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THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE OUR DESTINY AS CHILDREN OF GOD

Taking as our theme that text of Saint John: *God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him* (I Jn. 4:16), we discovered our destiny as human beings. Created in the image and likeness of the Trinity, the primordial family, we are destined to give and share our lives with our fellowmen. In our own finite way we mirror that infinite inner give-and-take that is the very essence, the very life, of the Trinity. But God not only asks us to share our lives with our fellow creatures—we should have had to do this even if we had been destined for a merely natural order—He has lifted us to a supernatural order, inviting us to share in the inner life of the Three Divine Persons.

1. The Inner Life of God

What can we know of the essence of God, of the divine nature? How can we perceive even a shadow of this divine delight? It is true, of course, that the created world does tell us something of the splendor of our infinitely lovable God. Just as we cannot handle an object without leaving dozens of invisible finger prints upon it, so nothing tumbles from God's creative hands without carrying upon it some impression of the divine touch. But because our vision has been dimmed by original sin, as Saint Bonaventure tells us, the invisible finger prints of the Trinity on the world remain hidden from us unless dusted with the powder of faith. Scientist and saint can study the same bit of nature without seeing the same things. Take the Grand Canyon, for instance. The color artist may study those shifting hues for hours, for days. From the time the sun rises over the Painted Desert, catching the white sandstone rim and turning it to gold and driving down the purple shadows until they change to reds and hazy greens and blues, through the mid-day light that turns mysterious capes and temples and plateaus into things of indescribable beauty, until sunset when reds deepen to dim purples and the grays and yellows and greens change to magic blues, it is always different. But the man of faith sees much more than a magnificent play of color over the rugged, breathtaking beauty of the Canyon; he sees a

reflection of the infinite splendor of God, ever ancient ever new. To the geologist, those layered walls of the Canyon that drop over a mile into the earth are a history book. They take him back through five geological eras. He sees the sea deposits of marine shells in the upper sand and limestone wall. Lower he sees what were once sand dunes with tracks of primitive reptiles and amphibians. In the sandy shale he discovers primitive evergreens, fern-like plants, insects. Then come the red flood-plain deposits with land-animals and plants; more sea deposits as he drops deeper into the gorge; ancient trilobites; species of plants and animals long extinct. So he goes back further and further into the dim geological past before man walked the earth. But the saint sees all this and more—he begins to comprehend the timelessness of God for Whom a thousand years are but a day. The story of evolution itself tells him not only of the ineffable variations hidden in the living cell which like the kaleidoscope brings out continually changing forms; it tells him something of the ineffable mystery of God that all eternity will not suffice for us to explore.

It is the same with other beauties of nature. The universe is full of stray melodies that fall upon the ears of the saint with the ordered beauty of a divine symphony. The music of a child's laughter, the song of a brook, the caroling of birds, the whispering of pines—all are continually breaking out to delight our senses. No wonder pantheists could mistake the universe for God.

Yet we know that nature, for all its beauty and power, is not God. Behind the child's laughter is the whimper of pain; behind the marvelous order of the universe is the chaos in the heart of the atom; behind the wonder of life is the mystery of death. Every natural beauty has its natural shadow. This in itself is not to be wished away, for the shadow somehow serves to enhance the beauty. Nevertheless it makes clear to every discerning mind that nature is but a material veil concealing God's splendor from mortal eyes, yet permitting something of the radiance of His glory to shine through.

To recall our original figure, creatures are but fingerprints of God. And how much do finger prints tell us? Could we judge the beauty of God's lovely Mother from the finger prints she left on the

bowls and tables at Nazareth? What would they tell us of her attractiveness, her gentleness, her beauty, her marvellous graces and virtues? And so it is with God's finger prints on the natural world. They tell us as little about Him as Mary's finger prints on an earthen jar. Yet there is a difference. Our ignorance of God is what theologians call a "learned ignorance." We know that the difference between what is ugly and what is beautiful is not so great as the difference between the beauty of God and the beauty of a creature. In fact some theologians tell us that God is not beauty, goodness, and truth. Not that they wish to say He is ugly, evil, and false, but only that He infinitely transcends what we know as beauty, goodness, and truth, so that it seems more correct to say what He is not rather than what He is.

The infinitely lovable divine essence is what makes the Blessed Trinity reach out creative fingers that others may share the thrill of loving what they love, their own incomprehensible nature that we call divine. It is a mystery, of course, this love of God for us, and simply beyond the grasp of human understanding. But this much we know: that God is love, that love is the answer to the "why" of creation, and that love is the only way for the creature to return to the Creator, Who is the ultimate end and destiny of all things.

2. *The Incarnation as a Bond*

In order to draw us gently into the divine life of the Trinity, dispelling our fear and awe, the Second Person became incarnate—put on our nature, shared our joys and sorrows and weaknesses, and assured us through the Scriptures that His delight is to be with the children of men. But because man is to every other man a brother Christ could not become incarnate without by that very fact becoming our brother, and His Father becoming our Father as well. We became adopted sons, coheirs with Christ, and the Love of the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit, took up His abode in our souls.

There are other bonds besides that of human nature that link us to Christ—our faith, which is somehow a re-thinking the thoughts of God; sanctifying grace or charity, which is the Christ-life in us. But the long and short of it is that we form one great family, we are all children of God. And so in addition to the purely natural ties

that make mankind one race, the divine Family, through the bond of the Incarnation, is linked with the human family which in turn is firmly cemented together by supernatural love and by incorporation into the Mystical Body. This is why in the supernatural order it is simply impossible to separate the love of God from the love of neighbor. We cannot love God without loving His Son; but the Son is also man. In this sense Saint John could write: *If anyone says: I love God, and hates his neighbor, he is a liar* (I Jn. 4:19). Conversely, it is impossible to love man without loving God, because one man is Christ. But this last statement needs qualification. It is possible to love man without loving God, if we take "man" in the sense of "humanity;"—if we love human nature and ignore the human person. In this way we can exclude the divine Person from our love. And this, incidentally, is the meaning of the great Communist experiment and other movements like it. In its beginnings, Communism had the interests of man at heart. Like Rousseau, its leaders realized that man is created free but everywhere is in chains. They tried to reform social conditions, to make life livable; but without God there was no security, no insurance or guarantee of the brotherhood of man. And what happened? Persons were lost sight of. It was only the collective man, not individuals, that they considered. That is why Stalin could deliberately let over two million Ukrainians starve, while he shipped grain to foreign markets. That is why the Reds did not hesitate to pour army after army of cannon fodder into Korea. It was the inhuman treatment of a cartoonist who was abandoned by the Communists when his incurable sickness ended his usefulness to *The Daily Worker* that first caused Heywood Broun to doubt Communism.

3. No Man Reaches Heaven Alone

The inner give-and-take that is the life of the Blessed Trinity is a model of our own. No one ever enjoys eternal life exclusively through his own efforts. Some have received it gratuitously—innocent children who die in the state of grace, symbolical of the Holy Spirit. Others find life in giving it to others, symbolical of the Father. Others both give and receive it, symbolical of the Son. There is no such thing as isolationism in the spiritual, the supernatural, order.

In fact, according to God's plan, love of fellowmen leads logically to God. It begins when a young man and a young girl join hands and realize for the first time that they cannot be happy alone. It is the oldest story in the world—they need each other. With marriage come children, the fruit of their love. Once more they must broaden their interests, widen their horizon, take others into their heart. If a father becomes jealous of his wife's devotion to the children, or if the mother centers all her affection on her offspring and leaves none for their father, that marriage will fail. Each partner has to expand his heart, each has to become progressively broader, more understanding, more generously self-sacrificing. Quite rightly marriage has been described as a school in unselfishness.

