

T • H • E
C • O • R • D

"Come Let Us Begin"
Maureen Maguire, FMSJ..... 2

A Lonergan View of Francis of Assisi
Richard L. Boileau, SFO..... 3

*Lessons Learned in Franciscan Spirituality
As First-Year College Faculty*
Mary B. Schreiner..... 23

"Sheets in the Wind"
Florence Vales, OSC..... 27

*Elements of Franciscan Unity;
An Ecumenical Perspective*
Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity. .28

*The Hermeneutic of Projection: Jews as
Exempla in Bonaventure's Sunday Sermons*
Timothy M. Powers..... 30

About Our Contributors...... 37

Book Review...... 38

Announcements...... 40

On the Franciscan Circuit...... 48

COME LET US BEGIN

I feel as Francis felt
Who said to his brothers, "Come."
Let us begin our work
For we have nothing done.

I never knew what he meant before
His life so full, so varied,
Pulsing, alive with purpose.

Indeed let me begin.
The time runs out on me.
My inner clock grows weary.
I pass from joy to sorrow.
Today shall I begin,
Or wait until; tomorrow?
My pendulum swings on steady wings.
It's hard to keep the pace.
I wind and oil my run down springs
And polish up my face.

Is there an end to the journey?
Am I really worth all this trouble?
Shall I take up my spade and dig?
Clear away all this rubble?

Then, like Francis, I took the stones
That had lain there for many years.
Tired, tumbled heaps
Of visions, hopes and fears.

I polished each treasured stone,
Placed it with loving care.
And began to rebuild the church,
Christ had asked me to repair.

Maureen Maguire, EMSJ

A Lonergan View of Francis of Assisi On Consciousness, Conversion and Communication

Richard L. Boileau, SFO

Introduction

The radical decision that Francis of Assisi took with regards to the meaning of the Christian Gospel during the opening moments of the thirteenth century created a whole school of spirituality that has transcended the centuries as "the richest of all, incontestably one of the most beautiful, and one which has most decisively left its stamp on the history of the Church."¹ Few within the Christian tradition, other than Jesus himself, have been the subject of as much speculation as Francis of Assisi; more books and articles have been published about him than any other figure in Christian history.² No one has been more closely associated with Jesus: "It seems . . . that there was never anyone . . . who resembled more the image of Jesus Christ and the evangelical form of life than Francis."³ No one has had a larger spiritual family: grouped as Friars Minor, Poor Clares and Secular Franciscans and Third Order Regular religious, they have made up the largest religious movement in the history of Christianity.

For those of us who are so inclined, appropriating this tradition and allowing it to change our lives is important, but it is not enough. We are invited to "Repent, and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1:15), but also we are called to spread the good news of salvation (cf. Rm. 10:14). Francis gave us the foundation and the tools for doing so efficiently and effectively: "Already at an early date, Pope Honorius III pays tribute to the Friars Minor in that "everywhere, after the example of the Apostles, they spread abroad the seed of the word of God."⁴ I believe that Francis's legacy still has much to teach us about the communication of gospel values. Whereas the monastic tradition had focused on seeking God, the mendicant movement had as its prime intuition the need to propose to the wider world the Good News of Jesus Christ.

To understand the effects of this movement requires familiarity with the culture in which Francis operated. He lived in changing times, as we do today, and his genius was to interpret the traditional elements in his surroundings in a new way.

The word “new” recurs frequently in the comments of early observers of the Franciscan movement. Francis himself seemed to many in his day a new kind of Christian, one that did not fit easily within the categories of his day . . . creating a new “form of life,” as he called it, different from the prevailing monastic and canonical forms then in favor.⁵

Vernon Gregson, a Lonergan scholar, has highlighted the ways in which great teachers, such as Buddha, Jesus, Confucius and Mohamed introduce newness (to which I would add the name of Francis despite the fact that the *poverello* would surely protest).

First, these great teachers were originators of meaning and values [and] the past became “new” to their visions. They did not give new answers. They raised new questions. . . . Second, most of what they taught was in the form of stories or parables, which are particularly effective and striking ways to reveal values, their principle concern. Their interest, then, was not primarily discursive truth. . . . Third, their own lives were the best narratives, the best stories to reveal the depth of their own characters and to give evidence of the goodness, the beauty, and the rightness of what they stood for.⁶

As I have come to know him better for who he must really have been—historically, stripped of devotional clichés—my respect for Francis has grown exponentially. Most of the



credit for this belongs to the eminent Jesuit theologian, Bernard Lonergan, whose method exposes the need, as well as the tools, for understanding historically even something as elusive as spirituality. When looking at the life of Francis of Assisi, in asking all the relevant questions with regards to his religious experience, understanding, judgments and decisions, we are drawn to the changing aspects of his socio-economic environment. Exploring what Lonergan

meant by intellectual, moral and religious conversion, one relates this progressive process to Francis’s manifest commitment to continuous conversion as the *sine qua non* of religious life. Finally, when one asks questions about his spirituality in relation to the functional specialties proposed by Lonergan, it is a relatively simple matter to attribute insightful moments of Francis’s life to the operation of each specialty running from his unique experience of religious life and teaching; to his resolution of conflicts and contradictions, and the subsequent change in his foundational convictions; to his communication of this experience and understanding by word and action.

Lonergan’s “Transcendental” Method

The term “transcendental” is applied because of the progressive nature of this process: a system of striving for higher levels of consciousness, “a mounting from a fixation with the world of immediacy to the world filled with meaning and permeated with value. It has to do with the struggle toward the authentic human functioning identified with knowledge and choice.”⁷ Of particular importance in understanding Lonergan’s method is how he perceived consciousness or intentionality. It is to this that Lonergan related the eight functional specialties that he saw as comprising the work not only of theology but of other disciplines as well.

Lonergan thought of human beings as coming to know through progressive levels of consciousness. The first level is experience to which he urged us to be attentive. Upon this basic human activity rests the entire process leading to real self-actualization. On this level are situated the sensory operations as well as remembering and imagining. The second level is understanding, which requires us to be intelligent in the operation of inquiring, imagining, understanding, conceiving and formulating.⁸ The third level is judging for which being reasonable is the operative precept as one reflects and determines the sufficiency of evidence: “reflecting, marshalling and weighing the evidence, judging.”⁹ The fourth level of consciousness is deciding, which demands that we be responsible in the choices we make and in the actions we undertake to breathe life into our decisions: “deliberating, evaluating, deciding, speaking, writing.”¹⁰ The apex of this ascent is mystery, the state of being in love: “We fall in love. And it need not always be preceded by knowledge, especially when our falling in love is initiated by, and has as its term, a Transcendent Mystery that we do not and cannot apprehend.”¹¹

The following table illustrates the relationship between the eight functional specialties and the four levels of consciousness or intentionality, and previews the manner in which these can be applied to Francis of Assisi’s religious insights.

Lonergan's Cognitive Process Applied to Francis of Assisi <i>(To be read from bottom left, up and across, then down to bottom right)</i>		
Functional Specialties	Levels of Consciousness or Intentionality	Functional Specialties
<i>Appropriating a Tradition (Meaning of the Gospel)</i>		<i>Mediating between Tradition and Contemporary Culture</i>
4. Dialectics → <i>Conflict leading to conversion</i>	<i>Fourth:</i> Deciding Responsibly	5. Foundations ↓ <i>Development of form of life</i>
3. History <i>Discernment within church</i>	<i>Third:</i> Judging Rationally	6. Doctrine <i>His new priorities</i>
2. Interpretation <i>Culture affecting his knowing</i>	<i>Second:</i> Understanding Reasonably	7. Systematics <i>His early rule and admonitions</i>
1. Research <i>His experience of religion</i> ↑	<i>First:</i> Experiencing Attentively	8. Communication <i>His Testament</i>

Lonergan's method is not so much a cognitional theory but a concrete charting of the data of consciousness itself. It is "concerned with objectifying the human subject's actual cognitional process."¹² Being alert to one's own cognitional process is what Lonergan called "self-appropriation"¹³ and it is not the same as looking at oneself as one would a specimen in a laboratory but must be done in context of a living experience. Consequently, objectivity for Lonergan was in effect critical and transparent subjectivity.

