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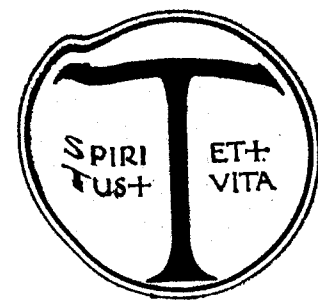
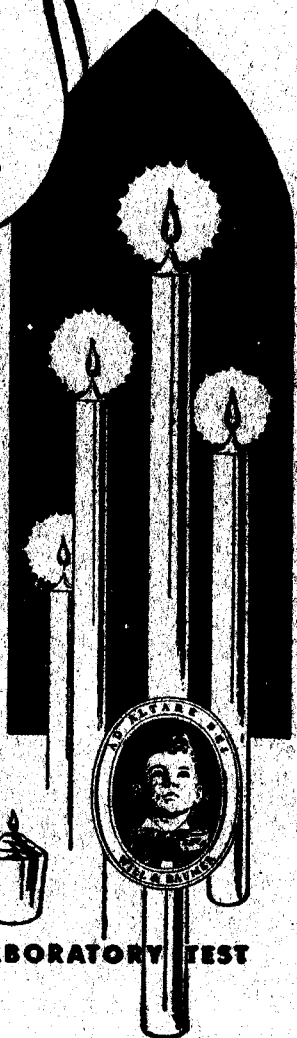
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A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

VOL. VI., NO. 7, JULY, 1956

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The CORD, a monthly magazine specifically devoted to Franciscan spirituality, is published under the sponsorship of the Franciscan Educational Conference by The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure P. O., New York. Editor: Eugene Boyartz, O. F. M., Assistant Editor: St. Frances, S. M. I. C. Managing Editor: Innocent Dam, O.F.M. Editorial Board: Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., Columban Duffy, O.F.M., Allan Wolter, O.F.M. Annual subscription, \$2.00. Entered at second class matter on November 25, 1950, at St. Bonaventure P. O., New York, under Act of March 3, 1879. All communications, whether of a business or a literary nature, should be addressed to The CORD, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure P. O., New York. *Cum permissu superiorum.*

THE MONTHLY CONFERENCE

THE CHALLENGE OF SIN

In probing the full meaning of that line from John: *God is love and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him* (I Jn. 4:16) we also studied the meaning of sin as the antithesis of true love. From our last conference, we saw it to be something ugly; ugly in its nature, for selfishness is a perverted form of love; ugly in its consequences, for it leads to misery, death, and hell for the individual; it crucifies mankind metaphorically and Christ literally. But if sin is as ugly as all this, how can a God of love permit it to work its malice unchecked? Sin and its inseparable consequences must have a positive aspect; it must be able to fit into the grand plan of divine love.

Evil has always been a great philosophical mystery. Some have tried to explain it in terms of ditheism—a god of evil and a god of love. This error, too, is a guess at a great truth, for in a sense, to explain evil we must create another “god.” And that is precisely what we do through selfishness. We make our ego, our self, the ultimate goal of every action, the end-all and be-all of our existence. And this is another way of saying we deify ourselves, we create a rival god.

Suffering itself is not so mysterious, for we see that it is in great part the result of an abuse of our freedom. What creates the problem, however, is the suffering of the innocent. We can understand why the lawbreaker should be punished for his infraction, his personal sin. But why should children suffer for the sins of their parents; husbands for the sins of their wives, or vice versa? Can this be the will of an all-just God? Is not God unfair to the innocent? The answer to this question is not merely of academic value. It has practical consequences. For in discovering how the evil of sin is compatible with the goodness of God, you are brought face to face with your personal task in meeting the challenge of sin. So let us consider the facts.

I

Could God have made us individualists? By that I mean, could God have created us in such a way that we would not be hurt or influenced by the sins of others? Perhaps He could have, but only under certain conditions: First, by making us less like Himself, and incapable of ever fully sharing in His own inner life; and the second condition—which is really a consequence of the first—that we should no longer be men or women, no longer human. And after all, it is rather nice to be human. If there are some things that even the angels envy man, I wonder if one of them is not the joy in a young mother's face as she holds her first son. But she could never experience such joy if that same son did not have the ability to break her heart. Then there is the eagerness with which a young married couple plan their own home. Yet their working, their sharing an existence together, would never be possible if divorce or separation were not also an ugly possibility. The thrill of a young nun on her profession day; or that of the priest with the oil of ordination still moist on his palm; the warm handclasp of a friend; the tears in a mother's eyes when her Johnny comes marching home again—these human joys are possible only because human suffering is also possible. Only by destroying all the human relationships that make up our lives could God have kept others from hurting us—and kept us from sharing in their joy. The human race is so intimately one that the very fact that we love one another gives to each of us the power to make others sad and saddened by others in turn.

Furthermore, suffering and pain were meant to be a deterrent from sin. Yet if we are honest with ourselves we shall admit that purely personal punishment alone will never keep us on the path that leads to heaven. To appeal only to this sanction is to neglect one of the most powerful motivating forces we have. For recall that we have the power to be unselfish, the power of our free will. Indeed this is the highest of our faculties, our strongest ally in this war against utter selfishness. Hence, it is also our greatest weapon against sin, a strengthening force that helps us to be what we should be. The realization that our own actions will not merely harm ourselves but also others whom we love can make us careful when

nothing else can. It is not uncommon to find careless Catholics developing a sense of responsibility and becoming conscious of their religious obligations when they have to set a good example to children they truly love.

II

But we may still ask: *Is it just that we should be hurt by others?* Let us consider the facts sanely and objectively, first as regards spiritual damage, then as regards physical suffering. No doubt the greatest spiritual loss one could suffer would be to be deprived for all eternity of the beatific vision of God. From what we said earlier of hell, we know that no sinner is damned except through his own fault. But what of innocent children who through no fault of their own are deprived of the blessing of baptism? Does not this entail some injustice?

By way of answer, we might note that only recently some theologians have raised the question of whether God in His providence may have provided some special or extraordinary means whereby they may be saved. While these suggestions run counter to the generally accepted position of theologians, they are indicative perhaps of the fact that the last word has not been said on this thorny question. But even if we take the common theological view that such children will never see God face to face, is there really any injustice on God's part? After all, the beatific vision is not something we have a right to, or anything that is due to us by nature. It is a pure gift of munificence on the part of the Blessed Trinity. And not only is it to be a gift on Their part, but having created man a social being in Their own image, They require also that man receive this gift of love only through the charity or loving cooperation of his fellowman. If it be true that no one is damned save through his own fault, it is also true that no one is saved except through the charity of another. And while those who through their own sin and self-seeking deliberately prevent a child from ever living with God in the ecstasy of heaven will indeed incur the divine wrath, for *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God* (Hebr. 10, 31), still it would be as irrational to accuse God of injustice as to call a woman unjust who chooses one suitor in preference to another.

And in fact, we might go further and point out that it is actually a tribute to God's mercy and generosity that He has enabled some human souls, through no merit of their own but because of the love and generosity of their parents or others, to enter heaven by the grace of baptism. Such would not have been the case had Adam not sinned, for in paradise death was unknown and every soul personally would have had to choose heaven or hell. Consequently, we may well suspect that many more are in heaven today through dying before they were capable of losing their baptismal innocence than would have been had Adam not sinned. At any rate we cannot level any accusation against God for the fate of unbaptized children, particularly since He loves each one of these souls enough to be crucified for them.