But children grow up, parents retire, life with its needs becomes less complicated, less difficult to satisfy. Husband and wife no longer need each other so much; yet their capacity to love, to give, to sacrifice, has grown greater with the years and needs other outlets. They may first turn their attention to their grandchildren, or engage in social activities or works of charity; but gradually God disengages them from all these things to remind them gently but firmly that it is He alone Whom they have really been seeking. At length they come to know that the infinite God alone can exhaust their power to give and to love. This is the reason why older men and women take more interest in religion, slipping into church for daily Mass, kneeling before the Tabernacle for hours of silent prayer.

It is natural that the older we grow, the more eagerly we should look forward to heaven. God gradually takes away our little earthly pleasures, the things that absorbed our youthful interest. It is His way of making us homesick. Assuredly the burden of lonely old age is no light one, especially for those who have spent their whole life in the service of others; but if we bear it with patience, it will add to our joy for all eternity.

It is difficult to picture the delights of heaven; yet it was the thought of eternal blessedness in possession of God that drove our Seraphic Father to hasten through life, as Celano tells us, like a pilgrim hurrying to reach home. So it should be for us. If we look upon our earthly life as a kind of pilgrimage, the crosses that accompany

old age will be as so many happy signs that we are nearing our journey's end, that we will soon be in sight of our true and eternal home.

What is it like? No one knows; no one ever saw it and returned to tell us about it. Saint Paul got one foot into heaven, so to speak, in a vision. And what did he say? He stuttered like a tongue-tied child. *Eye has not seen nor ear heard.* But if he could not tell us what heaven is like, he showed us by his life how utterly consuming was his desire for it. He was honored, esteemed, respected as a Pharisee. He threw it all away to become a fool for Christ. He was driven from the synagogue, regarded with suspicion by the other Apostles, betrayed by false friends, thrice beaten with iron rods. He was scourged until his back was one mass of bloody ribbons and he hung from the pillar as one dead—and not just once, but five times that we know of (II Cor. 11:23 ff). But nothing restrained him from preaching Christ. He pushed on, not aimlessly as one *beating the air*, but ever reaching out for that incorruptible crown he had glimpsed. *We are Christ's, co-heirs with him of heaven. Yet so if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified with him. For I reckon the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us.* And if anyone knew, it was Paul of Tarsus. No wonder he longed for death, *to be dissolved and to be with Christ.*

We too should learn to regard death for what it is, the beginning of life. At the moment when the veil of this time is rent asunder and we no longer see God as in a dark glass, but face to face; in that moment we shall suddenly realize the meaning of that phrase we have uttered so often in life and perhaps so unthinkingly: "Our Father who art in heaven. . ." Like awe-struck children we shall stand before Him, speechless with wonder, until the Holy Spirit Himself prompts us, putting into our mouths that beautiful word: "Abba, Father." And when the answering arms of God reach out, their touch will awaken our power to love. It will course through our being like a surging flood, sweeping us into God's eternal arms. And He will clasp us and hold us and for all eternity will not let us go.

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

MOTHER MARY THERESIA BONZEL (II)

From 1863 to 1870 the young community grew rapidly in every phase: sisters, orphans, buildings, and new foundations. Although constantly suffering from ill health, Mother Mary Theresia personally opened every new foundation and instructed the sisters in the specific aims of the new mission.

The Franco-Prussian War of 1879 found her on the battlefields where she directed the angelic service of her sisters. Countless soldiers passed to eternity reconciled to God through the aid of the sister nurses. Hundreds of wounded soldiers, friend and foe alike, received tender loving care in field and home hospitals. Thousands of religious brochures and papers were distributed to the soldiers who, thus uplifted and instructed, made their peace with God. Five of the sisters paid the supreme sacrifice as a result of their strenuous war duties on the battlefields. Recognizing the community's distinguished service, the government decorated each sister nurse with a merit badge and the valiant foundress with the Iron Cross.

Then in quick succession came crosses far more precious to God—loving souls, the crosses of hate and persecution by the very government whom the community had served so valiantly in time of war. Bismarck unleashed the infamous Kulturkampf which threatened to nip the life of the young community in its very bud.

At this period in the history of the congregation we meet with that great mystery in God's dealing with man, which has often caused wonder to those who are inexperienced in the ways of Divine Providence. The activities of the sisters had reached a flourishing state; their work among the poor, sick, and orphaned and neglected children was praised by all; everything bid fair for further progress when the enemy of God and man designed to destroy it.

By numerous national decrees religious institutions were secularized; Catholic schools, orphanages, seminaries, and postulates were closed, and religious investiture and profession forbidden. This unjust ruling was a blow to all Catholic educators, especially to Mother Mary Theresia, the born teacher and lover of children. Her devotedness to the cause of education was manifest from the very beginning of her congregation; it stood as a beacon light in the external objectives of her sisterhood. When the Bismarck regime put an end to the educational endeavors of Catholic institutions of learning, Mother Mary Theresia, far from yielding to discouragement, chose nursing of the sick as one of the major ob-

jectives of her congregation; but even the noble work of Catholic sister nurses was greatly curtailed by government interference.

The foundress and her sisters had yet another heavy blow to endure. Bishop Conrad Martin of Paderborn was secretly arrested, deposed, and held captive at the fortress of Wesel. Mother Mary Theresia and her daughters doubled their prayers and penances for the safety of their beloved prelate and the suffering church. In these days of tribulation, the foundress counseled her children:

For this cause should your prayers be offered, your mortifications and penances endured. The day you cease to offer your intentions for that purpose, you can no longer call yourselves daughters of Holy Mother Church.

As the blood of martyrs became the seed of new Christians, so the cruel Kulturkampf injected new vigor and life into Catholic hearts and institutions, and opened undreamed-of fields of labor for its victims. Bismarck indeed became a powerful instrument in the hands of Divine Providence for strengthening the faith in Germany and for spreading the Gospel far beyond the boundaries of the fatherland. Exiled religious communities took deep roots in many countries of the globe. Like bright rays emitted from the sun, they streamed from their homeland in all directions; they feared neither the sands of the deserts nor the terrors of the sea. Among the exiles were the sisters from Olpe.

Bishop Dwenger of Fort Wayne, Indiana, visited the motherhouse during the days of the Kulturkampf and offered the distressed community a wide field of missionary work in his diocese. December 14, 1875, he welcomed the first group of six sisters who settled at Lafayette on the Wabash river.

Unknown and without funds, they began their work in a few poorly furnished rooms, but God blessed their labors with abundant success. The third day after their arrival found these heroic pioneers in the hovels of the poor and sick, and within a week a temporary hospital was ready for the reception of patients. The first years of the community in America were replete with untold privations and hardships, but the sisters' trust in God was equal to their great faith; in prosperity and in adversity they depended upon God's Providence.

In 1877 the daughters of Mother Mary Theresia were offered the first school mission in the United States, Saint Boniface, Lafayette. In quick succession thereafter, new foundations were established: schools, hospitals, and orphanages.

Three times the foundress crossed the ocean to visit her American daughters and foundations. Wherever she went, she met the poor, the

sick, and her favorites—orphans and neglected little ones. Her heart went out to all of them with the devotion of a mother. There was something undefinable in her outward appearance that drew all hearts to her, something so kind and charitable, so winning and really good, that no one could doubt it was a reflection of her beautiful soul.

On her visits to the United States, Mother received request upon request for the opening of new foundations. It pained her greatly to refuse so many petitions for excellent missions because of lack of sisters. However, to deny a request for the opening of a school in a district of the poor was impossible for her.

Within the first decade of the sisters' labors in the United States, the community established six hospitals and assumed charge of seven schools located in the states of Indiana, Ohio, Nebraska, and Kansas. At the time of the papal approbation of the community, January 31, 1931, the American foundations numbered 52 schools, 21 hospitals, and 4 orphanages.

