

### A WORD FROM BONAVENTURE

His zeal for fraternal salvation, which emerged from the furnace of love, pierced the inmost parts of this man [Francis] like a sharp and flaming sword. Aflame with the ardor of imitation and stricken with the sorrow of compassion, this man seemed to be completely consumed . . . he struggled to pray, was active in preaching, and outstanding in giving good example.

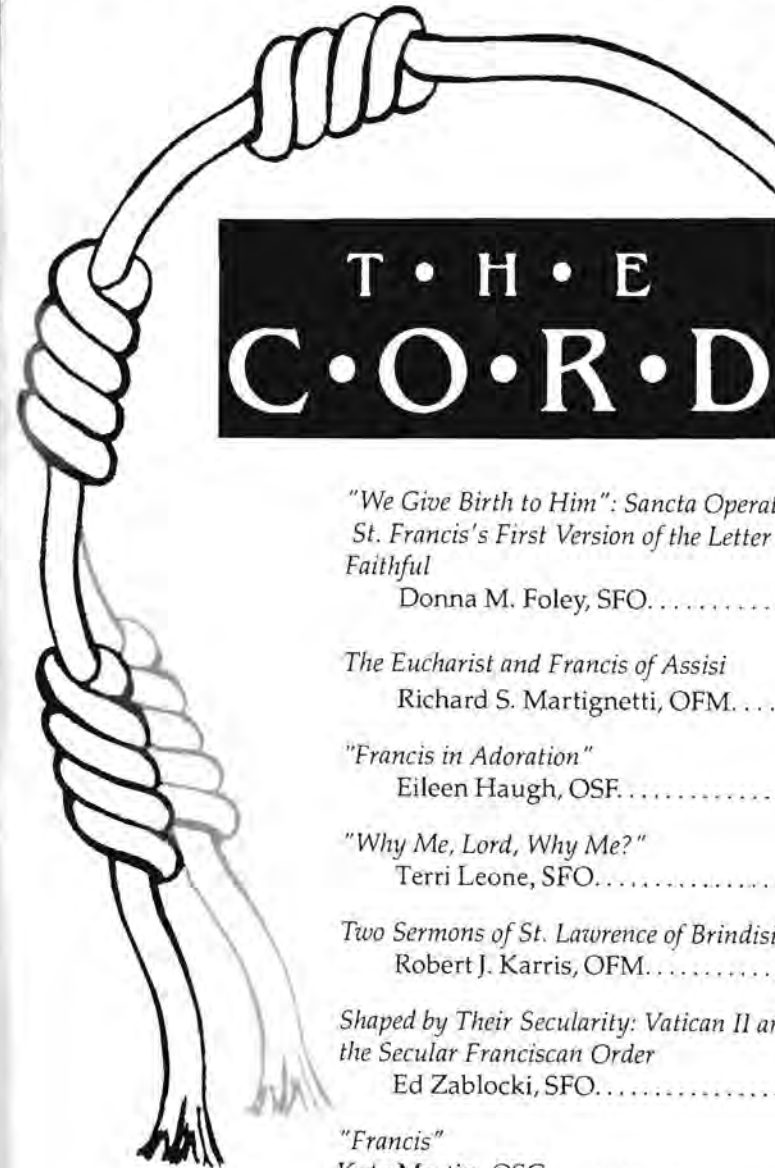
St. Bonaventure's *Minor Life of St. Francis*  
"The Sure Sign of Virtue," *Eighth Lesson*

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

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1. MSS should be submitted on disk (or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced).
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 14th ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined. 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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**Editorial**

Once again we come to the issue that is dedicated the life and spirit of the Secular Franciscans in our family. Our goal is to provide resource material primarily for SFO members and secondarily for those of us who interact with the Seculars/laity in any way. To the fullest extent possible, I rely on authors who make their good journey as professed members of the Secular Franciscan Order, and supplement when necessary with the writings of others whose work integrates well into this issue. So it is with the material presented in the following pages.

The authors selected for this *Cord* all touch real-world concepts and problems. They acknowledge the many challenges of living Gospel values in everyday situations, naming ways in which we fail to embody the Jesus who is the incarnation of God's mercy and compassion. But they also offer personal witness to the holy ground on which they stand, whether they count SFO, OSF, OSC or OFM as part of their identity.

We open with Donna Foley's reflection on "*sancta operatio*"—a term which resonates with every Franciscan heart since we all strive for holiness of life. She leads us into the First Letter to the Faithful with a very specific focus and draws us into a reflection on how the branches of the Franciscan family rely on the same roots: the search for holiness. Fr. Rick Martignetti states that "love for the Eucharist taught Francis how to live and act in daily life." His article calls each of us to remember Francis's devotion to the Eucharist and reminds us of its impact not just on clerics. Eileen Haugh's poem shares with us a piece of holy ground, the wonder of adoration, while Terri Leone invites us into her reflection on the difficulty of faithful trust in God in some of the dark times of life. Ed Zablocki writes of the "uplifting understanding of the role of the Catholic layperson in the Church and the world." Is it true, as he says, that "This understanding is, for the most part, unknown or underappreciated among Catholic laypersons"? If so, what can *I* do about it? And, lastly, Fr. Bob Karris has translated two sermons that allow us to place ourselves once again within the Gospel itself to be embraced by the fullness of God's mercy. I am grateful to all the authors for the contribution they have made to *our* journey!

May the season of longer light and lesser darkness that we call "summer" be filled with new life for all of us and for our world.

*Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF*

**"We Give Birth to Him"**  
***Sancta Operatio* in St. Francis's First Version  
of the Letter to The Faithful**

Donna M. Foley, SFO

*We are mothers, when we carry him in our heart and body (cf. 1 Cor 6:20) through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience; we give birth to him through a holy life [emphasis added] which must give light to others by example (cf. Mt 5:16).<sup>1</sup>*

Why would a contemporary Catholic become a Secular Franciscan? If it is an affinity for the saint, profession is not necessary. If it is a desire to take part in Franciscan apostolic ministry, there are arguably more dynamic outlets for this than a Franciscan fraternity. Yet some individuals are still called to profession and commitment to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. Perhaps what is sought is really, as Thaddée Matura suggests, "a matter of being"<sup>2</sup> that can still be found in this life.

If a Secular wanted to find a connection between her/his own profession and the charism of Saint Francis, she/he would naturally look to the document that serves as a prologue to her/his Rule, the so-called First Version of the Letter to the Faithful. If she/he wished further to discover what she/he has in common with her/his brothers and sisters in the first two orders, she/he might study a theme found early on in the spirituality of all three families.

Reflecting an understanding that profession is at least partly a "matter of being," I want to explore the phrase *sancta operatio*, which is found in the First Version of the Letter to the Faithful (hereafter referred to as First Letter) 1:10, and in the same document in 2:21. It appears again in the Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful (verses 49-53). Particular attention will be paid to this expression's use in the context of motherhood to Christ. The phrase will also be studied as it occurs in the Later Rule of the Friars Minor, chapter 10, and in Francis's Testament, v. 39. And though the phrase *sancta operatio* itself does not appear in Clare's writing, because we find it to be linked to a sense of maternity to Christ, we will examine that theme in the First and Third Letters to Agnes.

It is especially important for Seculars to understand Francis's own words with regard to the norm of life they've received, and to seek out what that life has in common with other parts of our Franciscan families. Secular Franciscans have a Rule consigned to them which has undergone a great deal of development through the centuries. At the same time, they are expected to return "to the origins and to the spiritual experience of Francis of Assisi."<sup>3</sup> The phrase *sancta operatio* has meaning for all Franciscans, yet we will read it with a particular concern for the Secular Order.

The passage being considered appears in the Rule of the Secular Franciscans under the following heading:

Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order

Prologue

Exhortation of Saint Francis to the Brothers and Sisters in Penance

In the name of the Lord!

Chapter One

Concerning Those Who Do Penance

Here is what Francis says in the Letter about those who "produce worthy fruits of penance":

<sup>5</sup>Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, "because "the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them" (cf. Is 11:2) and he will make "his home and dwelling among them" (cf. Jn 14:23), and they are the "sons of the heavenly father" (cf. Mt 5:45), whose works they do, and they are the spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Mt 12:50).<sup>8</sup>We are spouses, when by the Holy Spirit the faithful soul is united with our Lord Jesus Christ, "we are brothers to him when we fulfill "the will of the Father who is in heaven" (Mt 12:50).<sup>10</sup>We are mothers, when we carry him in our heart and body (cf. 1 Cor 6:20) through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience; we give birth to him through a holy life which must give light to others by example (cf. Mt 5:16).

For Seculars, the expression *sancta operatio* (translated by Habig as "through a holy life") and the connected idea of motherhood to Christ were a last-minute gift to the Order in the form of the First Letter's attachment to their Rule of 1978. In describing the process by which this current Rule was written, Robert Stewart, OFM, explained that the study most critical to the development of the new Rule was Esser's analysis of the Volterra document, a study that first appeared in German only in 1975. Esser's conclusion—that the Volterra text could well represent the "norm of life" given by Francis to the penitents as



described by Thomas of Celano—undoubtedly influenced the decision of the Ministers General to insert the text as a Prologue to the Rule. But, unfortunately, the widespread popular recognition of the centrality of that text for the Secular Franciscan Order emerged too late for the text itself to have influenced or directed the entire Rule Project.<sup>4</sup>

Happily, though, with the First Letter, Seculars have Francis's own words to serve as a lens through which to read their Rule, even if the document's power is not always readily detected in the Rule itself. And by taking for themselves the meaning of *sancta operatio* in particular, they obtain something significant to the other two Franciscan families as well.