But what shall we say of other instances where individuals suffer because of others? We need only look at the dreadful housing conditions in certain slum districts to realize that children brought up in such sections have an almost unsurmountable handicap. Never having had a normal childhood, living in coarseness and amid brutality, they are burdened with problems in early life that only a mature adult should be asked to face. And they suffer in consequence. Virtue becomes doubly, triply, or even inhumanly hard at times. Is this justice? we might ask. These are indeed sad sights. And yet if we tend to excuse people living under such conditions, what of God? Surely He is more merciful than any human being. Who was it who forgave the woman in adultery? Not the self-righteous Jews, not even the normally kind and understanding common folk. No! It was Christ. Who took in the crooked tax collector, despised by the devout, and made him into Saint Matthew? Peter was so conscious of his own sinfulness the day he discovered a miracle-worker in his boat that he cried out: *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord* (Lk. 5:8). So concerned was Christ with those unfortunates who were more sinned against than sinning that the *Pharisees and the Scribes murmured saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them"* (Lk. 15:2). And when His enemies pegged Him to a cross He continued to pray for them because *they do not know what they are doing* (Lk. 23:34).

Perhaps we are far better off so far as salvation is concerned in the present fallen condition of man than had Adam not sinned.

Who knows how we should have fared in our trial or test of love, for such a trial we should all have had to pass, had we been born with original innocence. A third part of the angels fell without an excuse (Apoc. 12, 4). Would we have done any better than Adam or Eve?

Granting then that God does no spiritual injustice to man, what of physical pain and suffering so often inflicted on the innocent? Is this not something incompatible with the idea of a good and just God? To this we can only answer, if there is any injustice involved then it should be proportionate to the innocence of the victim. And by that norm we should have to admit that God inflicted the greatest of injustices upon Himself in the person of the *Man of Sorrows* and upon His beloved Mother, Queen of martyrs. Consequently there must be another answer. And Christ Himself pointed it out to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus after His crucifixion. Not only were their eyes blind to the bodily presence of Christ but to the spiritual significance of suffering as well. But as Jesus began to explain the Scriptures to them, something of His own feeling must have crept into His voice, that attitude almost of eagerness that prompted His remark before the passion: *There is a baptism I must needs be baptized with, and how impatient I am for its accomplishment* (Lk. 12: 50). For as they confessed later, *Were not our own hearts burning within us when he spoke to us on the road, and when he made the scriptures plain to us?* (Lk. 24: 32) explaining to them why it was fitting that *Christ should undergo these sufferings, and enter so into His glory* (ibid, v. 26).

If everything ended with this life, perhaps it might be difficult to adequately account for the physical suffering and anguish that often strikes at those innocent of sin. But we know that whatever the innocent may be called upon to bear in this vale of tears the day will come when *God will wipe away every tear from their eyes* (Apoc. 7: 17), and with Saint Paul they will be forced to confess that *the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that will be revealed in us* (Rom. 8: 18). And who should know better than Paul who was privileged both to glimpse heaven and to feel pain as few men have ever felt it (2 Cor., 11-12)?

III

Suffering then must have some purpose in the divine plan. What is it? For one thing, pain is educational for the individual. Man is part animal. In fact as someone ironically defined him, he is the perfect beast. For at times indeed, the animal is very much in evidence. Like the dog that gets hurt chasing cars, the animal nature in man will learn to stay away from forbidden things only by suffering pain. Before a child comes to the use of reason, he learns by personal discomfiture not to touch fire or a hot stove. So too God provides a natural control of animal appetites in the pain that accompanies overindulgence.

But if suffering the consequences of our own mistakes and sins is educational, the suffering of the innocent can be redemptive. A biological analogy will best illustrate this spiritual truth. The most primitive and simplest forms of living organisms are the unicellular animals like the amoeba and paramecium or the one-celled plants like the bacteria. If the cell wall of an amoeba be pricked with a microneedle, the protoplasm oozes out and the little animal dies. Yet if you cut your hand with a knife drawing blood, you do far more extensive damage, objectively speaking, than the pin prick in the cell wall of the microorganism, yet the damaged cells in your hands do not die. The body musters its defenses, blood vessels dilate, the white corpuscles or phagocytes rush to the rescue devouring the invading bacteria, the blood clots and cicatrization begins. In a short time the wound is healed and your body is even stronger than before. You may have developed some new bacterial immunity in the process. Now God has created the human race organically one. Supernaturally we form one mystical body with fellow Catholics. Even those outside the mystical body proper profit by its health and spiritual vigor.

When we suffer innocently for something we have not done, what are we actually doing? If all suffering in the present dispensation is somehow occasioned by sin, either personal misdemeanors or the sins of others, then in bearing pain and suffering we are paying the penalty of sin, our own or that of others. And if innocent of personal fault, we do this willingly, even gladly, for a supernatural motive, we are doing precisely what Christ did in the

passion, taking the consequences of another's sin on ourselves. In our own way, we atone somehow for that sin. No wonder Paul could write to the Colossians (1:24): *I rejoice now in the sufferings I bear for your sake; and what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ I fill up in my flesh for his body, which is the Church.*

We should view suffering and pain, the effects of sin, for what they really are—a challenge. The sufferings of others have evoked some of man's most heroic accomplishments and brought out the finest traits of human nature. More than anything else they cause us to break through the shell of self-centeredness and make our hearts go out to others.

What are some practical applications we might make? For one thing we should not take a defeatist or pessimistic attitude towards the evil in the world, but rather consider it a challenge. In the language of the Christopher movement, we too can change the world. In fact that is the practical meaning of Christ's redemption. Though He paid the price of sin, He did not simply restore human nature to the status it had in paradise before the fall. What He did was to give us the grace, the power, the means and inspiration to redeem ourselves. The world after all is our world. We are responsible for it and for everyone in it. Can we like Cain disclaim to be our brother's keeper without also like him becoming an outcast from the human family? But while our obligation to love is universal, nevertheless in practice those who comprise the social circle in which we move will have the greatest claim to our concern. And in specific instances our responsibility will be proportionate to our capacity to counteract the effects of sin. It is greatest, of course, as regards our personal life and conduct, for we are to be first of all captains of our own soul. And here we must be on our guard against both discouragement and self-pity. Whether our handicap be congenital, or of our own or others' making, we should not lose courage but set out manfully to win back the lost ground for Christ. As for others, we ought to forgive them any personal affront, showing them the mercy we hope to receive from God. *Do not judge, that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you* (Mt. 7: 1-2). After all, what do we know of

the subjective guilt of those who in the eyes of men appear to be wicked? What do we know of the extenuating circumstances there may be in their background, their education, their native endowments, their environment, the measure of grace and light they have received! There is but one safe procedure, that enjoined by Saint Francis when he admonishes and exhorts his followers "not to despise or judge men. . . but rather let each one judge and despise himself" (*Regula FF. Min.*, c. 2). And even when the malice of others makes our own life miserable, we must ask Christ for the courage to repeat His prayer: *Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing* (Lk. 23:34).

And as for the physical suffering and distress we too often meet with in our environment, we must do what we can to alleviate and remedy it. Like the man who fell among robbers on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho, those unfortunates whom we can easily help become our responsibility in charity. Busy about our own business, even though it seems to be the work of God, we may, like the priest and Levite, view such hapless souls as no concern of ours. Yet does not the very fact that God has let us pass their way mean that He wished the sight of them to arouse something of the Good Samaritan that is in every normal human heart? We must do what we can to bind the wounds of those afflicted with moral or physical misery, pouring on the oil of kindness first, but adding the smarting wine of correction when necessary, and paying for their care with the ~~coin of personal sacrifice~~. Only then shall we be meeting the challenge of sin courageously. If, as we indicated in a previous conference, the selfishness of men can set up chain reactions for evil that may if unchecked extend to the end of time, Christ has counted on the unselfishness of our love as the counterweapon through which He will ultimately complete the redemptive work began on Calvary.