In Germany the storm of the Kulturkampf had abated, and by the decree of April 29, 1887, most of the religious congregations had been allowed to return to their native country and to resume their former work. The amazingly rapid revival of her congregation brought much joy and consolation to Mother Mary Theresia. Offers of new foundations poured into the motherhouse from all provinces of the fatherland and other European countries. Large numbers of candidates knocked at the door of the motherhouse in Olpe, and within a very short time the resurrected community had flourishing missionhouses in Westphalia, Rhineland, Hanover, Saxony, Thuringia, Brandenburg, Silesia, Hessen, Brunswick and in Austria. At the time of papal approbation, 1931, the community in Germany had 120 houses and 1,600 sisters in 43 hospitals, 10 convalescent homes, 43 centers of home nursing and social work, 12 orphanages, 6 schools of higher learning, 6 domestic science schools, and 95 kindergartens. This amazing development was wrought at the price of great sacrifices.

As Mother Mary Theresia's Community had proved itself during the Kulturkampf, so too in World War I. While large numbers of sisters ministered to wounded and dying soldiers in France, Poland, Russia, and Galicia, the Sisters at home opened soup kitchens, sewing circles, nurseries, and convalescent homes for starving and tuberculous children. Thousands of poor and needy were kept alive by the charity of the Olpe sisters. Thousands, too, remained true to God because of the glowing example of these valiant women.

Alas for the gratitude of governments! The sisters who had labored

and toiled to utter exhaustion for the good of their country, became again the object of hate and persecution of a man insane with desire for power and revenge, Adolf Hitler. With a stroke of the pen he closed all the community's schools. The valiant Mother Verena, schooled by the foundress herself in the ascetic and religious life, never allowed an unfavorable word to pass her and the sisters' lips against the persecutors of the Church. The prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," was engraved deeply on their hearts.

The storm of persecution by the Nazis was followed by the terrors of World War II. Again the sisters' service was requested by the godless government.

At the front and at home the sisters suffered indescribable hardships. With orphans, patients, and other charges, day after day and night after night, they rushed to air-raid shelters. Many of the community's foundations were leveled to the ground, and a large number of sisters, patients, and children lost their lives in circumstances too horrible to relate.

The terrible war had hardly ended, when the sorely-stricken Community stood ready to heal the wounds of soul and body of thousands of homeless, hungry, sick, and morally and mentally crushed unfortunates. It opened its houses to refugees from the East who had been expelled or threatened with death or exile to Siberia by ruthless Communists. The charity of the American provinces in these distressing times is written in heaven. Clothing, food, medicines, household utensils, and money were rushed by the American provincial and missionhouses to European scenes of suffering. Undoubtedly, Communism would have triumphed in West Germany as it did in the East had it not been for the material help received from the United States.

Here we revert briefly to an important milestone in the history of the Community of the Poor Sisters of St. Francis Seraph of the Perpetual Adoration. By 1930 the Community had spread over such vast areas in Europe and in the United States that with ecclesiastical approval it was divided into four provinces. The large German province was divided into the northern, Holy Family Province, with the provincial house in Muehlheim on the Moselle, and the southern, Sacred Heart Province, with the provincialate in Bonn on the river Rhine. In America, the Mississippi became the dividing line between the eastern, Immaculate Heart of Mary Province, with headquarters moved from Lafayette to Mishawaka, Indiana, and the western Saint Joseph Province, with the provincialate first in Dever, then in Colorado Springs. The generalate remained in Olpe, Westphalia.

One of the greatest advances in the internal history of Mother Mary Theresia's Community was the adoption in 1949 of a revised rule and new constitutions, granting to each province the right to elect its own provincial chapter, i.e., the provincial superior and her four councilors. The wisdom of the changes effected is already apparent in the rapid internal and external development and efficient administration of the four provinces of the congregation.

In 1950, Mother Mary Theresia's Community was offered the domestic management of the American College in Rome. Since this mission called for a staff of thirty sisters, the offer had to be declined. Very many other petitions for the service of Mother Mary Theresia's daughters in schools and hospitals had to be rejected for lack of sisters.

However, in conformity with the foundress' predilection for orphans and poor neglected children, the eastern American province, in 1954, established a mission at Rockaway Park, Long Island, New York, serving some three hundred neglected boys from the metropolis New York, and, in 1955, a school for colored and poor white children in Buras, Louisiana.

The sisters of the American western province, too, walk in the spirit of their holy Mother by caring with tender devotion for poor orphans and Indian children. In spite of incredible hardships they continue their heroic apostolate of teaching and nursing the American Indians at Jemez, Zuni, Cochiti, Albuquerque, and Gallup. New Mexico.

The educational activities of the Community in America were crowned with the development of two colleges: Saint Joseph College on the Rio Grande in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Saint Francis College in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

In the General Chapter of 1953 the momentous decision was made to expand the Community into several far-away countries in answer to numerous requests from prelates and missionaries in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, and Canada. In the very near future, the first South-American foundation of the Community will be opened in Brazil.

At present, Mother Mary Theresia's Community comprises 122 houses in Germany staffed by 1,600 sisters and 91 foundations in the American provinces with 1,200 sisters.

Now our thoughts must revert to the venerable foundress, whose holy career ended in a most edifying death, February 6, 1905. Her funeral in Olpe resembled a triumphal march. Twenty-five years later, September 17, 1930, her remains were exhumed and solemnly placed in a new chapel built in the convent garden of the motherhouse in Olpe. Many favors, spiritual and physical, have been reported by such as sought the

holy Mother's intercession with God. Testimonies of such favors are being collected by her spiritual daughters.

It may be truly asserted that the life of Mother Mary Theresia was always deeply moored in God. The love of God enkindled her soul and left her with a profound feeling of God's presence which permeated her entire being. The Franciscan motto, "My God and My All," was her favorite ejaculation. She would pray before the Blessed Sacrament for hours at a time, totally oblivious of her surroundings. When the clock struck the hour, she united herself with her Divine Spouse by praying aloud:

O God, grant us a virtuous life and a happy death. Amen. O Jesus all for love of Thee this hour. Mary, Mother, ever help. Angel of God protect me. Teach me, O my Jesus, to think and judge mildly and charitably, to speak little and wisely, to act justly and prudently, in order that my life be always pleasing to Thee and that I may reach perfection in holiness. Amen.

In a circular letter to her spiritual family she wrote: "Instant prayer and converse with God make us true religious, not work among the children and the sick." For many years, summer and winter, in the early morning hours, she made the stations of the cross barefooted outside, weeping as she pondered the sufferings of her Lord and the sins of mankind causing these bitter sufferings.

She resembled the Little Poor Man of Assisi in her intense love of the Holy Eucharist, the Manger, the Cross, Our Blessed Mother, and Saint Joseph. Love for Christ in the Blessed Sacrament prompted her to introduce perpetual adoration in the motherhouse and to inculcate great respect for the priesthood. She cultivated a touching reverence for the Holy Father, the Pope, and for the Bishops of the Church, and she sorrowed deeply when the "Bride of Christ" was persecuted in her prelates. She had an extraordinary love and devotion to Saint Joseph and he, in return, did wonderful things for her, things which often seemed miraculous. While traveling in America, her train was held up and robbed. Warned, she quickly alighted with her companion and walked briskly across the fields in the direction of a church steeple. In the humble chapel, the sacrifice of the Mass was being celebrated. After receiving Holy Communion, the Sisters were driven back to the train by some kind farmers. In the Colorado Rockies, her driver with horse and car plunged into an abyss shortly after the foundress had left the carriage in response to a warning by a venerable-looking stranger who disappeared as mysteriously as he had come. Numerous are the occasions when bills were

paid miraculously and food and clothing provided in times of dire poverty. After exhausting all earthly resources, the humble Mother addressed her troubles to her dear Saint, and never did she do so in vain. She composed a prayer in his honor and added the name of her loving protector to the name of each sister.