Finally, a few words about "intersubjectivity," the understanding of which reveals how truly gifted a communicator Francis was: "Meaning is embodied or carried in human intersubjectivity, in art, in symbols, in language, and in the lives and deeds of persons. . . . Prior to the 'we' that results from the mutual love of an 'I' and a 'thou', there is the earlier 'we' . . ."¹⁴ From it wells up a deep desire to break free of self-preoccupation and to find meaning in a broader reality or higher level of consciousness. Thomas Farrell has suggested, "advanced writing is intersubjective, because writers draw on meanings, and values they have received from others."¹⁵ By acting attentively, intelligently, reasonably, responsibly, and in love, therefore, the communicator of religious value assists in the progress and development of society because within him intersubjectivity collaborates with authenticity to create new horizons of understanding and new categories of meaning.

The genesis of common meaning is an ongoing process of communication, of people coming to share the same cognitive, constitutive, and effective meanings. On the elementary level this process has been described as arising between the self and the other when, on the basis of already existing intersubjectivity, the self makes a gesture, the other makes an interpretive response, and the self discovers in the response the effective meaning of his gesture. So from intersubjectivity through gesture and interpretations there arises common understanding. On that spontaneous basis there can be built a common language, the transmission of acquired knowledge and of social patterns through education, the diffusion of information, and the common will to community that seeks to replace misunderstanding with mutual comprehension and to change occasions of disagreement into occasions of non-agreement and eventually agreement.¹⁶

What Lonergan implied is that all good theology goes through these stages of consciousness and the functional steps or specialties that rest upon them—whatever we chose to call these levels and steps. Any endeavor, therefore, that is either inauthentic (e.g., interpretation of data without adequate consideration of biases) or incomplete (e.g., skipping from doctrine to communication) must be regarded as inherently flawed. It is my belief that any investigation of Franciscan spirituality or, in particular, of the communication of Franciscan spirituality, must take this process into account.

Francis's Experience of Religion

According to Lonergan, research is the awareness of experience and the unavoidable first step in a rigorous pursuit of meaning. It is the most basic level of knowing and the conscious or intentional state of being attentive to what is occurring around and within us. Not only are sensory details important, so also is the thoughtful consideration of how our own mind works. This is the only way to counter bias and other distortions that creep into our attempts to know and understand. Awareness of how we process data is just as vital as our consideration of the data being processed: "It is central to Lonergan's thought that the data of consciousness, or how the human mind works, be part of the theologian's "data" as he or she goes about theological research in the data available to the senses through reading and personal experience."¹⁷

In his Testament, Francis would clearly identify the Gospel as the inspiration for his form of life, so it is fair to assume that his experience of it had a significant affect on him. There is no way of knowing what its influence was prior to his commitment to follow Christ in strict fidelity to what he found in the Gospel, but it is evident from his various writings that he was deeply marked by numerous passages that convey the words and actions of Jesus. This is all

the more remarkable when we consider that it is unlikely he ever read or even consulted the Gospel the way we do today, with the whole Bible or New Testament in one bound edition. What he spoke from was probably his recollection of pericopes proclaimed in the liturgies that he attended. It was only in churches that he would have had access to full biblical texts. Manselli, for instance, echoed the popular belief that it was in a church that Francis and his first companions used the officially proscribed practice to discern the will of God for the nascent order by randomly opening the Gospel three times, each time revealing a verse about the nature of discipleship and the call to evangelical poverty. But it was his keen observation and his near-perfect memory regarding the details of incidents and quotations recounted in Gospel narratives that seems so awesome to us today. His citation of them was extensive and his insight into their meaning was many times innovative. For reasons that are not entirely clear, Francis's attention focused explicitly upon the Gospel. Perhaps he did have access to books but that these contained only the four Gospel accounts, or perhaps it was his intuition to resolve the confusion created by different styles of religious behavior prevalent in his time. For whatever reason, he would eventually choose to follow the example of Jesus rather than that of the apostles, a decision that would have surprisingly dramatic consequences.

Another experience that would change the course of Francis's life was the fact that he charismatically attracted others to join him in the hope of sharing his new form of life. First there were few, among them the wealthy Bernard of Quintavalle, the priest Peter Catanii, and later Clare, born in nobility. Soon there would be many: "Not only were men converted to the Order; but also many virgins and widows, struck by their preaching, on their advice, secluded themselves in cities and towns in monasteries established for doing penance."¹⁸ From every indication, recruiting others to join him and providing leadership to hundreds and then thousands of followers was certainly not part of his original plan. It figuratively sent him back to the drawing board. For this reason, there are few landmark moments in Francis's experience of the Gospel as weighty as his hearing of Christ's call to preaching in the Gospel of Matthew:

Go and preach, "The Kingdom of Heaven is near!" Heal the sick, bring the dead back to life, heal those who suffer from dreaded skin-diseases, and drive out demons. You have received without paying, so give without being paid. Do not carry any gold, silver or copper money in your pockets; do not carry a beggar's bag for the journey or an extra shirt of a stick. A worker should be given what he needs (Mt 10: 7-10).

Even as Francis lived and preached the Gospel, his own communication of its central events became experiences that precipitated further developments

in his spirituality. Perhaps the best example of this is his re-enactment of the Nativity scene at Greccio, cradled in the Rieti valley south of Assisi. The year 1223 was a difficult year for Francis. There were considerable tensions within the brotherhood, principally between those who would live according to the precepts of evangelical poverty as Francis explained them and those who would adopt a style of living more consistent with the prevalent monastic model of the times. As he returned from Rome, where he had met Church officials to consider the revisions recommended by the curia (an event some would agree weighed heavily upon his spirit), he stopped to visit an old friend, John, a man of good reputation and means. He asked his friend to organize a Christmas liturgy to illustrate the poverty and simplicity of the Incarnation. What he caused, almost certainly without intending to do so, was the beginning of the now-familiar tradition of constructing nativity scenes in our homes and churches around the world. What he observed was a concrete manifestation of what it meant for Christ to enter human history, and that experience filled him with inexpressible joy and consolation. Christmas at Greccio was a living out of Francis's fixation on the humanity and divinity of Jesus in the context of his relations with Mary and Joseph as evidenced in the Gospel, which he viewed as more fundamental than the life of the apostles after the death of Christ as recounted in the Acts of the Apostles. If the reenactment of Christ's birth was a key milestone experience in the completion of his spirituality, the stigmata which recalled his beloved Lord's passion and death, and which occurred on Mount La Verna, in Tuscany, not quite a year later, was an event of corresponding magnitude: "On September 14, 1224, while Francis was immersed in a long period of prayer, he received the stigmata, which he carried until his death."¹⁹

In the course of shaping his spirituality into a final rule of life that could be shared by his brotherhood, Francis was also greatly influenced by his experience of the Gospel as interpreted in the wide-sweeping ecclesial reform of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and subsequent papal bulls. The magnitude of this event, which addressed burning concerns such as "various heresies, growing disrespect for the church and its leaders and minister, the reform of the church's episcopacy and priests, the reform of Eucharistic practice, and the initiation of a new crusade to the Near East,"²⁰ calls to our minds Vatican II, which in turn allows us to imagine how deeply Francis must have been moved by this watershed event.

Often portrayed as a romantic dreamer, Francis was actually a pragmatic man who never ventured very far from the need to find concrete answers to life's primordial questions by using the materials found in his immediate environment. His spirituality was not spawned by highly evolved theological principles; rather he "felt that the starting point of his conversion and reversal of

values was his realization of the existential fact of the human condition as common to each person, and that over each person loomed the possibility of an identical fate."²¹

Evidence suggests that he was extremely observant and attentive to the minutest details of his surroundings. He was a person who based much of his understanding about the central issues of life as well as his judgments about their relative importance and his decisions about how to integrate these into his own life on the most basic of materials: his own observations and experiences, his own data of sense and of consciousness. Ironically, the man who tradition would receive as an eccentric dreamer was in effect a practical man, bold and perseverant, but with a poet's sensibility for deriving meaning from data that others would overlook and an idealist's audacity for daring to live authentically according to the insights that these would yield, no matter the cost.

Francis's careful attention to his own experience of religion can be regarded as consciousness at the most basic level, in regards to the categories elucidated by Lonergan. He would then interpret this awareness as understanding that would later open onto new and exciting possibilities and serve as the solid ground upon which would be constructed a form of life to which others would soon be drawn.

Francis as Communicator

Lonergan's method is an invaluable tool to appreciate the manner and content of the poverello's communications of his religious experience. Anyone wishing to communicate the spiritual insights of this thirteenth-century Italian penitent would benefit from a process similar to one proposed by Lonergan to avoid misleading biases and unhelpful superficialities; to reveal the richness of who he was and what he did; and to do so in a manner that will have a positive impact on our culture and the development of spiritual theology.