Before examining the phrase as it appears in the Secular Franciscan Rule, other interpretations of it will be considered. In his study of the phrase *sancta operatio*, which he translates as "with holy activity," Optatus van Asseldonk allows the word "activity" to allude both to the action of the human individual and to the inspiration of the Spirit of the Lord. He states, "In the concrete it refers to our holy activity under the activity of the Spirit of the Lord." Of the adjective "holy," van Asseldonk writes that the word "reveals one of Francis's special loves, so much so that it is the adjective most used in his writings."<sup>5</sup> In the work of Armstrong and Brady, the phrase is given as follows: ". . . we give birth to Him through [His] holy manner of working. . . ." For these editors, "Saint Francis underscores the dynamic principle of the spiritual life, the Holy Spirit, which must be operative in the life of every Christian."<sup>6</sup> In contrast, Stewart asserts that given the context of the phrase, "the sense indicates that we give birth to Him by *our holy manner of living*."<sup>7</sup> This translation seems closer to Habig's than the other two. While it may be important to keep in mind the different translations, most English-speaking Secular Franciscans will be reading the phrase, "through a holy life." A discussion of the different implications in "Its/His/our holy activity/manner of working/manner of living" might indeed be productive for Secular Franciscans. Perhaps reflection on the different renderings of *sancta operatio* would lead us to a sensitive search for the places where the Holy Spirit's activity and our own diverge or harmonize. However, Seculars are given "through a holy life," so it seems most worthwhile to accept Habig's translation and move on to the context in which the phrase appears. The designation of verses will follow that of Armstrong and Brady.

Writing in the third person plural, Francis says that those who do penance "are the sons of the heavenly Father whose works they do, and they are the spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ." If we compare Francis's use of "sons of the heavenly Father" with the scripture passage cited by editors (Mt 5:45), we may get a sense of what Francis means by the "works they do." Being a son to the Father here is a matter of loving and praying for one's enemies and persecutors. Between this and the next set of relational terms

he gives, Francis adds that of spouse. Though not noted by editors, we may compare verse 8 of *The First Letter* with 1 Corinthians 6:17, "But whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him."<sup>8</sup> And when Jesus stretches out his hand to his disciples, naming them brother and sister and mother when they do his Father's will (cf. Mt 12:50), Francis responds joyfully. After these layers of relationship are introduced, their meaning is explained by Francis and a change occurs in the language of the letter. Following the phrase, "mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ" the text shifts to the first person plural: "We are spouses . . . we are brothers . . . We are mothers. . . ." Francis, who began by addressing other lay men and women, now unites his voice with theirs. It is almost as if by speaking of this closeness with our Lord Jesus Christ, the saint is moved to something more personal in his language. Here, in three strokes, Francis introduces the Christian reader (or listener) to the possibility of the most intimate connections with the Father, Holy Spirit and Son. When he speaks of how "We are mothers, when we carry him in our heart and body," Francis may be drawing on 1 Corinthians 6:20, "For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body." However, where Paul has taken the text of Genesis 2:24, "The two . . . will become one flesh" and turned it into a warning against sexual immorality, Francis turns it round again and applies it positively to the penitent's heart and body. We can be a temple, a vessel, a womb for our Lord Jesus Christ when we carry him "through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience." If there are any doubts about this, we have the words of Jesus himself: "For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Here again, the image of motherhood to Christ seems to move the speech of the text to a new level of expression. After "we give birth to him through a holy life," the language of perseverance, unity and gestation gives way to crying out:

<sup>11</sup>Oh, how glorious it is to have a great and holy Father in heaven!

<sup>12</sup>Oh how glorious it is to have such a beautiful and admirable Spouse, the holy Paraclete!<sup>9</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Oh, how glorious it is to have such a Son, loved, beloved, humble, peaceful, sweet, lovable, and desirable above all: Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . [Armstrong/Brady, p. 63]

Matura writes, "This is the only place where Francis gives free reign to his unbounded joy by using the frequent exclamation, 'Oh!' and the many adjectives which express his keen delight." He goes on to note, "It is true that, when speaking elsewhere about the Father, he also uses an abundance of similar adjectives . . . but he does so with a kind of reverent restraint, whereas here we can sense a freer, more personal reaction of joy and pleasure."<sup>10</sup>

The expressions and ideas in this letter may have existed prior to Francis, but we can try to imagine the impact of this exhortation on the lay people who first read it, or more likely, had it read to them. It addressed what was then still a fairly new conception of a "mixed life of service and contemplation,"<sup>11</sup> and did so with images both dramatic and familiar.

The phrase *sancta operatio*, which Francis uses twice in the First Letter, also appears for the Friars Minor in verse 8 of Chapter 10 in The Later Rule:

<sup>7</sup>At the same time I admonish and exhort the brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ that they beware of *all* pride, vainglory, envy, avarice (cf. Lk 12:15), cares and worries of this world (cf. Mt 13:22), detraction and complaint. And those who are illiterate should not be eager to learn. <sup>8</sup>Instead let them pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working, <sup>9</sup>to pray always to Him with a pure heart and to have humility, patience in persecution and weakness, <sup>10</sup>And to love those who persecute us, find fault with us, or rebuke us, because the Lord says: *Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute and slander you* (Mt 5:44).<sup>12</sup> [Armstrong/Brady, pp. 143-44]

Once more that "holy life" or "holy activity" is connected to purity, humility and patience. We read in the First Letter that "We are mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through divine love and pure and sincere conscience. . . ." Here, to have the Spirit of the Lord and His *sancta operatio* is "to pray always to Him with a pure heart and to have humility." As in verses 1 through 5 of the First Letter, there is a strong sense of the single-mindedness, or rather, single-heartedness that Francis sees as absolutely necessary in order



to "have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working." Even education may, without humility, become a distraction. Here, as in 7:3 of the Later Rule, the brothers are counseled to avoid those inner disturbances that impede holy activity. In 7:3 we read, "They must take care not to become angry or disturbed because of the sin of another, since anger and disturbance hinder charity in themselves and others." If our understanding of *sancta operatio* in the

writing of Francis is connected to the image of giving birth to Christ, then we may sense how cares, worries, anger, and impatience can "hinder" the process. Any midwife who's sat with a laboring woman knows that these are the very types of "disturbance" that can make the whole birthing process longer and more painful. And although motherhood is not directly linked to *sancta operatio* in this passage, elsewhere Francis does turn to motherhood as a model for the love brothers should show to one another. In 6:8 of the Later Rule we read, "And let each one confidently make known his need to another, for, if a mother has such care and love for her son born according to the flesh (cf. 1 Thess 2:7), should not someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit even more diligently?" If Francis admonishes the brothers to beware of "pride, vainglory, envy and avarice" in their pursuit of "what they must desire above all things," then here we see the opposite of those hindrances. In the act of providing a mother's care for one another, with its attendant qualities of humility and patience, the brothers will have the Spirit of the Lord.

Francis uses *sancta operatio* in another of his writings to the brothers. In a manner somewhat similar to his closing in the First Letter, Francis brings the Testament to a conclusion:

<sup>39</sup>But as the Lord has granted me to speak and to write the Rule and these words simply and purely, so shall you understand them simply and without gloss, and observe them with [their] holy manner of working until the end. <sup>40</sup>And whoever shall have observed these [things], may he be filled in heaven with the blessing of the most high Father and on earth with the blessing of His beloved Son with the most Holy Spirit the Paraclete and with all the powers of heaven and all the saints. <sup>41</sup>And I, little brother Francis, your servant, inasmuch as I can, confirm for you this most holy blessing within and without. [Armstrong/Brady, p. 156]

Here *sancta operatio* is taken by Armstrong and Brady to refer to the activity of Francis's *words*, granted by the Lord, and understood "simply and without gloss." Van Asseldonk reads the text to mean, "he [Francis] recalls that the Rule and Testament, 'given' or 'inspired' by the Lord, must be observed as such until the end . . . with holy activity."<sup>13</sup> The Secular Franciscan who wishes to explore what themes his life may have in common with that of the friars might compare the above passage with the following from The First Letter. Again, because it is the one available to Seculars, Habig's English translation will be used here:

<sup>19</sup>All those into whose hands this letter shall have come we ask in the charity that is God (cf. 1 Jn 4:17) to accept kindly and with divine love the fragrant words of our Lord Jesus Christ quoted above. <sup>20</sup>And let



those who do not know how to read have them read to them.<sup>21</sup> And may they keep them in their mind and carry them out, in a holy manner to the end, because they are "spirit and life" (Jn 6:64).<sup>22</sup> And those who will not do this will have to render "an account on the day of judgement" (cf. Mt 12:36) before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 14:10).

The position of the phrase *sancta operatio* near the end of these two texts seems to make understanding its use vitally important for us. The differences in interpretation are quite real, but whichever is followed, the reader or listener might still reasonably arrive at a couple of conclusions. He could come to understand that these words, given to Francis by the Spirit of the Lord and by Francis in love, are expected to generate real, holy activity in the listener's life. Furthermore, this *sancta operatio* of the Spirit of the Lord should come to refer to the Secular's very life itself. There can be no mistaking this "holy manner" for something optional, or reserved for religious life. It is not.

If Chapter 1 of the First Letter uses vibrant, exalted language to describe a life of relationship with the Trinity, the language of Chapter 2 is no less vivid in its description of death. Under the heading, "Concerning Those Who Do Not Do Penance" we read:

<sup>1</sup>But all those men and women who are not doing penance <sup>2</sup>and do not receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ <sup>3</sup>and live in vices and sin and yield to evil concupiscence and to the wicked desires of the flesh, <sup>4</sup>and do not observe what they have promised to the Lord, <sup>5</sup>and are slaves to the world, in their bodies, by carnal desires and the anxieties and cares of this life (cf. Jn 8:41)...<sup>14</sup>

<sup>7</sup>These are blind, because they do not see the true light, our Lord Jesus Christ; <sup>8</sup>They do not have spiritual wisdom because they do not have the Son of God who is the true wisdom of the Father.

We "have the Son of God" when "[w]e are mothers, when we carry him in our heart and body" (1:10). We do not have him when the "carnal desires and the anxieties and cares of this life" work against any *sancta operatio*. There will be no giving birth to Christ where these are present. This question of motherhood versus barrenness, or spiritual infertility, seems quite clearly for Francis a matter of eternal life or death. While this theme is communicated to the penitents and friars by Francis through his writing, it is also differently and beautifully expressed in the writing of Saint Clare.

In order to reflect more fully on the idea of motherhood to Christ, we would very naturally turn to the writings of Saint Clare for help—beginning with the First Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague. The person being addressed

and Clare's own voice make this document unique. However, Clare uses a language of relationship strikingly similar to that of Francis:

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, most beloved sister, or should I say, Lady, worthy of great respect: because You are the spouse and the mother and the sister of my Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor 11:2; Mt 12:50), <sup>13</sup>and have been adorned resplendently with the sign of inviolable virginity and most holy poverty: Be strengthened in the holy service which You have undertaken out of an ardent desire for the Poor Crucified. . . . [Armstrong/Brady, p. 191]

To the "spouse" which might be expected in a letter to a woman about to enter religious life, Clare adds "mother" and "sister." These relationships are described as *already* in place, along with the "holy service" already undertaken.