Like Saint Francis, the foundress was a great lover of poverty, humility, penance, and charity. Although her life was an indescribable chain of sorrows and sufferings, she was ever joyous, bearing all heroically for the love of God and the good of souls. Even though she was born and reared in wealth, she despised the world and its goods and became the "Mother of the Poor" whom she loved with special affection. The keynote of her holy life was a continuous self-oblation, expressed in her own words: "Lord, let me be Your victim; take me as Your holocaust; reject me not."

Assuredly, the secret of her success was the ever-flowing fountain of grace of the Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The unbroken chain of ninety years of adoration, reparation, thanksgiving, and petition in Germany, and eighty years of the same angelic service in America, has been the source of strength for Mother Mary Theresia's Community, and the mainspring of untold blessings for Holy Church. The Holy Eucharist was heaven on earth for the saintly foundress. Her spiritual daughters yearn for the day when, with ecclesiastical sanction, they may address their beloved Mother with the invocation, "Saint Mary Theresia of the Blessed Sacrament, pray for us!"

Sr. Fridian, O.S.F.

THIS ARTICLE IS BASED UPON THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:

1. Sister Fridian and Sister Honora. *From the Wounds of St. Francis*. Paterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1955, 288 pp.
2. Elsner, Dr. Salesius, O.F.M. *Mutter Maria Theresia Bonzel und Ihre Stiftung*. Werl, Westphalia: St. Franziskus Druckerei, 1925, 300 pp.
3. Sister Rosana. *The History of the Community*. Lafayette, Indiana: Community Press, 1946, 210 pp.
4. Hammer, Rev. Bonaventure, O.F.M. *The Congregation of the Poor Sisters of St. Francis Seraph of the Perpetual Adoration*. Lafayette, Indiana: 1910, 116 pp.

SAINT FRANCIS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS CREATURES*

Francis of Assisi as a lover of creatures has become a commonplace in the world's art, whether painting, sculpture, music or literature. Yet precisely in that role Francis is frequently and seriously misunderstood. Well-meaning devotees sometimes draw a picture of a romantic humanitarian, a soft, though attractive, sentimentalist. Why? Because such recreators tend to isolate Francis' love of nature, separate it from the total outlook of Francis the man. In their efforts to appreciate his attitude toward creatures they force Francis into a pattern of a nature lover, rather than fit his love of nature into the whole pattern that was Francis himself.

What, then, is the way toward a proper understanding of Francis? Surely one must proceed from the solid basis of supernatural faith and Christian dogma and truth. Francis was always the *vir catholicus*, rich in grace and filially attached to the Church and its teachings. Any structure he would raise would necessarily rest upon that foundation.

However, assuming such a supernatural basis of faith and dogma for Francis' outlook, we might pose a further question: is there some way of our getting inside Francis himself, as it were, and seeing all things, Creator and creatures, through his eyes? Can we somehow share Francis' *Weltanschauung* with him? More pointedly, is there one quality or attitude which, if we grasp it, will give us at least the foundation of the overall pattern of Francis' outlook? Yes, there is; it is reverence.

If we accept reverence as the psychological basis of unity in Francis the man, we will find in it the master key to a fuller understanding of why and how he loved creatures, of why and how movements and acts of love sprang forth so spontaneously from him toward all things good. We can find in the concept also the beginnings of a Franciscan approach to science. And more, if we catch that spirit of reverence ourselves, it can point the way toward a fuller and warmer appreciation of Francis and his whole movement.

Reverence

If reverence is to be our key to an understanding of Francis, we must first answer the question: what is reverence? Dietrich Von Hildebrand offers a definition in his book *Liturgy and Personality*:

...reverence is a response to the general value of being as such, to the dignity which all being possesses as opposed to nothing or to mere

*This paper was prepared for The Franciscan Educational Conference, August 1955, at Rensselaer, N.Y. and for the Sisters' Division held at Indianapolis, Ind. in November, 1955.

fictitiousness, to the value of its own consistency, of standing on its own, of the ultimate "positivity" of being.¹

Reverence, therefore, presupposes a recognition of the value of being in itself, apart from any ulterior end a being might serve. And there lies the heart of the problem and the difficulty for us moderns. Because we have grown so accustomed to being "practical," utilitarian and (unwittingly) selfish, we have lost sight of the value of being as such. What is a thing good for? How can it be used? How can it serve me or mankind? We readily ask such questions and ignore the prime question: what is it? Aware of this situation, a whole gallery of present day Christian thinkers stress the all-important idea that things are of value first of all in themselves. To a few of these thinkers we turn briefly for a clearer understanding of this necessary premise.

"Meaning" and "Purpose"

Romano Guardini blazes the path by drawing the distinction between meaning and purpose. All things have meaning, he tells us, though not all things have purpose.² Of the two, meaning is by far the more important.

In so far as a being has purpose it is subordinated to something else. It serves another being in some way, exists for that other being and derives value from it. Thus a pencil serves one to write, a saw to cut wood, a slave to do his master's bidding.

That which we call purpose is, in the true sense of the word, the distributive, organizing principle which subordinates actions or objects, so that the one is directed towards the other, and one exists for the sake of the other. That which is subordinate, the means, is only the significant in so far as it is capable of serving that which is superior, the end.³

Regardless of its purpose, and even in the absence of a purpose, everything has meaning. Its meaning is simply to be itself, that it should be and by its very being glorify God who brought it into existence. Its meaning stands apart from any relation the thing may also have to some other created object.

Now what is the meaning of that which exists? That it should exist and should be the image of God the Everlasting. And what is the meaning of that which is alive? That it should bring forth its essence, and bloom as a natural manifestation of the living God.⁴

Therefore each thing, whether or not it has purpose, is vested with a dignity not dependent upon its use nor upon its benefits or service to

other but simply upon its being. "Purpose is the goal of all effort, labor and organization; meaning is the essence of existence, of flourishing, ripening life."⁵

Gerald Manley Hopkins grasped this vision well in the "inscapes" he observed. He realized that "There lives the dearest freshness deep down things,"⁶ and made it a frequent theme of his poetry. Nowhere does he state it more expressly than in the sestet of a sonnet:

As fishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells,
Each hung bell's tongue to fling out broad its name;
But swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Dells out that being indoors each one dwells;
Singles itself; myself it speaks and spells;
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*

In relation to meaning, then, reverence might further be defined as the proper or adequate response to the meaning of a thing. Since the inherent value of anything is in direct proportion to its being, a thing will elicit a greater or lesser response according to the nature of its being. In giving reverence, therefore, one must first grasp the nature of the object, and then pay a meaningful response.

Man of Vision; Man of Power

Fr. Gerald Vann, O.P., in *The Heart of Man*, carries the implications of reverence a step forward by distinguishing between the man of vision and the man of power. The man of power desires to have, to use, to rule independently of everyone and everything not himself. He desires mastery and determines to acquire it at the cost of any violence, by grabbing, smothering, even killing if necessary. He is wholly wrapped up in a world of purposes. The man of vision, on the other hand, is concerned primarily with meanings, with knowledge of and appreciation for things as they are, and in using them he respects their nature. Paradoxically, Fr. Vann indicates, the man of vision is the real man of power, the true master, while the would-be man of power is powerless. The man of vision is a lover, for he values things for what they are; the man of power is a lover, for he seeks only himself and his good in things. An example of Fr. Vann will illustrate the point:

...all know the difference between the carpenter who is really a worker and the man who can knock a bookcase together if he needs it. There is no doubt which of the two is master and maker; you watch with admiration the almost miraculous obedience of tool and

material to the craftsman's will. But you notice that it is not he who asserts with every gesture his will to dominate; it is the hedge-carpenter who wrenches and forces and blusters and drives the wood to obey him against the grain. There is no great art without reverence. The real carpenter has great technical knowledge of material and tools; but the bungler might conceivably have that and still be a bungler. The real carpenter has something much more: he has the feel of the wood, the knowledge of its demands is in his fingers; and so the work is smooth and satisfying and lovely because he works with reverence that comes of love.