Following are a few conclusions about the communication of Franciscan spirituality, both in Francis's time and in our own.

1. Though this is indeed an extreme case of stating the obvious, I think it is important to begin with the observation that Francis was a sincere, intelligent and successful communicator. The evidence we have for this is quite simply the durability of its form and content, and the constantly renewed and reinvigorated interest it has elicited for the past 800 years.

2. Without distracting from the previous point, I think it is equally obvious that there is an urgent need to clarify, redirect or amplify—perhaps a combination of all three—the signal that we have received in order that it be made fully relevant and useful for our times. Mindless imitation of his life

would be unwise, unsatisfying and unhelpful to others. Consequently, there is a need to demythologize it, not to lay it bare and render it barren, but in order to re-mythologize it in exciting and contemporary ways so that its vital truths may echo across our culture and continue to convey meaning and value well into the future.

3. The essence of his legacy is still fertile ground for the development of spiritual theology that bears fruit needed to nourish people of the 21st century. It also serves as a solid and splendid foundation upon which we can ground reasonable decisions about how our own lives can be evidence of Gospel values transcending the limits of time and space to save us from devastating effects of these barriers to conversion.

4. It would seem to be appropriate to apply to the communication of Franciscan spirituality the best practices of secular communications, provided these were consistent with the charism of the poverello, particularly in his openness to what is from God, gift or desire, even as these are often times unplanned and unexpected. Today, we have a broader array of media available to us as well as a deeper understanding than Francis had of how even traditional communication operates. In thirty years of journalism, corporate communications and the study of communication theory, I have become aware of numerous principles and practices that enable people to achieve increased levels of authenticity and efficacy in reaching disparate audiences with key and vital messages. I have no doubt that the learning I have achieved in the secular arena can now be harnessed at the service of a particularly Franciscan understanding of spirituality for the benefit of those for whom it would have resonance. It would be appropriate, therefore, if not imperative, to apply to Franciscan communication aimed at the highly secularized citizens of this new millennium Lonergan's insights in communication, these being very consistent with those of Francis, as I have suggested in previous units. The outcome promises, I believe, to support the church's hopes for a new era of evangelization.

5. Perhaps the most compelling aspects of Francis's religious reality, one that echoes in our own, is the balance he struck between being authentically faithful to the meaning of the Gospel, as he understood it, and fidelity to the official teachings of the church, as witnessed by his wholesale inclusion of council decrees and canons in his own writings. I am reminded of the parallels that exist between this simple and sincere post-conciliar person who prayed and preached in the shadows of both heretical and church-led reform movements and us, who dwell, worship and act in the shadow of individualism, pluralism and various church reforms.

6. Returning to Lonergan as the lens through which we have formed a fuller appreciation of how Francis communicated his spirituality, we can also

get a glimpse of how we can more effectively communicate the tradition of Franciscan spirituality available to us today by drawing certain opportunities for further development. Three areas are particularly promising: writing, preaching and the use of symbols.

7. Lonergan rested much of his presentation of communication on the principle of intersubjectivity, which is a very elemental reality about how human beings related to one another: "Subjects are mutually and reciprocally aware."²² Writing must be regarded as intersubjectivity because "the image of writing as intersubjectivity clearly suggests that the writer needs to appropriate commonly known ideas from within the various textual communities . . . in order to be able to write effectively."²³ Farrell suggested that "advanced writing is inter-subjectivity, because writers draw on meanings and values they have received from others."²⁴ The conclusion for us is that good writing on any subject, including the communication of spirituality, requires that the writer apply to rigorously selected source material Lonergan's due diligence tests of good research, interpretation, judgment and decision with attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility: "According to Lonergan, meanings and values 'are authentic in the measure that cumulatively they are the result of transcendental precepts.'"²⁵

8. To be effective, preaching about spiritual matters must be regarded as a form, albeit distinct, of theological communication and not just a disincarnated inventory of doctrinal statements: "It is an articulation not only of the meaning to be conveyed, but of the value of that meaning for changing both the preacher and those who might hear the preaching."²⁶ When a person religiously in love engages in the distinct form of communication known as preaching, we have an example of an oral evaluative hermeneutic in action. A text is being interpreted not only as to its meaning, but also to its value to transform human life. . . .As a form of theological communication, preaching can bring a good word that not only calls for compassion but for justice. In hope, the religions and cultures of our world wait.²⁷

9. Finally, to be efficacious, our plan to communicate must make judicious use of symbols to faithfully convey rather than distort meaning. Too often traditional symbols are misrepresented, misused or misunderstood, particularly when they have long-since lost their capacity to bear meaning in cultural circumstances remote from those in which they were first conceived. Clearly, this problem is ubiquitous, insidious and intractable simply because "the communication of the Christian vision resides most centrally in its symbols as expressed in its sacred texts. Yet these symbols are not transparent. They require both the critical examination of their meaning in the first century and the critical understanding of them in the 20th century."²⁸

Catholic theology in particular has begun a thorough examination of itself in relation to culture: past, present, and especially the future. At the same time, theology has recognized that it cannot concern itself exclusively with ecclesial problems, especially those embedded in cultural contexts of the limiting past, at the expense of the rest of the world. Theology has a wider, inclusive reasonability for cultural problems as a new challenge.²⁹

The aim of the study that I conducted was to search in the writings of Francis of Assisi and those of biographers and historians for the best indicators of how Franciscan spirituality was communicated in the first years of the movement. This investigation employed Lonergan's transcendental method to interpret evidence found in early documents and contemporary academic literature in order to make reasonable judgments about how we are to receive this rich tradition in a manner that allows us to communicate Franciscan spirituality authentically in our own culture. Our point of departure must, of course, be with Jesus, just as it was for Francis: "For Jesus, the disposition of genuine repentance was only possible when one took on the attitude of a child (Mt 18:3) and turned away from the dispositions of self-righteousness and presumption (Lk 18:10-14). The repentance that Jesus preached was good news to be received with joy."³⁰ If continuous conversion, therefore, was at the heart of the spiritual life of Saint Francis, it must be so for anyone wishing to communicate his spirituality in our own culture. Indeed, conversion, as understood in the method of Lonergan, is by definition something to which we must remain disposed at all times, and it must be an authentic expression of decisions to change and progress, a transformation which begins with a religious experience, to which we are attentive, understood by being intelligent, judged by being reasonable, and acted upon by being responsible.

There are numerous parallels between the age in which Francis operated and our own. Not the least of these is the need to make a clear and deliberate choice between the secular forces of hedonism or humanism and the spiritual need to live according to tenets of the faith we profess.³¹ In our time as well as that in which Francis consciously sought to reconcile paradoxes and to find meaning in the midst of contradictory signs, we are called to respond to God's love through penance: "Francis and Clare experienced different events in their lives which led them into this practice, but they agreed upon the core values of penance: following Jesus in humility, poverty, simplicity, and community."³² Indeed, all Christians are called to make sober judgments and coherent decisions about the meaning of the Gospel, and to take responsible and loving action that is suited to our own particular circumstances. We all are called to consciousness in faith, to conversion in hope, and to self-transcendence in Love.

“Let Us Begin . . .”

Evidently, Francis’s communication of his spirituality has been a resounding success. Eight hundred years after he walked the dusty roads of Italy and neighboring countries, roughly clad and lacking in all things save for the virtues of faith, hope, love, and the qualities of peace, joy and compassion, we still speak of this fun-loving romantic who would become a self-effacing man of God, thrust onto the world stage by a series of disturbing insights and the conflicted circumstances that surrounded them. His charisma has been celebrated and condemned. He himself has been imitated and ridiculed. Still, his communication of meaning endures.

We can learn something about what is lasting about his legacy by examining what people say and write about it today. Warner recalled our traditional association of Francis with peacemaking, preaching by example, the brotherhood of creation and the balance between prayer and action. Short pointed to the continuing relevance of these insights: the “down-to-earthness” of the experience of God; the real meaning of evangelical poverty; the spirituality of creation; and the spirituality of reconciliation. And Brunette posited that Francis’s “state of spiritual itinerancy”³³ serves as a powerful inspiration or compass if not an actual road map for our own life’s journey of conversion.

Anyone undertaking the task of communicating these spiritual insights must first grapple with two questions. The first is whether or not it is important to do so. It is my conviction that it is. In part, this conviction is based upon the following appreciation of the similarities that exist between his age and our own, notwithstanding the vast differences in our respective social, political and ecclesial environments. The second is this: Was Francis’s way of looking at things compatible with our own?