In the Third Letter to the Blessed Agnes of Prague, Clare moves from a consideration of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the life of Agnes:

<sup>22</sup>For the heavens with the rest of creation cannot contain their Creator. Only the faithful soul is His dwelling place and [His] throne, and this [is possible] only through the charity which the wicked do not have. . . .<sup>24</sup>Therefore, as the glorious Virgin of virgins carried [Christ] materially in her body, <sup>25</sup>you, too, by *following in His footprints* (cf. 1 Pet 2:21), especially those of poverty and humility, can, without any doubt, always carry Him spiritually in your chaste and virginal body. [Armstrong/Brady, p. 201]

Here Agnes is invited to be mother to Christ "through" charity and "by" following: holy activity. In his study of Clare's spirituality, Heribert Roggen reflects on Clare's confidence in "the person who surrenders himself sincerely to God's action. . . . Despite the medieval mentality which was not yet ripe for such an attitude, we find many surprising points in Clare's rule that bear witness to this confidence in the person of others and to a great respect for the activity of God in men."<sup>15</sup>

This confidence in a life that is both holy and fertile does not seem to include the possibility that, once Christ is chosen, it can be one without the other. What Roggen observes about the Poor Clares resonates with what we have come to understand of *sancta operatio* in the life of the Secular Franciscans as well:

For Clare the apostolate of the Poor Clares consists precisely in the *manner of being*, in the very existence of the religious. She does not speak of *exercising the apostolate* but of *being apostolic*; life itself is the apostolate. All her life was apostolic precisely through her union with Christ. Thus frequent expressions, such as, "spouse, sister, daughter,

mother, and helper of the Lord" serve no other purpose than to express in a concrete way *union with God*. The profound value of motherhood flows from that adhesion to the Lord. The sisters become "mother of the Lord Jesus Christ," "mother to the Son of the Most High Father. . . ."

It is a spiritual birth of the Lord, the source of the development and growth of his Mystical Body, a life of fruitfulness in the Spirit of God.<sup>16</sup>

We might add that this birthing of Christ in the Spirit of the Lord is what constitutes the very existence, not just of the religious, but of all committed Christians.

Contemporary Catholics may take for granted so much of what is remarkable about the message of Francis. There are many other avenues of spiritual formation and nurture open to the layperson seeking one, and no shortage of ministries in need. Yet for some who consider life with and for Christ a "matter of being" nothing short of birthing Him is possible. It may have been the voice of Francis that first called them to Christ, but the saint never interferes with the relationship that comes next. For Secular Franciscans today, it is possible to understand *sancta operatio* (the Lord's and ours) as generative, life-giving and *essential*. It is a theme common to the life of all Franciscans. This understanding may yet help to fulfill that "hope of renewal" which the Ministers General saw in 1978 as hinging "upon returning to the origins and to the spiritual experience of Francis of Assisi."

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>This text of the Secular Franciscan Rule is based on the *Epistola ad Fideles I* in Kajetan Esser, OFM, *Die Opuscula des hl. Franziskus von Assisi*, Nuova Edizione, Critica (Grottaferrata: Col. S. Bonaventura, 1976). It was translated by Marion A. Habig, OFM in *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order* (USA: The National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, 1997). Some excerpts used in this article are from that translation.

<sup>2</sup>Thaddée Matura, OFM, *Gospel Living: Francis of Assisi Yesterday and Today* (NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994), 288.

<sup>3</sup>Constantine Koser, OFM, "Letter of the Four Ministers General of the Franciscan Family (Excerpts)," forward to *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order*.

<sup>4</sup>Robert M. Stewart, OFM, "De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam" *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation* (Rome: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1991), 319.

<sup>5</sup>Optatus van Asseldonk, OFM Cap., "The Spirit of the Lord and Its Holy Activity in the Writings of Francis," trans. Edward Hagman, OFM Cap., *Greyfriars Review* 5.1 (1991): 117.

<sup>6</sup>*Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap. and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M. (NY: Paulist Press, 1982), 63, n 3.

<sup>7</sup>Stewart, "De Illis," 153.

<sup>8</sup>Scriptural references are from the New American Bible.

<sup>9</sup>The Habig translation does not include the adjectives "consoling" and "wondrous" found in Armstrong-Brady.

<sup>10</sup>Thaddée Matura, OFM, *Francis of Assisi: The Message in His Writings*, trans. Paul Barrett, OFM Cap., rev. ed. (New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2004), 78.

<sup>11</sup>Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Docere Verbo et Exemplo: An Aspect of Twelfth-Century Spirituality* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979), 91.

<sup>12</sup>Armstrong-Brady, 144. Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent quotes from the writings of Francis and Clare are taken from this work.

<sup>13</sup>Van Asseldonk, "The Spirit of the Lord," 117.

<sup>14</sup>The Habig translation in the Secular Franciscan Rule does not include references to Colossians, Galatians or 1 Peter for this passage. Verse 6 ("They are held fast by the devil, whose children they are and whose works they perform") is not included—though the scriptural reference is!

<sup>15</sup>Heribert Roggen, OFM, *The Spirit of St. Clare*, trans. Paul Joseph Oligny (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971), 30.

<sup>16</sup>Roggen, 40.

***It is especially important for Seculars to understand Francis's own words with regard to the norm of life they've received, and to seek out what that life has in common with the other two Franciscan families. Secular Franciscans have a Rule consigned to them which has undergone a great deal of development through the centuries. At the same time, they are expected to return "to the origins and to the spiritual experience of Francis of Assisi."***

## The Eucharist and Francis of Assisi

Richard S. Martignetti, OFM

At a time in history when the practice of receiving Holy Communion had significantly tapered off, Saint Francis of Assisi came onto the scene and used his grace-filled imagination to call the people of God back to a fuller participation in the celebration of Eucharist. In the *Dizionario Francescano* (p. 519-47), Rinaldo Falsini tells us that by the end of the twelfth century, a fracture had occurred within the Eucharistic theology of the common believer. Generally, among the faithful, there was an increased sense of the True Presence of the Body and Blood of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and yet this existed alongside a poor understanding of what it meant to be believers joined together by the Lord in "holy communion". Thus, though devotion to the continual Eucharistic presence of the Lord was reaching a peak, especially among mystics, a sense of personal unworthiness was also at its height, relegating the faithful solely to the role of "occasional observer" of the great mystery unfolding before them during the celebration of the Mass.

Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), however, did not share this common hesitation to partake of Christ's Body and Blood. The Eucharist beckoned him. His first biographer, Thomas of Celano, tells us that Francis "considered it disrespectful not to hear, if time allowed, at least one Mass a day" and that he "received Communion frequently and so devoutly that he made others devout" (2 Cel 201). Saint Bonaventure, who had the benefit of even more years of theological reflection on the life of Francis, would elaborate: "[Francis's] burning love for the Sacrament of our Lord's Body seemed to consume the very marrow of his bones. . . . He communicated often . . . and was often, as it were, spiritually inebriated, frequently rapt in ecstasy" (LM 9:2).

Besides being something that flowed from the depths of his heart, Francis's Eucharistic devotion was also rooted in his respect for the Roman Church. By the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Church hierarchy had also shown itself concerned about infrequent reception of Holy Communion among the people of God. Responding to this growing trend, the Fourth Lateran Coun-

cil of 1215 attempted to rouse the faithful with regard to their participation in the Eucharist by official decrees which, among other things, made mandatory the reception of Holy Communion by all believers at least once a year (cf. canon 21). Priests too were challenged to re-embrace the mystery of the Eucharist since apparently by the time of the Council some were celebrating Eucharist as little as four times a year (cf. canon 17).

Francis of Assisi must have been overjoyed by the Council's desire to promote Eucharistic devotion since he himself had already been nourishing and deepening his own love for the Body and Blood of the Lord since the advent of his conversion some ten years earlier. The Lord had already given Francis a great faith in the Eucharist which was celebrated by the holy Roman Church (cf. Test 6-10) and now the Council would become the impetus for this poor little man from Assisi to pass on his faith to the world. Since Francis saw himself as a man of the Church, it was quite natural for him to become a great promoter of the decrees of the Council, doing his part to awaken in the faithful their perhaps dormant desire to meet Christ in this sacramental way.

Francis's writings show him to be passionate about the True Presence of the Son of God in the Blessed Sacrament. Unlike the great theologians of the universities, which were just beginning to become popular in places like Paris or Bologna, Francis did not engage in lengthy debates, using refined theological terms such as "transubstantiation" in order to argue for the reality of the True Presence. He was not a professor lecturing to theology students according to the rules of the well-organized scholastic method. Instead, Francis spoke simply and from the heart, to anyone who would listen, basing his arguments about the importance of the Eucharist on faith and captivating his audience by his passion and his descriptive, often poetic, use of metaphor.

Though eight hundred years old now, Francis's metaphors still have the power to touch the heart today, inviting us to ponder the great gift which we call Eucharist. His first admonition, for example, invites us to relate our own situation today to that of the apostles. In Jesus of Nazareth, the apostles literally had God walking among them in a simple, humble, and hidden way. The greatest temptation they must have faced was that of looking at Jesus of Nazareth solely with their physical eyes and missing the great miracle that unfolded daily in their presence.

To overcome such a temptation, Francis muses that the apostles must have been men of prayer who learned to look upon Jesus with the eyes of the spirit. They had to use their spiritual senses to see that which the physical senses could never comprehend, the fullness of God, present in their daily lives in profound humility. Drawing an analogy from this, Francis calls his followers to approach the Blessed Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood with a faith similar to that of the apostles. He writes:



Behold, each day He humbles Himself as when He came from the royal throne into the Virgin's womb; each day He Himself comes to us, appearing humbly; each day He comes down from the bosom of the Father upon the altar in the hands of a priest. As He revealed Himself to the holy apostles in true flesh, so He reveals Himself to us now in sacred bread. And as they saw only His flesh by an insight of their flesh, yet believed that He was God as they contemplated Him with their spiritual eyes, let us, as we see bread and wine with our bodily eyes, see and firmly believe that they are His most holy Body and Blood living and true (Adm 1:16-21).

