



# the CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

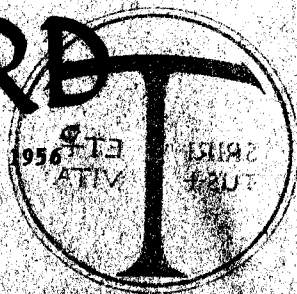
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BY

# THE CORD

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U. I. OZ. IV. IOY

## THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE

### HUMAN DESTINY

"God is love," wrote John, "and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him" (I Jn. 4:16). A whole philosophy of life lies embodied in that line. To understand it fully is to know why we are what we are—human beings, children of God, religious. It tells us too what sin is, and why this refusal to abide in love has the terrible consequences we know it to have. But what is more consoling, it reveals how we may meet the challenge of sin. For the love of which John speaks is not only creative, it is redemptive; and with our cooperation can transform us into the likeness of God's Son. Could we choose a better text than this to develop in these monthly conferences?

Consider, for the present, our human destiny. In Genesis (1:26) we read that God said: *Let us make mankind in our image and likeness.* But if God is love, this is but another way of saying that we are created in the image and likeness of love itself.

Love, we know, is a beautiful word, but much abused. It may mean anything from soft-hearted sentiment to hard-headed devotion. It can stand for selfish passion as well as for passionate selflessness. In more than one sense love or charity covers a multitude of sins.

Actually there are two basic types of love, one altruistic, the other egoistic. The first asks: What can I do for you? The second: What can I do you for? The former is based on what we have and are; the latter on what we are not, but hope to be. It seeks only to have, to own, to possess, whereas perfect love seeks rather to be had, to be owned, to be possessed, for it is the gift of oneself to another. It was such love to which Paul referred when he said: *Charity... is not self-seeking* (I Cor. 13:5) and John had in mind when he wrote: *God is love.*

#### 1. Egoistic

Though one of the greatest... apparently knew only of egoistic love... we he believed to be a quest... an en-

deavor in the universe is nothing else but the imperfect reaching out to perfect itself. The eye loves to see because seeing is the perfection of the eye. The ear loves to hear because hearing is a perfection of the ear. The nose loves to run, not because a running nose is a perfection, but it does get rid of the germs. And so his theory goes. Biologically speaking, all activity is trying to keep what we have or to get what we do not have. Even the perpetuation of the race through reproduction is a kind of self-extension in which the individual seeks immortality in posterity. All love then in some way is a search for one's perfection. The heliotrope that follows the sun with transfixed gaze to drink in its life-giving warmth, the bullfrog calling to his mate, the chicken grubbing for a worm, the cat that brushes against your habit for the tingling pleasure it brings, even the dog that hungers for the companionship of man—all are seeking to fill a need, a want, an emptiness in themselves.

And because Aristotle did not know fully what love is, he did not know fully what God is. God could not be Creator for him, for creation is an act of love and all love is imperfect. His deity, instead, was a God of thought or knowledge. Yet He knew nothing of this changing world, for that would have disturbed His divine peace of mind. And so He dwelt in splendid isolation, having only Himself to think about. He was a mind enwrapped in itself "whose thinking is a thinking on thinking" (Metaphysics XII, 9).

And because he could never understand God, Aristotle could never really grasp the nature of man created in His image. Man became most God-like, he believed, through knowledge—an error doubly false because it comes so close to being true. It was the mistake of Eve who thought being like to God was merely a matter of knowledge, an error perpetuated by certain educators who claim there is no sin, there is merely ignorance.

## 2. Altruistic Love

But John set Aristotle aright by telling us that God is not only truth or knowledge; He is also, and above all, love. And Paul went on to explain to his converts with their Greek culture, that this love is not self-seeking (I Cor. 13:5). It is rather the thrill of making another glad, forgetting oneself to think of others. Since it does not seek

to perfect itself, it is not ambitious. Such love delights in what is good simply because it is something good and perfect, irrespective of whether it is a good for self or not. Hence as Paul goes on to say, such love is not pretentious or puffed up. And since charity does not envy, such love is the basis of friendship, for it prompts one to share what he has with others. Where it finds imperfection, it does not rejoice over wickedness, but strives to heal the wound, to fill the needs of others; for charity is patient, is kind.

True love, perfect love, then, is unselfish. Even when it delights in some good we possess, it rejoices in that good for its own sake and not because it is our good. And the mark of its unselfishness is that it seeks to give, to share, to reproduce itself: *Bonum est diffusivum sui*.

Aristotle erred. Our God is not a lonely God, for He is love. And here perhaps is the deep psychological reason why the pagans drifted into polytheism. Every great error is a guess at a great truth. Marginal or primitive peoples recognize that God is good and loving. But as we go up the ladder of civilization, we are told, the notion of the all-high God becomes more and more obscured with secondary, inferior gods. It almost seems that the more heathens grasped that God is love, the more they were convinced He must share His love with other divine persons. Their great error was to create their gods in the image and likeness of human love which is imperfect and mixed with selfishness. But as false love or selfishness divides, true love or selflessness unites. And so it is only natural that a God who is love should be both three and one.

If we love a good for its own sake, Duns Scotus tells us, we wish it to be loved by others. The love the eternal Father bears His infinitely lovable divine nature is not a jealous, selfish love. And through the eternal generation of His only begotten Son, He gives it a perfect co-lover. Since the Son's love is like that of His Father, Son and Father share their divine nature with the Holy Spirit, the personification of love. God, then, is a Trinity of Persons, the first family, the first social unit, the primordial society. And if love is a giving, a sharing of one's life, of one's being, with another person, we begin to comprehend in some dim way why John could say simply: *God is*

love. For so closely are the lives of the three Divine Persons intertwined that it is not even theologically correct to speak of them as three lives. For there is but one life, even as there is but one mind, one will, one nature, one God.

We cannot comprehend this, for it is a mystery—the most profound of our faith. Yet a mystery is a great deal like the sun. If you try to look into it directly, to study it and analyze it, you grow dizzy and blind. But look away from it and everything becomes bright and clear because of it. As so it is that while we cannot understand the Trinity, paradoxically, the Trinity helps us understand ourselves, our nature, our destiny as human beings. For Scripture does not say merely we are fashioned in the likeness of God, but that we were created in the image of the Trinity. God did not say: "Let me make man in my image and likeness" but "Let us:" for it is the Trinity of Persons who speaks.

And because a God of love is not a lonely God, man too can never be happy alone. Like the Trinity whose image is stamped on his soul, he can never be content with personal loneliness, but must give and share what he is and has with his fellowmen. Only then does he begin to live. Only through such love can he fulfill his natural destiny. Here, incidentally, is the root reason why all isolationism is fundamentally false.

### 3. Man as the Image of God

How did the three Divine Persons make us like themselves? Genesis hints that God breathed into man something of His own life, as it were, and man became a living being (Gen. 2:7). But if our God is a living God precisely because His inner life is a life of love which all this implies, we might say more exactly that God made us like to Himself when He gave us the power of unselfish love. According to Duns Scotus this capacity for altruistic love is nothing other than our free will. Following the lead of Saint Anselm, he reminds us that among the myriad powers creatures possess, the free will of man is a thing apart, unique. Aristotle after all was almost wrong, for nature is constantly seeking its own perfection. It loves what is good only because it satisfies some need. Yet there is one

faculty that frees us from this necessity of nature, our human will. Its fundamental freedom, Scotus tells us, is to liberate us from the need of always seeking ourselves, of loving what is good only because it is a good for us. The will makes it possible to love the good and perfect for its own sake as a thing of beauty, as something lovely and lovable in itself. It is man's power of altruistic love and it enables him to give and to share instead of seeking only to possess and to hoard.

Where such love is, knowledge too is present. Where there is will, there is also reason, for love is not blind, though at times we may be tempted to think so. Actually love's "blindness" is really a keener, more penetrating vision. It sees the potential as actual, which is a philosophical way of saying that love depicts what could be as though it actually were. The lover, in a word, constantly discovers new capabilities, hidden resources, unsuspected traits present in the beloved in germ or bud, only waiting for the warmth of love to bring them to full flower.