Apply this to any form of making, apply it to the way men treat animals they have care of, apply it to the relationship of men with men; always it is the lover and servant who is most the master and who seems to have magic spells at his command. . . remember that reality is not a nettle to be grasped, or a fruit to be plucked and eaten, but a bride to be wooed.⁸

The man of vision, because he is alive to meanings, is always the true man of power. He respects or reverences the nature of a thing, works with it rather than upon it, cooperates with it rather than forces it, and the thing in turn responds to the touch of his hand. What Fr. Vann is stressing is simply this: reverence, a loving response to the value of being, begets in turn a response from the being.

Attitude of Reverence

Up to this point we have been dealing with the concept of reverence. An intellectual concept, however, must remain ineffective as a pattern of life unless it become an intellectual habit (if we may use the term in this way), a *principium agendi*, a mindset, an outlook—in this case, an habitual attitude of reverence. What are some of the implications of such an habitual attitude?

"Leisure"

Something of such an attitude of reverence is included in what the German philosopher Josef Pieper calls "leisure." Contrary to what we so often mean by the term, leisure is not to be understood as idleness, or simply non-activity, nor does idleness itself imply non-activity. Rather, according to Pieper's understanding, idleness is what the medievals meant by *acedia*, a vice which Saint Thomas regarded as a sin against the third commandment since it prevents one from having "the peace of mind in God."⁹ *Acedia* signifies

that a man does not, in the last resort, give the consent of his will to his own being; that behind or beneath the dynamic activity of his existence, he is still not at one with himself, or, as the medieval

writers would have said, face to face with the divine good within him; he is a prey to sadness (and that sadness is the *tristitia saeculi* of Holy Scripture).¹⁰

Idleness may (and generally does) beget a furious activity, a hurly-burly existence, an eagerness to grab hold of and meddle with everything, to actively intervene with things and never let them unfold. It is characteristic of the man totally engulfed in the world of purposes; the man of power, the would-be master.

Leisure, on the other hand, is the opposite of idleness thus defined. It is man's happy and cheerful affirmation of his own being, his acquiescence in the world and in God—which is to say love. . . an attitude of non-activity, of inward calm, of silence; it means not being "busy," but letting things happen. . . there is also a certain happiness in leisure, something of the happiness that comes from the recognition of our incapacity to understand it, that comes with a deep confidence, so that we are content to let things take their course. . .¹¹ But leisure, Pieper adds, is not simply non-activity; it is foremost an attitude of contemplative celebration.

God, we are told in the first chapter of Genesis, "ended his work which he had made" and "behold, it was very good." In the same way man celebrates and gratefully accepts the reality of creation in leisure, and the inner vision that accompanies it. And just as the Holy Scripture tells us that God rested on the seventh day and beheld that "the work which he had made" was "very good"—so too it is leisure which leads man to accept the reality of the creation and thus to celebrate it, resting on the inner vision that accompanies it.¹²

Thomas Merton frequently writes of the same spirit, though not under the same term. In *Seeds of Contemplation* he says:

Untie my hands and deliver my heart from sloth. Set me free from the laziness that goes about disguised as activity when activity is not required of me, and from the cowardice that does what is not demanded, in order to escape sacrifice.

But give me the strength that waits upon You in silence and in peace.¹³

In accord with the nature of his book, Merton sees such an attitude of leisure fructify in contemplation. Moreover, he stresses a further notion necessary to our approach to things, namely, the gift-character of every created being and the ensuing response due it.

The situation of the soul in contemplation is something like the situation of Adam and Eve in Paradise. Everything is yours, but on one infinitely important condition: that it is all given.¹⁴

For all God's gifts there must be in us a response of thanksgiving and happiness and joy: but here we thank Him less by words than by the serene happiness of silent acceptance.¹⁵

Leisure, therefore, implies a recognition of the mystery of things and their acceptance as gifts. Faced with mystery and gift one must not attempt to grab hold, to lay open, to use merely; one must rather respond with reverence, stand aside, as it were, and let things unfold themselves. Then in leisure, with its contemplative approach to everyday reality, the habitually reverent man will necessarily acquire a spirit of childlike wonder.

b. The "Spirit of Discretio"

Closely related to the attitude of leisure, perhaps even a part of it, is what Dietrich Von Hildebrand calls the "spirit of *discretio*." It is "a sense of the dramatic rhythm of being," a sense of "the law of inner development of all things, which varies according to the sphere of being," an appreciation of the fact that "everything requires its own time of inner ripening in order to be genuine and true."¹⁶ The spirit of *discretio* might be considered a willingness to let things mature, a holy patience while being unfolds.

A person lacking such a spirit can only bungle in his approach to things. In his irreverent craze for efficiently accomplishing his purposes, in his haste to "get things done," he will do violence to the nature of things and must ultimately end in failure. He will, for example, sand a varnished surface before it is dry, pick the fruit before it is ripe, jump to a conclusion before understanding the implications of a premise, set out to convert the world before he himself is grounded in the faith. In other words, not grasping the meaning of things and being totally concerned

¹Dietrich Von Hildebrand, *Liturgy and Personality* (N.Y.: Longmans, Green and Co., 1943), p. 58.

²"Objects which have no purpose in the strict sense of the term have a meaning. . . Measured by the strict sense of the word, they are purposeless, but still full of meaning." Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. Trans. Ada Lane. (N.Y.: Sheed and Ward, reissued, 1935), p. 174.

³*Ibid.*, p. 172.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁶Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. W. H. Gardner (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 3rd ed., 1948), p. 70.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 95. Italics are the author's.

⁸Gerald Vann, O.P., *The Heart of Man* (N.Y.: Longmans, Green and Co., 1945), pp. 9-10.

⁹Josef Pieper, *Leisure: the Basis of Culture*. Trans. Alexander Dru. (N.Y.: Pantheon Books Inc., 1952), p. 50.

with purposes, he will never give serious response to the value of being as such; the spirit of leisure will be impossible; and in his superficial, selfish, domineering approach to things he will never win their response. The most he can erect is a seemingly solid structure, but one built on sand, an unstable, shifting *Weltanschauung* at best, because he lacks the spirit of reverence.

* * * * *

Such, then, are the nature and implications of reverence, the quality which we assume as the psychological basis of unity in Francis the man. It remains for us now to see that attitude at work in Francis himself.¹⁷

Fr. Leander Blumlein, O.F.M.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 50 and 52

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹³Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation* (Norfolk, Conn.: James Laughlin, 1949), p. 36.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 150.

¹⁶Dietrich Von Hildebrand, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-41.

¹⁷Citing a number of twentieth century authors, none of whom would be listed among "Franciscan writers," as the groundwork for understanding Francis of Assisi, and even seeing in him an exemplification of their ideas, may seem strange. One might, of course, recall the fact that these authors are simply expounding Christian principles of which Francis, as the "radical Christian," would be the embodiment. Our surest justification, however, in this procedure is the fact that some of these authors themselves refer to Francis implicitly or explicitly as an example of their concepts in action. For example, cf. Dietrich Von Hildebrand, *op. cit.*, pp. 25, 33, 123.

THE HOLY FRIARS OF SAXONY

The early companions of Saint Francis are well known to us in the heart-warming pages of the *Little Flowers*, wherein we breathe the atmosphere of primitive Franciscanism. The Fioretti, dated about 1325, rely in turn on earlier sources, such as the *Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius* (ed. P. Sabatier, 1902). This latter work provided likewise much of the material which an unknown member of the Franciscan Province of Saxony used about 1340 to make his own set of portraits of his older brothers in religion. Fortunately for us, he was not content with the *Actus*, nor with an even older *Catalogus Sanctorum Fratrum Minorum* (ed. L. Lemmens, O.F.M., 1903), but inserted into his work a still older document on the Holy Friars of the Province of Saxony.