Having the eyes of faith and viewing the Blessed Sacrament in this way was no small concern for Francis. In fact, he saw it as one on which would hang our very salvation. In that same admonition, he makes the rather bold and harsh sounding claim: "[those] who do not see and believe according to the Spirit and the Divinity that it is truly the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ [in the Eucharist], are condemned" (Adm 1:8). He goes on to reinforce this troubling statement with words of Jesus from Sacred Scripture: "This is affirmed by the Most High Himself Who says: *This is my Body and the Blood of my new covenant and whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life*" (Adm 1: 10-11).

When it came to the Eucharist, Francis was not one to restrain his words. Since he saw it as something absolutely necessary for entry into God's kingdom, he was passionate in calling everyone within earshot to approach and receive the Body and Blood of the Lord *worthily*. Above all else "eating worthily", for Francis, meant believing firmly that it truly is the Lord's Body and Blood (cf. 2 LtF23-24). Not only did he call the Friars Minor, the Poor Ladies of San Damiano and the multitude of the faithful to avail themselves of the Blessed Sacrament, but also civil authorities, such as mayors and governors, who may not have even been believers. In his Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples, he writes to these individuals with the words: "I strongly advise you, my Lords, to put aside all care and preoccupation and receive the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with fervor in holy remembrance of Him" (LtR 6).

What seems to have fascinated Francis most about the Holy Eucharist was undoubtedly that which fascinated him most about the Lord Jesus in general, namely, His humility. The Son of God could have chosen to be with us in many ways, but the fact that He chose to be present in "an ordinary piece of bread" (LtOrd 27) filled the *poverello* with a sense of awe. Francis, with a vivid imagination enlightened by grace, saw the Lord's humble presence in the Eucharist as a call to himself to embrace the virtue of humility.

Let everyone be struck with fear, let the whole world tremble, and let the heavens exult when Christ, the Son of the living God, is present on the altar in the hands of a priest! O wonderful loftiness and stupendous dignity! O sublime humility! O humble sublimity! The Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humbles Himself that for our salvation He hides Himself under an ordinary piece of bread! Brothers, look at the humility of God and pour out your hearts before Him! Humble yourselves that you may be exalted by Him! Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that He Who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally (LtOrd 26-29).

Though having the eyes of faith was of the utmost importance, Francis's challenging words "hold back nothing of yourselves" unfold in a call to purity and chastity for the one who would approach the Blessed Sacrament. There is a subtle yet powerful statement in the second version of the Letter to the Faithful which ties these two virtues to the Eucharist. Francis writes:

His Father's will was such that His blessed and glorious Son, Whom He gave to us and Who was born for us, should offer Himself through His own blood as a sacrifice and oblation on the altar of the cross. . . . And [Christ] wishes all of us to be saved through Him and receive Him with our heart *pure* and our body *chaste*" (2 LtF 11, 14) [emphasis mine].

This is yet another subtle argument through metaphor. As Christ freely offered His Body for us on the cross, we who are invited to "receive Him" in the Holy Eucharist must freely offer our bodies back to Him through the virtues of purity and chastity.

This single statement clues us into that which the biographies confirm, namely, that love for the Eucharist taught Francis how to live and act in daily life. Not only would this continual invitation to the heavenly banquet call him to something as sublimely beautiful as chastity, it would also inspire him and his companions to clean up as they traveled around Italy. According to his biographers, Francis was known to sweep out dirty churches, wash altar linens by hand, and show a special reverent devotion to priests he encountered, all because of their closeness to the Eucharist.

And I desire to respect, love and honor [impoverished priests] and all others as my lords . . . because I discern the Son of God in them . . . [and] because in this world, I see nothing corporally of the most high Son of God except His most holy Body and Blood which they receive and they alone administer to others" (Test 8-10).

Behold, each day He humbles Himself as when He came from the royal throne into the Virgin's womb; each day He Himself comes to us, appearing humbly; each day He comes down from the bosom of the Father upon the altar in the hands of a priest. As He revealed Himself to the holy apostles in true flesh, so He reveals Himself to us now in sacred bread. And as they saw only His flesh by an insight of their flesh, yet believed that He was God as they contemplated Him with their spiritual eyes, let us, as we see bread and wine with our bodily eyes, see and firmly believe that they are His most holy Body and Blood living and true (Adm 1:16-21).

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Francis's concern about cleanliness and respect for that which was closest to the Eucharistic celebration, just like the call to return to reception of the Body and Blood itself, was something in line with the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council. The saint was simply doing his best to promote that which the Council had made binding:

We command also that churches, vessels, corporals, and vestments be kept clean and bright. For it is absurd to tolerate in sacred things a filthiness that is unbecoming even in profane things (canon 19).

Since Francis had such a special concern for churches or linens because of their proximity to the table of the Lord's Body and Blood, it follows that his love for the Word of God, that which made the Eucharist possible, would be even greater. Since it was through the Word of God, spoken by the priest, that the Eucharist was conformed (cf. 1LtCus 2), Francis demanded great respect for Scriptural or liturgical words and for any scrap of parchment upon which they may have been written. To the custodians of the Order, he passionately writes:

With all that is in me and more I beg you that, when it is fitting and you judge it expedient, you humbly beg the clergy to revere above all else the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and His holy names and the written words that sanctify His Body. . . . Let the names and written words of the Lord, whenever they are found in dirty places, be also gathered up and kept in a becoming place (1LtCus 2,5).

Francis's relationship with the clergy was somewhat paradoxical in that it was one of respectful, humble obedience as well as one of powerful words of exhortation and challenge. In the same letter to the Order, for example, priests are both hailed as men of great dignity whom "God has honored above all others" (LtOrd 23-24) and also warned that they will be held to a higher standard of judgment which could very well lead to their condemnation (cf. LtOrd 17-20). Basically Francis's main concern was that all those called to the heavenly banquet, but especially priests, appreciate the magnificent gift being offered to them and respond to God's generosity by striving for holiness. Among a series of poetic metaphors from the Letter to the Order, Francis compares the role of the priest to that of the Blessed Virgin in an imaginative comparison which would have certainly called his brothers to be holy. Though originally written with friar priests in mind, these words of Francis apply to any and all of us as we heed the call to approach the table of the Lord, partake of His Body and Blood, and marvel at His sublime humility. Francis's love for the Eucharist and his graced imagination speak as loudly as ever even today:

If the Blessed Virgin is so honored, as is becoming, because she carried Him in her most holy womb; if the Baptist trembled and did not dare to touch the holy head of God; if the tomb in which He lay for some time is held in veneration, how holy, just and fitting must be he who touches with his hands, receives in his heart and mouth, and offers to be received the One Who is not about to die but Who is to conquer and be glorified, upon Whom the angels longed to gaze. See your dignity, my priest brothers, and be holy because He is holy (LtOrd 21-23).

[All quotes and abbreviations of the Franciscan sources are taken from *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (New City Press, New York), vols. I (1999) and II (2002)].

#### FRANCIS IN ADORATION

My God and my All!  
You are in the circle  
The never-ending of Yourself  
Which constantly moves and  
Yet is always the same.

You gaze on me,  
who have become caught  
in the immensity  
of Your delight  
but cannot move

save to go around,  
constantly around,  
in Your eternal circle of embrace,  
My God and my All!

Sr. Eileen Haugh, OSF



## "Why Me, Lord, Why Me?"

Terri Leone, SFO

*I'm not sure exactly "where I'm going with this" but I am trusting in the Holy Spirit's guidance and your openness to His guidance.*

During meditation today, Holy Thursday in 2005, the importance of "carrying our crosses" became very urgent. As I dwelt on this, the Holy Spirit kept "flashing lights on and off" on various concepts without giving me a chance to really develop them. The concepts, as I recall them, were:

"Carry your cross"

"God can/will produce good from any event"

"Rebuild My Church which is falling into ruin"

"Why me, Lord, why me?"

"Franciscans don't have an apostolate"

"Take up your cross and follow Me"

"One who loves is willing to 'die' for the one who is loved."

How do all these fit together? What *do* they have in common?

I suppose it is only natural to spend time thinking about "crosses," "suffering" and "death" as we recall and relive Jesus' Suffering, Death and Resurrection to restore us in our relationship with God. We try to imagine the pain and the great love Jesus has for us. We think of the little love we have for Him and how much we complain about the "crosses" in our own lives—the very small, insignificant crosses when compared to His. Many theologians and "great saints" have offered explanations, usually referring to Sacred Scripture, as to the "why" and "how" we are called to suffer/carry our crosses—to atone for our sins; to "show" us areas of our lives in need of "conversion"; to release souls from Purgatory, to show our love for God by willingly sharing in Jesus' Suffering and Death, etc. The following is a somewhat different "explanation."

As I struggle to make sense of the "concepts" listed above, I hear the Holy Spirit say, "Is your brain really that 'foggy' today? Can't you see the connections?" What did God ask of Francis? What was he called to do? "Rebuild My Church which is falling into ruin." That was Francis's primary vocation and apostolate (which was the visible expression of his love for God); it was and is the same for all Franciscans today. Francis was open to the Holy Spirit's guidance as to what needed to be done or said each day and he expected his followers to be equally open. There is no "one" apostolate for Franciscans except following God's guidance in "rebuilding His Church" wherever we are; in whatever "position" we hold/service we provide (spouse, parent, child, employee, employer, priest, religious, politician, etc.). We are called to "live the Gospel . . . going from gospel to life and life to gospel"; we are called to love and live as Jesus did; to experience and to deepen for all the experience of "brotherhood"—oneness in God. How do the various concepts above related to "suffering" and "dying" fit in here? While I accept the teaching of theologians and saints on this, I am being led to see another facet, as it were, to these issues, and for me, it answers perfectly and completely the question, "Why me, Lord, why me?" It also addresses the Franciscan vocation/apostolate of "Rebuild My Church/My Kingdom." There are entirely too many "social justice issues" and "moral issues/problems" that need "correcting" for us to try to tackle. I know I have asked many times, "Lord, where do You want me to put my time and talents?" He answered, "It lies in your 'crosses'!! That is if you let them." Through our "crosses" God is showing us what He wants us to "rebuild" through prayer and action. Through sickness and disease, we can/should see many related issues—the medical care needed; the cost of this medical care; the personal and emotional support needed; what needs to be done to prevent or cure that disease, etc. A child or close friend tells you (s)he is homosexual; a child or friend is arrested after hitting another vehicle after having one too many drinks or being overtired; a child or friend is stalked by an ex-boyfriend/girlfriend; a child or friend is attacked or kidnapped. What do you do? What do you say? Are you overwhelmed by what is/has happened to you or that close person? Are you able to go beyond yourself and think of/pray for others in similar situations? God has led me to believe that the reason these things "happen to me" is to make me more aware of these issues in the rest of His Kingdom and that He wants me to pray for others; to be more compassionate and understanding of others in these situations, and to act in some way to "end these evils." In other words, God is calling me (and you) to be a sister (or brother) to those in need in circumstances similar to "my/our crosses."