Unselfish love above all is not blind. It is ingenious in using the mind or intellect to discover the needs of others, to find new outlets for selfless giving. And since intellect and will imply a spiritual soul, in this sense Francis could say: "Observe, O man, to what distinction the Lord has raised you, creating and moulding you in His likeness by giving you a soul" (*Admonitions*, n. 5).

### 4. Man, a Creature of Two Loves

Our likeness to God, however, is by no means a mirror image. Though our will is our highest, our most divine faculty, it is not our only one. We are not gods, but creatures knowing good and evil. Our being is divided between two loves. Are we not imperfect, burdened with real needs and wants that clamor for fulfillment? Is God Himself not the author of our human appetites and the desires rooted in our nature? We cannot simply love all things solely because they are good in themselves; we are constrained by our very humanity to seek also what is good for us. And this is the fundamental dichotomy of our being; we are constantly torn between the love that is self-seeking and the love that is self-giving. If we seek

ourselves, it is the creature in us; if at times we forget ourselves, go out of ourselves, give what we have, it is the divine in us—the spark of love that is not desire but friendship—the perfect love.

God planned that these two loves be integrated, and so they were in Eden. We can only give and share with someone who has a capacity to receive. Only if we have real and genuine needs is it possible for another to fill them. And it is this ability to give and to take that makes mankind one family so that it reflects in its own way the inner give and take that is the life of the Blessed Trinity. And so these two loves, one perfect like that of the Creator, the other characteristic of the creature, form the warp and woof of which human society is woven.

Sin, which put the will in the service of selfishness, destroyed something of this perfect integration of the lower and higher loves that our parents knew in paradise. And that is why Paul speaks of the law in his members fighting against the law of the mind and leading him into sin. "For I do not do the good that I wish," he complains, "but the evil that I do not wish, that I perform" (Rom. 7:19). For while we are not expected to neglect our own good, for our very nature would protest against it, original and personal sin creates a bias in favor of egoistic love so that it is no longer perfectly subservient to the will. Neither is the exercise of altruistic love as easy as it once was. To deny ourselves is always difficult. And Christ Himself testified there is no greater love than laying down one's life for another. Yet self-denial is a condition for following Christ. And *he who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world keeps it unto life everlasting.* (Jn. 12:25).

##### 5. *Love as the Perfection of Man*

This self-denial, necessary for the attainment of our end or destiny, also has a positive aspect. It is the love or *charity* which is *not self-seeking*, or as Paul puts it elsewhere, which is the *bond of perfection* (Col. 3:14), integrating our personality and making us mature. *Who abides in love, abides in God and God in him* (I Jn. 4:6).

But even if man were not destined to inherit heaven, but were to remain on a purely natural level, he would still be bound

to live for others. He would still be required to exercise this unselfish, altruistic love, sharing his time, his talents, his possessions with his fellows, under pain of being forever unhappy.

Cynics who claim man to be incapable of any true altruism seek to explain his seemingly unselfish actions as being secretly prompted by the joy he finds in so acting. It is true that there is no greater thrill than that of making another glad, nor greater happiness than that which comes from the complete gift or surrender of self in perfect love. All this is readily understandable since God normally associates with this most perfect action, as He does with every other action that is good and proper, a delight or satisfaction proportionate to its perfection. And if unselfish love is a spark of the divine in man, should he not find in it a sweetness that could be called in truth the nectar of the gods?

A little reflection, however, disproves the cynical contention that the desire for happiness motivates such love. For there is something spontaneous, or as others say, "irrational" about true love. It outruns human reckoning; it does not count the cost or appraise the consequences. And even upon reflection it can not always give the reasons for its actions. We can only say we love the beloved for being what he or she is.

Further proof that such love is not disguised selfishness, were such needed, is found in what sometimes is called the "Stoic paradox." *Seek happiness and you will never find it; forget your happiness and you will discover it.* For when we deliberately search for happiness, when we make pleasure or delight our primary aim or goal, our love is no longer selfless. And since the highest joy or delight accompanies only the most perfect love, by seeking such happiness we prevent ourselves from ever attaining it. And that is why the most miserable people in the world are those who think only of themselves, their own comfort, their own interests and ambitions.

Too many of us, including even religious, have fallen victim to the epidemic of egotism. We have become too absorbed in ourselves. We circle around our own personal problems and concerns day in and day out. If the problems of others claim our attention at all, it is only because in some way or other we ourselves are affected

by them. Morbid self-interest and self-pity, which is another form of egotism, saps the strength of all too many today. No wonder the world is sick, and the offices and consultation rooms of doctors and psychiatrists are crowded with unhappy people. The best tonic such individuals could take would be to forget themselves in the interest of others. "I found happiness," declared the Little Flower, "the day the love of God entered my heart and told me to forget myself always."

Part of this self-forgetfulness, we might note incidentally, is the lost art of accepting favors graciously. The proud and self-sufficient desire to be beholden to no one. They are surly in receiving favors and make it difficult for others to help them. This too is egotism—selfishness in rags, if you will, but selfishness all the same. True charity is both humble and generous. It not only prompts us to give graciously to others, but makes it easy and rewarding for others to give to us. This is genuine *caritas* that makes men brothers and welds the human race into one family under God.

And finally, our giving must be guided by prudence. Paradoxically we can kill others with care. We ought not to be like one "Lady Bountiful" of whom it was said: "She devoted her life to others, and you can tell the others by their hunted look." True charity is tactful, not obtrusive. At times the greatest charity we can show to others is to let them alone, to permit them to stand on their own feet.

If we love unselfishly in this enlightened and understanding way, we shall achieve our destiny. Our lives will reflect something of the inner give and take that is the life of the Blessed Trinity in whose image we are created. Our lives shall be full, for the more we empty ourselves, the richer we become. And because we are not concerned with our own happiness so much as with making others happy, we shall taste that sweetness of Franciscan joy that is the natural consequence of Seraphic charity.

Fr. Allan B. Wolter, O.F.M.

## THOMAS MERTON AND THE FRANCISCANS

Thomas Merton has become so completely identified with the Cistercian tradition that it seems a little surprising at first to recall that some of the early though very important influences on his spiritual awakening were not Trappist in origin, but Franciscan. Now this in itself, of course, is no revelation. You only have to open up a copy of *The Seven Storey Mountain* and index your way back to what we shall call "the Bonaventure period" in the life of this American monk. But what we shall try to show here is that the Bonaventure period was not just a prelude, an interim, a pleasant academic idyl in the pre-Trappist life of Thomas Merton, but that it formed lasting influences which are still evident even in his latest writings. In fact, it is possible to draw from his books a miniature anthology of Franciscan reference.

In 1939 the young convert, Thomas Merton, went to Columbia University in order to visit his friend Daniel Walsh and to seek his "advice about where and how to become a priest. . ." The door had been opened and the feast on the banquet table of Holy Mother Church lay before his eyes. He talked with Daniel Walsh about the great religious Orders: the Jesuits; the Dominicans; the Benedictines. It must be said here that this point in the life of a pre-religious is one of most delicate torture, swaying as it does in the balance between the affectionate, though self-seeking will of the ego, and the natural Will of God. When Daniel Walsh asked, "What do you think of the Franciscans?" Thomas Merton thought to himself:

"Yes, I liked the Franciscans. Their life was very simple and informal and the atmosphere of St. Bonaventure's was pleasant and happy and peaceful. One thing that attracted me to them was a sort of freedom from spiritual restraint, from systems and routine. No matter how much the original Rule of St. Francis has changed, I think his spirit and his inspiration are still the fundamental thing in Franciscan life. And it is an inspiration rooted in joy, because it is guided by the prudence and wisdom which are revealed only to the little ones—the glad wisdom of those who have had the grace and the madness to throw away everything in one uncompromising rush, and to walk around barefooted in the simple confidence that if they get into trouble, God will come and get them out of it again."