This Saxonian Fioretti, which is full of delight in its own right, seems otherwise unknown. Yet from its contents and from outside sources

we may conclude that the Friars herein portrayed belonged to the first generations of the Franciscans of Germany and that the document itself belongs to the thirteenth century (the very mistakes our scribe makes shows he is but a poor copyist). Their story bears witness to the influence of the Poverello in the "persons, places and cold climates" of the North. We have translated and edited it from the Latin edition provided by Father Edwin Auweiler, O.F.M.,¹ with the help of a tentative English version which he made some years ago. Some of the footnotes rely on his edition; others are proper to this translation. Frs. Marian Douglas and Fintan Warren are responsible for most of the translation; Fr. Ignatius Brady, for revising and editing.

FRIAR JOHN OF PIANO DI CARPINE

1. The patience and labor of Friar John of Piano di Carpine

I. The virtue of steadfastness with which the Holy Spirit fortified the sons of St. Francis is most brilliantly exemplified in the lifework of Friar John of Piano di Carpine. For in the burning zeal of his spirit he traversed many regions of the world, never ceasing to preach the divine word, but striving incessantly to do good and edify men by word and example. In this way he spread the Order far and wide.

When Saint Francis sent the holy man Friar Caesar to Germany, he dispatched with him Friar John of Piano di Carpine, a preacher in both Latin and Lombardic, and Friar Barnabas the German, an able preacher in Lombardic and German. Friar Caesar then sent Friar John of Piano di Carpine and Friar Barnabas ahead to preach in Wuerzburg and then in Mainz, Worms, Speyer, Strassburg and Cologne. There they made themselves known to the people, preaching always the message of penance, and preparing a hospitable reception for the friars who were to follow.

Afterwards, through their wholesome preaching, God increased the number of friars and they obtained dwelling-places in several cities. Then all the other pioneer friars under Friar Albert of Pisa, minister of Germany and successor to Friar Caesar, gave serious thought to the condition and spread of the Order. In a chapter at Speyer, September 8, 1223, they appointed Friar John of Piano di Carpine to be the first custos of Saxony and to establish the Order there.

With Friar John the following also entered Saxony: Friars

John and William; Friar Giles the Lombard, a cleric; Friar Palmerius, a priest; Friar Raynald of Spoleto, a priest; Friar Rudiger the German, a laybrother; Friar Rokkerus, a laybrother, and Friar Benedict the German, a laybrother; Friar Titmar the Thuringian, a laybrother; and Friar Emmanuel of Verona, a tailor.

2. When they arrived at Hildesheim they were hospitably welcomed and entertained by the Lord Henry of Tosseym, provost of the Cathedral chapter. When they presented themselves thereafter to the Lord Bishop Conrad, who was a great preacher and theologian, they were accorded a splendid reception. The Bishop called together all the clergy of the city and had Friar John of Piano di Carpine (now first custos of Saxony) deliver a sermon to the gathering of clerics. When the sermon was finished the Lord Bishop warmly recommended Friar John and the friars of his Order to the clergy and the people. Moreover he gave them faculties to preach and hear confessions in his diocese. And through their preaching and their good example many people were moved to do penance and to enter the Order. One of these was Bernard of Papenburg, the son of a nobleman and canon in the Cathedral. Another was Albert, the master of the boys' school, a very learned man; also a man named Rudolph and a certain knight.

But sad to say, there was a reaction when some of the friars left the Order. The people grew cold toward the friars; they gave them alms only reluctantly and looked askance at them when they came a-begging. But just as suddenly, by the mercy of Divine Providence, the lost favor bloomed anew and the people again showed love to the friars as before.

Friar John then sought to spread his Order by sending several excellent friars to Hildesheim, Brunschweig, Goslar, Halberstadt and Magdeburg. And two years later, while Saint Francis was still living, the friars came to the coastal regions and founded a new convent at Luebeck.

II. *His laudable tenure of office and his worthy administration*

3. In the general chapter held three years after the death of our Holy Father, John of Piano di Carpine was made minister of Ger-

many.¹ Now Friar John, since he was a man of generous girth, was unable to visit all the houses on foot, and therefore rode on a donkey. The people of that time, to whom the Order was still a novelty and who saw the deep humility of the rider, were greatly moved that Friar John, following the example of Christ, would rather ride on an ass than on horseback. They showed greater devotion to his donkey than they show to the Provincials themselves now that they are used to the friars.

Friar John was also a very avid propagator of our Order. For after he had become Provincial he sent friars into Bohemia, Hungary, Poland, Denmark and Norway. He also accepted the house in Metz and established the Order in Lorraine.

Furthermore he was the dauntless champion of our Order. For without fear he stood up personally for his Order before bishops and princes. As a mother loves and cherishes her sons and a hen her chickens, Friar John fostered and guided all his brothers with the peace and charity of loving kindness.

III. *His journey to Spain and to the Tartars*

4. Friar John remained here but two years as Minister and establisher of the Order.² Realizing that the more one undergoes labor and poverty in this life, the greater will be his reward after this life in the Kingdom of Heaven, when he was sent as minister to Spain he strove to gather together a new family for the Lord in that country. For he would not "have an abiding city." Traveling from place to place he spread the Gospel after the fashion of the Apostles and gathered an abundant harvest of souls for heaven.

For fourteen years Friar John did almost superhuman work in Spain for the development of the Order and the salvation of souls. But the Lord, who makes the way of this world rough for His elect while they are journeying towards Him, through His Vicar, the Supreme Pontiff, assigned Friar John to the land of the infidels. Here he was to gain new and greater recompense in labors for the welfare of Holy Mother Church.

For, as he tells us himself in the book which he wrote, *De Moribus Tartarorum*,³ at the bidding of Innocent IV, he, together with friars of the Order of Preachers, abode and conversed with the Tar-

tars for a year and four months and even longer. With his companion and fellow-sufferer in his hardships, Friar Benedict the Pole, he was given orders by the Supreme Pontiff to investigate carefully the conditions among the Tartars. Friar John, therefore, wrote a history of everything that he saw with his own eyes among the Tartars or that he heard from trustworthy Christian captives living among them.

IV. *His preaching and his steadfastness before the Tartar rulers*

5. Now when Friar John and his companions had arrived in the fortified camp of the Tartars and were asked by them about their business, the friars bravely answered: "We are envoys of the Lord Pope who is the Father and Lord of all Christians. He sends us to the King and the princes of the Tartars and to all the Tartar people, because he wishes all Christians to be friends of the Tartars and to live with them in peace. Moreover he also desires them to be in the good graces of God in heaven and therefore through us and by his letters he urges them to become Christians and to accept the Faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ, for otherwise they cannot be saved."

But while they were traveling through the realm of the Tartars they met their army and were conducted to Byathonoy, one of their generals. When they refused to adore him he grew angry and by an outright sentence commanded them to be executed. He was neither afraid to shed their innocent blood nor to violate the accepted international custom which everywhere allows ambassadors to come and go safe and free. But some of his counsellors spoke up to him: "Perhaps we should not kill all of them but only two, and then we will send the other two back to the Pope." Others again advised: "Let one of them, the leader, be flayed and we will stuff his skin with straw, and send it to his master via his companions." But others had this to say: "Let's kill two of them after having them beaten through the whole army; the other two we'll hold prisoners until the Westerners, who are sure to follow them, have arrived here." And others advised: "Let us take two of them and show them our whole army so that they may behold our might and multitude. Then we shall place them in front of the war-engines of our enemies

while such are at rest so that they may seem to have been killed by these engines and not by ours."