## Shaped by Their Secularity: Vatican II and the Secular Franciscan Order

Ed Zablocki, SFO

"What then was the council? What has it accomplished?" So asked Pope Paul VI during his address to the Last General Meeting of the Second Vatican Council on December 7, 1965.<sup>1</sup> In marking the fortieth anniversary of the close of Vatican II, recent Catholic publications have sought to reflect on these same questions. While acknowledging momentous changes over the past four decades, commentators have also noted those aspects of the Council's vision that have yet to be fully realized. In this article, I will consider how one generally undeveloped aspect of the Council's vision has had a profound influence on a branch of the Franciscan family.

In a recent *St. Anthony Messenger* article, in response to the question "Have parts of Vatican II not yet influenced the Church's life as the Council intended?" Archbishop John P. Foley replied: "I think that the specifically secular vocation of the laity has not been fully appreciated—the role of the laity to transform their world of work through their own personal integrity and professional excellence, to make the world better by a profound evangelization of one's workplace and home."<sup>2</sup> John D. Meehan, former president of Magdalen College, concurs:

The Council Fathers . . . affirmed without equivocation, qualification, or reservation the baptismal integrity and ecclesial status of every member of the People of God. In doing so, they highlighted the vocation, apostolate, and spirituality of the largest number of citizens of the Church—the laity. Indeed, this was something new! The reality of that 'new thing,' however, has not been transmitted effectively to the lay people of the Catholic Church in America.<sup>3</sup>

These statements truly jumped off the page when I read them because I had recently completed a study guide that paid particular attention to the de-

velopment of the 1978 SFO Rule. And what was undeniably striking about the Rule's development was the strenuous effort made to incorporate Vatican II's "new" understanding of the Catholic laity—an understanding that I was now seeing has been largely unrealized within the Church. The Franciscan "Third Order Secular" (as it was called at the time), like all religious and secular orders, had been called by the Council to "an adjustment of the community to the changed conditions of our times."<sup>4</sup> The "changed conditions" to which the Franciscan Third Order Secular specifically responded were precisely those contained in the Council's depiction of the "secular character" of the laity. The transformation of the pious Franciscan "Third Order Secular" into the self-governing, apostolically-oriented Secular Franciscan Order has been driven by this dynamic.

### Vatican II's Vision for the Laity

Before considering the SFO's journey toward a secular identity it is important to recall the staggering difference in the positions occupied by Catholic laypersons in the pre-and post-Vatican II Church with respect to their vocation, apostolate and spirituality. Prior to the Council, the vocation to holiness was commonly understood as attainable by those called to the religious or consecrated life but not something to which the common lay person should aspire. "For all too long, the prevailing attitude in the Church had seen the laity as second-class members expected to live the commandments but not called to lives of holiness as were priests and religious."<sup>5</sup> In contrast, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) taught that the laity should strive for sanctity: "All Christians in whatever state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of charity; by the pursuit of holiness."<sup>6</sup>

With respect to the mission of the Church, pre-Vatican II laity were understood to be participants only to the extent that they were carrying out the initiatives of the hierarchy. Such participation was commonly referred to as Catholic Action. "[I]n participating in Catholic Action, Catholic lay people were not engaging in an apostolate properly theirs—not doing something they had a right and duty to do just because they were members of the Church—but were sharing in something that properly pertained to the clerical hierarchy."<sup>7</sup> Conversely, *Lumen Gentium* emphasizes the universal call to mission with laypeople "sharing in the Church's saving mission."<sup>8</sup> Another Conciliar document, the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*) states that laypersons "are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord himself."<sup>9</sup> Moreover, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* emphasizes lay autonomy: "Laymen ought to take on themselves as their distinctive task this renewal of the temporal order.

Guided by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the Church, prompted by Christian love, they should act in this domain in a direct way and in their own specific manner" (AA #7; p. 498 in Abbott).

With regard to spirituality, pre-Vatican II laypersons knew that they could grow in their relationship with God through prayer and the sacraments. But there was not a common understanding that a layperson's everyday life could be a spiritual path as well. This corresponded with the pre-Vatican II perception of the world as more a place of temptation than one of grace. The Council, in contrast, invited laypersons to encounter the Divine in every aspect of their daily lives: "This lay spirituality should take its particular character from the circumstances of one's state in life (married and family life, celibacy, widowhood), from one's state of health, and from one's professional and social activity" (AA, # 4; p. 494 in Abbott).

Vatican II's re-visioning of the vocation, mission and spirituality of the laity is summarized in the phrase "the secular character of the laity." Catholic laypersons were being invited to become responsible participants in the Church's vocation to holiness and mission to evangelize. They were to undertake these challenges in and through the circumstances of their daily lives.

### "Secularity" in the Development of the Secular Franciscan Rule

As noted above, the so-called "Third Order Secular of St. Francis," like other orders both religious and secular, was called upon by the Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life (*Perfectae Caritatis*) to undertake a two-pronged initiative: to return to the charism of the founder and to adjust to the changing conditions of the times. To fulfill the latter mandate, orders were to update their rules, constitutions and rituals. In his book "*De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam*" *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation*, Fr. Robert Stewart, OFM, describes the rule development process. The so-called *Rule Project* was initiated in November, 1965, and took more than a dozen years before culminating in the promulgation of the new Rule in June, 1978. From the beginning of the *Rule Project*, inclusion of the secular character of the lay state was paramount. Initial worldwide feedback received in 1967 "called for a Rule which would present the members of the Third Order as followers of Francis . . . but in a manner truly adapted to the laity."<sup>10</sup> Consequently, initial recommendations were sorted into two categories: 1) the Franciscan charism or 2) the "secular" nature of a lay Order. Among the recommendations concerning the secular character of the Order were the following:

- to incorporate the decrees of Vatican II especially *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*;

- to emphasize the personal nature of the secular vocation;
- to understand "profession" as a deepening of one's baptismal commitment rather than entrance into religious life.<sup>11</sup>

Despite these recommendations, Fr. Stewart notes that the first Rule draft completed in 1968 elicited responses "ranging from disappointment to complete rejection of the Project" in large measure due to its failure to appropriately capture a truly "secular character" as part and parcel of the way of life of a lay Franciscan.<sup>12</sup> After this false start, a special Congress was convened in Assisi in 1969, with the specific mission of establishing the parameters that would guide the *Rule Project*. The Assisi Congress accomplished its mission in approving Motion 9 "that guided the rest of the redactional process for the New Rule."<sup>13</sup> This motion recommended that the new Rule should contain seventeen essential elements including the following: "to have a spirituality of a secular character" and "to participate in the Apostolate of the Laity."<sup>14</sup> Despite the inclusion of these elements, the next Rule draft, the 1974 *Basic Text* was most strongly criticized for its failure to present a "specifically secular spirituality" because "other than the mention of 'secular' and 'the laity'" the 1974 *Basic Text* contains little that would not also be appropriate within a rule for a canonical religious Franciscan group.<sup>15</sup> The right words were being used but the essence of Vatican II's encompassing vision for the laity was missing from these early rule drafts.

Finally, ten years after the initiation of the *Rule Project*, the 1975 *Redaction* contained a lengthy paragraph entitled *In the Midst of the World* that captured the Conciliar vision of the apostolate of the laity:

Like all members of the Franciscan Family, we are sent to the entire world. As seculars, we have our own vocation: living in the midst of the world, engaged in various duties and works of the world, it is our duty to enlighten and direct all temporal realities to which we are closely united, in such a way that they may work and prosper constantly according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer. . . . By our witness and our action, joined with that of other men and women, we will work in these different sectors towards the realization of the plan of God for the world. It is first of all in our family that we will live the Franciscan spirit, striving to make it a sign of the world already renewed in Christ. We will make our work a participation in the development of creation, in the redemption of men and women, and a service to the whole human community. Finally, aware that it belongs to the whole Church to make people capable of building the temporal order well and of pointing it toward Christ, . . . the secular Fraternities will assume their apostolic and social responsibilities and commit themselves to concrete evangelical choices.<sup>16</sup>



The vision and contents of *In the Midst of the World* are represented in articles 14-19 of the approved 1978 Rule; articles which call on Secular Franciscans to "build a more fraternal and evangelical world" (art. 14); to "be at the forefront in promoting justice" (art. 15); to "esteem work as a gift and a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service to the human community" (art. 16); to "cultivate a spirit of peace, fidelity and respect for life" in their families (art. 17); to "respect all creatures" (art. 18) and to be "bearers of peace" and "messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance" (art. 19).<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, the underlying unity of these articles as expressions of the lay apostolate, so beautifully captured by *In the Midst of the World*, is not carried over into the approved Rule but does find voice subsequently in the Constitutions.

The struggle to incorporate Vatican II's new and profound understanding of the "secular character" of Catholic laypersons into the new Rule culminated in the most symbolically significant way imaginable. Pope Paul VI, in the 1978 decree of promulgation stated: "By this letter we abrogate the previous rule of what was formerly called the Franciscan Third Order. . . . [W]e approve and confirm with our apostolic authority and sanction the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order."<sup>18</sup> Like Abram becoming Abraham, like Simon becoming Peter—the Order had received a new name—a name meant to symbolize its new character and new orientation as an association of lay faithful called to fulfill their vocation and mission in and through the world after the example of St. Francis. Paul VI, who had brought the Second Vatican Council to its close, was now intent on seeing that the Council's pronouncements concerning Catholic laypersons be realized through the *Secular* Franciscan Order.

