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From the Editor-in-Chief



David B. Couturier, O.F.M., Cap., is the Editor-in-Chief of *Franciscan Connections*. He is the Dean of the School of Franciscan Studies at St. Bonaventure University and Director of the Franciscan Institute.

The challenges to institutions of higher learning today are numerous: sky rocketing tuitions, demographic changes in students, the debates over curriculum development, and the insurgence of a “learn to earn” mentality. Nowhere are the challenges more trenchant and critical than in private, religiously-affiliated liberal arts colleges and universities.

In this issue, we concentrate on the foundations of a Franciscan education. Four Franciscan educators take a look at the times in which we live and the framework needed to provide a first class educational experience for young women and men today.

Fr. Sean Sheridan, TOR, President of the Franciscan University of Steubenville, addresses the issue of academic freedom. He describes how the Catholic commitment to faith and reason is hardly a limit to academic freedom but the grounding mechanism by which faculty and students engage the pursuit of the fullness of truth.

Br. Edward Coughlin, OFM, in his inaugural address as President of Siena College argues that a Franciscan education is transformative and holistic. He echoes St. Bonaventure’s call for students to “learn to live rightly,” strive to have “upright intentions, good and loving affections,” and to “act in ways that are just and loving.”

Sr. Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ, from the Franciscan School of Theology in Oceanside, CA, uses her expertise in the study of John Duns Scotus to explore how beauty must become a more pivotal and distinguishing part of Franciscan education. She states emphatically and elegantly that beauty is not a side interest of Franciscan learning. It should be seen as the foundational frame through which we understand the world, God, ourselves, and our moral actions.

I situate contemporary education within cultural constructs of modern consumerist economics. I use Charles Taylor’s work on the rise of secularism to introduce a Franciscan educational alternative, one that would substitute a philosophy of self-giving and self-transcendence for the secular models of self-invention and self-sufficiency.

We continue in this issue with the second part of Br. Daniel Klimek, TOR’s, engaging piece on St. Francis as mystic. Br. David Haack, OFM, investigates the intriguing background to Caravaggio’s masterpiece, *St. Francis in Ecstasy*. Our interview with Tom Nairn, OFM, offers a positive look at Franciscan ethics today.

Our News Roundtable lets us see around the Franciscan world and Fr. Robert Phelps’ OFM Cap. Franciscan poetry invites us to probe some autumnal to winter experiences. All these pieces and more provide reflection on the beauty and power of our Franciscan work today.

Enjoy.

Fr. Dave

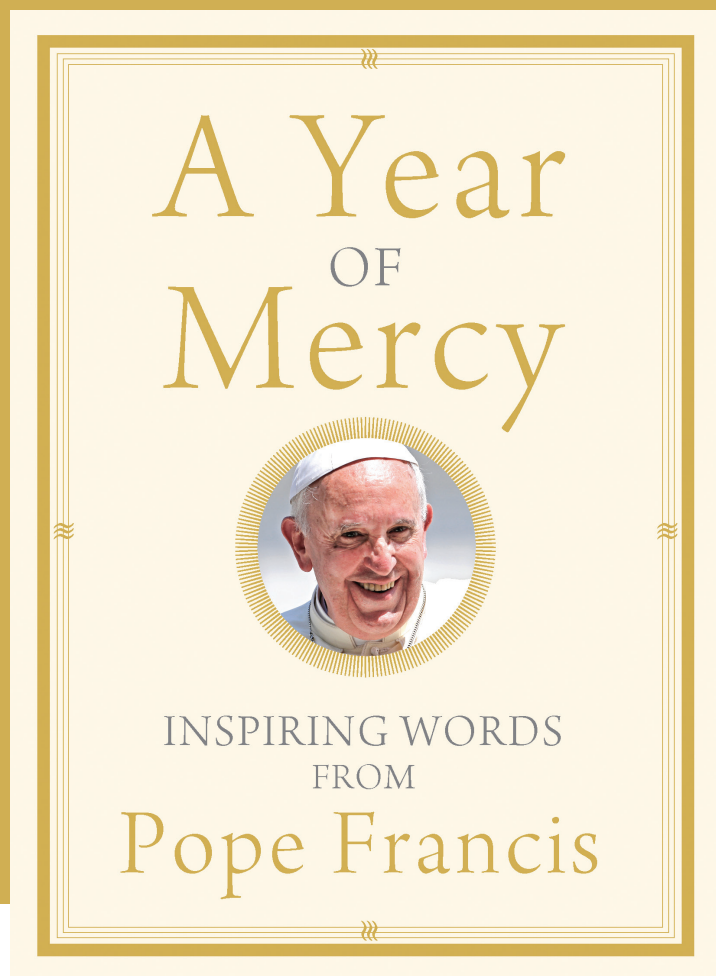
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—POPE FRANCIS,
from his announcement of 2016
as a Holy Year of Mercy

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Franciscan

International News

“Saint Francis: The Key to Reading Pope Francis’ Encyclical on the Environment” is the title of a letter from the **Conference of the Franciscan Family** (ministers general of the First Order, the Third Order Regular, International Franciscan Conference-TOR, and the Secular Franciscan Order). This letter notes that *Laudato Si* “challenges all of us to simplify our lifestyle, to divest ourselves and leave aside all that is not necessary, so as to rediscover the beauty that God has placed in us, in every human being, and in every created thing. Our vocation is to live in boundless solidarity with everything that God has created.”