In order to answer the first question, it is helpful to recall these similarities.

	Francis’s Times	Our Times
Cry for peace	War with neighboring cities War between church and state War between Islam and Christianity	Strife between rich and poor countries Conflict between church and state Tension between Islam and Christianity

	Francis’s Times	Our Times
Relationship to creation	Disregard for welfare of vassals Unawareness of ecology People and nature were mere resources	Disregard for welfare of employees Neglect and abuse of ecosystems Devaluation of human and natural capital
Quest for simplicity	Struggle to survive Constant fear of disease and violence People locked into social structures	Rampant and growing stress at work Growing fear of brutal economic forces Social alienation of individuals
Church reform	Ubiquitous heretical groups Monumental impact of Lateran IV Concern about control of <i>magisterium</i>	Growing concerns about orthodoxy Monumental impact of Vatican II Concern about control of <i>magisterium</i>

Relationship with Creation

When Pope John Paul II declared Francis of Assisi to be the patron saint of ecology, I doubt that anyone was surprised. His Canticle of Creation alone would have earned him that accolade. On the surface, it appears rustic and naïve, but “when it is seen in terms of Francis’s other works and the motivation behind its composition, the poem in fact acquires indisputable claim to originality and complexity.”³⁴

Creatures, each having autonomous worth and beauty, are yet brothers and sisters to each other, aiding each other, gladly performing their divinely allotted functions. . . . By giving creatures their due praise, people overcome their customary callous ingratitude to creatures and to God—another step toward the reconciliation and redemption of humanity envisioned by the end of the poem.³⁵

Francis tied all things together into a single integrated worldview, which encompassed God, humankind and all things great and small created by God’s

own hand. He understood the intended connectedness, so it would not be surprising to find a prominent liberation theologian eight centuries later writing a book linking the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. As Boff has written:

The world and its creatures are within the human being in the form of the archetypes, symbols, and images that inhabit our interiority and with which we must dialog and that we must integrate. If violence persists in the relationships of human beings with nature, it is because aggressive impulses emerge from within human beings. These impulses indicate the lack of an inner ecology and a failure to integrate the three main directions of ecology . . . : environmental ecology, social ecology, and mental ecology.³⁶

Cry for Peace

Scarcely anyone feels immune from conflict. As anxiety grows about the nature and frequency of distrust and disputes, as aggressive behavior and armed struggles intensify, people dream of peace. Sadly, some have already lost the ability to even dream of such a possibility, so the need for peacemakers is as manifest today as it was in Francis's time: people who bring reconciliation and healing to individuals, families, nations and the world. Peace was for him a subject of capital importance. His rule bade brothers to say upon entering someone's home, "Peace be to this house" and on his deathbed he said to them, "Go dearest brothers, two by two into all the country, and preach to men peace and penance unto the remission of their sins."³⁷ His method was predicated on a profound understanding of brotherhood and sisterhood, which implies true love of all created things, and respect for the inherent dignity of all of God's children. It implied a willingness to see all things as gift from a benevolent and providential God and to let go of the fear that causes us to hoard as though these possessions had the power to protect us from the real dangers in life. And, it implied the dismantling of barriers that block out the light more than they do the enemy.

Today, the charism of peacemaker is understood to take on three important forms. The first is to facilitate genuine dialogue. History would suggest that this is more difficult than it seems. Perhaps Francis would have observed that this is so because to engage in meaningful dialogue, one must pre-suppose that the dialogue partner is a brother or sister, equal in the eyes of God, with the capacity to be an instrument of his will and the capability of acting with divine grace. This is why Francis's notion of brotherhood is so fundamental to the building up of a world order crowned by peace: the kingdom of God on earth. The second modern strategy for peace is the promotion of justice. Francis

understood that to achieve peace, certain conditions had to be met. While the so-called *Prayer of Saint Francis* was not actually written by the *poverello*, it is generally regarded as being aptly steeped in his spirituality: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon. . . . For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned. . . ."³⁸ Reflecting on the tradition surrounding that prayer, Boff recalled a principle that "comes from Saint Augustine: peace is the work of justice. . . . [P]eace cannot be sought by itself without first achieving justice Justice is giving to each one his or her due."³⁹

Today social justice represents one of the most serious challenges to the conscience of the world. The abyss between those who are within the world "order" and those who are excluded is widening day by day [W]e are living in times of grave disequilibrium, of real war declared against the Earth, against ecosystems which are plundered, against people who are shunted aside because world capital is no longer interested in exploring them, against whole classes of workers who are made expendable and excluded; war against two-thirds of humankind who do not have the basic goods they need to live in peace.⁴⁰

Finally, the third enabler of peace is social and economic development, a role that Francis actively assumed, particularly privileging the poor.

On one hand, Francis can be offered as the exemplar of all three strategies. He showed by example what it means to enter into meaningful dialogue with a Moslem sultan; he advocated on behalf of those who were exploited and oppressed; and he worked alongside the poor in order that their situation might be improved, if only modestly. Clearly tradition has caused us to receive Francis not only as a lover of peace but also as a maker of peace. Cook recalled that various episodes in his life point to that fact: Francis and Masseo stressing that friars must see the importance of peace while on the road to Siena in the *Fioretti*; driving out demons in Arezzo in accounts by Celano and Bonaventure as well as the Legend of Perugia; restoring peace in Bologna as in the writings of Thomas, archdeacon of Spoleto; and, at the end of his life, reconciling the *podesta* and the bishop in Assisi itself,⁴¹ [and] according to the Legend of Perugia: "Francis is not only a lover of peace—he was a maker of peace. He did not concern himself only with preaching the peace which should penetrate the hearts of all men; he set out to create an end to war without which his goal of bringing salvation would have been largely unachieved."⁴² On the other hand, we must be cautious in our portrayal of Francis as an ideal peacemaker, particularly as we look for lessons relevant to our own circumstances. Joseph P. Chinnici has presented a persuasive argument to suggest that this misrepresents historic facts about what Francis did and the spirit in which he did things:

“Inasmuch as we make of Francis an ideal and the peace he incarnated an ideal peace, we rob him of his history and ourselves of our freedom to act.”⁴³ Rather, Francis offered peace as bread “to a war-torn, hungry world,”⁴⁴ showing many ways to witness to peace:

Martyrdom is a central motif in early Franciscan writing: Some are martyred in Morocco; some, like Giles, embrace what he calls the “martyrdom of contemplation”; some, like Francis and Bonaventure, are martyred in community; some like Clare receive the martyrdom of illness and struggle within the Church; others, by creative word in the world. All are martyred in the cause of peace, searching dominantly for the presence of Christ and a way to make that presence effective.⁴⁵

Quest for Simplicity

Despite growing public interest in matters of religion and spirituality, a phenomenon often heralded under the banner of post-modern values, it must be recognized that we live in a very materialistic world. The acquisitive and clinging tendency that seems to fuel an insatiable appetite for power and possessions creates remarkable anxiety in our lives and provokes us to assume roles and adopt behaviors that sink us into ever-increasing depths of stress. This was also true in Francis’s day, albeit manifest in different forms. His spirituality, however, provided relief from the anguish of unnatural ambitions: evangelical poverty was the antidote that he prescribed. While the challenge that this spirituality poses is daunting, for which reason we are often inclined to dismiss it, it is as relevant to us today as it was to him in his day. He would have been no more eager to part with property than we would be. But it was the price that he was prepared to pay for the freedom to follow Christ rather than the ways of the world.

Following this example, living *sine proprio*, without anything of one’s own, today implies the refusal to arrogate to one’s self what belongs to all, because all belongs to the Creator. Everything is gift; nothing is “property.” The gospel mandate to “sell all and give to the poor,” which Francis and Clare followed, far from being meaningless, is as urgent in our own day as it was in theirs.⁴⁶

But evangelical poverty was for the *poverello* and must be for us today understood to be the means and not the end of a courageous spiritual journey focused on union with Jesus Crucified: “Poverty is never lived for its own sake, but always for the . . . life of the Spirit, that it brings to the world. . . . The viable reforms always made specific expressions of poverty secondary to re-

newal of gospel service to the poor and union with Jesus in contemplative prayer.”⁴⁷ It is for this reason that we are more inclined to shift our attention from evangelical poverty, which is a value too easily misunderstood and misrepresented, to humility and simplicity.