### Making the Rule a Reality: Efforts to Embrace a Secular Identity

The secular dimension of the 1978 Secular Franciscan Rule has been appropriated in varying degrees by the Secular Franciscan Order at the international, national and local levels. At the international level, the 1993 theme of the international SFO's triennial General Chapter held in Mexico City was *Secularity as a Characteristic Element of the Identity of the Secular Franciscan*. Ronald Pihokker, SFO, then U.S. national vice minister, was invited to give a keynote address where he asked:

Are we simply relegated to the mundane; condemned to live in a space where the sacred does not exist? No! We, as Secular Franciscans are called to witness to the fact that the sacred is powerfully present in the world. We are called to live lives which resonate the song of Francis and the gospel of Christ present in every aspect of modern life.<sup>19</sup>

The most recent International General Chapter held in Assisi in November, 2005, reaffirmed this commitment:

The secular identity of the SFO is a fundamental point of our vocation and is manifested in the mission and testimony of each one of its members and fraternities. We are called to build a new, just and fraternal world, contributing to the kingdom of God with courageous initiatives and actions in the concrete situations we live in, never forgetting the importance of confident and persevering prayers.<sup>20</sup>

Within the United States, at the level of the National Fraternity, several individuals have acted to advance the secular dimension of the Secular Franciscan charism. Marie Amore, SFO, in a personal communication, recalls the creation of the apostolic commissions:

It happened at the 1984 National Fraternity gathering in Colorado Springs. It was Fr. Matthew Gaskin, OFM's first time at National. I remember asking him what his impression of the National Fraternity was. I was kind of surprised by his answer. He said something like "I am disappointed." Where are the visionaries?" A couple of us were listening to him and we encouraged him to state his opinion to the whole group. When he spoke to "the whole assembly" he said something that I still remember quite well. It went like this: "I wanted to work with the Secular Franciscan Order. I have read your [R]ule and find it challenging. There are articles there that address work, family, peace and justice and the environment. Why are you not talking about these things?" There was some discussion from the floor and then Fr. Matt said, "I propose there be five commissions one for each of these subjects." It was moved, seconded and approved that the commissions be set up in the following areas: Justice, Peace, Work, Family and the Environment.

Recent U.S. National Ministers have all played critical roles in advancing the secular dimension of the Secular Franciscan way of life. Richard Morton, SFO, spearheaded the challenging regionalization effort that united fraternities according to a common mutual bond, typically geographic proximity. William Wicks, SFO, wrote often and with passion on the need to find the sacred within the secular: "We are Secular Franciscans; we are asked to be present in the world, to be His Presence in the world, and we are asked to see with His eyes. . . . We need to open ourselves to the grace through which we find God in all the nooks and crannies, in the agony and stress and frustration of life, as we travel life's paths."<sup>21</sup> Current National Minister Carol Gentile, SFO, while serving as the national apostolic commissions coordinator, convened two national All-Commission Conferences in 1999 and 2004, and as National Minister was invited to give the keynote at the 2005 General Chapter of the International Fraternity in Assisi where she stated "Not only do we share His message, but we are called to BE his message."

I regret that I can here only acknowledge that many apostolic initiatives are being undertaken at the regional and local levels.

## Looking Ahead

In my 24 years as a Secular Franciscan, I had never previously given any thought to the impact of Vatican II on the Secular Franciscan Order. I imagine that most of my fellow Secular Franciscans are in a comparable position. Clearly, an appreciation of our "secular character" should be more fully incorporated into initial and on-going formation. There needs to be an appreciation that most of the major changes in today's Secular Franciscan Order, such as its status as a largely self-governing lay organization, owe their existence to our secularity. Also, forty years ago, Franciscan Third Order Seculars from around the world were urging that Council documents like *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes*, and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* should be essential reading for lay Franciscans of the future. We should honor their memory in turning to these sources for inspiration and insight.

Above and beyond the awesome example of our Seraphic Father St. Francis, Secular Franciscans have something of real value to offer to other lay Catholics.



The present Secular Franciscan way of life incorporates the Second Vatican Council's uplifting understanding of the role of the Catholic layperson in the Church and the world. This understanding is, for the most part, unknown or underappreciated among Catholic laypersons. If anything, Secular Franciscans should do more to promote the secular dimension of their way of life. Certainly, embracing the secular dimension more enthusiastically in no way diminishes the Franciscan dimension and, in reality, enhances it for "Understood properly, the

Franciscan way of life is secular. This does not mean that it is godless or secularized. Quite the opposite."<sup>22</sup>

By more fully embracing the secular dimension of their calling and more actively promoting the Church's vision of the secular character of the laity, Secular Franciscans can create a vibrant future for the Order: one rooted in Christ but oriented toward engagement in the world, a future filled with struggle, filled with life, filled with joy.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Mario von Galli, SJ, *The Council and the Future* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), 287.

<sup>2</sup>Barbara Beckwith, "Archbishop John Foley Recalls the Council," *St. Anthony Messenger*, vol. 113, No. 6 (November, 2005): 43.

<sup>3</sup>John D. Meehan, *Two Towers: The De-Christianization of America and a Plan for Renewal* (Bethune, SC: Requiem Press, 2005), 130-31.

<sup>4</sup>*Perfectae Caritatis* #2 [Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life] in *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, SJ, General Editor (NY: Herder and Herder Association Press, 1966), 468.

<sup>5</sup>Msgr. William H. Shannon, "Seven Shifts in the Church" in *St. Anthony Messenger*, Vol. 113, No. 6 (November, 2005): 16.

<sup>6</sup>*Lumen Gentium* #40, (LG) [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church] in *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, SJ, General Editor (NY: Herder and Herder Association Press, 1966), 67.

<sup>7</sup>Russell Shaw, *Catholic Laity in the Mission of the Church* (Bethune, SC: Requiem Press, 2005), 38-39.

<sup>8</sup>LG, #33, 59.

<sup>9</sup>*Apostolicam Actuositatem* #3 (AA) [The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity], in *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, SJ, General Editor (NY: Herder and Herder Association Press, 1966), 492.

<sup>10</sup>Robert M. Stewart, OFM, "De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam" *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation* (Rome: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1991), 244-45.

<sup>11</sup>Stewart, 245.

<sup>12</sup>Stewart, 247.

<sup>13</sup>Stewart, 249.

<sup>14</sup>Stewart, 250.

<sup>15</sup>Stewart, 257.

<sup>16</sup>Stewart, 270-71.

<sup>17</sup>*Hidden Power III: From Gospel to Life—The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order with Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1979), 18-22.

<sup>18</sup>*Hidden Power III*, 2.

<sup>19</sup>Ronald Pihokker, SFO, "Secularity as Characteristic Element of the Identity of the Secular Franciscan," *Address to the General Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order*, Mexico City, October 10, 1993 [found on [www.ciofs.org](http://www.ciofs.org) website]

<sup>20</sup>Message from the Chapter to the Entire Order, Assisi, November 12, 2005" in *Koinonia*, Newsletter of the Conference of the General Spiritual Assistants to the SFO, Year 12, no. 48, page 6.

<sup>21</sup>William Wicks, SFO, "Pilgrimage, A Walking Through Life," *TAU-USA*, The Newsletter of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States, No. 27 (Summer, 2000), 1.

<sup>22</sup>*Build With Living Stones—Formation for Franciscan Life and Work* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002), Unit 2, 5.

## Two Sermons of St. Lawrence of Brindisi

Robert J. Karris, OFM

### Introduction

There are 658 published sermons of St. Lawrence of Brindisi (1559-1619). Rarely do the sermons of this illustrious Franciscan Capuchin preacher appear in English translation. I provide an annotated translation of two of his sermons for the Third Sunday of Pentecost. Although the Gospel for these Sundays was Luke 15:1-10, Lawrence also includes the third parable of Luke 15, that is, the parable of the Prodigal Son. Thomas Patrick Neill describes Lawrence's great talents as a preacher in this way: "Witnesses insist that he was the greatest preacher of his age, and we are certainly safe in saying that he was one of the most impressive and effective preachers of the entire Counter-reformation. His ability as a preacher was due to his vast learning, his great zeal and physical stamina, and his personal appeal."<sup>2</sup> I invite my readers to sit back and drink deeply of Lawrence's proclamation of God's abundant and everlasting mercy.

### Sermon on Luke 15 for the Third Sunday after Pentecost<sup>1</sup>

*"The publicans and sinners were drawing near to Jesus to listen to him. And the Pharisees were murmuring, etc."*<sup>3</sup>

1. Not even the most compassionate human father, whose paternal heart and whole being are filled with love, desires the salvation of his most forsaken children, the way God desires the salvation of all sinners: "As a father has compassion on his children, so too does the Lord have compassion on those who fear him, for he knows how we are made."<sup>4</sup> Parents love their children not only when they are healthy, but also when they are infirm, sickly, and afflicted with incurable maladies. So too God loves not only the just, but also sinners and desires their salvation, since he is "the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation."<sup>5</sup>

2. When God came to give the law, he descended in fire, since God himself is fire. Now fire is a solitary agent, and therefore God commanded that no one approach him and not even touch the mountain.<sup>6</sup> Further, when God first appeared to Moses in the fire of the flaming bush, God said to him: "Do not draw near, for the place, where you are standing, is holy ground. Take your shoes off."<sup>7</sup> Nor did God want anyone to enter into the holy of holies except the high priest and then just once a year.<sup>8</sup> Nor did God want anyone to see or touch the ark of God. It is on account of this that Uzzah was struck, because he had touched the ark of the Lord,<sup>9</sup> because fire is most intense, God is a jealous God,<sup>10</sup> of infinite justice.

3. But God is also a fire of infinite mercy and love. So if God wanted to show his justice in the Old Testament, he wanted to make known in the New Testament the riches and treasures of his infinite mercy. For this reason today "publicans and sinners are drawing near" to Jesus, the living and true God. Thus by means of two parables, indeed three parables, Christ today shows his mercy and love towards sinners. The first parable deals with a shepherd who has one hundred sheep and with the greatest of concern searches for the one that was lost. The second parable features a woman who has ten drachmas, ten denarii, and searches with the greatest diligence for the one that was lost. The third is the parable of the prodigal son, whom a most loving father receives with the greatest joy upon his return home. In this way Christ shows himself to be God, the Father of infinite compassion and love towards sinners. The shepherd is Christ, the sinner is the sheep that wandered away. The woman who has ten drachmas is the love of Christ, while the lost drachma is the sinful soul. The most merciful father is Christ whereas the prodigal son is the sinner.