The International Conference of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular publishes its periodical *Propositum* in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese.

Up to 60 percent of **Conventual friaries** in the world gave a positive review to a draft of Chapter 1 of the Constitutions regarding the Conventual identity. A second draft is being prepared.

In addition to the Franciscan members of the **World Synod of Bishops on the Family** listed in the September issue, Cardinal Wilfrid Napier, O.F.M., (a member of the commission planning this synod) was also named a delegate president. Archbishop Charles Chaput, O.F.M., Cap., is the reporter for the English D small group.

Archbishop Joannis Spiteris, O.F.M., Cap., (Corfu, Santa and Cephalonia) was one of the synod’s papal appointees, and Antonio Moser, O.F.M., (Petropolis was one of the collaborators of the synod special secretary).

An English-language course of 13 new Capuchin, Conventual, and O.F.M. missionaries began at **Our Lady of the Nations Friary in Brussels**. Participants will eventually serve in Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Ghana, Congo, Denmark, the Philippines and India.

Topics covered include justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, secularism in Europe, mission work in Asia, the cultures and religions of Africa, fraternal finances in the missions and the role of the lead. A weeklong pilgrimage to Assisi and other

Franciscan sites in Italy will be part of the program. A French-language program will also be offered.

On November 21, in Barcelona, **Frederico of Berga and 25 other Capuchin martyrs** (1936-39) were beatified. Frederico was the Guardian of a friary in Arenys after having served as a missionary in Costa Rica and as provincial minister. Many of the friars were seized in private homes of friends. “Ready to Give It All” is the minister general’s circular letter to mark this occasion.

Franciscan scholars around the world now have a priceless resource online. All the English texts of Volume 1 of *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (New City Press) are posted (except for the liturgical texts) through a link at <http://franciscantradition.org>. The Latin, French and Italian originals are also there. Most of the texts in *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* are posted as well. This electronic version of *FA:ED* (Volume 1) was created by the Institute of Digital Theology at Saint Louis University in collaboration with SLU’s department of theological studies. Copyright restrictions are noted.

Key websites

www.ifc.tor
www.ofm.org
www.ofmconv.net
www.ofmcap.org
www.franciscanfriarstor.com

National News

After Pope Francis’ September visit to Cuba and the United States, *Love Is Our Mission*, the official 128-page commemorative book, was published in late October by Catholic News Service (Washington, DC) and Franciscan Media (Cincinnati). CNS provided photos and texts; Franciscan Media provided the editing and design. The digital files were sent to the printer 10 days after the visit concluded.

Cardinal Stritch University’s St. Clare Center has presented the first two sessions of its 2015-16 **Forums on Faith and Work**. These forums enable professions to gather, network, build connections and explore Gospel values with members of the Catholic business and professional community.

Roundtable

Bishop Don Hying discussed how Catholics can form themselves in deeper discipleship and how they are sent into the world to love and serve. Ann Garrido addressed several questions: How can we be attentive to God's grace in our work, our daily tasks, and amid the many tasks of administration? How can we allow God, through our work, to make more of us through spirituality?

Ilia Delio, O.S.F., gave Catholic Theological Union's **Duns Scotus lecture** last October. Her presentation ("Evolution and the Primacy of Christ: From Scotus to Teilhard") stressed that a new cosmology allows us to see how deeply connected we are, an insight that Teilhard emphasized later in life. A podcast of her talk is available. Teilhard is the only Jesuit cited by name in *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis' encyclical on care for our common home.

Introducing Junipero Serra: The Newest Saint, a 25-minute film that presents Serra's life and ministry, also contains interviews with Californians descended from indigenous people baptized at the missions and comments by Serra biographers Robert Senkewicz and Rose Marie Beebe. The interviews focus on the controversy connected to the mission enterprise. Produced by the Academy of American Franciscan History (Oceanside, CA), the film is also available at <https://vimeo.com/139092716>.