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

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARITY IN FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY (III)

Charity, the Essence of Perfection

The question of charity as the queen of the virtues is intimately connected with the question of charity as the essence of perfection.

"Something is considered to be perfect in so far as it attains its own proper end, which is the ultimate perfection of the thing," as Saint Thomas says.¹ But all the supernatural virtues strive to unite us with God, our final end; hence they are all integral parts of perfection. But which virtue in a special manner and of its very nature unites us with God so that it can be said to be in itself the essence of Christian perfection? The most common opinion among theologians and spiritual writers is that the perfection of Christian life consists *per se* and essentially in the virtue of charity. What, then, does the Franciscan school teach in this regard?

At the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century there were many Friars Minor, the so-called Spirituals, who placed the essence of evangelical perfection in poverty. The most outstanding among them was Ubertino of Casale who openly professed the doctrine that "Jesus, the Wisdom of the Father, has placed in poverty the hidden treasure, and all must be sold to buy it. And Jesus led others by His example to observe it and clearly pointed out that evangelical perfection consists in poverty. . . For there will be no perfection lacking to the one who weds this virtue with complete faith, with the most ardent love, and with inviolate observance. Not only is poverty a virtue, it is the perfection and the queen of all virtues, for through observing it one attains to the height of all virtues; and above all it makes the one who observes it more like Jesus the Son of God. Hence in its renewal lies the perfection of every state."² It was in opposition to this doctrine of the Spirituals that Pope John XXII wrote and taught that Christian perfection consists principally and essentially in charity, and that poverty without charity is of no value.³

Although Saint Francis did not explicitly teach the excellence of charity, his life, which is the main source of his teaching, clearly indicates that among all the virtues he gave first place to charity.

¹*Summa*, II-II, q. 184, a. 1

²*Arbor vitae crucifixae Iesu*, 1. 5, c. 3 (Venetiis 1485).

³*Bulla Ad Conditorem*, 8 Dec. 1322.

Saint Anthony of Padua, the Order's first Lector in Theology, reduced total perfection to love of God and love of neighbor.⁴

The renowned teacher and ascetic, David of Augsburg, who has had tremendous influence upon our spirituality, taught that charity is the mother, nourisher, measure, and form of all the virtues. In fact, in his opinion charity is the one virtue that possesses every virtue, for virtue is nothing other than well-ordered love.⁵

Saint Bonaventure clearly upheld the supremacy of charity, for he wrote: ". . . it should be known that the bond of perfection is charity, to which Christ the Maser of all things reduces the Law, the Prophets, and all the teachings of God."⁶ According to the Seraphic Doctor, the reason for this, as we have already seen, is that charity is the form and the end of all the virtues, the influence directing the actions of the virtues to their ultimate end, which is common to them all. Without charity there can be no perfect virtue, for it "alone leads man to perfection,"⁷ and by the highest right and privilege should charity be called "the perfection of all the virtues."⁸

Duns Scotus was by far the greatest champion of Voluntarism. If the will holds primacy in man over the intellect and over all the other powers, it follows necessarily that the most perfect of all the virtues should reside in the will. Moreover, according to the Subtle Doctor, "in the will there are two affections, that of justice (*justitiae*, of the good *as good in itself*) and that of advantage. (*commodi*, of the good *as useful*) but the more noble is the *affectio justitiae*."⁹ This is nothing less than the love of friendship (*amor amicitiae*) or charity. Hence Scotus builds and disposes the entire interior life around the supernatural virtue of charity, from the humble degree of justification to the splendor of the mystical life.

Saint Bernardin of Siena, walking in the footsteps of Bonaventure and Scotus, places charity before all other virtues and finds perfection in it. "Just as gold is the most precious and the highest in value among the metals," he writes, "so charity is the highest among the virtues."¹⁰ "More than all the other virtues, charity makes the soul like God, . . . for God is charity, and it is through charity, which is more like to God

⁴*Sermones Dominicales et in Solemnitatibus*, ed. A.M. Locatelli (Patavii, 1895).

⁵*De exterioris et interioris Hominis Compositione libri tres* (Ad Claras Aquas, 1899) 222-227.

⁶*Apologia pauperum*, c. 3, n. 2, VIII, 244b.

⁷*De perfectione vitae ad Sorores*, c. 7, n. 1, VIII, 124a.

⁸*II Sent.*, d. 28, dub. 2, II, 895a.

⁹*Oxon.* III, d. 26, q. un., n. 17, XV, 356a.

¹⁰*Sermo 2, De laudibus caritatis*, a. 3, *Opera*, II, 15b.

than any other virtue, that the soul possessing it is transformed into God, since everything which is similar is more conformed to what is more like it than to what is less like it."¹¹

In the same manner, the representative spiritual writers of the Order, from the Middle Ages to the present time, have taught that perfection consists properly and essentially in the virtue of charity.

Charity Is Active

Charity is not merely affective, but is also effective and active. For the virtue of charity is immediately in the will as in its subject. But the will regulates all human powers and is the principle of all the moral activity of man. Certainly Franciscan spirituality, since it closely adheres to Voluntarism, greatly emphasises and extols the activity of the soul and its cooperation with the heavenly stirrings and inspirations of grace. Hence it is that the theologians and spiritual writers of our Order place genuine love of God in the faithful carrying out of divine commands and in the perfect conformity of man's will with the divine will. Thus Our Seraphic Father exhorted his friars to love the Lord God "with their whole heart, their whole soul, their whole strength and vigor, with their whole mind and with all their might, with their whole power, their whole being, with their whole desire and will."¹²

In the same manner, the representative spiritual writers of the Order, three elements: will, action, and affection. The will, informed by reason, consents to its counsel to desire the good, and not to remain idle, the will proceeds to carry out the good work, calling to its aid the whole family subject to its command, namely, the limbs of the body, the senses and thoughts, that it may accomplish the good or do away with the evil. And when this is done faithfully, as a kind of remuneration or respite from the labor entailed in carrying out the work, an affection arises in the will as a comfort brought about by the sweet coaxing of grace."¹³ The Seraphic Doctor agrees with this when he asserts that "love is the keeping of the law,"¹⁴ and Blessed Angela of Foligno teaches that "the first sign of true love is evident when the lover submits his will to the will of the beloved."¹⁵

Charity, especially in Scotistic doctrine, is less a sense of joy than a continuous act of the will, by which God is effectively served here

¹¹*Sermo 3, De excellentia divini amoris*, a.2, c.4, *Opera*, II, 18b.

¹²*Regula I*, 25, 60.

¹³*Loc. cit.*, 224e.

¹⁴*Coll. in Hexaem.*, coll. 2, n. 4, V, 337a.

¹⁵*Loc. cit.*, 286.

on earth. Since the will of God is the supreme source of morality and of all good, it follows, according to Scotus, that goodness consists essentially in bringing our will into harmony with the divine will and pleasure.