Church Reform

We live, as Francis did, in an age when divergent opinions regarding the way in which we are called to witness to gospel values in our daily lives are confronted to one another as soldiers pitted against one another on a battlefield. It seems that at such a time, his response to this tendency is becoming increasingly worthy of our attention. Francis saw in his day those who would imitate Jesus concretely as well as those who would adapt his ways, perhaps more symbolically. Francis saw those who chose a direct route to God as well as those who would place more emphasis on structures and intermediaries as the road to salvation. He witnessed trends that encouraged heterogeneity and others than stressed the need for orthodoxy and orthopraxies.

These trends are still with us today and the divisions between people and communities continue to widen. Perhaps it is no wonder that we are so attracted to a gentle figure that manifestly sought the presence of the Holy Spirit in otherness; who held deep-seated convictions but, in a genuine sense of spiritual poverty, sought to humbly apply them to his own life rather than bitterly reproach those with whom he would not agree. He truly regarded himself as the greatest sinner of all, yet a brother to all. This attitude saved him from spiritual pride and others from the toxic words and behavior that self-righteousness inevitably spews.

The second question facing us before deciding on a course of action to communicate Francis’s spiritual insights to our own culture in the manner that Lonergan would appreciate is this one: Was Francis’s way of looking at things compatible with our own? Certainly he was not a critical realist in the fullest sense of that expression—nor could he have been. But relative to the context in which we must situate him, it may be said that he was naturally disposed to such an outlook. His struggle with religious questions was chiefly caused by his determination to be authentic. Can we today authentically appropriate and effectively communicate his spirituality without such an attitude? I suggest that we cannot. It would be folly to simplistically imitate someone from so foreign a culture. Yet it would be equally foolish to disregard his insights and the stunning parallels that exist between his socio-political and ecclesial environment and our own. It would be, I think, regrettable to set aside a tradition that carries with it a unique capacity to help us understand the desire that dwells within each of us, namely to find ultimate meaning and to fall in love.

The challenge is to communicate these insights with language that resonates for people today, particularly those who are unfamiliar with the expressions and even the categories of traditional religious discourse and the rituals of its celebration and worship. It is also to use the stories of Francis's life in new ways to engender passion in faith and compassion in love. It is finally to leverage genuine conversion, as Lonergan understood the term, in the hearts, minds and souls of God's people. These challenges call us to be creative in the way we present Francis, always mindful of the adaptations required, and always recalling that Francis communicated by his life more than by his words . . . as Jesus had done. While Francis's form of theology can be described as "archaic," his spirituality is timeless because it continues to "elicit our wonder and to inspire our feeble attempts to follow (him) in his dedication to the *'vita evangelii Jesu Christi.'*"⁴⁸

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Photo by C. Fischer

The Cord, 56.1 (2006)

Lessons Learned in Franciscan Spirituality As First-Year College Faculty

Mary B. Schreiner

A little over a year ago, I had the life-altering experience of becoming employed as a professor in a college founded in the Franciscan tradition of values. The contrast with my twenty years as a public school educator first surfaced when I realized I could not answer my interviewer's question: "Just what do Franciscan values mean to you?" Startled, I silently prayed that if I were offered the position, I would dedicate myself to learning the answer to that question. Now, in humble service to new Franciscan college faculty who may come after me, I offer the spiritual fruit of this quest during my infant year at Alvernia College.

Early in my first semester, I decided to approach this question using a traditional academic attack. First, I would memorize what the values were. Next, I would read about Saint Francis to see how he exemplified the values attributed to him. Third, I would ask other Catholics or veteran staff who have worked in our Franciscan college setting what they knew about Franciscan values. Finally, to comprehend Franciscan values, I would engage in prayerful study of any examples of these values in my daily life. The first three tacks were partially successful. In the end, however, observing the evidence of Franciscan values throughout my workdays was the approach that produced the most understanding for me.

I found the memorization of a list of Franciscan values more difficult than I originally thought. Our college mission statement described five: *collegiality, contemplation, humility, peacemaking, and service*. However, many other important values are discussed in literature about Saint Francis, including poverty, joy, respect for nature, compassion, and empathy for the less fortunate. I decided to start with learning the five mentioned in the mission statement, at least for my initial year.

My second strategy for understanding Franciscan values led me to several books about Saint Francis, and these books became my "non-professional" reading time indulgence. Prior to my employment, I had the stereotypical

understanding of Francis as the man who loved nature and founded a religious order of brothers and priests, but knew not much more. Consuming biographies and interpretive works helped me better see how this one man truly “lived the Gospel life,” and has endured as a model for Christian servants for almost 800 years. I began tucking examples of events in Francis’s life into stories I would share with my students at the outset of classes, and found my classes eager to hear more. Reminding my students that we had chosen a Franciscan college because of what made it different from other colleges was welcomed by all of us as we gradually learned more about our Francis’s approach to life. Beyond my reading about Saint Francis, I focused my scriptural reading on the Gospels, deriving from them daily connections with how I was supposed to live, teach, and touch others’ lives.

My third attempt to understand Franciscan values led me to ask other Catholics who embrace Franciscan values what these values meant, yet this tack ironically proved the most frustrating. It quickly appeared to me that the longer one had lived in a Franciscan lifestyle, the harder it was to explain to others what it was that makes one different. My sister, a Capuchin Franciscan Affiliate for several years, tried valiantly to educate me on the matter, but could only conclude “After you’ve been Franciscan, the best way to understand who Franciscans are is to be around people who are *not*.” A fellow faculty member and expert theologian could only say “I can’t explain it. You just have to live it,” and then, after additional conversation, muddled me further by saying “You *already* get it.” I left that talk feeling only somewhat reassured that I really did “get it.”

So, after all the memorizing, reading, and conversation, I returned to the study of my experiences, rather than the words of others, to clarify what Franciscan values meant on a college campus. I had kept a journal since the start of my employment, and before the examples fade in my memory or become such second skin I can’t isolate them, I offer a few of my experiences to my brothers and sisters in Franciscan college life.

Collegiality

My first experience with Franciscan collegiality occurred the morning of my interview. The dean, a nurse by profession, was effusive in her pleasure at being connected to our Education Department faculty, and was quick to note the parallels in our service professions. Later, taking a tour of campus with our department secretary, I sensed her equality and pride in being a key team member. Our department’s faculty, nicknamed “The Dream Team,” is informal, positive, and genuine; each actively seeks ways to build up the others, and especially to make new staff feel welcomed and appreciated as a colleague.

As the semester progressed, I saw collegiality across campus, from professors eating with students and secretaries in the cafeteria, to administrators present in the smallest of campus events, to commuters offered access to faculty during what some might describe as “impossible” office hours! Students have served me at Mass, the Fitness Center, and in offices, always with gentle respect. The Franciscan value of collegiality became clarified to me as *respect-filled connectedness*.

Humility

When the honeymoon of hire faded into the end of the first semester, student evaluations of my teaching brought the Franciscan value of humility to the fore. Behind the veil of anonymity, some questioned the fairness of my grading or the sincerity of my regard for them, two areas in which pride had clearly blocked my awareness. As I left for Christmas break, my co-workers were preoccupied and scattered, and I felt a vivid impression of the humility Christ experienced in His manger birth.

After Christmas, a second humbling came through a surprise request from our President when he asked that I represent Alvernia College on a conference-planning team with the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities. I was flying high with the flattery of this request when I was brought back to earth by a colleague. He suggested that perhaps I was chosen for this role not because I deserved recognition for my keen Franciscan knowledge. Instead, my friend suggested that because our president is a gentle insightful mentor, he was giving me this opportunity for huge personal and spiritual growth. The Franciscan value of *humility* became clearer to me as awakening to how much one has yet to learn!

Contemplation

Contemplation has become a daily hunger for me, filled first in quiet time at home when my family goes off to work, when I can read and pray to start my day. Later, time to contemplate is available to me in the hour drive I have going to work, when I think of the day ahead, pray the Rosary, or listen to spiritual music, and again on the hour drive home, when I think of the ways God revealed Himself to me in the day just past. During the workday, I frequently take advantage of one of our peaceful chapels, as I await daily Mass, or merely sit in God’s presence for a few minutes.