At Briarcliff University in Sioux City, IA, "**The Rabbis & Their Bible**" was presented by Dr. Joel Allen in the Sr. Ruth Agnes Ahlers Lecture Series last October. Doctor Allen, who teaches at Dakota Wesleyan University, explored how the Jewish rabbis interpreted their sacred texts and how their methods influenced both Jesus and St. Paul. The lecture was sponsored by the theology department.

Franciscan Mission Service has placed **Patrick Montine** and **Brandon Newland** in Jamaica, working with friars of St. John the Baptist Province. They are both involved in youth ministry. Brandon has also helped build a chicken coop to raise poultry for St. Anthony's Kitchen at St. Joseph Parish in Savanna-la-Mar.

Since 2009, Sr. Frances Joseph Piazza (Sisters of St. Francis of the Newman Communities) has been a **volunteer "cuddler"** at Sisters Hospital (Buffalo) for babies suffering from neonatal abstinence syndrome (withdrawal from opiate addiction or fetal alcohol syndrome). A registered nurse specializing in maternal and child health, Sister Francis maintains

a scrapbook of babies she has cared for over the years, reported *The Buffalo News*.

Over 75 O.F.M.s from 10 provinces in the United States, Korea, the Philippines and Australia gathered at St. Francis Retreat Center in San Juan Bautista, California for the first English-speaking Conference **Convocation of Lay Franciscan Friars**.

General Minister Michael Perry and General Councilor Caoimhim O'Laoide took part in this August 10-14 gathering that included presentations on their past and present and heard from the interprovincial team working on options for reconfiguring the U.S. provinces.

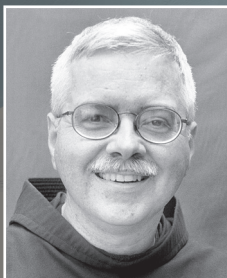
Two videos from the Franciscan Federation's 2015 conference ("Responding to God's Love: A Franciscan Moral Vision") have been posted on their website.

"Franciscans: Prophets Still Needing Conversion" was the theme of the **2015 Fiesta Franciscana** last October in San Antonio. Pat McCloskey, O.F.M. was the presenter for this InterFranciscan event, now in its fifth year. Last spring, they held their third music and arts event.

At October's **national chapter**, Secular Franciscans elected a new national fraternity for three-year terms: Jan Parker (ministers, O'Fallon, MO) Mary Bittner (vice minister, Ypsilanti, MI), Mattie Ward (treasurer, New Hope, PA), Jerry Rousseau (treasurer, Blairsville, GA) and councilors Mary Stronach (Marcy, NY), Mary Frances Charsky (Binghamton, NY), Awilda Guadalupe (Newnan, GA), and Joan Geiger (Bellerose, NY). Bob Brady, OFM (Oakland, CA) is the president-in-turn.

Key websites

www.franfed.org
www.escofm.org
www.franciscancollegesuniversities.org



Compiled by **Pat McCloskey, O.F.M.**, author of *Peace and Good: Through the Year with Francis of Assisi* (Franciscan Media). Send news items for this column to pmcloskey@FranciscanMedia.org. He serves as Franciscan Editor of *St. Anthony Messenger* and writes its "Dear Reader," and "Ask a Franciscan" columns. He also edits *Weekday Homily Helps*.

Our Dante:

Pope Francis and the Year of Mercy

By Dabney Park, Ph.D.

Get ready! The Holy Year of Mercy begins on December 8, 2015. Pope Francis has enjoined the faithful to meditate on the *Divine Comedy* of Dante Alighieri during this extraordinary Jubilee.¹ If you are not fluent in Italian, it's time to select your English translation. I prefer the translation by John Ciardi, available in both hardback and paperback from Norton.² Ciardi's notes are excellent, but the brilliance of his English translation lies in his own standing as a poet. With so many fewer rhyming words in English than Italian, Ciardi wisely does not attempt to reproduce Dante's *terza rima* (aba, bcb, cdc, etc.), but his language is vigorous and he approximates the pace and driving energy of Dante's text by rhyming the first and third lines of each tercet (three-lined stanza). That said, there are many other fine translations from which to choose. For the best commentary with text in both Italian and English, I recommend the three volumes by Robert and Jean Hollander.³ As to how to read this incredible poem, my advice is don't try to read it straight through. You can read one canto of the 100 cantos every other day and easily complete your reading in one year, excluding weekends. You are better off to read Dante slowly, meditate on each canto, and, above all, pay careful attention. Those who take their time at this pleasant but arduous task will be richly rewarded for their efforts.

