolence toward the Saracens would be in contrast the norm of violence of the Crusades of the age.<sup>29</sup>

Francis's desire to become a "lesser" person and to identify with the poor so much so that he "was distressed to see anyone poorer than himself,"<sup>30</sup> does not imply either disdain for humanity or a masochistic approach to poverty and suffering. Instead, by seeking to walk-with and identify with the most physically and socially oppressed and marginalized, Francis sent a clear message that no ecclesial and social reality could claim to mirror God's life until all of God's creatures, especially the most vulnerable were included at table. Francis links the physical and social body in a similar way that Jesus had clearly done when he healed leprosy and other illnesses. We must remember that Jesus' healing actions were "signs" of the reigning of God within human life. The reign of God provides for us a signpost of the kind of integral personal, communal, and social relationships that are expected when human life mirrors divine life. Thus, Jesus' healings not only anticipate the final healing of all

physical and excluded bodies, but also anticipate communal and social healings directly tied to these bodies.

The claim is sometimes made that there is an exclusive aspect to the preferential option for the poor and marginalized. Critics of this option claim that there is an implication that God loves some more than others. I would agree that God's love is inclusive. Yet precisely because God's love is inclusive and seeks historical manifestation, there must be a preferential love of and option for those who are excluded from human communities. The very divine life of being-for all others, in whose image we were created, demands that no one be excluded. If the whole of creation is called to mirror God's life, then our central missionary task must consist in the struggle, or "*la lucha*" as we would say in Spanish, to respond to God's grace in ongoing efforts to build inclusive communities.<sup>31</sup> Herein lies the primary reason for understanding the mission of Francis and Clare, which was defined by preferential acts of hospitality directed at the "Galileans" of their time.

## Contemporary Implications and Concluding Remarks

So far I have argued that the Church comes into existence as a result of mission. Following the example of Francis and Clare, I have understood mission in terms of not only going out into foreign lands to welcome the stranger and proclaim justice and peace (as was the case with Francis) but also in terms of making our lands a welcoming, just and peace-filled place for others (as was the case with Clare). By seeking to be-with all others, proclaiming and living the Good News of salvation, the Church defines its primary mission. Such being-with others mirrors the life of God whose radical way of inclusive existence reaches out to us in the mission of Christ and the Spirit. Yet precisely because God welcomes all, I have argued that the prophetic and often dangerous mission of searching for and empowering others must be mindful, first and foremost of the "Galileans" present in the Church and society.

Anachronistic and simplistic readings of history must be avoided. There are, however, some interesting parallels that can be drawn between the signs of Francis and Clare's time and the signs of our time. Much like our times, the missionary vision of Francis and Clare develops at a time characterized by militarism, conquest, moral corruption, religious tensions with Islam, and the misuse and abuse of religious authority.<sup>32</sup> In the midst of this context, Francis and Clare reject violence and exclusion and map an alternative road comprised of conversation with and reception of others. The story of Francis's conversations with the sultan provides a prophetic vision of how we might be called today to recognize the good and holiness that is in others and allow ourselves to be taught and transformed by this other.

Francis and Clare's way of existing with-others rather than above others best crystallizes the challenge for our times. In embracing egalitarian relationships today, the people of God are called to re-build once again the Church and society. Similar to Francis, we receive God's call to denounce prejudice, hatred and violence and affirm, embrace, and foster whatever good there is in other creatures. Just as Francis walked with-the sultan and learned from his otherness, so should we all learn to walk-with, subject ourselves to, and learn from others in our midst.

In my mind, Franciscans in the United States can play a central role in the effort to re-build the Church and society. By virtue of being situated in one of the most powerful economic and military nations of the world, the Franciscan mission can be one of challenging this nation to become a more welcoming and peaceful society. In the aftermath of 9/11, it is particularly essential for Franciscans to tap into the heart of their tradition to renew interreligious conversations with contemporary "sultans" and leaders of various religious traditions willing to embrace the universal message of peace. In the Spirit of Francis who reached out and learned from his Muslim brother, Franciscans today can challenge all work along Muslims, Jews, Hindus and others in the re-building of social relations. As Pope John Paul II declared to world religious leaders in his historic 1986 interreligious convocation in Assisi, "Either we learn to walk together in peace and harmony, or we drift apart and ruin ourselves and others."

Within the Church and society in our country, Clare's mission to create an inclusive community can offer a model for the creation of social and ecclesial realities that exclude any discrimination based on gender, race, culture, sexual orientation, age, physical disability or any other form of marginalizing human experience. Following her example, Franciscans today can take the side of poor and marginalized communities in order to listen to their cries and include them in the realization of more authentic communal realities.