But the sentence of Byathonoy⁵ prevailed; viz., that they all should be executed because they had stubbornly refused him the required prostration and adoration. Then God, Who brings to naught the plans of the wicked, intervened on behalf of the friars. The oldest of the six wives of Byathonoy and certain men who took care of visiting ambassadors, opposed the death-sentence of the friars by every possible means. Byathonoy's wife pleaded with him: "If you kill these envoys you will incur the hatred and dislike of all who hear of your deed, and you will lose all the presents and gifts which are customarily sent to you by prominent people from various and distant regions. And in just retribution your own envoys whom you send to leading men in all directions will be killed mercilessly and destroyed." By these entreaties Byathonoy was at last brought around; his heart full of gall and turbulence was softened and calmed and, as his anger slowly subsided, he became pacified.

6. Friar John of Piano di Carpine in the sweat of his brow traveled far and wide through that region and preached the Faith even before the Emperor of the Tartars. After he had done a great deal of

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¹"De Vitis sanctorum fratrum minorum Provinciae Saxoniae," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, XVIII (1925), 211-25; XIX (1926), 46-62; 181-93.

²This is not quite correct. No chapter was held in 1229. Instead, at the Chapter of 1227, Simon of Sandwich, an Englishman, was named Minister of Germany, but was assigned the following year to be the lector or teacher of the Province; in his stead the Minister General, John Parenti, appointed John of Piano di Carpine. Comparison with the Chronicle of Friar Jordan of Giano will show that our author has taken several numbers from him.

³That is, 1228-1230. He was then sent by the General Chapter of Assisi to the Province of Spain, where again he remained but two years (and not fourteen, as our text reads above), being brought back to Germany in 1232 as the first Minister Provincial of the new Province of Saxony. He held this new office until 1239; nothing is known of his further career until 1245, when he was sent to the Tartars.

⁴Edited as *Ystoria Mongulorum* by A. van den Wyngaert, O.F.M., in *Sinica Franciscana*, tom. I (Quaracchi, 1929), pp. 27-130. There were no Dominicans assigned to this mission; our chronicler is again in error.

⁵Surprisingly enough, what follows is not so much as hinted at either in the *History of the Mongols*, which John wrote enroute, or in the report of Benedict the Pole (in *Sinica Franciscana*, I, pp. 135-43). Nothing seems to indicate that they suffered from the Tartars. Our chronicler has, apparently, as Father Auweiler points out,

work he returned happily to the land of the faithful with his companions. But the Lord gives plentiful reward to the athletes who bravely compete in the arena of His Church Militant. And He with Whom there is abundant redemption, and Who is the exceeding great reward of His Saints, deigned to summon our Friar John from the hardships of this wicked world to the blessed repose of Eternity.⁶

borrowed from the *Speculum historiale* of the Dominican Vincent of Beauvais and ascribed to the Franciscan missionaries the troubles experienced by the Friars Preachers who went to the Tartars in 1247. This he could do in good faith, since the *Speculum* does not clearly distinguish the two missions.

⁶This chief was usually called Baicu, Batchu, etc. (see van den Wyngaert, *op. cit.*, p. 582); he was the leader of the Tartar army in Persia. Since he is not mentioned at all by John of Piano di Carpine, it is likely that the latter never met him.

⁷Our chronicler again displays his wide ignorance of Friar John's later life. On the latter's return to Innocent IV, he was sent on a mission to St. Louis IX and then, in 1247, or 1248, was made Archbishop of Antivari in Dalmatia. After some hectic years in this see, he died on August 1, 1252.

SCRIPTURE READING WITH SAINT BONAVENTURE

(Comment in Lucam, Ch. III, vv. 21-23, Opera Omnia, Tom. VII, pp. 81-84).

Now it came to pass when all the people had been baptized, Jesus also having been baptized and being in prayer, that heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased" (Lk. 3:21-23).

The ultimate purpose of the penitential preaching of John the Baptist was that Christ might be manifested to the people: *That he may be known to Israel* (Jn. I: 31). However, men would fully know the Saviour only when they had been reborn in Him through Baptism. John somehow anticipated this rebirth by his baptism, as he said: *For this reason have I come baptizing with water* (Jn. I: 31). Yet this Baptism was quite imperfect, when compared with the Baptism of Christ and the Holy Spirit. For the former was done by mere man, whereas the latter is authorized by God; the former had but temporal duration, whereas the imprinted character of the latter

endures eternally; the former was only a recommended counsel, whereas the latter is a necessary pre-requisite for entering Heaven; the baptism of John had only penitential power, whereas the Baptism of Christ with the Holy Spirit has the efficacy to make its recipient, in very truth, a child of God. John knew the imperfection of his baptism. So, even while baptizing for penance, he informed those to whom he ministered: *I indeed baptize you with water, for repentance. But he who is coming after me is mightier than I. . . He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire* (Matt. 3: 11). Hence, while fulfilling his mission of preaching and baptizing, the precursor of Christ constantly called attention to the One coming after him, the Messiah. His preaching and baptizing purposed and proposed penance for the advent of Christ and His teachings in public life. This repentance called for a complete change of heart in his hearers, so that their souls would be open, ready and waiting for the preaching and baptism of Christ. Thus, the Baptist's main work was done on that day when the unknown Christ came among them and John declared: *In the midst of you there has stood one whom you do not know* (Jn. I:26).

Here it is fitting that Saint Matthew, whose Gospel opens with the natural genealogy of Christ, should narrate for us the human course of events on that historic occasion. Thus he tells us the Good News: *Jesus came from Galilee to John, at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. And John was for hindering him, and said, "It is I who ought to be baptized by thee, and dost thou come to me?" But Jesus answered and said to him, "Let it be so now, for so it becomes us to fulfill all justice."* Then he permitted him. And when Jesus had been baptized, he immediately came up from the water (Mt. 3:13-16). Saint Bonaventure speaks of this ceremony as the spiritual regeneration of Christ. Not that Jesus was sanctified by the Baptism, but rather the Saviour conferred regenerative powers upon the very waters. Saint John Chrysostom points out: "He did not receive remission of sins, but He sanctified the waters for all others to be baptized." Moreover, when He is thus presented to us in His baptism by John as a Man, Christ is informing us as to the manner and form of serving God. For this service begins with our baptism.

Fittingly, then, this manifestation of Jesus at the Jordan shows Him in the form of a servant. Indeed, He had taken this form upon Himself when He was clothed with our human nature: *taking the nature of a slave and being made like unto men. And appearing in the form of man, he humbled himself* (Phillip. 2: 7). His baptism by John further reveals to us His three-fold humiliation as a Man. First, He is humiliated in His assumed human nature as a servant *before all the people*. This is evident from our first text, which tells us: *Now it came to pass when all the people had been baptized, Jesus also having been baptized* (v. 21). Lest we should underestimate the multitude witnessing His service of humiliation, the Gospel tells us of the great crowd coming to John: *Then there went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region about the Jordan; and they were baptized by him in the Jordan* (Matt. 3: 6). Truly, many people were present to see the public humiliation of Christ in the form of a servant.

Secondly, his humiliation was increased with respect to the minister baptizing. For it was an awesome humility whereby the Lord submitted to the ministration of John: *Jesus also having been baptized* (v. 21). The Baptist realized this, saying: *"It is I who ought to be baptized by thee, and dost thou come to me?"* (Mtt. 3: 14). The answer of Christ gave His purpose: *"Let it be so now, for so it becomes us to fulfill all justice"* (Mtt. 3: 15). The Seraphic Doctor remarks that His example was for our instruction, because this fulfillment of all justice exemplified perfect humility which subjects itself not only to superiors and equals but even to inferiors. Rich rewards await the soul who deeply meditates upon that submissive service of Christ, humbly receiving the baptism of John. And we should also notice that Jesus first acted, before He began preaching. *Jesus began to do and to teach* (Acts I: 1).