First, however, it will behoove you to think carefully about why you are reading the *Divine Comedy*. Dante himself tells us that the purpose of the poem is "to remove those living in this life from a state of misery [and] to lead them to a state of happiness (*felicitas*)."⁴ For many who are healthy and economically somewhat comfortable in modern day America, it is important to remember that not all miseries are physical and that troubles abound throughout our world. But Dante's point (and Pope Francis') is that the *Divine Comedy* was written to lead its readers toward a state of happiness, blessedness, beatitude, and *salvation*. This fourteenth-century Florentine poet devoted his entire being to the end that you and I might be saved by the grace of God. Wow! As you read and meditate on the *Divine Comedy*, be fully aware that the stakes are high.

All Franciscans, fellow travelers, and admirers of Pope Francis

rightly rejoice in Jorge Maria Bergoglio's choice of the Founder's name, in many of the pontiff's statements and actions, and in his encouragement of the faithful to read the *Divine Comedy* during this Holy Year of Mercy. Drawing from Francis, Bonaventure, and other Franciscans, as well as from classical thought and the theology of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and many others, Dante offers us a powerful presentation on the journey of the soul to God in his master poem. It is a journey that recommends itself to everyone, but that has distinctly Franciscan roots.

The high esteem that Pope Francis has for Dante finds antecedents among his pontifical predecessors. In fact, Dante has been called the "poet of popes."⁵ Leo XIII, in his paean to St. Francis in 1882, noted that Dante celebrated the Founder in his verse.⁶ Benedict XV's encyclical *In praeclara summorum* celebrated Dante on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of the poet's death in 1921,⁷ and Paul VI used the closing day of Vatican II to issue the *motu proprio* entitled *Altissimi cantus*,⁸ a ringing endorsement of Dante's poem as well as an insightful and original critique of the *Divine Comedy*.⁹ Pope Francis has followed in the footsteps of his predecessors by endorsing both the Christian character of the poem and Dante's consummate skills as a poet. He has also highlighted the value of the *Divine Comedy* for Catholics as a model for the journey of the soul to God. Paul VI even said "*Dantes noster est*." The twentieth-century papacy has claimed Dante for its own.

Such respect for the *Divine Comedy* and its author is relatively new; it took 700 years for popes to embrace the Florentine poet. Pope John XXII backed Cardinal Bertrand del Poggetto when he put the *Monarchy* to flames for heresy not long after Dante's death. This suspect work found itself on the Index of Prohibited Books in 1585, and it stayed there until 1881. Meanwhile, the *Divine Comedy* was carefully censored more than once to remove the offensive parts. While few, if any, Dante scholars today would accuse Dante of unorthodoxy to the point of heresy, it should also be said that, as we gain a better understanding of the historical context behind the poet's work, we are learning that Dante's thought is often significantly unconventional.¹⁰

1 Message of His Holiness Pope Francis to Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, the president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, for the Solemn Celebration of the 750th Anniversary of the Birth of the Supreme Poet Dante Alighieri, 4 May 2015.

2 *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: The John Ciardi Translation* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1954 and subsequent editions).

3 Dante Alighieri, *Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso*, tr. Robert and Jean Hollander, with Introduction and Notes by Robert Hollander (New York and London: Doubleday, 2000, 2003, and 2007, respectively).

4 Dante's letter to Can Grande della Scala, *Epistola X*, in *Dantis Alagherii Epistolae: The Letters of Dante*, ed. and tr. Paget Toynbee (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 202.

5 Ann Schneible, "Dante's Biggest Fans? The 'poet of popes' and his legacy at the Vatican," *EWTV News*, online at www.ewtvnews.com/catholic-news/World.php?id=11850, accessed on 10/19/15.

6 Leo XIII, *Auspicato concessum*, 17 September 1882.

7 Benedict XV, *In praeclara summorum*, 30 April 1921. Benedict also established a chair in Dante studies at the University of the Sacred Heart in Milan.

8 Paul V, *Altissimi cantus*, 7 December 1965; published as "*Altissimi cantus*": *motu proprio di Paolo VI per il VII centenario della nascita di Dante Alighieri* (Rome: Edizioni Paoline, 1966).

9 See Kenelm Foster, O.P., "The Pope and Poetry," *Dante Studies* 87 (1969): 147-51.

10 Teodolinda Barolini, "Dante's Sympathy for the Other, or the Non-

The papacy is not the only entity to claim Dante as its own. *Nostro Dante* has been a rallying cry for generations of Italian patriots, at least since the middle of the nineteenth century. For Italian nationalists like Gabriele Rossetti, Ugo Foscolo, and Giuseppe Mazzini, Dante became the prophet of the new, secular nation, an apostle of a unified Italy.¹¹ Dante and Italian patriotism have been intertwined ever since. There is every reason that Italians should be proud of the poet whose language served them as a fixed point in the difficult process of stitching towns, cities, contados, provinces, and mini-states together into a country.¹² The remnants of this sentiment are still strong in the Italian public schools, where Dante is regarded as a virtual father of the Republic. In the end, however, the nationalist way of reading the *Divine Comedy* is a tradition by and for Italian patriots; this limits the appeal of his message to those not raised in the Italian culture.