According to Franciscan doctrine, love of Christ does not rest merely in tender devotion and affectionate compassion. Love inclines the lover to take on and to make his own the feelings of the beloved, to assume his ways of thinking and acting, and to conform to him in all things. Hence Franciscan spirituality, following the example of our holy Founder who so wonderfully imitated Christ, exerts every effort to imitate our beloved Lord as closely as possible, and to become as much like Him as possible.

Love of neighbor, which the Friars Minor have always taught and fostered, is also essentially active. It was not enough for the Order to love merely in word and tongue, but it loved in work and in truth. Thus the first Franciscans did not pass their lives in solitude or within the confines of their monasteries, but went out into the world, through the cities and villages, over highways and oceans, to bring the Good Tidings to all men. Following Christ, Who taught man the evangelical truths by word and example, who healed the sick and gave His life for all, the Friars Minor preached both by word and example. They cared for the sick and the destitute, they devoted themselves to the welfare of others, and even gave their life in behalf of their fellowmen. The Franciscan origin of many forms of modern charity—social work, specialized hospitals, homes for the aged and outcast, *Montes Pietatis*,—testifies to the spirit of practical charity that animated the early Friars.

Beyond any question of doubt, Franciscan charity is definitely and preeminently active. It is diametrically opposed to Quietism and to any kind of spirituality that tends to belittle or destroy human activity and substitute total passivity.

Ecstatic Love

To understand clearly the active character of Franciscan charity, it is necessary to consider the concept of ecstatic love by which it is animated.

Scholars have distinguished two medieval concepts of love which they call "physical" and "ecstatic." The physical concept of love appears in the tendency, inherent in every creature, to seek its own good and to perfect itself. Even in loving God, man does not cease to love himself because God is man's supreme Good. The ecstatic concept, however, appears when the lover goes out of himself in some way, sacrifices everything for his beloved, and becomes totally absorbed in him.

As Bonaventure explains: "When the soul, full of love, longs for the possession of God and is not able to obtain Him in the present life, . . . she continually goes out of herself and passes beyond herself through ecstatic love."¹⁸ From this aspect, love is the more perfect the more it breaks man away from himself and frees him from the desire for his own advantage.

Just as the Word Incarnate, by physical conception, is principally considered as God humbling Himself out of love for humanity so as to unite it to Himself, so in like manner humanity is regarded as holy because of its ecstatic conception in Jesus Christ Who has given proof of His love for us by His example, mainly by poverty and humility, and also by His passion and death. This aspect impels us toward personal and intimate devotion to Christ; it makes the Cross brilliant with a clear light; it inspires us to offer and sacrifice ourselves and to engage in all works of apostolic zeal. It makes martyrdom the ideal of the Christian life, if not physical martyrdom, then martyrdom of love; for ecstatic love embraces every kind of sacrifice in order to imitate Christ and to repay Him love for love.

The ecstatic concept of love is more basically in harmony with the emotional make-up of man, especially on the higher levels, than the physical concept; it is also more concrete and practical, more generally accessible; and at the same time it is capable of leading man to the heights of perfection. We can apply to ecstatic love the words of the *Imitation of Christ*: ". . . the lover gives all for all, . . . he has no regard for the gifts but turns himself to the giver above all goods. Love often knows no measure, but is inflamed above all measure. Love feels no burden, shrinks from no labors, would willingly do more than it can. Love does not speak of impossibility, because it knows that it may and can do all things."

These two concepts of love, the physical and the ecstatic, are not, however, mutually exclusive. They are often found in the same person, as for example in Angela of Foligno. Nor has any writer described the physical concept of love in more brilliant terms than Saint Bonaventure, although he himself was possessed of a most tender ecstatic love for the humanity of Christ. Generally speaking, though, just as the physical concept is prevalent in Thomistic and Dominican spirituality, so the ecstatic concept is prevalent in Franciscan spirituality. This is true not only in reference to the spirit of Saint Francis, but also to the teaching of Duns Scotus who maintains the supremacy of that charity by which God is loved solely because of His infinite perfection, irrespective of any creature or of the personal good of the lover.

¹⁸*De triplici via*, c. 2, 4, n. 9, VIII, 10a.

The folly of the Cross pertains to the ecstatic concept of love, for this kind of love continually says and does things that seem unreasonable and impossible. The first example of this folly was given by infinite Wisdom Himself, Who for us descended to utter humility and endured the most terrifying pain; for He sought our love, urged by the desire of His own consuming love. Saint Paul also recommended this folly by his own words and deeds. Certainly Franciscan spirituality has many remarkable examples of it, as we can read in the life of Blessed Angela of Foligno, of Blessed Raymond Lull, and of many others who followed the footsteps of the Poverello.

Charity Is Linked with the Affections of the Heart

We have already seen that the Franciscan concept of love is affective, which means that it resides in the will and manifests itself through activity. The love of desire alone is not sufficient; the ideal demands solid, active love, and to this love all man's faculties and senses contribute their share.

When active charity of will and work have been properly ordered, the Franciscan school feels free to allow the affections of the heart full liberty and justly grants to sensibility its legitimate place in man's spiritual development. Our Seraphic Father urged his followers to love God not merely with their whole intellect, their whole will and strength, but also with their whole heart, with all their affections and desires, with all their human faculties.

Genuine love resides not only in the will and in active cooperation with grace, but also in sensible affection. This is in perfect harmony with our human nature. God has given us a heart not that we should stifle its divinely-ordained tendency to love, but that we should develop and strengthen that tendency and so come to love Him with all our affections. After all, God has explicitly commanded us to love Him with our whole heart, not only with our mind and will; for the affections can aid us powerfully in striving for holiness. When we embrace something good not only because our will commands it but also because our heart desires it, we find that the good becomes much easier and simpler for us to accomplish. Nor does this render the act of the will less perfect or less pleasing to God. As David of Augsburg writes: "This is true soundness of will, when not only out of the promptings of reason one is urged to will and to do good, or to deny and to avoid evil, but also when out of the affection and desire of the soul good is embraced and evil is hated."¹⁸

¹⁸Loc. cit. 225.

Molinos condemned sensible devotion and everything sensible that we experience in the spiritual life. His error was condemned by the Church, but there are still many sound and wholly orthodox writers who mistrust sensibility. Saint John of the Cross, whom the Carmelite school follows rather closely, inculcated self-denial in regard to spiritual consolations and sensible devotion, and he urged this almost to the point of rigorism. Other ascetical writers insist that "you are bound" by the order and absolute command of the will, in accordance with the ultimate end of man, and tend to ignore or discredit the senses and affections.

Franciscan piety, however, is of a more spontaneous nature, and relishes the tender affection of love. It goes without saying, of course, that the Franciscan school opposes the kind of sensibility that fights against the will or stifles it, but not the kind that helps it. In fact, the Franciscan school uses the affections as a means to love God more ardently, whence it possesses a tremendous drive for action; and it places great confidence in the heart as a guide to perfection.

Love for Creatures

What has been said thus far of our sensible nature holds also for visible creation. Monks of Christian antiquity and of the later Middle Ages generally considered nature as a potential danger for the soul, or at least as something imperfect and best let alone. The dualism between God and creatures was partially suppressed by Benedictine piety, especially in the Cistercian reform, through which nature entered into the public worship of God or served as a symbol or sign of devotion. Nevertheless the tension between love of creatures and love of the Creator remained strong, and it is still with us today. Even Saint Bernard, who is highly regarded among the affective saints, did not extol the love of nature but warned against it.