Perhaps the most powerful product of contemplation has come through my selection of a “Mission Moment” to start each class I teach. The Mission Moment might be a shared prayer, a meaningful piece of prose or poetry, a connection between the Gospels and the class I am teaching about children

with disabilities, or something I've learned about Saint Francis. More recently, students have stepped forward with Mission Moments of their own. In evaluations given to me, students have been overwhelmingly grateful for the time I have taken to "put things in proper perspective," and "take a breath of fresh Spirit-filled air" for a few minutes. In fact, it hadn't occurred to me how powerfully different life on a Franciscan campus was until I shared my enthusiasm for these Mission Moments with a colleague. She helped define the Franciscan value of *contemplation* for me when she said that we have "*the privilege to pray all day!*"

Peacemaking

The making of peace has become clear to me only recently. As an example of peacemaking, I have lightened the load of an anxious or burdened student, by occasionally excusing an assignment or postponing a deadline. Many of our students work real-world jobs and have active families while trying to juggle the demands of college. When possible, I have inserted a little peace in their stressful lives with some small act of kindness.

An unexpected occasion of peacemaking presented itself to me this spring. I had spent a full class period purposely simulating a very poor teacher while I had my students simulate students with various types of disabilities. The frustration and anxiety erupted on both sides of the podium, a very uncomfortable and unnatural contrast to our usual student-professor relationship. In processing the simulations during our next class, relief and laughter accompanied the learning as my future teachers now understood how *not* to make their future students feel. To merely "keep" peace is passive and unproductive. Instead, the Franciscan value of *peacemaking* means instead *an active, purposeful resolution of conflict and stress*.

Service

Service is the "middle name" of every act, decision and plan at Alvernia College, and opportunities for service are continuous. A few services I happily offered included finding readings on a research topic for another professor's student, helping a co-worker with her own post-graduate coursework, and making community connections with families who have disabled children. On a daily basis I try to pay attention to those who surround me with very quiet human needs waiting to be heard.

So embedded is the attitude of service, I taught myself and my students a three-step strategy for recognizing a service opportunity. These steps were based on our faculty opening day speaker, Brother Edward Coughlin, OFM, who described Saint Francis as one who knew how to "pay attention to the

world, be compassionate, and be ready to step down in order to meet the needs of others." So, the Franciscan value of *service* occurs when I employ the strategy of "*Attendo. Compassio. Condescendo.*"

The final blessing of my initial year brought all five of these Franciscan values together for me. I was asked to give the "Mission Moment" for our closing faculty luncheon. In humble service, I shared with my brothers and sisters my contemplative reflections on the collegiality and personal peace I'd experienced during my first year. I have no doubt that the Spirit of God will continue to bless me with understanding and joy in my work at a Franciscan college, as I continue my journey where Gospel values have come alive!

Sheets in the Wind

Sheets sun-soaked white,
wind-whirled,
Shamelessly forgetful of
passerby.

I too, hang my wash out
for all to see,
It's half way between white
and black,
a dingy gray.

I'm tossed, lost, bossed.
Come, shake me up.
Lift me high.
Sparkle me white.

Florence Vales, OSC

Elements of Franciscan Unity: An Ecumenical Perspective

The Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity

The Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity was founded in 2004 by members of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans; the Third Order, Province of the Americas, Society of St. Francis; and the Secular Franciscan Order. The Orders represent Protestant, Anglican, Roman Catholic and Eastern Catholic secular Franciscans. Taking a prophetic stance, "that all may be one," the committee works towards healing among our various traditions. The Mission Statement states: "For the sake of all Creation, we are called to bear witness to the essential unity of the church, the body of Christ, by working towards Franciscan unity in all of its expressions. We will achieve this through dialogue and collaboration among the Orders which follow Christ in the tradition of Francis and Clare."

In attempting to elucidate the basics of our common Franciscan charisms, the 2005 meeting of the Joint Committee focused its efforts on study and dialogue regarding several key components of each Order's Rule, Constitutions, and other Official Documents. It is hoped that by sharing and celebrating our common ground of spirituality that we may together "rebuild" the Church. It is shared here in hopes that others may continue the dialogue. The result of this process was the formulation of the following statement: Elements of Franciscan Unity.

Elements of Franciscan Unity

Baptism and Vocation

We recognize that all of our Orders understand that our Franciscan vocation proceeds from our relationship with God through Holy Baptism in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The call to vocation implies being conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ by means of that radical interior change that the Gospel calls conversion, taking up our cross daily to follow Christ. Our particular vocation is to observe the Gospel by following

the examples of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi. As members of Franciscan orders, we pledge ourselves, with lifelong intent, to live out our Franciscan vocation in community with our brothers and sisters.

Charism

As Franciscans, we see in the life of St. Francis of Assisi particular gifts of the Holy Spirit of Holy Poverty (humility), love and joy.

Christocentric Dimension

Franciscan spirituality is Christocentric to the extent that Francis fell in love with Jesus and his life was transformed. All that he did was shaped by what he saw in the Incarnation, and in the ministry and passion of Jesus.

Likewise, Franciscan spirituality is a way of life centered on the person of Jesus. It is our mission to make Jesus known to all and to pray and work for the reconciliation of all creation.

Prophetic Voice

We agree that fundamental to Franciscan spirituality is a commitment to strive for justice and peace among all people. We are called to courageous initiatives in the field of human development and justice and to make definite choices in harmony with our faith whenever human dignity is attacked by any form of oppression and indifference.

In the spirit of Francis who understood the interrelationship of all creation, we are also committed to the integrity of creation and therefore to its protection and restoration.

Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity Members:

The Reverend J. Frederick Ball, OEF
Marcella A. Bina, SFO; Jean A. D'Onofrio, SFO;
The Reverend Masud Ibn Syedullah, TSSF

August 11, 2005

Feast of St. Clare at St. Francis House – New London, Connecticut

For Further Information:

Order of Ecumenical Franciscans: www.franciscans.com

Third Order, Society of St. Francis, Province of the Americas: www.tssf.org

National Secular Franciscan Order: www.nafra-sfo.org

**The Hermeneutic of Projection:
Jews as *Exempla* in Bonaventure's
Sunday Sermons**

Timothy M. Powers

Introduction

In Bonaventure's Sunday Sermons,¹ the literary device of the Jews is a projection of unacceptable and repressed attitudes in the Christian community and is used as an *exemplum*² for moral instruction. These "hermeneutical" Jews³ were condemned for their beliefs or behaviors concerning perfidy and ignorance, insanity, fraternal hatred and lack of redeemed affectivity, beliefs and behaviors that were present in Christians but that were projected onto Jews. The Jews mentioned in Bonaventure's Sunday Sermons were not people with whom Bonaventure had regular interaction, but were figures he used to condemn attitudes and behaviors that were repressed in medieval society.

How the outsider, the stranger, the alien, the Other is treated is a measure of how well a Christian community follows its call to imitate God, who is love. The human cycle of oppression and liberation bears the marks of sin, so that often those who were oppressed become oppressors themselves. Historical examples abound, none more poignant than the Christian Church, itself persecuted at its beginnings, becoming the oppressor of those who were considered Other. The relationship between the Jewish and Christian communities has been complex. At times relations between the two communities were cordial; often, the attitudes and actions of individual Christians and the Church through the ages toward people who are Jewish have been hateful and harmful. While contemporary anti-Semitism finds its roots in many different places, Christian attitudes and practices dating from the Middle Ages certainly influenced modern biases. Contemporary attitudes concerning those who are marginalized by society can be reformed and redeemed by learning from the mistakes of the past. If the richness of the Christian tradition is to influence contemporary life, the sinful parts of the Christian tradition must be faced.

Bonaventure and the Jews

In the introduction to the second volume of Bonaventure's Commentary on Luke, Robert Karris analyzes the treatment of the Jews in Bonaventure's writings. Karris notes that Bonaventure stood in the Augustinian interpretive tradition of the eleventh chapter of the Letter to the Romans.⁴ In Romans 11, Paul describes the hardening of hearts against Jesus in Israel which will last until the conversion of the Gentiles at the end of time. Paul writes that "the gift and the call of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:29). Bonaventure, following Augustine, understood that the existence of the Jews was a sign of the mercy of God and that the Jews had a part to play in the divine plan.⁵

Karris also writes that Bonaventure does not concern himself with real or contemporary Jews, but is concerned with the hermeneutical Jew.⁶ Karris borrows the term "hermeneutical Jew" from Jeremy Cohen, who writes that Jews served the purpose of bolstering the Christian understanding of scripture in the Middle Ages. So strong was this hermeneutical purpose of Jews in Christian theology that the very nature and existence of the Jews was dependant on it. When Jews in the Middle Ages did not fit the Christian concept of their hermeneutical purpose, their very lives were at risk. This instrumental use of people who are Jewish in the Middle Ages played a role in the developing history of the mistreatment of Jewish people in the history of Western Europe.