Thirdly, the humiliation of Christ was undertaken with respect to God hearing Him. So it is fitting that the Gospel recounts His prayerful attitude: *being in prayer* (v. 21). Hereby He fulfilled the words inspired by the Holy Spirit: *Be subject to the Lord and pray to him* (Ps. 36, 7). Once more, too, His prayer is an example for us. The Old Testament had admonished: *Let nothing hinder thee from*

praying always (Eccl. 18:22). Christ first did this, so that He could later advise us: *Pray always and do not lose heart* (Lk. 18: 1). And He carried out His counsel, because He prayed not only at baptism but throughout this life—in solitude, before preaching, when working miracles, while dispensing Sacraments and even in His passion, consummated by the prayerful offering of His Spirit to His Father. And His Father listened to His prayers: *For Jesus, in the days of his earthly life, offered up prayers and supplications to God and was heard because of his reverent submission* (Heb. 5: 7). If we follow humbly His submissive service to God and prayerfully commit our cause to the Divine Will, we should have every hope and confidence of being heard by our Father.

After His humiliation, there came His glorification by the Triune God. The Holy Trinity clearly identified Him as the Saviour of mankind. For the testimony of the three Divine Persons bore witness to Jesus as the Son of God Incarnate. This revelation manifests Christ as more than the Man Who was humiliated by baptism. He is, in one and the same Person, the Eternal Word. To this fact, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity Himself testified when the *heaven was opened* (v. 22). The Seraphic Doctor remarks that this text means first that a great heavenly light appeared. This is in accord with the words of the Son of God about Himself: *"I am the light of the world"* (Jn. 8:12). Likewise, Saint Paul reminds us: *God. . . has spoken to us by his Son, who is the brightness of his glory and the image of his substance* (Heb. 1: 1-3). For us, this apparition of the Word of God signifies the power of the baptism of Christ. This Sacrament opens the gates of heaven to welcome home those spiritually reborn. Therefore, the Scripture saying that *heaven was opened* (v. 22) has the deep signification that our loss in Adam has been repaired through the second Adam, Jesus Christ. For, by His Redemption, Christ resurrects us through baptism from death in the tomb of sin to the glorified life of grace.

Secondly, besides the Light of the Son, there appeared the Dove, symbolizing the Third Person of the most Holy Trinity: *And the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form as a dove* (v. 22). When this happened, John was assured that here was the Christ.

For God had told John: "*He upon whom thou wilt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, he is who baptizes with the Holy Spirit* (Jn. I: 33). After the flood, the sign of peace returning to the submerged world was brought by the dove: *and she came to him in the evening, carrying a bough of an olive tree* (Gen. 8: 11). Most fitting, then, is the symbol of the dove, denoting the Holy Spirit's baptism with the saving waters of grace. Indeed, it is like an outward reassurance of lost innocence being inwardly restored with peace to the soul.

Finally, after the *Light* of the Son and the *Dove* of the Holy Spirit, there was heard the *Voice* of the Father: *And a voice came from heaven* (v. 22). This fatherly Voice had been heard in the Old Testament: *The voice of the Lord is upon the waters* (Ps. 28: 3). Our faith tells us that, through the words from the mouth of the priest at baptism, the *voice of the Lord is upon the waters*. As a consequence, we are bound to believe that by our baptism in Christ we are spiritually re-conceived. This rebirth means that we have been raised from death in sin to share a new and divine life in Jesus Christ. Moreover, the baptismal sign of the cross over us connotes that we now belong to the Triune God: "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." We are thus signed over as the exclusive property of God. "In the Name" signifies the Unity of the God possessing us: *One Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all* (Eph. 4: 5). Therefore, our new and spiritual conception makes us heirs and true sons of the one and only Lord, our God. From this conviction, we can realize how our baptismal rebirth in Christ enhances the nobility of our soul. We are baptized in the "Name of the Father," for by baptism we become children of the King of kings, God the Father. What a marvelous dignity! This thought has an inspiring, as well as a frightening, aspect, because if we are faithful to that noble, eternal imprint upon our soul, our baptism in Christ will lead us to our Father's house; but if we besmirch it by final impenitence, we will lock ourselves forever out of our heavenly home. Further, our Baptism regenerated us as brothers of Christ, so much so that, even as God spoke to His Son in the proper sense, now too He has spoken to each of us in an applied sense: "*Thou art my beloved son*" (v. 22). Thus

we are also baptized in "the Name of the Son." Baptism thus gives us a genuine birthright, as true children of God, with His Divine Son, Jesus Christ, as our Brother. But this wonderful inheritance brings with it a tremendous responsibility. The very word "responsible" means to be capable of giving an answer. In effect, we are actually answerable for every thought, word, and action. This would be indeed terrifying, were we not convinced that divine help is given to us.

Hence now for our comfort and consolation, we notice that we are also baptized in "the Name of the Holy Ghost," assuring us of all the help that we need. Having regained our innocence, if we are to keep a stainless soul unto eternal life, we must constantly implore the aid of the Holy Spirit. Baptism in Christ brought the fulness of the Holy Spirit's grace into our souls. So that, even as our rebirth made us children of the Father and brothers of the Son, likewise our spiritual re-conception espouses us to God through the Holy Spirit. We are united to our Divine Spouse by the Charity of God, lovingly poured forth into our souls. While, with the help of the other Sacraments, we remain in the state of sanctifying grace, we can also be convinced that the most Holy Trinity dwells within us. Speaking to Saint Jude, Jesus also reminded us: "*If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him* (Jn. 14: 23). Thus we can see that by keeping the word and law of God, we insure the presence of the Holy Trinity within us. Our baptism in Christ enables us to enjoy this most priceless and most lovable Divine Presence.

Yet Christ would counsel us to do more than fulfill the mere requirements of the Divine Law. He was constrained to please His Father in all things. His Father testified to this: "*Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased* (v. 22). Beyond our own obligation to strive for perfection, should not our zeal prompt us to please God in all things? A Saint of our own times, Therese of the Child Jesus, was inspired to try this. Late in her short life she could claim that from her earliest years she had endeavoured never to refuse God anything. Though we can hardly claim as much, can we excuse ourselves from making that effort? Like her, we may have no chance for great deeds, but the perfecting of the little tasks lies

within our reach. A devout morning offering will prepare us daily to sanctify every action. A thoughtful sign of the cross will remind us of our baptismal vows to the most Holy Trinity. A conscious effort will enable us to keep a spirit similar to that of Christ at His Baptism and throughout His life who said: *I do always the things pleasing to Him* (Jn. 8: 29). In this way, even on earth, we will prepare for that eternal praise: "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost."

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

Rev. William Joseph Manning, T.O.F. R. I. P.

The readers of THE CORD who were so appreciative of Father William Manning's series of meditations on the Franciscan Crown will be saddened to learn of his untimely death December 30, 1955. Father Manning died of a heart attack at Newburgh, N.Y., while en route to Boston for a brief visit.

Father Manning, an alumnus of Boston College, served in the U.S. Army during World War II, and upon separation from the service entered Saint John's Seminary. He completed his theological studies for the priesthood at Christ the King Seminary, and was awarded an M.A. degree from Saint Bonaventure University. Ordained last February with the class of 1955, Father Manning was assigned to Saint Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Bismarck, North Dakota, where, besides teaching at the cathedral high school, he was named editor of THE DAKOTA CATHOLIC ACTION. The sudden death of so gifted and zealous a priest is felt as a heavy loss to the diocese.

Father Manning was buried from Saint Mary's Church, Cambridge, the family parish on Tuesday, January 3, 1956. He was but 29 years of age, and had been a priest less than a year.

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