Saint Francis was almost an innovator in bringing visible creation to the foreground. He looked upon all creatures as part of an immense family that has come from God, our most loving Father. Hence he delighted in creatures and called them his brothers and sisters. As Thomas of Celano relates, "he called all creatures by a fraternal name."¹⁹

Certainly, love for irrational creatures is not fraternal charity properly so-called, since irrational creatures are not able to love God nor to possess the love of friendship. As the Seraphic Doctor points out: "If you ask what virtue elicits that act of love by which one loves creatures, in so far as they come from God and belong to God, it must

¹⁹Celano, I, n. 81.

necessarily be said that it is a certain natural piety and affection."²⁰

But creatures are the mirror in which the perfections and divine attributes are reflected, and they are also the ladder by which man ascends to a greater love of God. Franciscan spirituality regards nature in exactly this light, and urges us to seek and contemplate and love God in all His creatures.

Saint Bonaventure writes of our Seraphic Father: "So that he might be aroused to divine love through all creatures, he exulted in all the works of the Lord's hands and though the wonders of their joy he rose to their life-giving Reason and Cause. In things of beauty, Saint Francis saw Him Who is most beautiful, and through the vestiges of Him impressed in nature he found his Beloved. He made a ladder of these things on which to reach an understanding of Him Who is wholly desirable. He drank as from a stream, with an affection of unspeakable devotion, from that Fount of Beauty that he saw in creatures. And as though he perceived a heavenly vision in the harmony of the powers and of the activities given by God to creatures, he sweetly exhorted them for the glory of the Lord, as was the custom of the Prophet David."²¹

Because of his tender affection and love for Christ, Francis especially loved and contemplated those creatures in which he found a likeness to his beloved Redeemer. "He loved little lambs with a special love and a ready affection, because in Holy Scripture the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ is frequently and fittingly likened to a lamb. Thus all things, especially those in which he could find some allegorical resemblance to the Son of God, he lovingly embraced and looked upon most gladly."²² These words of Celano are beautifully exemplified in the *Cantic of the Sun*, that sublimely simple hymn of loving admiration for the works of the Creator's hand.

Saint Bonaventure, animated with the spirit of our Seraphic Father, frequently expressed the same loving reverence for nature. According to him, the whole visible world offers a means for contemplating God, a clue to discovering the wisdom of the Creator, a reflection of the divine beauty, a book written in bold, clear, and striking letters, exhorting the reader to seek God in all creatures so as to love Him in a higher degree. "Open your eyes," urges Bonaventure, "attune your ears, loosen your lips and set your heart in readiness, that in all creatures you may see your God, and hear Him and praise Him and love

²⁰*III Sent.*, d. 28, a. un., q. 1, III, 622b.

²¹*Legenda S. Francisci*, c. 9, n. 1, VIII, 530a.

²²Celano, I, n. 77.

Him and worship Him, and magnify and glorify Him, lest perhaps the whole world rise up against you."²³

This Bonaventurian view of life, which is distinctly aesthetic,²⁴ is best expressed in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, where the Seraphic Doctor describes the world as a medium through which and in which to contemplate God and finally to arrive at mystical union with Him. Actually, it is a technical interpretation or development of the poetic *Cantic of the Sun*. And since this love of creation and reverence for the created world is so typical of the best Franciscan tradition, more will be said of it in the following section of this article.

²³*Itinerarium*, c. 1, n. 5, V, 299b.

²⁴One of the most recent discussions of this is Sister Emma Jane Marie Spargo's *The Category of the Aesthetic in the Philosophy of Saint Bonaventure*, published by the Franciscan Institute, 1953. (Editor's note.)

(To be continued) Fr. James Heerincks, O.F.M.

Fr. Marvin Woelffer, O.F.M. (Transl.)

BEGGAR IN ASSISI—1223

He sings down newer avenues
Of white obscurity
As of a light on other streets
He knows with certainty.

We do not mourn his darkened sight—
His seeming poverty—
There somehow burns beneath the voice
A richer entity.

Our sudden world is turned about.
The joy takes skylark wings.
The fire of song is in his eyes
And it is love that sings.

—Sister Florian Eggleston, O.S.F.

A VISIT TO CAPISTRANO

It was a hot afternoon in the hills of Abruzzi when Father Paschal Robinson, later Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland, and myself were stopping at the railroad station called Busti, or, as the natives call it, Bussi. Incidentally, this is the birthplace of Blessed Bernardino a Busis who, as far as is known, wrote the first Office of the Immaculate Conception approved by the Church.

It was getting warmer and warmer as we waited for the train—but no train came. The rumor reached us that the trains were stopped because of some bloody rioting and killing in the nearby towns. This was no surprise, since the radical Socialist element was disturbing the countryside. Unfortunately, the movement had a peculiarly vicious tinge of anti-clericalism. We were made conscious of this when, a little later, we passed through a crowd of workmen coming from a factory. We were greeted with hoots and hisses, and some even went so far as to throw sticks and stones at the two strange friars in brown.

But to get on with my story—a young man appeared at the station telling us that he had a horse and buggy and was willing to take us to Capistrano in spite of the disturbing rumors. His price was outrageously exorbitant, but we had to reach our destination so off we went.

The trip was uneventful except for the incident of the factory workers. In fact, it turned out to be a grand and glorious buggy ride through hills and dales. Our driver almost fell asleep in the burning rays of the sun, but an emphatic "Avanti!" from my companion quickly aroused him from slumber. I recall how Father Paschal pointed out to me at a turn in the road the distant walls of Aquila, the city so well known on account of Saint Bernardin of Siena, the intimate friend and companion of Saint John Capistran whose city we were about to visit. We had been following a stream which grew narrower as we neared the town of Capistrano. The story is that this name is derived from the Latin *caput* and *strano* or *trano* meaning "the head of the stream."

As we entered the town there was absolute peace and silence. Only a few dogs and chickens greeted us with brief quizzical glances, then went on about their business. We found this stillness rather strange in view of the rumor that had reached us at the station. But perhaps it had been only a rumor after all, and rumors have a way of growing in proportion to the distance they travel.

Whether the driver was suddenly hit by an inspiration to move

fast, or whether he sensed trouble in the air, we never knew; but all at once he pulled out his whip and began to lash the horse so mercilessly that the beast galloped through the narrow streets causing a tremendous racket. The noise must have been heard by the friars in their monastery, which is situated on a hill a short distance from the town.

An event of unusual significance was about to take place. The bells of the friars' church suddenly rang out as if touched by angels, and as we looked toward the church, we saw a procession of friars emerging, the Father Guardian in cope, the ministers in spurlice holding sprinkler and incense. The driver stopped before the procession and lo and behold! the Guardian in wide-eyed surprise came forward to embrace my companion with a joyful: "O Padre Pasquale!" As a matter of fact, so we learned later, the procession had not been meant for Father Paschal and me but the Very Reverend Provincial who was due to appear that day for canonical visitation.

But the surprise of the Father Guardian and of all the friars turned to joy when they saw their mistake, and to make the joy still brighter, we were immediately escorted to the refectory where, among the brethren toasting and saluting us, we partook of a *bichieruccio* of *vino dulce*. Meanwhile, when darkness had fallen, Father Provincial finally arrived—but there was no procession to meet him. Thus ended my first day at Capistrano, the name that adorns the memory of one of the greatest men in its history, Saint John Capistran.