If in the Sunday Sermons the Jews mentioned are hermeneutical Jews, the question remains: what is the hermeneutic? While faithful to the tradition of Romans 11 as interpreted by Augustine, Bonaventure lived at a time when Jews were often perceived as a threat to Christianity.⁷ Ivan Marcus claims that "as the Christian Middle Ages were getting 'made' . . . the Jewish Middle Ages were getting 'unmade.'"⁸ The instrumental use of idealized Jews in the Middle Ages made them targets of bigotry and violence when they were encountered not as ideas but as living persons. The polemic against the Jews in much of Christian discourse gave false justification to their mistreatment in medieval society.

Exempla in Medieval Sermons

Joan Young Gregg's work on the use of *exempla* in medieval sermons can shed some light on Bonaventure's use of the hermeneutical Jew in the Sunday Sermons. *Exempla* were stories used by medieval preachers to illustrate a point made in a sermon. These stories interpreted for the hearers of the sermons an ideological system which emphasized human weakness and the need for constant correction and instruction. *Exempla* were rhetorical techniques meant to

emphasize the need for confession and conversion. The stories were pointed and often gruesome, playing on fears based on stereotypes. Any "ambiguity would cloud the life and death issue at hand," *Exempla* were meant to be quick and effective ways of making people understand moral issues.

Gregg notes that in the revitalization of preaching in the Middle Ages, sermons played a role in bringing about social conformity. Clear and simple distinctions were made between the Christian and the Other, who was to be condemned.¹⁰ These clear distinctions guided Christians away from the condemnable behaviors (real or imagined) of the Other.

The evil attributed to Jews was necessary so that the path of good might be more clearly delineated for Christians. The Catholic doctrine of free will meant that salvation had to be worked-out, and part of working for salvation was the struggle with sin and evil. Sin and evil were within God's plan, and the threat posed by Jews and other outsiders was part of God's will that Christians might struggle and obtain the good.¹¹

Gregg writes that *exempla* can be understood as illustrations of the modern psychological notion of the mechanism of projection. Part of the division between medieval and modern mentality is modernity's understanding of the workings of the unconscious, and the discovery of the Other within.¹² Projection means that personal fears and the fears of a community are not recognized as such, but are rather projected onto those who are different. The development of modern psychology at the end the Nineteenth Century recognized that the characteristics attributed to the Other were truly located (suppressed) within one's own psyche.¹³

Exempla threw "a harsh spotlight on human transgressions in order to promote a salutary course of conduct."¹⁴ Faith doubts were repressed and projected onto Jews, inevitably resulting in exclusion, vilification and ultimately, death. Jews were seen as imperfect versions of dominant Christianity, and the blame for their exclusion was placed on the Jews themselves, since they refused to submit to the rational guidance of the Church. Stories and other mention of Jews were ways of expressing the otherwise inexpressible, of giving voice to expressions of doubting the Christian faith. Rather than admitting that doubts about the faith could be entertained by otherwise good Christians, these doubts were projected onto the Jews, who were subsequently ridiculed and abused for their impiety and perfidy. The *exemplum* "both mirrored and shaped the cultural notions of its audience."¹⁵

Jews as *Exempla* and the Sunday Sermons

Gregg's definition of *exempla* describes Bonaventure's use of the Jews in the Sunday Sermons. Although Bonaventure does not tell stories about the Jews in the Sunday Sermons, the Jews of which he writes are not living per-

sons, but are historical figures from the time of Jesus or are characters used to express a moral purpose. The things which Bonaventure accuses the Jews of believing or doing are ideas and actions which good Christians should not entertain or do. Bonaventure's purpose in speaking of Jews is to give expression to repressed attitudes and behaviors in Christianity and to tell his audience what to avoid doing.

The majority of the forty references to the Jews in the Sunday Sermons can be placed into one of four categories: Bonaventure holds up the Jews as examples of unfaith, impiety, fraternal hatred and unredeemed affect. Rather than name these things as attitudes and behaviors of Christians, Bonaventure projects them onto "hermeneutical" Jews. The hermeneutic is repression and projection: unfaith, impiety, fraternal hatred and unredeemed affect are unacceptable for Christians and must therefore be imputed to the Other.

Bonaventure accuses the Jews of being perfidious, that is of making a calculated breach of faith. His desire was to inspire faith, and so Bonaventure uses the Jews as examples of lack of faith. In Sermon 43, Bonaventure writes that Jesus countered the pride of the Jews with humility, and their perfidy with liberality. He warns in Sermon 21, quoting Augustine, that those who do not believe are "blinder than the blindness of the Jews." In Sermon 46, he makes the connection between evil Christians and the Jews explicit by quoting Bede: "the one who was struck down by the blows of the Jews, is now struck down by the blasphemies of false Christians." In Sermon 46, Bonaventure blames the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus on the perfidy of the Jews. Bonaventure praises the Maccabees in Sermon 31 for their willingness to die for truth, and notes in Sermon 3 that the Jews were close to the coming of Christ because of the Law. These words in praise of historical Jews, however, strengthen the invective against Bonaventure's hermeneutical Jews, who are faulted for their unwillingness to believe in the truth even though the truth came close to them.

In Sermons 6 and 7, Bonaventure faults the Jews for their impiety and insanity in refusing the medicine of the sacraments. Bonaventure's word-play on insanity and medicine highlights his desire to encourage participation in the sacraments. In Sermon 44 he writes that the Lord, like a good doctor, wished to communicate himself to those who were most sick, just as goodness wishes to communicate itself to those who are most evil. Bonaventure uses the metaphor of medicine for the sacraments, calling his audience to avoid the evil and sickness of the Jews by participation in the sacraments.

In Sermon 16, Bonaventure compares the Jews to Cain, for in killing Christ they were killing one of their own, their brother. He lists the abuses of Christ and accuses the Jews of murder and violence. Through their malevolence, he writes, the Jews displayed God's nobility and the bitterness of Christ's suffering. The fratricide of which Bonaventure accused the Jews stressed the need for mutual love in community. In Sermon 32, he makes an explicit connection

between the need for mutual love in fraternity and the fraternal hatred of the Jews; the Jews crucified Christ with poisonous words, Bonaventure writes, and those reading his words must be vigilant against crucifying their own brothers with the poison of reproach. The Jews, he writes in Sermon 38, hated their neighbors so much that they agreed to take on themselves the yoke of the devil by taking Christ's blood on their heads and on the heads of their children. Bonaventure uses the example of Jewish fraternal hatred to warn his audience not to hate those in their own community.

Finally, Bonaventure criticizes the Jews for their unredeemed affectivity. In Sermon 49, he encourages his audience not to be shocked if they find truth coming from Jewish sources, since they acknowledge truth in words while lacking love in their hearts. He calls them wicked and despoiled because of disordered love and pride. In Sermon 39, he refers to the Jews as coarse, sensual and irrational, and writes that Jesus wanted to lead them to an invisible reality, but they refused and will be cut down. In Sermons 35 and 46, the Jews are referred to as blasphemous, carnal and gluttonous in desiring the flesh pots of Egypt over the freedom of the Exodus. Bonaventure sees the Jews' unredeemed affectivity as the model for what Christians are not to do.

Although the invective directed against the Jews in the Sunday Sermons is at times fierce, there are relatively few references to the Jews given the sheer magnitude of the work. Bonaventure did not devote much space to condemning the Jews, and does so with a hortatory purpose. He does not refer to contemporary Jews, although Sermon 23 might be interpreted as providing an insight to Bonaventure's attitude toward his contemporaries who did not believe in Christ. In Sermon 23, he writes that the Good Shepherd is sent not to "other" sheep (those already damned), but only to his own (those who have the beginnings of faith and can be saved by repentance). There seems to be no concern in the Sunday Sermons for converting Muslims and Jews, an odd omission given that Bonaventure was writing during the time of the Crusades. Sermon 23 may be Bonaventure's way of telling pastors to avoid concerning themselves with contemporary non-Christians and to focus on exhorting those who already believe in Christ to continuing conversion of life.

Other works that Bonaventure wrote or edited at the same time as the Sunday Sermons (1267-1268) include the Collations on the Ten Commandments and the Collations on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Both works make scant reference to the Jews. In the Collations on the Holy Spirit, there are only two references, one of which is of significance. Bonaventure writes "however much a Jew glories in the Law, from which one is without grace, he is nothing."¹⁶ This attitude is consistent with Bonaventure's criticism of the Jews in the Sunday Sermons for their faithlessness and impiety. Similarly in the Collations on the Ten Commandments, Bonaventure makes explicit his use of

the Jews as an example for Christians not to follow, writing "I say that we as Christians should see more than the Jewish people."¹⁷ Bonaventure is more concerned in the Collations on the Ten Commandments with countering Jewish arguments than he is in the Sunday Sermons,¹⁸ but his technique of using the Jews as *exempla* continues.