The struggle between the Italian nationalist and the Roman Catholic interpretations of Dante came to a head in the 1860s when the new Italian nation confiscated the Papal States from the Church and confined the popes to the Vatican. The popes remained angry and the secular government remained unrepentant for a long time. Pope Francis took a major step toward the reconciliation of this situation on May 4 of this year when he sent Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, to read the papal statement praising Dante as “one of the most illustrious figures not only for Italians but for all of humanity” before the Senate of the Republic of Italy.¹³

But *Dantes noster est* and *nostro Dante* are not the only ways to read the *Divine Comedy*; the poem is a journey of the soul, and its idiom *did* help establish a common language that contributed to the unification of the Italian nation. In addition to these two traditions, other readers have focused on the quality of Dante’s poetry, i.e., on seeing him primarily as a master poet, and not so much as a spiritual guide or a civic, secular hero. Poets and critics of literature have done this through the centuries. No less a literary light than T. S. Eliot famously said that “Dante and Shakespeare divide the modern world between them; there is no third.”¹⁴ No one doubts that as a poet Dante was a master technician. The literary tradition is just as valid as the others, and it should be appreciated by any who would strive to read Dante.

Almost everyone agrees that the power of Dante’s poetry comes from his message. Part of that message, as we have seen, and as twentieth-century popes have emphasized, is focused on the individual journey of the soul to God. But equally important to Dante is his urgent call for ecclesiastical and political reform. It is this prophetic message of blame and hope that moves the journey of the *Divine Comedy* along and provides the motive force and power that makes Dante’s poem at once brilliant and important.

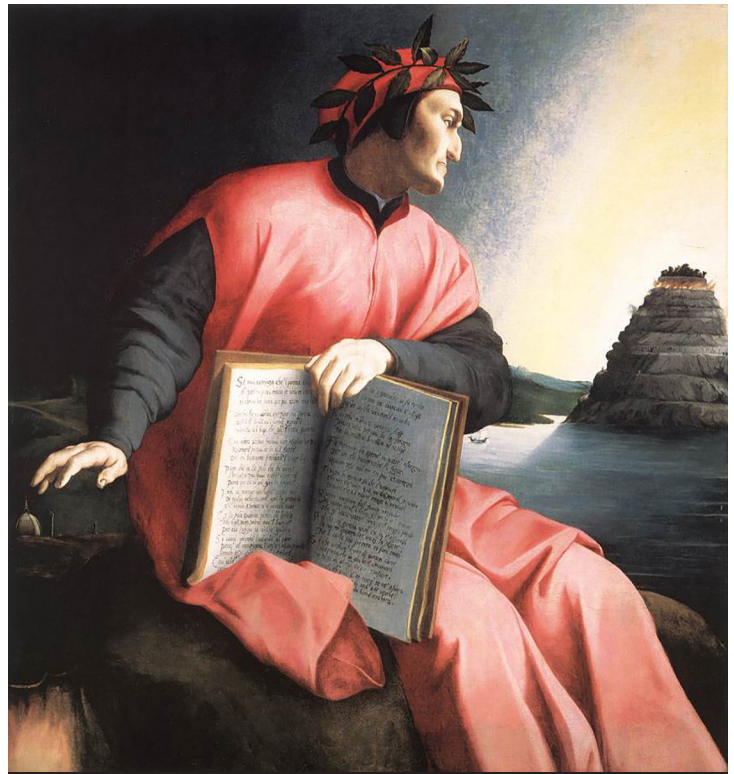
Stereotyping Imagination: Sexual and Racialized Others in the *Commedia*,” *Critica del Testo* 14/1 (2011): 177-204, at 184, writes: “We must also contend with the relentless appropriation of Dante’s authority by the Catholic church and the Italian state, which have successfully configured this unorthodox thinker as an enforcer of orthodoxy.”

11 See Charles Till Davis, “Dante and Italian Nationalism,” in *A Dante Symposium in Commemoration of the 700th Anniversary of the Poet’s Birth (1265–1965)*, ed. William de Sua and Gino Rizzo (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 199–213, and Stefano Jossa, “Politics vs. Literature: The Myth of Dante and the Italian National Identity,” in *Dante and the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Aida Avdeh and Nick Havely (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 30–50.

12 It is worth noting that Dante not only dared to write in a version Italian, but that he wrote a treatise supporting the use of the vernacular, *De vulgari eloquentia*.