Within our society, the preferential option for the poor can express itself in an option for persons facing distinct but often inter-related forms of economic, gender, racial, and cultural poverty. Above all, the poor among us are materially deprived persons, including African-Americans, Asians, Latino/as, Haitians, and Native-Americans. Secondly, the poor among us are those women who continue to face marginalization in the home, in the Church and in society. Following Clare's example, who blessed loaves of bread upon Pope Innocent's IV's request, can we as a community of Catholics be willing to subject ourselves to the blessing women can bring to our various tables?<sup>33</sup> Thirdly, the poor among us are children and adolescents sexually exploited and abused within familial, ecclesial, and social realities. Finally, the poor among us are elderly and disabled persons, often viewed as non-persons in the eyes of a

society that defines persons based on human productivity. Like Francis, all these persons bear the markings of the cross within their bodies, and remind us of the resurrection that is yet to be realized within the Church and in society.<sup>34</sup>

Challenging the Church and society to become a more inclusive community will not be easy. In the process of facing today's wolves and winning them over through peaceful means, some will undoubtedly experience one or more of the various contemporary expressions of Christian martyrdom. But by imitating Francis, Franciscans today can become peaceful instruments that transform the personal, socio-political, and economic institutions that threaten the lives of the vast number of peoples in this world.

As a Cuban-American child, I remember growing up with a story that I am sure other Cuban and Cuban-American children have also been told. It is the story of Hatuey, a Taíno native American chieftain who witnessed first hand the atrocities of the conquest. He is said to have been originally from the island of Quisqueya (present day Dominican Republic). He fled to Cuba with a number of other Taínos after experiencing the violence brought about by Spanish *conquistadores*. He told others about the God that the European conquerors adored, namely, the God of gold and precious jewels. After the violent conquest of Cuba in 1512 by Diego Velásquez, he was captured and fatally injured. Just before he died he was asked by one of the Franciscan missionaries if he wanted to receive baptism, which would cleanse him from all of his sins and bring him to heaven. Hatuey is said to have responded as follows: "Are there people like you in heaven?" "Yes," answered the Franciscan priest, "there are many like us in heaven." Hatuey then said: "If the Spaniards are going to heaven, then I do not want to go there."

Hatuey's story is an example of what happens when Christians fail to mirror the life of God. Rightly so, Hatuey was unable to see how the violent actions of those engaged in conquest and war could in any way mirror their message of the prince of peace. Francis's way of subjecting himself to the other and Clare's creation of an inclusive community have not always prevailed as common and universal Christian and Franciscan practices. Learning from past mistakes, and rooted in the missionary vision of Francis and Clare, Franciscans today can help pave the way to birth a different Church and society. Finding themselves in the midst of "wolves," Franciscans can help in the taming of such wolves in order to invite the realization of a new humanity shaped by fraternal love, especially mindful of the needs of the poor and marginalized.

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#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Scholars point out that the rule of St. Francis went through a three stage formation process: 1) The rule of 1209/10 which was orally accepted by Pope Innocent III and addressed the "simple pattern of life," 2) The rule of 1221 (*Regula non bullata*),

which incorporated and expanded the first version, and finally, 3) the edited, revised and papal sanctioned rule of 1223. See Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 425, note 29. See also Walbert Buhlmann, "Francis and Mission according to the Rule of 1221," *Spirit and Life: A Journal of Contemporary Franciscanism* 6 (1994): 87-107.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Finnegan, "Franciscans and the 'New Evangelization,'" *Spirit and Life: A Journal of Contemporary Franciscanism* 6 (1994): 3. Note that I use the male pronoun because Clare, who wrote her rule after Francis, is considered to be the first woman to write a rule for religious women. Her rule obtained papal approval two days before her death (1253).

<sup>3</sup>RegNB, 16.

<sup>4</sup>In chapter nine of *The Major Legend of Saint Francis*, Bonaventure describes the beginning of the journey to Egypt in the following way: "Taking a companion with him, a brother named Illuminato, a virtuous and enlightened man, after he had begun his journey, he came upon two lambs. Overjoyed to see them, the holy man said to his companion: 'Trust in the Lord, brother, for the Gospel text is being fulfilled in us: behold, I am sending you forth like sheep in the midst of wolves.' When they proceeded farther, the Saracen sentries fell upon them like wolves swiftly overtaking sheep, savagely seizing the servants of God, and cruelly and contemptuously dragging them away, treating them with insults, beating them with whips, and putting them in chains, LM 9.