4. Christ desires the salvation of any sinner whomsoever in the same way as the shepherd wants to find the sheep that is lost, the woman the drachma that has disappeared, the father wants to give life to his dead son and to find what was lost. God "desires the salvation of all people"<sup>11</sup> and wants no one to perish.<sup>12</sup> That is why Christ speaks not of many, but of one sheep, one drachma, one son. For Christ suffered for all in such a way that he also suffered for individuals, no less for individuals in particular than for all in general: "I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me."<sup>13</sup>

5. But I ask, let us see why Christ may be said to be the shepherd who has only one hundred sheep, the woman who has only ten drachmas and the father who has only two sons and why the sinner is said to be a lost sheep, a lost drachma, and a son separated from his father and reduced to utter misery. Christ is indeed said to be the shepherd, the woman, and the father, since all these names are those of compassion and love. He has a few sheep, a few



drachmas, and only two sons to indicate the intensity of his love and compassion, for the shepherd who has a numberless multitude of sheep does not care greatly if one is lost, but if he has a few, he cares a great deal. And a very rich woman, who has an abundance of drachmas, is not bothered if one is lost, but the one who has very few, is greatly agitated. And the father who has many sons does not make a great fuss over an individual son, but if he has only two, he is greatly concerned about both of them, for his love is more focused and intense.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>This sermon, which is little more than a sketch, is taken from the first cycle of Sunday Sermons in *S. Laurentii a Brundisio Opera Omnia*, Volume VIII, *Dominicalia* (Padua: Ex Officina Typographica Seminarii, 1943), 116-18. The second cycle of Sunday Sermons contains a more elaborate sermon. See pp. 454-59.

<sup>2</sup>"The Apostolate of St. Lawrence of Brindisi" in *Saint Lawrence of Brindisi Doctor of the Universal Church*, Volume II (Pittsburgh: Capuchin Educational Conference, 1961), pp. 48-60 (50).

<sup>3</sup>These are the opening two verses of this Sunday's Gospel, Luke 15:1-10. As will become clear, St. Lawrence of Brindisi also includes in his sermon the third parable of Luke 15, that is, the parable of the Prodigal Son.

<sup>4</sup>See Ps 102:13-14.

<sup>5</sup>See 2 Cor 1:3. I make no attempt in these notes to indicate to what extent Lawrence of Brindisi's citation of the Latin Bible varies from that of the Vulgate.

<sup>6</sup>Lawrence alludes to Ex 19:10-22.

<sup>7</sup>See Ex 3:5.

<sup>8</sup>See Ex 30:10; Lev 16:2; Hebr 9:7.

<sup>9</sup>See 2 Sam 6:6-8.

<sup>10</sup>See Ex 20:5: "I am the Lord, your God, mighty, jealous. . . ."

<sup>11</sup>See 1 Tim 2:4.

<sup>12</sup>See 2 Peter 3:9.

<sup>13</sup>See Gal 2:20.

## Sermon on Luke 15 for the Third Sunday after Pentecost<sup>1</sup>

1. Prophet Isaiah prophesied that he saw the divine Seraphim having six wings, arranged in such a way that two covered his face, two his feet, and with two they flew.<sup>2</sup> Now the Seraphim are the most beautiful and most divine images of the supreme God, in whose Sacred Scriptures the number six, among many numbers, is mainly used in speaking of God: power and wisdom, justice and mercy, love and goodness. And the first two shine forth especially at the beginning of the world whereas the last two shine forth at its end while the middle two radiate in the middle. I state that the first two occur in the works of creation, the last two in the work of glorification, while the middle two in the

work of redemption. Now Our Lord Jesus Christ speaks in today's holy Gospel about one of these. I say that he speaks of God's mercy towards sinners who do penance and makes his point by means of two parables: the shepherd's care for the lost sheep and the woman seeking her lost drachma. I maintain that he even adds a third parable, that of the prodigal son and the most merciful father.<sup>3</sup>

2. Plainly the mercy of God is great just as are God's power and wisdom and justice and goodness and love, for just as wings are equal in birds, so too are these wings that were seen in the Seraphim equal. Great is God's mercy, because Moses cries out: "O the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion and true, who maintains mercy unto thousands, who takes away iniquity and wickedness and sin."<sup>4</sup>

3. Great is God's mercy as its effects show. O Christian, if you look at the heavens, realize that they are a work of God's mercy: "Who made the heavens by understanding, for his mercy endures forever."<sup>5</sup> If you look at the earth, know that it was created by the working of God's mercy: "Who established the earth above the waters, for his mercy endures forever."<sup>6</sup> If you look at the lights in the sky—sun, moon, and stars—know that they have issued from the same source: "Who made the great lights . . . the sun to rule the day . . . the moon and the stars to rule the night, for his mercy endures forever."<sup>7</sup> When God saw the many crimes committed by human beings in the days of Noah,<sup>8</sup> God was led by his zeal for justice to inundate the world with the waters of the flood and destroy it. But since all the sins of all ages from the days of eternity were always most present to him, why did he create the world unless his most gracious mercy led him to do so? "For his mercy endures forever."<sup>9</sup>

4. God's mercy in the providence of the world acts like a shepherd for his flock, as the first parable of today's Gospel shows. God's mercy is the reason why God holds our souls in the highest regard just as the woman of the second parable treats with the greatest regard her many pearls and gems.<sup>10</sup> God's mercy functions similar to the human concern of a father who most truly and deeply loves his children, as the third parable makes clear. Through these parables it is also shown that we are the sheep, the gems, and the children of God.

5. Christ likens the lost sinner to a lost sheep and drachma. For there are two kinds of sinners. Thus there are those who are like sheep, which, separated from the flock, wander in the desert, bleating in fear of the wolf. Through its bleating it searches for its shepherd and is easily found by the shepherd both on account of its bleating and because it gives no resistance to the shepherd. Now other sinners are like a drachma, which, lost in the house, remains

buried in the dirt. It has no voice and makes no sound through which its location can be detected. Therefore, it is only after the expenditure of the greatest diligence that it can be found.

6. Furthermore, there is a threefold type of sinner according to the three parables just as the Lord raised up three dead people.<sup>11</sup> And some sin against the Father, some against the Son, and some against the Holy Spirit, just as the royal prophet says: "Blessed is the man who has not walked according to the counsel of the ungodly and has not stood along the path of sinners nor sat in the chair of pestilence"<sup>12</sup> or of those who mock. For just as in the case of the virtues no one immediately reaches the highest stage, but there are the beginners, the ones making progress, and the perfect, it is the same way with regard to sins. So in speaking of sinners, Christ sets forth three kinds: the prodigal son, the lost sheep, and the lost drachma, in which the different types of sinners are seen. For a human being is better than a sheep, and a sheep better than a drachma. So the coin occupies the lowest place, the sheep the middle, and the son the highest. Of his own accord the son returns to his father, for many are converted solely through divine inspiration. But the sheep that has been sought does not return to the flock by itself, and so is found with great difficulty. Finally, the drachma requires consummate diligence and is found with the greatest difficulty. For "she sweeps the house and searches carefully until she finds it."<sup>13</sup> So we ascertain that sinners have been converted to Christ in these three stages. Thus, Magdalene came to Christ of her own accord.<sup>14</sup> Matthew was called by Christ.<sup>15</sup> Paul was helpless on the ground.<sup>16</sup>

## Part II

7. The unbelief and malignity of the Pharisees<sup>17</sup> murmured against our most merciful Savior's clemency towards sinners: "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."<sup>18</sup> It is for this reason that our Lord attacks them by means of the three parables that show that sinners are to be welcomed to salvation with mercy. The first of these concerns the compassionate shepherd who thoroughly searches for one sheep lost out of a hundred, and when he finds it, rejoices. The second deals with a diligent woman, who searches with earthly skill, that is, most diligently, for the drachma missing from her ten drachmas until she finds it. The third parable is that of today's Gospel. So Christ is literally speaking of himself and shows that he is the merciful shepherd, the most diligent woman, and the most loving father. That is, that he loves sinners as the shepherd loves his lost sheep, as the woman her lost drachma, and the father the son who had gone away from him. So, my most beloved brothers and most beloved sisters, I want us to always meditate on these.

8. Wherefore, the literal sense of these three parables is this: O Pharisees, you murmur about me that I associate, eat, and live with publicans and sinners and not with you. I ask you. Tell me: If a shepherd has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does he act evilly if he seeks the one that is lost? If a woman has ten drachmas and loses one of them, does she not act well if she most carefully searches for it? If a father has two sons and one of them departs from him and leads a most dissolute life, but afterwards, led by repentance, returns to him, does he not act well if he welcomes him home in a paternal manner? Moreover, does he not do well to experience great joy and to celebrate his return with great festivity and with a banquet, as if a son, who was dead, had returned to him alive? Why, then, do you murmur about me that I welcome sinners and eat with them? Did the elder son do well to murmur about his father? Shouldn't he, too, have rejoiced, as if his brother, who was dead, had resurrected from the dead?

9. So in this parable the father of the household designates Christ, who, as God, is Father of us all. The prodigal son is the assembly of publicans and sinners. The elder son in his murmuring is the assembly of the Pharisees who were murmuring about Christ and who, like the elder son, considered themselves just, as that Pharisee who, along with the publican, went up to the temple to pray.<sup>19</sup> And Christ called them just when he said: "I have not come to call the just, but sinners"<sup>20</sup> to repentance, not because they were truly just, but because they thought they were just and were confident in the justice of their works and appeared to be just in the sight of men and women. For this reason Christ compared them to whitened sepulchers.<sup>21</sup> Now it is the habit of Scripture not to name things as they truly are, but as they appear. Thus it says that the serpent tempted Eve, because he seemed to be a serpent, when he really was the devil.<sup>22</sup> So too it says that three men appeared to Abraham, although they were angels.<sup>23</sup>

10. Christ calls the sinner the younger brother, just as it is said that of the son of the widow of Nain that he was young, because every sinner sins because of the strength of sensual flesh and the weakness of the mind. For in young people sensual flesh is especially strong, the fire of concupiscence flames forth, and the mind is weak and the reason is inexperienced. That is why Christ intimates that passion is the source of sin, as Blessed James says: "Everyone is tempted by being drawn away and enticed by his own passion. Then when passion has conceived, it brings forth sin."<sup>24</sup> This is clear in the case of the sin of the first parents<sup>25</sup> and in the sin of David.<sup>26</sup> Along with passion ignorance is also a root of sin, for if people truly knew God, themselves, virtue, vice, punishment and glory, they would flee sin as they would from the face of a serpent.<sup>27</sup>

11. "Father, give me the share of the property that falls to me, etc."<sup>28</sup> In the bath of regeneration and renewal<sup>29</sup> Christ has welcomed many children from the Church who is his spouse.<sup>30</sup> Some of them always live in perpetual innocence, always serving God and never transgressing his commandment, as the older son says to his father today: "Behold, these many years I have been serving you and have never transgressed your commandment."<sup>31</sup> Others pass through the stages of adolescence, infancy, and childhood<sup>32</sup> and then, enticed by the passions of the flesh, fall into sin, for they are at an age when they have full use of reason and can distinguish between good and evil. So they can at that age, having lost baptismal innocence and grace, go astray through the counsel of the ungodly and stand along the path of sinners,<sup>33</sup> following both the evil counsel and the evil works of wicked people as well as their most depraved behavior and wanton sinning.