Now if this (true as it may be) is all that being a Franciscan meant to Thomas Merton, then it would be easy to say, as indeed he did himself say, that what actually appealed to him was a sense of religious ro-



manticism, a kind "of simple thirteenth century lyricism." But with his usual good judgment Thomas Merton is quick to correct this concept of Franciscanism so prevalent among us today. One point, though, should be made clear. When he follows with the paragraph, 'However, the lyricism,' etc., it should be obvious to the reader that he is not now speaking at a time contemporary with his talk with Daniel Walsh—but at a time chronologically far removed—namely, at the time he was writing *The Seven Storey Mountain*.

"However, the lyricism must be carefully distinguished from the real substance of the Franciscan vocation, which is that tremendous and heroic poverty, poverty of body and spirit, which makes the Friar literally a tramp. For after all, "mendicant" is only a fancy word for tramp, and if a Franciscan cannot be a tramp in this full and complete and total mystical sense, he is bound to be a little unhappy and dissatisfied. As soon as he acquires a lot of special articles for his use and comfort and becomes sedate and respectable and spiritually sedentary he will, no doubt, have an easy and pleasant time, but there will be always gnawing in his heart the nostalgia for that uncompromising destitution which alone can give him joy because it flings him headlong into the arms of God. . . Without poverty, Franciscan lyricism sounds tinny and sentimental and raw and false. Its tone is sour, and all its harmonies are somewhat strained."

It is evident here, of course, that Thomas Merton's grasp on the essence of Franciscanism is clearer and stronger than it had been earlier. 'I am afraid,' he says, "that at that time it was the lyricism that attracted me more than the poverty, but I really don't think that I was in a position to know any better." (Incidentally, it is this kind of complete and open sincerity that has given Thomas Merton so much meaning to us in this age of sham and duplicity). But it is equally important to realize that Thomas Merton at this time, and even much later than this, did not yet fully understand the Franciscan way of life in any but the most abstract sense. It was always *Franciscanism*, but hardly ever Saint Francis—and never, of course, *Father Francis*. It never seems to have occurred to him in the most profound and fundamental fact of all that every Franciscan is, or aspires to be, a *follower* of Saint Francis, who is himself the *follower* par excellence of Christ Our Lord.

It was not long after his talk with Daniel Walsh that Thomas Merton decided to enter the Franciscan novitiate. But by the summer of 1940, several months before the novitiate would open in August, Thomas Merton began to doubt his vocation.

"It is true," he said, "I was called to the cloister. That has been made

abundantly clear. But the dispositions with which I was now preparing to enter the Franciscan novitiate were much more imperfect than I was able to realize. In choosing the Franciscans, I had followed what was apparently a perfectly legitimate attraction—an attraction which might very well have been a sign of God's will, even though it was not quite as supernatural as I thought. I had chosen this Order because I thought I would be able to keep its Rule without difficulty, and because I was attracted by the life of teaching and writing which it would offer me, and much more by the surroundings in which I saw I would probably live. God very often accepts dispositions that are no better than these, and even some that are far worse, and turns them into a true vocation in His own time."

True, and yet one cannot help but hear in all this a very slight and tenderly pathetic whistling in the dark. Now this perhaps would be an unkind thing to say if it were intended in any way to be critical of Thomas Merton. On the contrary, it is simply to understand a young man who at the time did not understand himself, or at least what he wanted to do with himself. "Of course I understand the whole business now. My own mind was full of strange, exaggerated ideas. . ." And then the narration follows with great poignancy and need not be repeated here.

But surely it is in no way condescending to say that at St. Bonaventure's, Thomas Merton had friends and spiritual advisers who without question had much to do with the forming of his spiritual vocation. This, however, does not mean that Thomas Merton received his principles of spirituality from the Franciscan Friars. It simply means that in a time of indecision and vacillation, the Bonaventure period proved to be a stabilizing force to him in his search for the light of guidance. St. Bonaventure's became a kind of retreat to him in more ways than one. It was the place he always came back to. Even after the profound Harlem episode, where the Franciscanism of the remarkable Baroness Catherine de Hueck impressed him so deeply, he came home again to St. Bonaventure's. In fact, as events turned out, it proved to be his last home "in the world." Gethsemane was next.

However, it is the whole burden of this essay to claim and to demonstrate that the Franciscanism which Thomas Merton did acquire during the Bonaventure period never entirely left him. Nearly ten years later Fr. Louis Merton made the following entry in his published journals, *The Sign of Jonas*:

"The Portiuncula always brings me great blessings—and that is

the Franciscan side in me which continues to grow also. It was last year I first realized how much there is in Portiuncula Day for those who will take it. If we are granted indulgences, it is because there is so much in the feast which they represent. They are counters. The feast brings graces of contemplation and spiritual joy, because every church becomes that tiny little church that Saint Francis loved above all others. Thus everyone in the world can share the bliss of his sanctity."

Nothing could be more explicit than the phrase ". . . and that is the Franciscan side in me which continues to grow also." But the fullest expression of Fr. Louis on what Saint Francis means to the world was yet to be written. It appeared recently in his book *No Man Is an Island*. This particular part of the book devotes nearly five pages to Saint Francis, so that obviously it cannot all be quoted here. And yet it would be worse still not to quote any of it. Thus Fr. Louis:

"The remarkable thing about St. Francis is that in his sacrifice of everything he had also sacrificed all 'vocations' in a limited sense of the word. After having been edified for centuries by all the various branches of the Franciscan religious family, we are surprised to think that St. Francis started out on the roads of Umbria without the slightest idea that he had a 'Franciscan vocation.' And in fact he did not. He had thrown all vocations to the winds together with his clothes and other possessions. He did not think of himself as an apostle, but as a tramp. He certainly did not look upon himself as a monk: if he had wanted to be a monk, he would have found plenty of monasteries to enter. He evidently did not go around conscious of the fact that he was a 'contemplative.' Nor was he worried by comparisons between the active and contemplative lives. Yet he led both at the same time, and with the highest perfection. No good work was alien to him—no work of mercy, whether corporal or spiritual, that did not have a place in his beautiful life! His freedom embraced everything."

It is, of course, that very last sentence which is the key to everything Fr. Louis has been so eloquently speaking all along: "His freedom embraced everything," as in fact it truly does. There is not a mode of life that Saint Francis cannot enter into. All of our great religious Orders and societies retain, as they should, their own particular ways of spirituality and even their own more or less "specialized" saints. But there is not a religious Order in the Christian world, nor any state of life, in

which Saint Francis does not hold deep and fruitful meaning. It is certain that he now holds such depth of meaning for the young Trappist monk, whose journey from the Seven Storey Mountain to the truth that No Man Is an Island, has given us all that spiritual joy of recognition, which is the freedom and joy of Saint Francis himself in Christ Our only Lord.

Thomas P. McDonnell, T.O.F.

## MOTHER MARY THERESIA BONZEL AND HER COMMUNITY

Near the southwestern boundary of the German province of Westphalia, amid the gently rolling hills of the Sauerland Mountains, where the brooklet Bigge sends its babbling waters through the fertile meadows, lies the quaint, medieval city of Olpe, with a population of about six thousand. The history of Olpe might have remained obscure forever had not one of its daughters, by the splendor of her seraphic life, immortalized its name.

Here on the feast of the Stigmata of Saint Francis, September 17, 1830, was born a maiden destined by divine Providence to rally a numerous family under the banner of the Poverello of Assisi. The child was christened Regina Christine Wilhelmine, but commonly called Aline. She was the eldest of two daughters born to the wealthy industrialist Frederick Edmund Bonzel and his wife Maria Anna Liese. The *Sauerland Genealogy* and the *Chronicle of the City of Olpe* list the families of Liese and Bonzel as wealthy patricians whose names can be traced to the middle of the sixteenth century.