Next day I was permitted to say Mass at the altar of Saint John. Many souvenirs adorn the reredos of the altar, among them a large hat and a walking stick that the Saint had carried on his journeys through Hungary, Germany, Italy and other countries of Europe. I spent nearly all day in the library that Saint John had left to this convent. There were books dealing with geography, mathematics, various sciences, philosophy, and theology. One beautiful volume was inscribed: "To Father John from the Holy Father." All of the books showed the neatly written signature, "Fra Joannes a Capistrano." Every book was bound in sheepskin and showed the wear and tear of much use. The story goes that Saint John used to carry these books on the back of a donkey on his missionary trips. They also reveal the sources of the extraordinary knowledge and versatility that mark his sermons.

Saint John is the hero of Belgrade were, in the company of the famous general Hunyadi, he defeated the Turks and saved Christendom from conquest. Stern of demeanor and serious of temperament, Saint John is yet one of the most colorful figures of his day. When he preached the churches could not contain the crowds. Although for the most part

he used the Latin idiom, the power and unction of his words seemed to reach the hearts of all regardless of the language he spoke.

The friendship between Saint John and Saint Bernardin is of unique interest: the former serious, grave, hard to approach, matter-of-fact; the latter smiling, cheerful, charming and friendly to all. Somehow the one supplemented the other. They remained faithful in friendship until death, and we must ascribe to their wonderful blending of temperaments and supernatural endowments the triumph of the cult of the Holy Name of Jesus, which stands out as the crowning glory of these two great missionaries of the Franciscan Order.

It is this cult of the Holy Name of Jesus that made Saint John Capistran the "Apostle of Peace" and the "Apostle of Europe." Standing at the embattled walls of Belgrade, he ushered in a new year by exhorting the crusaders with the words: "We go forward secure in the name of Jesus; confidently we take the path that the New Year opens." When later in that fateful year of 1456 the Turks paralyzed the city of Belgrade with their dreadful hosts, Saint John, lifting up his crucifix for all to see, gave the order to the crusaders to shout the sacred name of Jesus three times. The enemy was crushed and Europe was saved.

This was the climax to a long list of fatiguing labors for the cause of peace. This great Franciscan had traveled over most of Europe in the name of the Supreme Pontiff, restoring peace between ruler and city, pope and prince, nation and nation.

In the midst of labors for Jesus the Saviour, Saint John died at Glok (at present in Yugoslavia), October 23, 1456. He was canonized in 1691. On October 4, 1955, Pope Pius XII solemnly opened the fifth centenary celebration of his death.

Very Rev. Fr. Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M.



THE HOLY FRIARS OF SAXONY

FRIAR JOHN VON OSTERWYCH AND HIS THREE SONS

I. Their entry into the Order

29. In the city of Magdeburg there was a respected citizen named John von Osterwyck, a very rich man, who guided by divine inspiration, entered the Order with his three sons. Although he was an old man, he surrendered himself wholeheartedly to the following of Christ. And his sons also labored so industriously to please God that they made great strides in the spirit of religion and happily completed their lives in our Order.

John von Osterwyck, father of the laybrother Friar Frederic, was almost a centenarian when he entered the Order. Still, he enjoyed such good health that he could be appointed brother porter, though his eyesight was growing weak. One night when he was walking through the convent in the dark there suddenly appeared before his eyes a heavenly light which preceded him in every part of the convent he visited, lighting up his way in every direction with brilliant rays. But when he beheld the Divine Goodness of Christ coming to his aid in this extraordinary manner, he began to glory in his heart and to attribute to his own merits what was a free gift of God. The Lord therefore just as suddenly withdrew that light from him so as to turn him back into the way of humility. In this way our friar was recalled wholly into the path of the Fear of God.

II. The life of Friar Frederic:

his yearning for Christ

30. The laybrother Friar Frederic, who was the eldest son of John von Osterwyck, had spent his younger years in the fear of God and in all perfection. In his riper age he began to have such a yearning for the life to come, that he hardly ever thought or desired anything but to see Jesus. For he hoped that after the death of the body he would rejoice and exult in the glory of the Father forever.¹¹

III. His longing for Christ and how he was carried away in contemplation.

31. The following is related by Friar John of Neustadt, a true religious who later became minister of Saxony: Friar Frederic the laybrother fell ill, and during his sickness he frequently received the Sacrament of the

Lord's Body in Holy Communion. This frequent Communion began to set his body aflame with heavenly desire. As a result after his recovery he had such an all-consuming impatience for death and such a pining for the glory of heaven, that this yearning more than the weakness of his convalescence made it all but impossible for him to eat or drink or sleep. For a boy one year old could not have kept alive on what he ate. As this yearning grew stronger in him from day to day there finally came a day when he was praying so ardently and was so completely ravished up to God, that from then on he was forever with Him, and for the remaining twelve years of his life his heart was never for a moment separated from God. During all these years indeed, whether he was eating, drinking, or even resting, he longed so much to die and to be with Christ that he could not think of anything but the beloved Bridegroom.

When he made his condition known to the saintly Father Nicholas, whose story we told above, Friar Nicholas charged him that in this life he should never make known to anybody such a precious and unheard-of grace. When Friar Nicholas told the Minister General of this favor, the General testified that this grace surpassed any gift of working miracles and even that of recalling the dead to life.

IV. How he fell into ecstasy while engaged in spiritual conversation.

32. Once Friar Frederic was in earnest conversation about God with the holy Friar Nicholas and Friar John of Neustadt. While he was listening to what the two were saying he became fired by their words, and began to speak in ravishing language on the nostalgia felt by a devout soul while it is bereft of the embrace of the Beloved and separated from God in this miserable life on earth. With the Psalm he exclaimed: "Woe to me because my sojourn is so prolonged. . . As the hart panteth for fountains of water, etc." And while he was speaking thus, his longing grew so acute that almost at once he was caught up in an ecstasy under their very eyes. His soul soared into the sweetness of interior vision and, with eyes closed but streaming with tears, and face lifted up to heaven, he leaned his head against the wall near which they sat; he became utterly unconscious of everything less than his joyous rapture into God. The other two had to wait a long time for the ecstasy to pass, but at last he partly returned to himself moaning and breathing deeply and exclaiming: "Oh!" As if to say: "How can one ever express the sweetness of such rapture and the height of the soul's ascension." But seeing that in his deep absorption he did not know where he was, Friar John softly said to him: "Good Father, never mind." And so these

two began a simple talk on everyday matters until they slowly succeeded in recalling him completely to himself.

V. His last years and his teachings.

33. I met this holy Friar in Borch where he died as a member of that community; he drew near, leaning on a kind of a crutch, walking feebly and limping along in great weakness. The first thing I said to him was: "Dearest father, and when are you going home to Heaven?" In answer he quoted the psalm: "As the hart panteth for water." And he added: "But never did any hart so thirst for water as I am thirsting for that blessed Kingdom."

34. At another time I desired to confer with him about the salvation of my soul and to hear a few words of inspiration. When I visited him he was already bed-ridden but he discoursed in such a devout and fervent fashion on the love of God, and how God is to be loved above all things for Himself, that he could hardly form his words because of his excessive earnestness. So deep was his delight while he spoke these words of life that I became alarmed lest his intense feelings should carry him beyond his strength.

Later at this same conference he taught me how to pray. "For the first two years of a man's conversion no exercise is more needful than constant prayer. One must likewise beg God to grant him the grace of weeping always, even as we ought, over our sins and the most bitter Passion of Christ. And as he labors in these things without intermission, let him learn to break his own will and to be humble towards all. After he is thus well tried let him advance to that meditation which leads to union with God and the reward of His saints. But this is most certain: that any soul which resists distraction and strives solely towards the enjoyment of God and of His angels and saints will soon be possessed of more than ordinary love and will attain to such joy and happiness of heart that it cannot be described in words. Therefore the Psalmist says: "Blessed the people that knoweth jubilation; and here is what he means: Jubilation is that joy which can not be explained in words."