13 Message of His Holiness Pope Francis, paragraph 1.

14 T. S. Eliot, *Dante* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965; first published in 1932), 46.



“Allegorical Portrait of Dante”
by Agnolo Bronzino /
Held at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

The Holy Roman emperor was to play a critical role by curbing human cupidity, by subduing the unruly power of the emerging nation-states and independent cities throughout Europe, and most of all by reclaiming the Donation of Constantine and insisting that the Church fulfill its proper role as a spiritual and not a temporal force.¹⁵ Given the world in which he lived, it is natural that he would have seen the empire as the solution to the political problem. But Dante’s underlying concern was to affirm the existence of secular government among humans, a structure not dominated by the Church. He envisioned a political society based on Aristotle’s *Politics* that would enable human beings to achieve fulfillment in this life through well-ordered relations among individuals, neighbors, cities, and kingdoms.

By far the most vigorous and critical part of Dante’s message was directed toward the ecclesiastical hierarchy itself. He placed no fewer than ten popes in Hell, and he names several of them, along with unnumbered cardinals and other clerics. Dante the pilgrim in the poem is never angrier than in *Inferno* 19, the canto of the simoniacs, where he encounters Pope Nicholas III and condemns the dead pope as the beast rising from the sea in chapter 13 of the Apocalypse of St. John. Nicholas in turn expects to see Boniface VIII and Clement V follow him into this disgusting pit in the *Inferno*. Dante the author displays equal outrage in *Paradiso* 27, where he has St. Peter refer to Clement V and John XXII as “ravenous wolves in shepherds’ clothing” who have made the pope’s tomb “a sewer of blood and filth” and who prepare to drink the blood of the apostles. Perhaps these deep feelings about ecclesiastical corruption prompted him to choose Virgil, a pagan poet, and Beatrice, a young Florentine lay woman who died at age

15 See Dabney Park, “Dante and the Donation of Constantine,” *Dante Studies* 130 (2012): 67–161.

23, as his guides to the other world, right up to the last few cantos of the *Paradiso*. Here, St. Bernard takes Dante the pilgrim through the last few steps—acting as his guide, not as his priest. No priest plays a role in Dante’s journey to salvation. Small wonder that popes before the twentieth century have neglected to see the Florentine poet as “Dantes noster est.”

It would be a mistake to see the *Divine Comedy* only as critical of the Church. Dante throughout maintains a reverence for the Petrine papacy, while at the same time he calls for the hierarchy to return to the simplicity and purity of the primitive Church of the apostles. He hopes for a Church focused exclusively on spiritual matters, leaving temporal affairs to the civil authority. St. Francis of Assisi’s sharp focus on the imitation of Christ became for Dante the ideal model for the Church. The proper form of the Church, he tells us in the *Monarchy*, is simply the life of Christ.¹⁶ Dante sees the poverty and simplicity of the Franciscan life in the careers of St. Peter and St. Paul, the early popes, St. Benedict, St. Peter Damian, St. Bernard, and St. Dominic. Never does he compromise on the principles that the Church should live in poverty, that its resources belong to the poor, and that simplicity, humility, and dedication to the spiritual mission of the Church are paramount. Dante learned most of his message of ecclesiastical reform from St. Francis, St. Bonaventure, Peter of John Olivi, Ubertino of Casale, and other Franciscans whose works he read and with whom he was personally connected both before and after he was banished from Florence in 1302.¹⁷ He saw Francis as the perfect imitator of Christ. With all thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Franciscans, he believed that the way to reform the Church was to return to the simplicity, humility, and poverty of Jesus and the apostles. The positive image of Francis re-enacting the life of Christ was certainly the most powerful influence on Dante’s understanding of how the Church should be reformed.

From St. Bonaventure’s *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* (The Journey of the Mind to God),¹⁸ Dante learned about the way of the soul to God. Through this saint’s *Apologia pauperum* (Apology for Poverty), the poet began to understand the meaning of Franciscan poverty and the vital distinction between ownership and poor use. While St. Bonaventure considered all Franciscan properties to be owned by the popes, he insisted that the brothers were bound to a strict standard (*arctus paupertas*) in the use of material goods. This message was strongly seconded by Peter of John Olivi, who took a further step: he sharply criticized the abuses of papal Rome, even suggesting that the Rome of his own day was the Great Whore of Apocalypse 17.¹⁹ Olivi’s protégé Ubertino of Casale took yet another step by naming Pope Boniface VIII and Benedict XI as corrupt popes who led the carnal Church.²⁰

Franciscans today, who are rightly returning to their medieval

roots in search of an even better understanding of their charism, would do well to pay attention not only to Dante’s journey of the soul during this Holy Year of Mercy, but also to his vital message of the need to purify the Church. The Catholic Church and its hierarchy remain in desperate need of reform. Dante’s bitter invectives about the corruption of the hierarchy, the self-seeking of too many clergy, and the widespread cupidity that drives too many of the ordained ministry, unfortunately continue to ring true today in too many quarters. *Aggiornamento* is an understandably scary term in the second decade of the twenty-first century, a phrase better not to use in the current context of gay marriage and widespread abortion. But some would say that the misuse of wealth and power, the self-promoting behavior of too many clergy, the ostentation of the hierarchy, the suppression of women, and especially the disgrace of sexual abuse, render ecclesiastical reform as urgent today as it was in the early 1300s when Dante spilled his heart onto the pages of his poem.