From her tender infancy Aline showed a great love for the Holy Eucharist, which foreshadowed the character of her future vocation. This could have hardly been otherwise. The sweet sounds of pulsating prayers and holy songs of the faithful and the majestic tones of the deep organ mingled with the tender lullabies of the pious Mrs. Bonzel who, living in the stately mansion next to the parish church, directed the child's young heart toward Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Often the little one was found in the shadow of the sanctuary, kneeling close to the tabernacle, whispering words of love to the good God hidden behind the little golden door.



At the age of five the first great sorrow entered Aline's young life; her illustrious father died unexpectedly at the age of twenty-nine. His untimely passing was a terrible blow not only to his immediate family but also to the community of Olpe and the province of Westphalia, for he had been a prominent industrialist, a leader in politics, a generous, charitable man, and above all a staunch Catholic who tolerated no government interference with the rights of the Church.

After the death of her husband Mrs. Bonzel devoted herself even more than before to the proper training of her two young daughters. Unknowingly Aline caused her mother many anxious moments, for she was fleet of foot and daring in all kinds of sports and games. She knew no danger; her buoyant spirit, her inventiveness at play, her tricks and pranks, made her a general favorite. Endowed generously in mind and heart, Aline could easily have fallen victim to pride and conceit. But her Mother was always close, guiding her precocious child on the path of humility and self-control.

Aline's intense yearning for the reception of the Holy Eucharist was not fulfilled until the age of twelve. Later in life, as Mother Mary Theresia, she confided to a sister the happiness that filled her heart on the day of her first holy Communion. She revealed:

On the day of my first Holy Communion I was unspeakably happy. Before that day I was a very vivacious child, always ready to take part in every escapade. As I returned to my place after having received Jesus for the first time into my heart, an indescribable sensation came over me. I had a foretaste of heaven and but one thought filled my whole being. As Jesus had given Himself entirely to me, so should I, in turn, give myself entirely to Jesus. Without quite realizing it, I was saying over and over again, 'O Lord, I am Your victim; take me as Your holocaust; do not reject me.' This prayer of oblation silenced every other thought and raised me to a state of inexpressible bliss.

We shall see how the Lord accepted her offering, and how He assisted her with His divine grace to remain true to her promise.

Her attraction to the interior life and works of piety found a splendid realization and development in the family circle. Her pious mother was her first teacher in prayer; she set a glowing example of genuine Christ-like living to the growing child. Mrs. Bonzel was justly proud of her richly endowed daughter, and she cherished fond hopes of a bright future for Aline.

There is another personage not to be overlooked when speaking of

Aline's early childhood. It is her uncle Arnold, the brother of her father, who after the latter's death assisted Mrs. Bonzel in the education of her children. Arnold lived a celibate life and was known in Olpe as "the saint." He was a man of prayer and gave liberally of his wealth to the poor. The keynote of his life was love for the Holy Eucharist. To this saintly man Aline Bonzel confided her innermost thoughts and aspirations, and from him she received all possible encouragement and assistance. Under his influence and with the assistance of divine grace, her beautiful soul blossomed forth, a vessel of God's benediction. The young maiden learned to give alms with a lavish hand and to console the sick and sorrowful with sweet tenderness.

After graduation from the schools of Olpe, Aline was sent to the famous finishing school for girls conducted by the Ursulines in Cologne. Pursuit of knowledge and perfection in the social graces were the objectives of this institution. Aline loved her studies but even more the cloistered solitude of the school halls and chapel and the religious atmosphere of the place. Her visits to the Prisoner of Love multiplied steadily, and the almost unconscious self-oblation of her First Communion day now found a realization far beyond her years. The offering: "Lord, let me be Your holocaust; reject me not," was ever in her mind and heart and frequently on her lips.

Pressed by her mother and friends, Aline made her debut after her return from Cologne. Surrounded by admirers and suitors, she found herself the center of attraction; but her choice between God and the world was made, and no allurements of pleasure, comfort, and social standing, not even the pleading of her mother, could sway her from her noble resolve.

God Himself came to her assistance by permitting her to fall victim of a heart disease that gave her much suffering to the end of her days. Thus He fashioned a great soul, one that in all the enterprises of future years did not trust in its own strength but relied completely on His loving Providence. In spite of her poor health, Aline soon became known as the "angel of mercy" in the city of Olpe. With two kindred friends she cleaned and decorated the sanctuary in the parish church. With Aline as their leader, this pious circle visited the homes of the poor, the sick, and the dying; they helped over-burdened mothers of large families and took a special interest in orphans and neglected children. Together they joined the Third Order of Saint Francis, and Aline exchanged her name for that of Mary Theresia. The young Tertiary gave freely and graciously from her patrimony, and to go begging for her dear poor be-

came a passion with her. With a basket on her arm she could be seen touring the bakeshops, the public marketplace, the clothing stores, the cobblers, near-by farms, and the homes of her wealthy relatives and friends. After sundown, with tact and discretion, she deposited the "treasures of the day" in the humble homes of her beloved poor. The alleviation of wants and misery served Mary Theresia as a means to lead souls back to God and Holy Church.

Lest the strictness of the Franciscan penitential order be beyond her daughter's strength, Mrs. Bonzel permitted Mary Theresia to join the gentle Order of the Visitation at Muehlheim on the Moehne river in Westphalia. At long last the day of departure from home and kindred was at hand, and a jubilant Magnificat rose from the heart of the generous maiden. But who can imagine her disappointment, when on the morning of this eventful day, Mary Theresia awoke with a severe case of erysipelas, making it impossible for her to travel. Resigning herself wholeheartedly to Divine Providence, she breathed a fervent "Fiat voluntas tua." While sympathizing with her sick daughter, Mrs. Bonzel was happy at the turn of events. Perhaps Mary Theresia would change her mind and remain in the bosom of her family; but in this she was mistaken.

Slowly recovering from erysipelas, the young Tertiary yearned more than ever before to give herself to God in religious life. She seemed haunted by the seraphic Saint of Assisi, whom she beheld in a dream beckoning her to follow him. Saint Clare too appeared to her, pointing out the road of Franciscan poverty and penance. Mary Theresia had been born on the feast of the Stigmatization of the Poverello, and thus, as she loved to say, "had proceeded from his wounds." She already wore the livery of a Franciscan tertiary. What other need was there to assure her in her choice of the seraphic mode of life?

To insure her daughter's complete recovery and to turn her mind from embracing religious life, Mrs. Bonzel arranged for her a lengthy trip through the fatherland. While traveling with her dear friend Regina Loeser, Mary Theresia met Clara Pfaender, a Sister of Christian Charity, who was about to sever her connections with the community of Pauline von Mallinkrodt because of her intense longing for a religious congregation with perpetual adoration. Mother Pauline regretted losing the saintly Sister Clara Pfaender; yet, she saw the finger of God in the event. Six days later, contrary to their inclination but obedient to their spiritual director, Mary Theresia Bonzel and her friend Regina Loeser joined Clara Pfaender for the purpose of establishing in Olpe a congre-

gation for the care and education of orphans and other neglected children. The rule of the Third Order of Saint Francis was to be the foundation of the new community.

After a holy retreat with the Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus in Aix-la-Chapelle and a lengthy visit with the saintly daughter of Saint Francis, Mother Frances Schervier, the three zealous souls, with Clara Pfaender as superior, began to live a life in common according to the rule of Saint Francis. And now we find the little seed of the new community developing rapidly. Because of the increasing number of orphans, the house became too small, and Mrs. Bonzel purchased a large building for the young community. Poorly furnished in accordance with the wishes of its occupants, the sisters' new home was a veritable paradise, another Nazareth, where communion with God and the practice of Christ-like charity rendered sweet the hours of community life. This heavenly peace and happiness was not to endure without God's stamp of approval, the seal of the cross.