<sup>5</sup>RegNB 16.

<sup>6</sup>Francis's call to be subject to every creature should not be misconstrued to mean unjust and unequal subjection to others, whether with respect to gender, race, culture or any other human experience. Just the opposite is the case: Francis is simply calling for the willingness to recognize the equality of all God's creatures.

<sup>7</sup>RegNB 16.

<sup>8</sup>*Rule of Clare*, 10. See Angelyn Dries, "Mission and Marginalization: The Franciscan Heritage," *Missiology: An International Review* 25/1 (1998): 8-9.

<sup>9</sup>Note that in Clare and Francis's model of mission one cannot avoid some consideration of gender stereotyping, which associates men with public roles and spaces and women with private roles and domestic spaces. Notwithstanding the challenge to overcome such stereotyping, when interpreted in a gender inclusive way, the missionary vision of Francis and Clare can offer men and women a way to make both public and private places, places that welcome the distinctiveness of others.

<sup>10</sup>*Testament of Clare*, 18. Emphasis added. Also cited in Dries, "Mission and Marginalization," 8.

<sup>11</sup>Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 31.

<sup>12</sup>Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 31.

<sup>13</sup>Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 31.

<sup>14</sup>See Juniper Cummins, "St. Francis and the Missions," *Spirit and Life: A Journal of Contemporary Franciscanism* 6 (1994): 29.

<sup>15</sup>For instance, see Cummins, "St. Francis and the Missions," 29; Anton Rotzetter, "The Missionary Dimension of Franciscan Charism," *Spirit and Life: A Journal of Contemporary Franciscanism* 6 (1994): 51-52; and Leonhard Lehmann, "Essential Elements of Mission," *Spirit and Life: A Journal of Contemporary Franciscanism* 6 (1994): 39-40.

<sup>16</sup>Lehmann, "Essential Elements of Mission," 44.

<sup>17</sup>Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 10.

<sup>18</sup>See *Anonymous of Perugia*, 4.

<sup>19</sup>Dries, "Mission and Marginalization," 8.

<sup>20</sup>See John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: New York, 1985), 15-16.

<sup>21</sup>On Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology see Maria Calisi, S.F.O., "Bonaventure's Trinity: Revelation of an Intensely Personal God." Paper delivered for Franciscan Federation in New Mexico, August 2001.

<sup>22</sup>See Rotzetter, "The Missionary Dimension of the Franciscan Charism," 51.

<sup>23</sup>Leonardo Boff, *Saint Francis: A Model for Human Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 35.

<sup>24</sup>See Miguel H. Díaz, "Dime con quién andas y te dire' quién eres: We Walk-with our Lady of Charity," in *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999), 153-71.

<sup>25</sup>Boff, *Saint Francis*, 79.

<sup>26</sup>Boff, *Saint Francis*, 79.

<sup>27</sup>Elizabeth Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 143.

<sup>28</sup>For what follows see Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000), esp. pp. 49-125.

<sup>29</sup>Boff, *Saint Francis*, 93-94. Emphasis added.

<sup>30</sup>1 Cel 76.

<sup>31</sup>On the notion of *la lucha*, see Ada María-Isasi Díaz, *En la Lucha, in the Struggle: A Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

<sup>32</sup>See Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 140-41.

<sup>33</sup>Note the Eucharistic implications of this story. In a visit to Assisi, Pope Innocent IV during a meal asks Clare to bless the loaves of bread. At first, the story tells us that Clare is hesitant. The pope insists, indeed, commands that Clare should pronounce a blessing over the bread. Clare finally agrees and we are told that upon making the sign of the cross over the loaves, "there immediately appeared on all the loaves of bread a most beautiful sign of the cross." See Fior 42.

<sup>34</sup>Fior 65.

**Hail, O Lady,  
Holy Queen,  
Mary, holy Mother of God,  
Who are the Virgin made Church,  
chosen by the most Holy Father in heaven  
whom he consecrated with His most holy  
beloved Son  
and with the Holy Spirit the Paraclete,  
in whom there was and is  
all fullness of grace and every good.**

**SalBVM: 1-3**



### ***Witness at Greccio: Christmas Eve, 1223***

***"...the manger is prepared, the hay is carried in,  
and the ox and the ass are led to the spot . . . and  
out of Greccio is made a new Bethlehem. The night  
is lit up like day, delighting both man and beast."***

**I remember  
the special glow  
that the sky had that night . . .**

**from the torches,  
the stars,  
and the eyes of men and beasts . . .**

**as they led us gently to that place**

**where we were reminded  
after far too long,**

**of that infant child  
by that saint of God**

**who had brought us together again,  
at last . . .**

**and who deemed us  
worthy to be  
again at His birth,**

**and to join him with the rocks and woods,  
the hills and streams,**

**in a joyful  
song  
of praise.**

**Andrea F. Barone, SFO**

### **About Our Contributors**

**Andrea Barone, SFO**, is coordinator of educational services for students at The Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University. This is her second appearance in *The Cord*.