Concerning this joy Friar Frederic said to me: "In the short time that it takes a man to pass through the church, God sometimes grants him such ineffable consolation that he is filled with an excess of sweetness and an abundance of joy, and so great an overflowing of inner peace comes to him that, even if God refused to give him anything more in the life to come, he would feel fully rewarded for all his toil in God's service."

"But that a man may more easily attain the fervor of true devotion, should he find himself heavy with sloth and sleepiness at the time of prayer, let him pray orally, make genuflections and deep bows, and prostrate himself before God in prayer, until he attain to contemplation. Then let his prayer be mental rather than vocal, for the Holy Gospel says: "When you pray, do not multiply words." It is enough simply to have an ardent desire for the solace of divine consolation. For such desire is itself a continuous prayer, since prayer is nothing else than the steadfast tending of the mind towards God, even though it break forth here and there into vocal prayer lest it grow weary."

*VI. How near the end of his life, Friar Frederic
praised the Order of Friars Minor.*

35. Once in the presence of many friars, Friar Frederic praised the Order of Friars Minor because of its strict adherence to the Rule and the austerity of its poverty. Among other things he said: "I rejoice much over my entrance into this holy Order and the pure life led in it, and I look forward to that heavenly reward promised to those who make profession in this most sacred Order. This reward, indeed, I prefer and value more than what would have been my reward if, having stayed in the world, I had built a hundred monasteries and amply endowed them with my temporal goods. Such things would not have promoted my salvation as much as the simple observance of my Rule and unremitting loyalty to the attainment of perfection."

At one time this holy laybrother Frederic was also the Guardian. For the Custos of that time had been received with such genuine joy when he entered the convent that upon his departure he said to the brother who accompanied him outside the city, that is, our Friar Frederic: "I place this house of the friars under your guard until I return."

Holy Frederic died full of sanctity in Borch in the Custody of Magdeburg in the year of the Lord.

FRIAR HENRY HIS BROTHER

I. His holiness of life.

36. Friar Henry [Heydenricus], blood-brother of Friar Frederic the laybrother, was a man of wondrous devotion. At the hand of the Heavenly Guide he humbly embraced every means to perfection until he came at last by the path of righteousness to the very summit of perfection. Although he was rich in every virtue, he made such little headway in scholastic lore and learning that when he was ordained a priest he hardly knew how to say Mass. For he did not study much in the books of parch-

ment and sheepskin, but more untiringly did he pore over the books of his conscience. For he knew well that the true science of the devout student is the vision of Him Whom to see but once is to learn everything. He had three virtues that were most remarkable: he was humble, charitable, and a man of prayer.

II. His charity and humble submission.

37. He showed his holy humility not only by doing reverence towards all with whom he lived, but also in doing the lowliest and humblest tasks for them with a heart full of joy. For he was not a mean hand in the tailor's art, and therefore, even with all his other work, he never failed to patch the old tunics of his brothers. And he did this with such humility, charity, and devotion that he often declared he would not exchange these lowly services of love and charity towards others for the honor of being a lector in the Order.

III. His kindness and benevolence.

38. So great was his love for the friars that he could never say no to any demand they made; in fact, his first word was always, "Gladly!" But when he had already made the same promise to another friar, he would answer the newcomer: "I have to do this or that now for Friar So-andso, but when I have finished it, I'll gladly do what you want."

IV. His joyful manner of praying.

39. So great was his love for prayer that it was his delight to steal away from the others whenever it was convenient and give himself to devotion and interior prayer. It was his custom during the daytime to work at patching the tunics of the poor friars and to do his other manual work. But towards evening when he wished to offer his night prayers and private devotions to God, he would seek a spot where, all alone with God, he could enjoy the intimacy of devout and prayerful converse and pour out to Him the love and longings of his heart.

Sometimes when he thought that he was all alone the other friars would spy on him from a hiding place in order to learn his method of praying. By this means they found that at times he would begin his prayers by assuming the role of a beggar standing at the door of a rich man. In this manner he would insistently beg God to grant him the alms of His grace and strengthen him in His service, praying in these or similar words: "Oh my Lord, I, Your subject, slave, and a poor sinner, have come to You to ask for an alms. In Your goodness give me a little something, whatever may please You, towards the forgiveness of my sins either for my welfare and the glory of Your name, or for the consolation of Your Holy Church and the conversion of all poor sinners, so

that by Your loving kindness and grace all sinners may return to You and serve You faithfully and perseveringly according to Your most Holy Will."

And while he was thus lying prostrate in prayer pouring out his heart in sobbing and wailing, he sometimes knew that his prayers for sinners were heard and that God at his insistent pleading would grant life everlasting to those particular souls for whom he had prayed. And when the thought of that everlasting glory came to him and he would meditate how great and transcendent was that reward to which we are all most assuredly called, he would begin to sing for sweetness of joy and holy hope. After long hours of prayer, when he dared keep watch no longer, he would seek his poor cot with a song in his heart, and gently fall asleep in sweet contemplation.

V. How he was given revelations at prayer.

40. Once it happened that he was praying for the absent friars. During this prayer God revealed to him that some friars were still far afield who planned to stay overnight in his convent. And so he hastened to the brother porter and told him not to lock the gate until these friars had arrived.

VI. How Christ offered him an apple during Mass.

41. God's great love for Friar Henry is shown from a miracle which he is said to have experienced. It happened once that he was away from home with another friar and the two of them went to the altar to say Mass and to offer the Immaculate Victim to God for the welfare of the living and the dead. When he had started offering the Mass, he beheld the wooden statue of the Blessed Virgin on the altar with the infant in her lap. The Infant stretched out its hand and showed him a beautiful apple, graciously nodding to him to accept the gift offered to him. Friar Henry was afraid his companion might see it and that if people heard about it, he would be tempted to vainglory; and so long as his companion was looking, he did not dare take the apple. So he kept his eye on his companion, wondering whether he too saw the kindness of the Boy, for then nothing could be hidden. Since the Infant continued holding the apple out to him, he gathered up his courage and said to the Infant, "Oh, but I am afraid my companion will see it!" Then the Infant, as if indignant because Friar Henry would not take the gift, withdrew his hand and Friar Henry, trembling with joy at having had this gift offered to him, finished saying the Mass he had begun.

42. Friar Henry revealed this miracle in confession when he came to die, adding that many times afterwards he had regretted his refusal of

that apple. From this miracle we can get an idea of the holy simplicity and humility of Friar Henry because he did not dare to accept the apple. Hereby too is manifest the devotion he had towards Our Lady and how pleased the Ever-blessed Virgin was with his holy life.

We can well believe that this friar had many revelations which in his humility he would never make known to others.

(Conclusion)

Fr. Ignatius Brady, O.F.M. (Transl.)

MARRIAGE OF ST. FRANCIS WITH LADY POVERTY

So final are the marriage vows that once taken they are co-existent with life itself. To death only belongs the task of terminating such a solemn act of the will. With the same note of finality St. Francis uttered his 'I do' when he took unto himself, as his bride for life, Lady Poverty. With all the joy and happiness that fills a wedding day Francis, "superabundans gaudio" (II Cor. 7,4), so pronounced his vow, "Hoc est quod volo, hoc est quod quaero, hoc totis medullis cordis facere concupisco." If the Poverello has attained universal recognition as the joyful saint it is in part due to the truth that he really and most sincerely, from the day he espoused Lady Poverty, lived with her 'happily ever after'.