Sooner than expected the young sisterhood found itself confronted by one of the severest trials in its history—a trial that led to dissension and finally to separation. Prior to the investiture of the Sisters, Mother Clara Pfaender compiled the statutes of the new congregation, basing them, to the bitter disappointment of Mary Theresia Bonzel and Regina Loeser, upon the Augustinian rather than the Franciscan life. Severe as this trial was, another was added which served to increase the anxiety of the two girlhood friends.

From the time that the number of orphans and sisters began to increase, Mother Clara Pfaender thought of transferring the motherhouse of her congregation from Olpe to near-by Elspe. When Bishop Conrad Martin denied her Community the practice of home nursing in the city of Olpe because of the objections of the Sisters of Charity at the local hospital, Mother Clara, with ecclesiastical approval, selected Salzkotten as the center of her community. Olpe was reduced to a mission place with Sister Mary Theresia as superior.

The cessation of perpetual adoration in her little convent home must have been exceedingly painful to Sister Mary Theresia, whose all-surpassing love was for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. However, far from yielding to discouragement, she remained loyal and obedient to Mother Clara until Bishop Conrad Martin, July 20, 1863, declared the convent in Olpe independent of the convent in Salzkotten and appointed Sister Mary Theresia superior of the community in Olpe.

This decree marked the parting of the ways of two valiant souls—

Mother Clara Pfaender and Sister Mary Theresia Bonzel. The painful separation was recognized and accepted as ordained by Divine Providence; it resulted in two religious congregations, both destined to do much good for God and the Church.

With courage, humility, and faith, Mother Mary Theresia shouldered the burden of the office of superior, placed upon her by Bishop Conrad Martin of Paderborn. Immediately she discarded the distinction between lay sisters and choir sisters. All became one in rank and one in heart. Then she set to work to base the statutes of her congregation upon the Rule of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis. They were approved by the Church in 1865 and the title, "Poor Sisters of St. Francis Seraph of the Perpetual Adoration," was conferred upon the Congregation.

The rapid increase of sisters and orphans called for a well-planned system of expansion. The foundress was equal to the task. Her ardent love for orphans and neglected children led her on to ever new toils, ever new sacrifices. At the same time she left nothing undone to train her daughters in the science of the religious life. Nothing escaped her watchful eye. She was ever at the helm, as it were, to steer those confided to her care toward the harbor of perfection. While giving her wholehearted attention to all in general, her loving care was at the same time bestowed upon each in particular. She was for each individual sister an unspeakably kind and loving mother who gave wise counsel in difficulties and consolation in sorrow.

During the formative period the congregation was greatly aided by Mother Frances Schervier, the saintly foundress of the Sisters of the Poor of Saint Francis of Aix-la-Chapelle. The zeal of the young Olpe sisterhood in the practice of self-denial was so great that Mother Frances advised the sisters to mitigate their extraordinary life of penance; she also recommended a change in their coarse woolen garments, for the work among the children and the sick justified and required the wearing of linens. Later she opened the hospitals of her community to the sisters of Olpe for their education in the science of nursing. Mother Frances' wise counsel and genuine kindness won the lasting gratitude of Mother Mary Theresia and her community.

*(To be Continued)*

*Sr. M. Fridian, O.S.F.*

## ST. BONAVENTURE EXPLAINS THE "OUR FATHER"

Our holy Father Saint Francis ordains in his Rule that "Clerics shall recite the Divine Office according to the order of the Holy Roman Church. But laics shall say twenty-four Our Fathers for Matins, five for Lauds; for Prime, Tierce, Sext and None, for each of these seven; for Vespers, however, twelve; for Compline seven; and let them pray for the dead" (Rule, III).

By this simple ordinance our Seraphic Father manifested his profound reverence for the most beautiful of all prayers, the Our Father. He was eager that the lay brothers of his Order who, because of their work and lack of clerical training could not be asked to say the Divine Office with the priests, should nevertheless approach God with "this pearl among all prayers" and in this simple and forthright fashion participate in the praises which Mother Church, the Bride of Christ, offers daily to her heavenly Spouse.

Saint Francis offered no reason or explanation for making this choice. He took it for granted that his brethren would, in the simplicity of their hearts, understand and appreciate the inestimable value of the divinely-inspired Lord's Prayer. However, his faithful son and scholar, Saint Bonaventure, the Seraphic Doctor, went out of his way, in his "Exposition of the Rule of the Friars Minor" (ch. III, nn. 3 ss), to give a beautiful and colorful explanation of the Brothers' Office. As was his way, the Seraphic Doctor pointed out a symbolic and spiritual meaning in almost every word, figure and number. Surely the members of other religious communities will profit by Saint Bonaventure's commentary, which reads as follows:

For the instruction of the lay brothers Saint Francis continues (in his Rule): "But the lay brothers shall say twenty-four Our Fathers for Matins." The lay brothers should be taught that these words "Our Father, who art in heaven" are meant to prepare the soul for prayer. For by assuming the name "Father," God wishes to give us confidence at prayer, since a father is always willing to give of his riches to his children (See II Cor. 12:14). By the word "our" we are taught that our love must reach out, so that no one may restrict his prayer to himself alone. By the words "Who art in heaven" the Lord seeks to purify our intention, in order that the petitioner may ask only for the things of heaven.

With the words "Hallowed be Thy Name" there follows a prayer of seven petitions. The first three pertain directly to the honor due to God; the remaining four comprise the needs of the petitioner. Hence the words "hallowed be Thy Name" carry the petition that the most holy Truths of our faith become known to all the infidel world. The words "Thy Kingdom come" plead, however, that the laws of God be obeyed by the faithful. The third petition "Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven" has for its purpose that God's goodness be loved, and that for His own sake He be worshipped by the weak even as He is worshipped by the strong.

Among the four petitions that follow, the first begs for all the necessities of soul and body. This is contained in the words "give us this day our daily bread." And since we ask bread only for "today" we guard ourselves on the one hand against the temptation to greed, and on the other remind ourselves of the uncertainty of life. The second petition "forgive us our trespasses" begs deliverance from the debts we have incurred in the past. But the addition "as we forgive those who trespass against us," implies what Saint Augustine calls "the debt of innocence." This means to be innocent of wishing harm to anybody. For the petitioner must realize that in this prayer he brings evil upon himself if in his heart he harbors rancor against anyone. The second petition looks into the future: "and lead us not into temptation"—which means, do not permit temptation to assail us. In other words the petitioner begs for the grace to shun all dangers of sin and temptation. The third petition, "but deliver us from evil," looks to the present and embraces all the evils of our earthly exile. It means that as we spend our life in patience we look forward to death by which God will end this life whenever it pleases Him. And all these prayers are confined by the word: "Amen." Meanwhile we should bear in mind that the present Prayer should be venerated above all other prayers because it was given us, without any intermediary, by the Lord Himself.

Now Saint Francis had a special reason for ordaining that the Brothers should say "twenty-four Our Fathers for Matins." Matins, which is the nocturnal office, represents the night-watches of heaven's citizens, and at those hours this sacrifice of praise is most pleasing to God and His Angels. The number twenty-four recalls the number of the members of both Testaments. Twelve were the Patriarchs through whom the chosen race was multiplied in the flesh. Again, Twelve were the Apostles through whom in the New Testament the faithful were multiplied spiritually. In this way our Brothers, in virtue of this mystical

number, enjoy the companionship of the Fathers of both Testaments and thus may safely hope that their prayers will be heard through their merits, since undoubtedly they have joined the angelic choirs. Again, since the natural day consists of twenty-four hours, it is easily inferred that a prayer which features the number twenty-four should implore spiritual benefits for all times. Furthermore, since these nocturnal praises that are sung by the clergy consist of psalms, lessons and canticles, of which there are nine of each, we are led to recognize in them the nine choirs of angelic spirits.