The pope named Francis shows signs of understanding all of this, and he has taken some important steps in the right direction. He has placed major emphasis on reconciliation during the Holy Year of Mercy. It is no accident that he made the announcement calling for the extraordinary Jubilee on March 13, the second anniversary of his elevation to the papacy, nor that he timed it to start on December 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception and the 50th anniversary of the end of Vatican II, nor that he called for the faithful to meditate on the *Divine Comedy* during the course of this year. But Francis and his predecessors have tended to downplay the corruption of the Church as a thing of the distant past and have opted instead for an interpretation of the *Divine Comedy* that makes Dante safe for Catholics.²¹

One can hope that this pope will move beyond the journey of the individual soul to enjoin the entire hierarchy to meditate on Dante’s Franciscan-inspired message of ecclesiastical reform during this penitential year. The name he chose for himself demands at least that. He has called Dante “the prophet of hope.”²² The journey of individual souls to God should find a parallel effort in the pope’s encouragement to make the Church morally better and spiritually closer to the unblemished Bride of Christ.

21 There is some irony in Francis’s declaration of a Jubilee, a tradition reportedly started by Dante’s nemesis, Boniface VIII. Paul VI, *In praeclara summorum* 6, says that “it cannot be denied that at that time there were matters on which the clergy might be reproved” and notes Dante’s “bitterness against the Supreme Pontiffs of his times,” but he then says that while “with lacerated mind he breaks out sometimes into words of excessive blame.” Dante never failed in his reverence for the Keys of Peter. This is the only reference I have found in the key papal documents that acknowledges Dante’s criticism of the Church. In a similar vein, Anthony Esolen, in an interview with Gerald Korson of *Catholic Pulse* published online, excuses Dante’s criticisms by saying that “any poet is going to be a little offbeat now and then.” Responsible readers should be wary of allowing any such narrow interpretation of the poem to hold sway.

22 Message of His Holiness Pope Francis, paragraph 8.

16 Dante Alighieri, *Monarchy*, 3.15.3, tr. and ed. Prue Shaw (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), 90.

17 See Dabney Park, “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: What Dante Says about Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, Matthew of Acquasparta, and Ubertino da Casale,” *Dante Studies* 132 (2014): 267-312.

18 Sofia Vanni Rovighi, s.v., “Bonaventura,” *Enciclopedia dantesca* I (1970), sees the *Itinerarium* as the model at the base of Dante’s ascent to God. See also Edward Hagman, “Dante’s Vision of God: The End of the *Itinerarium Mentis*,” *Dante Studies* 106 (1988): 1-20.

19 Charles Till Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 220-35.

20 Ubertino of Casale, *Arbor vitae crucifixae Jesu* 5:8 (Venice: Andreas de Bonetis, 1485), facsimile reproduction with an introduction by Charles Till Davis (Turin: Bottega d’Erasmus, 1961), f. 432a.



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In the Footsteps of Christ:

The Franciscan Identity of St. Marianne Cope

By Kevin Elphick

When Mother Marianne Cope was canonized in the fall of 2012, it was easy to see her as a quintessentially Franciscan Saint. She had cared for the poor, taught children, helped the addicted, established hospitals, nursed the sick, and, with the final decades of her life, lived with the lepers of Molokai. That she followed in the footsteps of Francis and Clare could not be clearer as we celebrated her life of ministry and prayer.

However, it could be asked how she understood her own Franciscan vocation. After all, St. John Neumann founded Cope's Franciscan community in 1855, a mere 17 years after Cope herself had been born. Bishop Neumann, a Redemptorist, had gone to Rome in 1855 to request permission from Pope Pius IX to bring an established community of women religious to Philadelphia. Instead, Pope Pius, himself a Franciscan Tertiary, urged Neumann to establish his own Franciscan foundation in the United States. The Spirit was already moving forward with this vision, for while still in Rome, Neumann received a letter from a priest of his in the States, seeking approval to establish a Franciscan community, beginning with three determined women in Philadelphia. On Easter Monday of that year, these three women took the habit and adopted the Rule Bishop Neumann had written for them.¹ However, the Rule had little which would characterize it as Franciscan. Written by a Redemptorist bishop, only the wearing of the habit and cord, and the observance of Francis' and Clare's Feast days gave it any identifiably Franciscan characteristics.