One of the most beautiful prose poems of the Middle Ages is the Sacrum commercium. This beautiful piece of Franciscan literature depicts the mystical espousal of holy Francis with Lady Poverty. The contents of this masterpiece of simplicity reveal and reflect the first and happiest days spent with Lady Poverty at Rivo Torto.

We have often heard the familiar phrase, "If only these walls could talk." Such a hypothetical soliloquy must be left to the elasticity of the imagination. Remaning within the realm of the imaginative but adding the note of practicality, suppose that we as Franciscans who profess a unique love of poverty were given the opportunity of a personal chat with Lady Poverty. Given such a hypothesis the following excerpt from the Sacrum commercium is presented as a norm in judging to what degree our conversation with Lady Poverty would resemble that of our holy father. That there should be a literal agreement is beyond our capacity especially since the burden of our vow and the safeguarding of the virtue of poverty compels us in many instances to be satisfied with a preservation of the spirit of poverty.

We have just reached the climax in the narrative of the Sacrum commercium wherein St. Francis and his companions have finally reached the top of the mountain where Lady Poverty dwells and are now preparing for the descent.



... On descending from the mountain they led Lady Poverty to the place in which they were staying, for it was about the sixth hour.

And when all the things were prepared they urged her to eat with them. But she said, "Show me first your oratory, the chapter room, the cloister, refectory, kitchen, sleeping quarters, and stable, your beautiful chairs, polished tables and buildings. I see none of these but only you, happy and gay, abounding with joy, filled with consolation, as though you were looking for all things to be supplied to you as you wish."

They made answer and said, "Our Lady and queen, we your servants are tired from so long a journey, and in coming with us you have labored not a little. Therefore, let us first eat, if you so wish, and thus strengthened, all will be fulfilled as you bid."

"What you say is pleasing," she said, "but now bring water so that we may wash our hands, and towels with which to wipe them."

They quickly brought a half-broken earthen vessel filled with water, for they had none that was whole. And wringing their hands they looked here and there for a towel. When they did not find such, one offered to her the tunic which he was wearing that she might wipe her hands with it. With a gesture of thanks she took it and with her whole heart glorified God Who had befriended her with such men.

Then they led her to the place where the table was prepared. But when she reached it, she looked at it, and seeing only three or four crusts of barley or bran bread placed on the grass, greatly marvelled and said within herself, "Who has ever seen such things even to everlasting generations? Blessed art Thou, O Lord God, Who hast care of all; for Thy power is at hand when Thou wilt; Thou hast taught Thy people by such works to please Thee."

And so they sat down together, giving thanks to God for all His gifts.

And Lady Poverty commanded the cooked food to be carried in on dishes. And behold, one dish was brought in filled with cold water, that all might dip the bread therein; for there was no abundance of dishes nor much of cooked food.

She asked that at least some fragrant uncooked herbs be offered to her. But not having a gardener and knowing nothing of gardens, they gathered wild herbs in the woods and placed them before her. Then she said, "Bring a little salt that I may season the herbs, for they are bitter."

"Wait, O Lady," they said, "until we enter the city and we will bring it to you if anyone should give it to us."

"Give me," she said, "a knife so that I can clean off the crust and cut the bread because it is very hard and dry."

They said to her, "Lady, we do not have a blacksmith to make swords for us; for now, however, use your teeth in place of a knife and afterwards we shall look for one."

"Do you have a little wine?" she said. They answered her saying, "Our Lady, we do not have any wine, because the chief things for a man's life are bread and water. Besides it is not good for you to drink wine since the spouse of Christ ought to flee wine as poison."

After they were filled, rejoicing more in the glory of their indigence than had there been an abundance of all things, they blessed the Lord in Whose sight they found so great grace, and then led Lady Poverty to a place where she might rest, since she was tired. And so she cast herself naked upon the hard ground. She then asked for a pillow to rest her head. They immediately brought her a stone and placed it beneath her.

When she had slept a most sound and quiet sleep she arose upon a sudden and asked to be shown the cloister. They led her to a certain hill and showed her the whole world as far as she could see, saying, "This is our cloister, Lady."

She beckoned all to sit down together and she spoke to them the words of life saying, "Blessed are you, my sons, by the ord God Who made Heaven and earth, you who have received me in your house with such a fullness of charity, that I seemed today to be with you as in the paradise of God. Wherefore, I am filled with joy, I abound with great consolation, and because I was so slow in coming to you I beg forgiveness. Truly God is with you, and I did not know it. Behold what

I have desired I already see, what I have longed for I now hold, since I am with them on earth, who reflect for me the image of Him to Whom I am equal in Heaven. May the Lord bless your fortitude and receive the works of your hands.
Fr. Regis Marshall, O.F.M.

FRANCISCAN BRIEFS

SAINT IGNATIUS AND THE FRANCISCANS

On March 11 this year, millions paid homage to Saint Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus. A nation-wide tribute, which was part of a world-wide observance of the Ignatian Year, marked the 400th anniversary of the death of the little Basque soldier who recruited a new army for the Church.

While there is a vast difference between the spirit and aims of the Jesuits and the Franciscans, it is interesting to note that Saint Ignatius received much of his spiritual formation under Franciscan influence.

It was a Franciscan friar, Ambrose de Montesino, who translated into Castilian Spanish Ludolph of Saxony's *Life of Christ*, one of the chief instruments in the conversion of Saint Ignatius. After a worldly life as a page at the court of Ferdinand and Isabella, and as a swash-buckling young soldier, Ignatius was wounded at the siege of Pampeluna in 1521. The only books available to while away the tedious and painful hours of convalescence were Ludolph's *Life of Christ* and a volume of the *Lives of the Saints*. So eagerly did Ignatius read and re-read Montesino's translation that echoes of it, even straight phrases from it, are found in his *Spiritual Exercises*, written years later.

It was with the Franciscans that Ignatius stayed on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1523—even then they were custodians of the holy shrines. The chief influence of the Franciscans on Ignatius, however, and on the future of the Jesuits, was exercised in 1541, after the Bull of Paul III authorized the formation of

the Society of Jesus. By the vote of his companions, Ignatius was elected General of the Society. He refused office twice. Finally, yielding to the treaties of the brothers, he agreed to a retreat and to leave the decision to a Franciscan confessor. This was Father Theodore of the convent of San Pietro Montorio. There Ignatius retired for days of prayer and meditation. In the end, after a general confession, he accepted Father Theodore's counsel to take the burden as the first General of the Society of Jesus. It might also be of interest to note in passing that it was the same convent of San Pietro that Father Pamphilus da Magliano, O.F.M., saintly founder of Saint Bonaventure University, died November 15, 1876.

The official seal adopted by Ignatius for the Society is the monogram of the Holy Name of Jesus. How often in his early days of preaching in Italian cities must he have seen the monogram inscribed over the doors of churches and convents—the result of the preaching of the Franciscan Saint Bernardin of Siena.

According to some historians, Ignatius was a member of the Third Order of Saint Francis before he founded the Society of Jesus. His testament, which may still be seen in his native Pampeluna, seems to point to his having been a Franciscan Tertiary.

Thus in pleasant fraternal recollection, the sons of Francis join the sons of Ignatius Loyola in observing the Fourth Centenary of the Basque soldier-saint whose Society has won so many victories for Christ. His feast is celebrated July 31.
I.J.H.

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