Now the number twenty-four is obtained by multiplying eight by three. Number three indicates what we must believe; number eight (which is the Eighth Day or the Day of Judgment) symbolizes Justice, that is: Render to everyone his due. Lay Brothers, therefore, who do not aspire to chant the angelic praises in choir or to engage in intellectual meditation, nevertheless render a simple profession of their faith and justice under the token of this sacred number. For while number eight symbolizes the virtue of Justice, number three stands for the belief in the Blessed Trinity.

Then follows the words "For Lauds Five." Even as the office of Matins signifies the praises of the citizens of heaven, so the office of Lauds denotes the divine worship of the Church, from the morning of her primitive days to the time when the Light will shine brilliantly, which we expect to witness at the end of the world. For Lauds begins with the Reign of Christ who among the Jewish people was vested with majesty (the first Psalm of Lauds, 92:1, *the Lord is reigning, he is arrayed in majesty*). Then the praises continue amid the jubilation of the whole earth, proclaiming among the Gentiles the peace which is given to holy Church (the second Psalm: 99:1). After which, these two psalms are joined to the third, to indicate that peace has been achieved among the two peoples (the third Psalm: 69:1, *O God, thou art my God*).

Next, at the chanting of the Cantic of the Three Youths in the fiery furnace (*All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord*,—Dan. 3:57) the office of Lauds sings the praises of the Church under the reign of Antichrist. And as the last Psalm is added to these (fifth Psalm: 148:1: *Praise the Lord from the heavens*), we are reminded of the time after Antichrist. This is the moment when the nations who previously were Jews and pagans are now joined with the Christian community in the unity of faith, to render joint praises to the Lord.

We surmise that Saint Francis assigned to the Lay Brothers five Our Fathers for Lauds because of the five petitions contained in the

ecclesiastical office. But besides that, it may also have been his intention to indicate that the divine praises are twofold, celestial and terrestrial. This brings to mind the two hierarchical orders: the one in heaven rendering praise in spiritual aspirations; the one under heaven, by means of sensible symbols. These symbols are offered by the five senses. Thus the sense of hearing praises God in canticles; the sense of sight in ecclesiastical adornments; the sense of touch in external ceremonies; the sense of taste in the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar; the sense of smell in the odor of incense and similar objects that spread an atmosphere of sweet fragrance.

Saint Francis continues: "For Prime, Tierce, Sext and None, for each of these seven Our Fathers." At Prime our Lord was arraigned before Pilate and other tyrannical leaders. At Tierce He was accused and judged. This is also the hour in which the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles. At Sext He was crucified. At None He died on the Cross. In each instance the Seven Our Fathers suggest to us a sevenfold prayer, either to obtain the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit or to give thanks for the Seven Sacraments, through which the Saviour made available to us the merits of His Passion.

The Rule continues: "For Vespers twelve Our Fathers." This order has two meanings. On the one hand, since Vespers are to be said at the twelfth hour, we implore Christ's mercy twelve times for the sins of the day past. On the other hand, the prayers at Vespers denote the vespers or evening of the world. At this period of the world's history Christ in His Incarnation brought us a new day on which He turned the twelve hours into reality by choosing His Twelve Apostles. This may be the mysterious meaning of our Lord's question: *Are there not twelve hours in the day* (Jn. 11:9)?

Finally Saint Francis says: "And for Compline seven." By this is intimated the consummation of all. For as the Holy Spirit begins and guides with His sevenfold gifts, so He consummates the day's work and merit. All told then, the Brothers' office consists of seventy-six Our Fathers, and to this is added a "Prayer for the Dead." This increases the number to seventy-seven. Dividing this by seven we obtain the number eleven. An ancient gloss on the text of Matthew 18:22 tells us that eleven indicates transgression because it oversteps the Ten Commandments of the Decalogue. Hence it would seem to follow that the number seventy-seven, which is obtained by multiplying seven by eleven, symbolizes the remission of all transgressions. Perhaps our Lord had this in mind when He answered Saint Peter in these words: *I do not say*

*to thee seven times, but seventy times seven thou shalt forgive thy brother* (Matt. 18:22).

Thus far the explanation of the Brothers' Office by the great Doctor of the Church, Saint Bonaventure, the pride of our holy Order. Bonaventure loved the Lay Brothers of the Order, because not being burdened with the many responsibilities that priests have to carry, they are free to follow our Seraphic Father in simplicity, humility, and holy poverty according to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. May they read and study these lines of the Seraphic Doctor and profit by his simple, sometimes naive, but deeply significant elucidations.

*Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M.*

## SCRIPTURE READING WITH SAINT BONAVENTURE

*And his parents were wont to go every year to Jerusalem at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. And after they had fulfilled the days, when they were returning, the boy Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and his parents did not know it. But thinking that he was in the caravan, they had come a day's journey before it occurred to them to look for him among their relatives and acquaintances. And not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem in search of him. . . And it came to pass after three days, that they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who were listening to him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold, thy father and I have been seeking thee sorrowing." . . .*

*And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" And they did not understand the word that he spoke to them. . . And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them;*

and his mother kept all these things carefully in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace before God and men. (Lk. 2: 41-52).

In going to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover (v. 41), the Holy Family concurred with the ceremonial custom of the Old Law. As the Gospel states: *when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast* (v. 42). Yet, this was not merely a standing on the law of ceremony; it was an ethical action. For Christ later declared: *Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to destroy, but to fulfill* (Matt. 5: 17). Hence, in both custom and conduct, the Holy Gospel records that *they had fulfilled the days* (v. 43). However, after the festivities, it was customary for all to return home: *And after those days every man returned to his house* (Judith 16:25). But this was the time when Christ did not follow the usual custom: *And after they had fulfilled the days, then they were returning, the boy Jesus remained in Jerusalem* (v. 43). It was not necessary for Him to seek His parents' counsel in order to honor His heavenly Father. Regarding his remaining, even though *his parents did not know it* (v. 43), Joseph and Mary were hardly negligent. For it was reasonable for each to think that Jesus was in the company of the other. Humanly, the Seraphic Doctor asks, what was more natural among the adults than that the men should travel with the men and the women with the women? And still, even though inculpable, this fact was small comfort to them in their loss. Because they soon realized that *they had come a day's journey before it occurred to them to look for him among their relatives and acquaintances* (v. 44).

Imagine the sudden shock at *not finding him* (v. 45)! Picture further the anxiety, retracing their steps, as *they returned to Jerusalem in search of him* (v. 45). Mary alone could well use the anguished appeal of Solomon's love song: *I sought him and, found him not: I called, and he did not answer me. . . I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love* (Cant. 5: 6 & 8). And the silent sorrow of Joseph, supporting Mary in their desolation, must have driven him onward in their anguished search. At this point, should we not join them by examining our own actions in like losses? If Jesus seems to have left

us for a time, do we seek Him sorrowing? Should our quest continue to be unavailing, do we look for a cause in ourselves? Is it our own fault that He is a *hidden God to us*? Has the little ego of our own pride, perhaps, set up its throne in us, thus crowding Him out of our souls? Has some unobtrusive or almost-unnoticed affection gained a foothold in our heart, which should be His kingdom alone? If this is the case with us, is it any wonder that our search for Him is fruitless? Supposing we feel we have lost Him, do we have the courage to leave the caravan of human consolation and go forth in solitary search of Him Who alone can give rest to our troubled hearts? Sensibly, we should not let the length of a day's journey pass without seeking Him. To do this, with the help of grace, we need but the *will to go*. But where shall we go? Saint Augustine advises us: "Do not go outside, but turn within yourself." The lover in the Canticles could not find Him *whom her soul loved* in the city, that is, outside herself. Neither can we—nor inside self, for that matter—until we rid our soul of yearnings for external things and crush the ego that rules our thoughts and desires. Only when emptied of self, can we hope to come upon Him. For when we effect this complete change of heart, like to the returning to Jerusalem of Joseph and Mary, Jesus will undoubtedly make His appearance in the temple of our souls.