12. So the younger son says to his father: "Give me the share of the property that falls to me."<sup>34</sup> Before a Christian person sins, that person is a child of God through the grace received in baptism. So during youth, when the person has the use of reason and the exercise of free will, the person withdraws from obedience to God and lives subject to his own whim, not wishing to follow God's will, but his own will in everything.

13. Now the share which falls to men and women are the use of reason, free will, and all the powers of soul and body, and every good either of nature or circumstance that men and women possess in this world. All of these things we have received from God: "What do you have, O human being, that you have not received? If you have received it, why do you glory as if you have not received it?"<sup>35</sup> Now we have received these things from God so that we may love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength above all things.<sup>36</sup> So God "divided his means among them,"<sup>37</sup> for "there are divisions . . . of grace."<sup>38</sup> Now we see that many who live in sin have many graces, riches, honors, pleasure, health of body, bodily integrity, keen senses, beauty, graciousness, facility in languages, eloquence, ingenuity, sound judgment, prudence, practical wisdom, prodigious memory, much learning and wisdom and other matters of this kind. But we see them using all these things in an evil manner by living voluptuously,<sup>39</sup> that is, according to the flesh, not according to the Spirit,<sup>40</sup> so that they might please the world and not please God, and so live as if they had received none of these things from God. So this youth, "gathered up all his wealth and set off on his journey into a country faraway."<sup>41</sup> Thus many people, although they have received many gifts from God, live far from God, far away in understanding, since they do not acknowledge God and deny that everything they have is from God. They live far away in the affection of their will

and the recognition of their heart, because they do not love God nor do they ever think of God. They live far away in memory, since they have forgotten about God, as it says: "My people have forgotten me days without number."<sup>42</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>This sermon is taken from the second cycle of Sunday Sermons in *S. Laurentii a Brundisio Opera Omnia*, Volume VIII, *Dominicalia* (Padua: Ex Officina Typographica Seminarii, 1943), 454-59.

<sup>2</sup>See Isa 6:2.

<sup>3</sup>In his opening paragraph (or protheme) Lawrence sets up his theme, namely, the mercy of God.

<sup>4</sup>See Ex 34:6-7.

<sup>5</sup>See Ps 135:5.

<sup>6</sup>See Ps 135:6.

<sup>7</sup>See Ps 135:7-9.

<sup>8</sup>See Gen 6-7.

<sup>9</sup>See the refrain of Ps 135.

<sup>10</sup>Note how Lawrence embellishes the Gospel text which mentions drachmas.

<sup>11</sup>The references seem to be Matt 9:24-25 (the official's daughter); Luke 7:14-15 (the only son of the widow of Nain); John 11:43-44 (Lazarus).

<sup>12</sup>See Ps 1:1.

<sup>13</sup>See Luke 15:8.

<sup>14</sup>Lawrence of Brindisi follows the erroneous but common view that Mary of Magdala was the sinner of Luke 7:36-50. However, the woman of Luke 7:36-50 is unnamed. Moreover, nowhere does the New Testament say that Mary of Magdala was a sinner.

<sup>15</sup>See Matt 9:9.

<sup>16</sup>See Acts 9:1-7.

<sup>17</sup>Note the anti-Judaism of Lawrence of Brindisi. Luke 15:2 says nothing about the Pharisees' "unbelief and malignity."

<sup>18</sup>See Luke 15:2.

<sup>19</sup>See Luke 18:9-14.

<sup>20</sup>See Matt 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32.

<sup>21</sup>See Matt 23:27.

<sup>22</sup>See Gen 3:1.

<sup>23</sup>See Gen 18:2.

<sup>24</sup>See James 1:14-15.

<sup>25</sup>See Gen 3:6.

<sup>26</sup>See 2 Sam 11:2-4.

<sup>27</sup>See Sir 21:2: "Flee from sin as from the face of a serpent. . . ."

<sup>28</sup>See Luke 15:12.

<sup>29</sup>See Titus 3:5. Eph 5:26 also contains a reference to baptism.

<sup>30</sup>See Eph 5:29-32.

<sup>31</sup>See Luke 15:29.

<sup>32</sup>While we might say "infancy, childhood, and adolescence," this is Lawrence's ordering of the ages of youth.

<sup>33</sup>See Ps 1:1. Lawrence returns to the Psalm verse he used n. 6 above.

<sup>34</sup>See Luke 15:12.



<sup>35</sup>See 1 Cor 4:7.

<sup>36</sup>See Luke 11:27.

<sup>37</sup>See Luke 15:12.

<sup>38</sup>See 1 Cor 12:4.

<sup>39</sup>See Luke 15:13.

<sup>40</sup>See Gal 5:16.

<sup>41</sup>See Luke 15:13.

<sup>42</sup>See Jer 2:32. It would be very rewarding to see how Lawrence of Brindisi would have developed a sermon just on the Parable of the Prodigal Son which was the reading for the Saturday after the Second Sunday of Lent. However, the editors of the critical edition of Lawrence of Brindisi's sermons decided to eliminate his sermons for the Saturdays of Lent. See *S. Laurentii a Brundisio Opera Omnia*, volume IV: Quadragesimale Primum (Padua: Ex Officina Typographica Seminarii, 1936), xvi.

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## FRANCIS

Rag-man,  
wasted with hunger for God;  
bone-thin, fragile as a moth,  
innocent as truth.

Your fierce heart thundered with desire  
to follow, running on bloody feet,  
the steps of the Beloved.

Yet we cling to our comforts,  
too weighed down for running,  
too afraid to gaze where your blind eyes gazed  
seeking an unseen Sun.

Francis, you escape us,  
with your ravenous heart and idyllic songs;  
your light flies toward the Eternal  
like lightning toward mountains.

Rag-man,  
count us as your retinue,  
sorry in our sins,  
blessed in your company.

Kate Martin, OSC

## About Our Contributors

**Donna Foley, SFO**, is a member of St. Elizabeth Fraternity in Oakland, CA and a student at the Franciscan School of Theology. She is the married mother of four (mostly) grown sons and is co-founder of The Seldom Seen Acting Company, a troupe of homeless men performing in the Bay Area.

**Eileen Haugh, OSF**, is a member of the Rochester, Minnesota Franciscans. She has published poems both in *The Cord* and in *National Catholic Reporter*.

**Robert J. Karris, OFM** is a member of Sacred Heart province of the Friars Minor. He is a research faculty member of The Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University. He has recently completed work on a translation of Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*.

**Terri Leone, SFO**, is Peace and Justice coordinator for the St. Katherine Drexel Regional Fraternity. Her article was published in the national SFO newsletter last fall.

**Richard S. Martignetti, OFM**, is the author of a book on St. Bonaventure's *Tree of Life*. He currently resides in Rome and serves as guardian of the fraternity of the General Curia. He is a member of the Immaculate Conception province of the Friars Minor.

**Kate Martin, OSC**, is a member of the Poor Clare community in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Her poetry has previously appeared in *The Cord*.

**Ed Zablocki, SFO**, lives in Buffalo, NY and is a member of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity along with his wife, Mary. The couple served for six years as co-chairs of the Secular Franciscan National Fraternity's Work Commission and were part of the North American delegation for the revision of the course on the Franciscan missionary charism known as *Build With Living Stones*. Ed recently completed a study guide for the book "*De Ilis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam*": *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation* by Fr. Robert Stewart, OFM. The book and study guide comprise the content for a correspondence course being offered through the Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life at St. Francis University.

## Book Review

*My Heart's Quest: Collected Writings of Eric Doyle, Friar Minor, Theologian.* Edited by Josef Raischl and André Cirino. GB-Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NA (Giles Lane), Franciscan International Study Centre, 2005. 23 cm., 619 p., ill. (£ 20; \$42.00). ISBN 0-954-9272-06. Distributed in the US by Franciscan Institute Publications.

The publication of this anthology of essays of Eric Doyle (1938-1984) marking the occurrence of his twentieth death anniversary is indeed a significant tribute to the memory of this Franciscan scholar, who "is rightly described as a *founding father* of what is now the Franciscan International Study Centre, which had its official opening in September, 1974, commemorating the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the coming of the Friars Minor to England" (p. 8). The key to the understanding Father Eric's passion for Franciscanism may be found in the book's *Preface* by Austin McCormack, the OFM Provincial Minister of England: "He [Eric] alerted us to the wealth of spiritual living, prayer, devotion, philosophy, theology that saturates our Franciscan heritage; and also to the more than significant contribution made in this by friars from what is now this Province. He did this in the only real way—not just by talking about it—but by his personal effort and commitment to try, daily, to become what he was first receiving—friar minor" (7). Thanks to their enthusiasm and punctilious attention to detail, the editors have effectively brought together in a handy volume Doyle's different writings spanning two decades. The sectional titles under which the studies are thematically grouped are indicative of the wide range of Doyle's academic interests: *On Various Franciscan themes* (38-171); *On Saint Bonaventure* (pp. 174-241); *On Blessed John Duns Scotus* (244-312); *On Teilhard de Chardin* (pp. 320-50); *On Various Themes* (360-598). The bibliography of Doyle's publications (pp. 609-19) chronologically lists his literary productions. The testimonials and other personal reminiscences of Doyle's friends and confreres go to reveal not only a scholar but also "a model for all of a Friar Minor who is humble, devoted, faithful" (34).

Benedict Vadakkekara  
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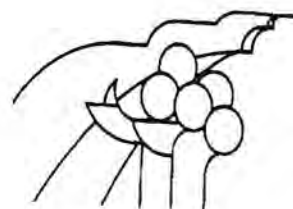
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## Abbreviations

### 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 of 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'Avanches
1-3JT	The Praises by Jacopone da Todi
DCom	The Divine Comedy by Dante Alighieri
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