Bonaventure finds unfaith, impiety, fraternal hatred and unredeemed affect in his own community. In writing the Sunday Sermons, Bonaventure uses the Jews as a way of exhorting people to faith, sacraments, mutuality in community and a purification of affectivity and sensuality. In this way, Bonaventure uses the Jews as *exempla*: characters who are used for short, pointed moral instruction to incite the reader or listener to faith and conversion.

Contemporary Implications

In attempting to retrieve the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition,¹⁹ it is important that lessons be learned from those things that are sinful in the tradition. If Franciscans are unaware of the evil contained in the tradition, it can find the inheritors of the tradition unprepared, and thus undo the good that can be culled from the riches of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. The Franciscan tradition has much to offer the Church and the world; if Franciscans are unaware of its entirety, both good and bad, neither the Church nor the world will be well served.

David Nirenberg writes that "the most dangerous attitudes toward minorities, or at least toward Jews, do not draw their strength from the interactions of individuals and groups within a society, but from collective beliefs, beliefs formed in the Middle Ages and transmitted to the present day."²⁰ Bonaventure used people who were Jewish as instruments to make a case for faith. Faith, if it is to be genuine, must make its appeal to what is best in human beings. As Christian faith has journeyed for two millennia, it has learned the harsh lessons of a faith that attempts to intimidate by fear and to encourage by disparaging others. Whenever persons who are different, who are Other, are condemned the condemnation must be examined for the hermeneutic of projection. Examining Christian condemnations for signs of projection would certainly call into question current ecclesial, political and social condemnations of women, homosexuals, Muslims and others.

Among potential areas where projection may be at play, current Vatican politics concerning the admission of gay men to seminary studies is of contemporary concern. John Allen, writing for the New York Times, notes that in the Roman conception of law the ideal is described with the understanding that exceptions will be made.²¹ While Allen is attempting to promote an understanding of Vatican thought, his thinking and the thinking of the Vatican

officials he describes follows a hermeneutic of projection similar to the hermeneutic found concerning people who are Jewish in the Sunday Sermons: unacceptable attitudes and behaviors are projected onto the Other in order to promote a supposedly salutary course of action. Projection becomes dangerous, as history has taught, because it can eventually lead to violence against the Other. Current Vatican policy is headed down this dangerous and sinful path, a path which can be avoided.

A contemporary crafter of sermons, Barbara Brown Taylor, gives an example of how to avoid the pitfalls of projection. She writes about Jewish-Christian relations in a sermon on Matthew 5: 17-20, in which Jesus calls his disciples to surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. This passage can be problematic for interfaith relations between Christianity and Judaism. Brown writes, however, that the exceeding righteousness for both followers of Christianity and Judaism consists in the love of neighbor. This type of righteousness can provide fertile ground for interfaith dialogue, and certainly precludes condemnations of the type found in the Sunday Sermons.²²

The seeds of violence against the Other are planted early. Contemporary anti-Semitism can trace its roots to medieval Europe and beyond. Trying to understand some of the manifold ways in which humanity came to build places like Auschwitz can help to keep humanity from building them again. The ability to understand the mechanism of projection will help us avoid the violence inherent in vilifying and condemning those who are Other.

Endnotes

¹Bonaventure, *Sunday Sermons*, trans. Timothy J. Johnson (NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, unpublished manuscript, 2005). This paper was submitted as part of the course requirements for "Readings in Franciscan Theology," taught by Professor Johnson during the summer session of the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University. The author is gratefully indebted to Dr. Johnson for his scholarship and encouragement, as well as to the Franciscan Institute for the opportunity to engage in Franciscan studies.

²This analysis is dependent on and will be developed using the work of Joan Young Gregg, *Devils, Women and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997).

³Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jews in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 2.

⁴Robert J. Karris, *Introduction to St. Bonaventure's Commentary on the Gospel of Luke Chapters 9-16*, ed. Robert J. Karris (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003), vii-lvii. See particularly xiv ff. on Romans.

⁵Karris, xv.

⁶Karris, l.

⁷R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe 950-1250* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1987), 152.

⁸Ivan G. Marcus, "The Dynamics of Jewish Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century," in *Jews and Christians in Twelfth Century Europe*, ed. Michael A. Signer and

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⁹Gregg, 13.

¹⁰Gregg, 16.

¹¹Gregg, 18.

¹²Gregg, 19-20.

¹³Morton Hunt, *The Story of Psychology* (New York: Anchor Books, 1993), 201-03.

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¹⁸Paul J. Spaeth, Introduction to the above work, 9-10.

¹⁹Joseph P. Chinnici, Introduction to Kenan B. Osborne, *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition: Tracing Its Origins and Identifying Its Central Components*, The Franciscan Heritage Series, vol. 1, ed. Joseph P. Chinnici and Elise Saggau (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003), vi-viii.

²⁰David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 4.

²¹John L. Allen, Jr., "At the Vatican, Exceptions Make the Rule," *New York Times*, 27 September 2005, A25.

²²Barbara Brown Taylor, *The Seeds of Heaven: Sermons on the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 1-7.

About Our Contributors

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BOOK REVIEW

Three Heroes of Assisi in World War II: Bishop Giuseppe Nicolini, Colonel Valentin Müller, Don Aldo Brunacci. Edited and written by Josef Raischl and André Cirino, OFM. Editrice Minerva - Assisi, 2005. 148 pp.

Among the targeted initiatives of the Minerva Press—which for some time has been gradually and thoughtfully increasing its output with a number of works by authors who are eminent members of the Academy of Subasio, we have a worthy production in this most recent work that was presented to the public on October 4, 2005, during a solemn ceremony organized by St. Bonaventure University.

The text was prepared by two authors who have a special bond with Assisi and its saints—Francis and Clare—to whom they have dedicated their studies and their widespread and somewhat complementary interests. The first author is Josef Raischl SFO, who lives in Dachau, Germany, after having completed his formation in Rome at the Historical Institute of the Friars Minor Capuchin and in England at the Franciscan International Study Centre in Canterbury. The second author, André Cirino, OFM, teaches at the above-mentioned Canterbury center and for more than twenty years has been leading pilgrimages to this Franciscan city, deeply inhaling its spiritual atmosphere and historical memory. From this meeting of their interests has come this new book, whose goal is to let the whole world know about the three heroes of Assisi: Bishop Giuseppe Placido Nicolini, Colonel Valentin Müller, M.D. and Assisi Canon, Don Aldo Brunacci.

The first forty pages present, in the impeccable translation by Nancy Celaschi, OSF, some studies by Francesco Santucci taken from the significant bibliography of local history which he has dedicated for some time to the study of these three protagonists of the city's silent era that, during the terrible conflict of the Second World War, made the city a beacon of hope by saving so many human lives.

This material is followed by some of the accounts of Don Aldo Brunacci, the only survivor of the “three heroes,” who as early as 1946 wrote an account that is found on pages 98 to 101 of the book. This provides a fitting anthological key and combines with other accounts by the elderly priest taken from his letters and interviews over the years, including his most recent interview which the National Public Radio broadcast on March 31, 2004, several days after the

solemn conferral of the *Gaudete* Medal Award and his reception as an honored guest at the US Holocaust Museum.

It would be remiss if the authors had failed to conclude this work with that most beautiful of the prayers of Brother Francis which asks God for that most precious gift of peace. *Give us peace of mind and heart, that peace which comes from You. Grant peace to our families, to our Nation, and to the whole world.* Indeed, the world still is in great need of this gift!

Pio De Giuli
Editor of *Subasio*, published by the
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Editor's Note: Copies of this title can be purchased through the St. Bonaventure University Bookstore. Contact Annette McGraw for information. (Ph: 716-375-2229 or Fax: 716-375-2667)



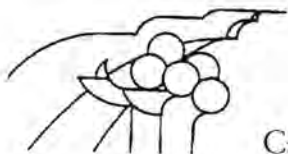
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Photo by C. Fischer during SBU pilgrimage (May, 2005)

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Bill Cook is Distinguished Teaching Professor at SUNY Geneseo. He has published a brief biography of St. Francis and two other books on early Franciscan art.

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Abbreviations

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