Even then, our divine Master may want to subject us to further lessons. This happened to Joseph and Mary: *for they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions* (v. 46). Notice the human posture: *sitting in the midst of the teachers* (Ibid.). This 'sitting' signified His quiet humility. He was exemplifying the studious submission for which—as the *best part*—He later commended Mary of Bethany: *who also seated herself at the Lord's feet, and listened to his word* (Luke 10: 39). But Jesus also spoke out, first *asking them questions* (v. 47) and then showing *his understanding* and giving *his answers* (v. 48). Truly an example for us is this lesson proposed by God: *Learn before thou speak* (Ecclus. 18: 19). For the open ear, the questioning mind, and the serene soul are prerequisites for illumination of the humble man by the Holy Spirit: *All wisdom is from the Lord God* (Ecclus. 7: 1). Indeed, Jesus' learned listeners were



amazed (v. 47). And, knowing Him to be the *wisdom of the Lord*, the attitude of Joseph and Mary is understandable: *when they saw him, they were astonished* (v. 48).

However, realizing that God had given to herself and Joseph the parental authority over Him, Mary was prompted to ask: "*Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold, thy father and I have been seeking thee sorrowing* (v. 48). And here, from the fact that He did not excuse His action on human grounds, Christ seemed to accept quietly and humbly His Mother's corrective question. He apparently acquiesced to her maternal right to obedience. For God spoke through them: *My son, keep the commandments of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother* (Prov. 6: 20). And again: *Honor thy father and thy mother* (Exodus 20: 12). But then, since they were entitled to an answer, He promptly pointed out that His action was justified by a higher obligation: *How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business* (v. 49). Never for a moment denying the validity of parental authority, Jesus reminded them—and us—that the first fealty and responsibility is to God. How well Saint Francis grasped His message. Casting off his clothing, which symbolized that human bonds no longer held primary authority, the little poor man of Assisi could confidently pray: *Our Father, Who art in heaven* (Matt. 6: 9). In this regard, human beings—even those bound to us by family ties—may not fully grasp our voluntarily-vowed obligations in religion. If unable to explain satisfactorily, we can best imitate the silent submission of Christ when He evidently realized that *they did not understand the word that he spoke to them* (v. 50).

But then, having done His divine duty, He submitted humbly to His parents' guidance: *He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them* (v. 51). We can apply this to our own way of life. Living in a religious family, we should strive to adapt ourselves to the requirements of humble submission. Its reward, for us, is the joy spoken of by the Psalmist: *Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity* (Ps. 132: 1). Let us focus the attention of our souls on Christ Who *was subject to them* (v. 51). Who was subject to whom? Saint Bernard answers: "God to men." Then he asks us: "If God submits himself

men, do you, desiring to rule, want to place yourself in preference over your Author?" Each one must answer this for himself. However, the example of Jesus was not lost upon Mary. Rather than discuss His actions, she made them the object of her own reflection: *His mother kept all these things carefully in her heart* (v. 51). And, as she pondered His words and works in her soul, who can doubt but that she often spoke prayerfully to her heavenly Father? Even before Saint Paul wrote about it, Mary was well aware that *her conversation is in heaven* (Philip. 3: 20). The behaviour of Mary is a tacit reprimand for our talkativeness. Answerable as we are for every useless word, should not her example give us abundant matter for meditation? And, lest we pass him by unnoticed, Saint Joseph also points out the lesson for us. For throughout the whole episode he remained watchful but silent, the epitome of saintly reserve. . . Our Gospel text concludes: *Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace before God and men* (v. 52). Saint Bonaventure is not unaware of the theological problems here involved. But, leaving most of their dogmatic import aside, he refers simply to the moral meaning. His advice is simply to copy the examples of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as proposed to us. He recommends putting on the mind of Christ, imitating His virtues, as suggested to us in the Holy Gospels. Our progress, he says will be evident before *God and men* (v. 52); we must endeavor to grow like Christ: *until we all attain to the unity of faith and of the deep knowledge of the Son of God, to perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fulness of Christ* (Eph. 4: 13).

Fr. Owen A. Colligan, O.F.M.

#### Apologies to the Atonement Fathers!

In the December 1955 issue of THE CORD we published a review of Father Titus Cranny's FATHER PAUL, APOSTLE OF UNITY, in which it was stated that this is the first book-length life of Father Paul. Happily one of our readers was kind enough to call attention to our error. The fact is that in 1951 the Graymoor Press published a full-length biography of Father Paul written by David Gannon, S.A. So sorry we slipped.

## CAUSE OF OUR JOY

When thou mad'st God a flesh to wear  
And gave Him two small eyes to see  
Earth-craft He did some aeons back,  
Thou madest laughter, too, Marie.

Our mirth grew strong within thy womb  
Along with that small Saviour sweet,  
And all our songs were born that night  
A little God lay at thy feet.

Sorrow we had full-plenteous  
Without thee, and we found the way  
Of lonely pain with never need  
For thy dear hand to beck or stay;

But singing and laughter only came  
When thou agreedst to queen the earth  
And heavens, too, with mothering  
Alike our Saviour and our mirth.

Cause of our music and our glee,  
Lady, our joy flows all from thee!  
Mother of all hilarity  
That ever wast or shall e'er be.

SISTER MARY FRANCIS

## FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

### NATIONAL MEETING OF THE FRANCISCAN TEACHING SISTERHOOD

"Nature—The Mirror of God," was the theme of the fourth National meeting of the Franciscan Teaching Sisterhoods, held at Marian College, Indianapolis November 25-26.

Upwards of 400 delegates from some 27 different Congregations who came from the New England and other Eastern states to as far west as Colorado, and from the Dakotas to Oklahoma. In addition about fifteen Franciscan friars took an active part in the conference either in presenting some of the papers, acting as discussion leaders, or consultants at the various general and sectional meetings.

The conference was opened with a High Mass offered by the Very Rev. Vincent Kroger, O.F.M., Provincial of St. John the Baptist Province, Cincinnati, Ohio. In his sermon addressed to the delegates Father Kroger stressed the fact that "It is a spiritual equipment and a supernatural disposition which is needed" to enable Franciscan Teachers to turn over the world to Christ, or "renewing all things in Christ."

"The modern world says we do not have academic freedom," Father Kroger stated and, "that we are hampered and restricted by the truths which faith teaches us. But the modern world does not ask us to take the loyalty oath. When we say we want to turn the world over to Christ, we are not suspected to mean the overthrow of the government, a world revolution to deprive individuals of their God-given rights. Even the votaries of the world know that Christ Our Lord stands for peace and justice and respect for every human individual," he said.

"We have academic freedom in the best sense of the words," Father Kroger assured the assembled Sisters. "Faith, after

all, is not a restriction but a guide, it does not coerce us but leads us," he continued. As followers of St. Francis, he urged the Sisters to "be like the Holy Sacrifice, a channel of divine grace to our fellow men. . . by living and acting in a spirit of faith. . . and in a spirit of love."

The Rev. Mother Mary Cephas, O.S.F., Mother-General of the Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg, Indiana, host of the convention welcomed the delegates and expressed the hope that all present would "learn more about Our Holy Father Francis, learn more about the God of Francis." As a result of the conference, she said, "we should all be better Franciscans, better servants of God, better servants of man, for having been privileged to be one of this group of eager-to-learn, eager-to-give Franciscans."

The key-note address of the two-day event was given by the Rev. Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., of St. Francis College Fort Wayne, Indiana, president of the Franciscan Educational Conference, of which the Sisters Conference is an affiliate. He asked the assembled delegates to capture the Franciscan approach to nature, and through nature to find God. He urged them to teach science as a science; not to neglect the natural while stressing the supernatural; and while philosophy and science are separate, he said, they are not to be separated.

In a delightfully Franciscan Paper, the Rev. Leander Blumlein, O.F.M. of Duns Scotus College, Detroit, Michigan, spoke on "St. Francis' Attitude towards Creatures." The basic trait or quality or attitude which formed the ground work for all other virtues of St. Francis was his reverence for things."