**Jean Marie Cleveland, OSF**, a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg, IN, has been President of the Franciscan Federation of the Third Order Regular, and is also her community's Congregational Minister. The article in this issue was her address at the end of her term as Federation President.

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**Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF**, is a Franciscan scholar and Congregational Minister of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Frankfort, IL. She is well-known on the Franciscan circuit, and her book, *A Franciscan Solitude Experience*, is widely used as a source book in Franciscan retreat work.

**Ramona Miller, OSF**, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Rochester, MN, and currently serves as Director of Spiritual Formation and Director of Field Education at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, CA. she is a long-time staff member for Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs, and is a graduate of The Franciscan Institute. Her article was one of the keynote addresses at the 2005 Annual Conference of the Franciscan Federation.





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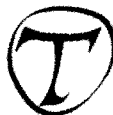
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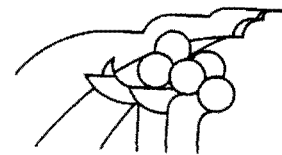


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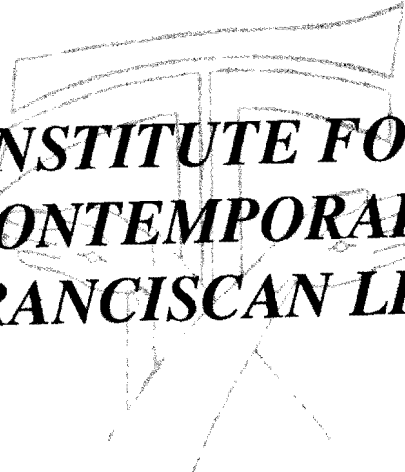
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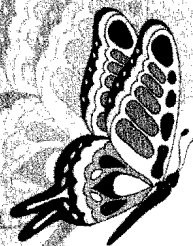
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Sunday, January 8 (7p.m.) – Saturday, January 14 (noon), 2006.

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#### Retreat: The Admonitions of St. Francis

Friday, August 4 (7 p.m.) - Thursday, August 10 (noon), 2006.

Director: Elizabeth Mackowiak, CSSF.

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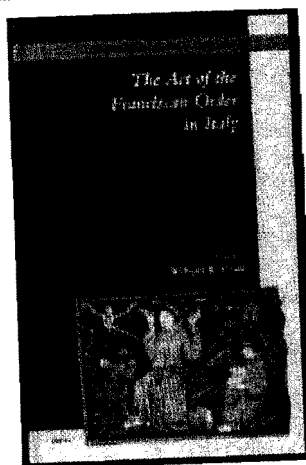
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## Abbreviations

## Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	The Admonitions
BIL	A Blessing for Brother Leo
Ctc	The Canticle of the Creatures
CtExh	The Canticle of Exhortation
1Frg	Fragments of 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 Custodians
1LtF	The First Letter to the Faithful
2LtF	The Second Letter to the Faithful
LtL	A Letter to Brother Leo
LtMin	A Letter to a Minister
LtOrd	A Letter to the Entire Order
LtR	A Letter to the Rulers of the People
ExhP	Exhortation o the Praise of God
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
PrsG	The Praises of God
OP	The Office of the Passion
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix
ER	The Earlier Rule ( <i>Regula non bullata</i> )
LR	The Later Rule ( <i>Regula bullata</i> )
RH	A Rule for Hermitages
SalBVM	A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SalV	A Salutation of Virtues
Test	The Testament
TPJ	True and Perfect Joy

## Writings of Saint Clare

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

## Franciscan Sources

1C	The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano
2C	The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul
3C	The Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
LCh	The Legend for Use in the Choir
Off	The Divine Office of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
LJS	The Life of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
VL	The Versified Life of St. Francis by Henri d'Avranches
1-3JT	The Praises by Jacopone da Todi
DCom	The Divine Comedy by Dante 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
LFI	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