"This," Father Blumlein asserted, "pre-

supposes the proper recognition of a value in itself—a thing which we moderns have often lost in the quest for the practical, the useful. Francis grasped the value of things in themselves, and thereupon their value toward a further goal; he saw how worthy of veneration things are in themselves, and was willing to let things speak for themselves, without rushing to put them immediately to use." He urged the Franciscan Sisters to use the Franciscan approach which is radically Christian, in teaching the sciences. This would be accomplished by having "a deep reverence and respect for the very nature of things." This, he said, calls for deeper and sounder and true scholarship, deeper findings. In having such reverence for things one woos them, wins them, has them work along, as it were, instead of being worked upon. "A true Franciscan scientist," Father Blumlein declared, "will work with things, rather than upon them." He urged the delegates to make the universe a "ladder" to God.

The Very Rev. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M., rector of Christ the King Seminary, St. Bonaventure, N.Y., presented a paper and led a discussion on the subject of "The Creation of the World, according to Franciscan Teachings."

The Director of the Academy of American Franciscan History, Bethesda, Md., spoke briefly about the research work being done by the research center. He also outlined the various projects now being readied for publication. Among these are the Life and Letters of Father Junipero Serra, the Apostle of California.

Several sectional meetings were held during the afternoon, all of them developing the theme of the conference for teachers in the Elementary, Secondary, and College and Nursing Education Fields. Demonstrations were held under the direction of teachers of elementary schools of Indianapolis: Sister M. Adriana, O.S.F.

of St. Theresa School, Sister M. Janita, O.S.F. of St. Rita School, and Sister Frances de Chantal, O.S.F., Our Lady of Lourdes School.

The section in the field of Secondary Education was under the chairmanship of Sister M. Bibiana, O.S.F., Cotter High School, Winona, Minn., and heard Sister M. Michele, O.S.F., of Mount St. Francis, Joliet, Illinois, speak on "Science Clubs in a Catholic High School."

The College division under the chairmanship of Sr. M. Joan, O.S.F. College of St. Francis, Joliet, Illinois, presented by the Rev. Allan Wolter, O.F.M., of Cleveland, Ohio, and the Franciscan Institute, N.Y. The subject was "The Complexity of the Atomic Nucleus."

The Nursing Education division was treated to an inspiring paper by Sister Mary Aquinata, S.S.M., St. Francis Hospital, Wichita, Kansas, on the subject of "Student Personality Development."

Approximately 15 Franciscan librarians under the chairmanship of Sister M. Josepha, O.S.F., Holy Family Library, Manitowoc, Wisc. discussed some of their own problems. They also listened to a paper presented by the Rev. Ambrose Burke, T.O.R., of Francis Preparatory School, Spring Grove, Pa., on the subject of "Backstage a Bibliography." This outlined the work of compiling a Bibliography on recent Papal Pronouncements on Science.

A paper on "The Teaching of the Sciences," prepared by the late Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M. director of the Franciscan Institute St. Bonaventure, N.Y., was presented in his name by the Rev. Allan Wolter, O.F.M. member of the same Institute.

The second day sessions were opened with High Mass offered by the Very Rev. Gerald Walker, O.F.M. Cap. provincial of St. Joseph's Province, Detroit, Michigan. In his sermon he gave a spiritual consideration of Franciscan Education as

it is related to the topic of the conference: "Nature—the Mirror of God."

"To understand what Franciscan Education is, what its aims and goals are, one must understand the philosophy of life which underlies it." Bishop Felder, he said, declared: "The peculiar and individual character of Franciscan learning is derived from a two-fold source, namely from the Augustinian orientation of doctrine and from the Franciscan contemplation of the world." "All profane science" Father Walker stated, "contains within it the science of God, and in the mind of St. Bonaventure, the Franciscan should convert all of his studies into sacred studies by allowing everything that he learns to tell him something more about God."

"The Proofs for the Existence of God and the Natural Sciences," was the subject of the Paper presented by the Rev. Kieran Quinn, O.F.M. Cap. St. Fidelis College and Seminary, Herman, Pa. In his discussion Father Quinn pointed to a recent address of Pope Pius XII to the Pontifical Academy of Science for a modern vindication of the age-old proofs of St. Thomas for the existence of God. In the second part of his paper, he showed that scientists in every field do find that nature is a mirror of God; that from the wonders of the universe about us they conclude to the existence of God.

The Rev. Victor Hermann, O.F.M., Dean of Quincy College, Quincy, Illinois, spoke to the general assembly on "The Place of the Natural Sciences in Catholic General Education and stated: "Besides the usual goals claimed for science: the aim for precision; the acquisition of the so-called objective method; the appreciation of the work of the scientist, and the understanding of the physical and biological world; there is one which no Catholic and no Franciscan educator can ignore. It is expressed in the theme of this conference: Nature, the Mirror of God," de-

clared Father Hermann. "The deeper man's knowledge of the world about him becomes, the more perfect a reflection of the mirror he sees," he stated. "The more perfectly he understands God's perfection reflected in nature," he continued, "the more adequately he will be equipped to achieve the primary purpose as a rational being: the glory of God."

At the Business Session it was revealed that the topic for next year's conference will be: "The Franciscan Life Today." The place for the next meeting has not been set. It was decided that in future, the proceedings of the Franciscan Sisterhood Conference would be published as a part of the F.E.C. Report, rather than being issued as a separate volume, as heretofore.

Available in time for the meeting were the Proceedings of the Third National meeting of Franciscan Teaching Sisterhoods, *Mary in the Franciscan Order*. The price of this volume is \$2.50 and is available from the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, N.Y. Previous Reports may be obtained while the supply lasts.

*Franciscan Education*, the report for 1952 held at St. Francis College Joliet, Illinois at \$1.00 from the Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 9, Illinois; and *Theology in Daily Life*, the 1953 Conference held at Alverno College, is available from the Seraphic Press, 1501 South Layton Blvd., Milwaukee Wisc.

One of the requests made at the business meeting was for a translation into English of the Abridged Divine Office for Franciscan communities. A survey will be made to see how many Franciscan Motherhouses are interested and would be willing to cooperate in such a project.

Among the Resolutions unanimously passed at the final session was one of encouraging all Franciscans to make a definite contribution to the solution of the problems faced by modern science and by philosophy. The Conference also ex-

pressed a prayerful sympathy to the conferees of the late Father Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M., former director of the Franciscan Institute, whose untimely death last May removed a noted philosopher and scientist who, in his life, so ably and devotedly expressed the theme of this convention, and continually found in "Nature, a Mirror of God."

Another Resolution extended Seraphic Felicitations to His Excellency the Most Rev. Amleto Giovanni Cicognani, D.D., Apostolic Delegate to the United States, and member of the Franciscan Family, on the occasion of his Golden Sacerdotal Jubilee.

The final resolution read: "Whereas the Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, in his counsel to teaching Sisters urges their training in personal, moral, and spiritual perfection, and likewise stresses the need for training religious teachers in a manner that corresponds in quality and academic degrees to that demanded by secular accrediting agencies; be it resolved: That

the Fourth National Meeting of Franciscan Teaching Sisterhoods recommend to Superiors, General and Provincial, that no teacher be sent into a classroom until she is prepared religiously, educationally, and professionally, for her important responsibility of instructing and guiding youth."

In his concluding remarks to the delegates the Most Rev. Paul C. Schulte, D.D., archbishop of Indianapolis, considered it imperative that the teacher inculcate in the child the prayerful habit of referring all things to God as their first cause and final end. He also stressed the importance for all to see God's perfections and handiwork in the world around us.

Among the features of the convention were several Franciscan book exhibits and art displays.

The Franciscan Teaching Sisterhoods organization is an affiliate of the Franciscan Educational Conference founded 36 years ago. The former convenes during the Thanksgiving holidays, the latter meets during the summer months.

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