As Capuchin Friar Van Dijk has noted:

In the 19th century there was an incredible proliferation of female congregations. Many of them, because the Third Order rule is so flexible, were Franciscan. ...[T]hese congregations continued to emerge sometimes, it must be admitted, to the detriment of unified activity and sometimes even to the detriment of a true Franciscan spirituality. (Merely tying a cord around one's waist does not suffice, after all, to make one a Franciscan!) Sometimes the Franciscan rule and St. Francis' patronage were chosen hastily as a new foundation was launched.²

While Neumann's Rule for this nascent community was sparse in its Franciscan elements, the three original members were keen on their identity as Franciscan. One of them, Anna Dorn, had initially been a lay "Secular" Franciscan and brought this knowledge and

charism to her fellow sisters. It was Dorn herself who went on to lead the community in Syracuse, which Cope would eventually join.

In Cope's own life before joining the Sisters, Third Order Secular spirituality also played a formative role. Unable to enter the convent while she still needed to care for her infirm father, in 1859 Cope joined the Secular Franciscan Order in her local city of Utica, N.Y. The ledgers of this Secular Franciscan Fraternity in Utica have only recently come to light and point to her joining their community and selecting St. Clare as her specific patron Saint. Notably, St. Clare was also the name of the convent of these Franciscan Sisters newly living in Utica.³ The ledger also chronicles Dorn's connection to this Franciscan lay community, noting her profession before Bishop Neumann among its many entries. Herein we already see Cope's intentionality in seeking out a Franciscan identity and her purposefulness in selecting St. Clare as her patron, a saint emblematic of a female Franciscan vision.

While her ministries and heroic actions have been written about and advanced in her canonization process, Cope's writings have had much less visibility. Where her faith-in-action caring for the poor, the marginalized, and the sick readily evidence her Franciscan identity, her writings (largely letters, correspondence, and journal entries) have been far less explored for their Franciscan content. Mother Marianne's writings give ready evidence that not only was she conscious of her Franciscan identity, but that she was actively reflective of the Franciscan tradition and gave it expression in her apostolate.

She used her knowledge of the Franciscan charism to motivate not only her own ministry, but that of her fellow sisters as well. In the writings of both St. Francis and St. Clare we find exhortations to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and his Mother. St. Marianne echoed this tradition when she wrote to Sr. Mary Bonaventure: "For Jesus' dear sake, take up your cross and follow Him on the thorny path His blood stained feet have traced out for you." And ever the practical administrator, she does not unnecessarily spiritualize this walking in the footsteps of Christ, but instead she concretizes it in the lived reality of Sr. Mary Bonaventure: "Follow Him cheerfully and patiently even though it be in the performance of Hospital duties" (Letter dated February 6th, 1882). For Mother Marianne and all Franciscans, our following in the footsteps of Christ is not an intellectual abstraction, but real, concrete actions whereby we imitate the Wounded Healer, caring for our sisters and brothers.

In St. Francis' Testament, he identifies his time spent with those suffering from Hansen's Disease, the "lepers," as the catalyst to his conversion. In the primitive Franciscan community, ministry among the leper colonies was an essential element of their early, formative identity.⁴ When Cope wrote her letter whereby she commit-

1 See Raffaella Pazzelli's *The Franciscan Sisters: Outlines of History and Spirituality* (Steubenville, OH: Franciscan University Press, 1993), pp. 151-3.

2 Willibrord-Christian Van Dijk, O.F.M., Cap., *Gospel Living: Francis of Assisi Yesterday and Today*, (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1994), pp. 243-244. In her unpublished, 1998 graduate thesis, "The Common Historical Roots of the Neumann/Bachmann Congregations," Sister Mary C. Gurley, O.S.F., uses this same quote to introduce her recovery of the historical origins of the community to which both she and Mother Marianne belong.

3 Sr. Mary Laurence Hanley's *Pilgrimage and Exile: Mother Marianne of Molokai* (Honolulu, Hawaii: Mutual Publishing, 2009), p. 12.

4 Care for the leper was so embodied in the early Franciscan identity that 14th century friar, Angelo Clareno records a vision of a fellow friar who is carried to heaven to see St. Francis in glory. There the friar is led by an angel to find St. Francis still caring for a leper in his beatific reward and doing such 'at Christ's



From the collection of the Saint Marianne Cope Shrine & Museum

ted herself to the lepers of Molokai, she was consciously imitating St. Francis and explained her plan “to accept the work in the name of the great St. Francis.” Her choice of language demonstrated how specifically impassioned she was to begin this quintessentially Franciscan ministry: “I am hungry for the work and I wish with all my heart to be one of the chosen ones, whose privilege it will be, to sacrifice themselves for the salvation of the souls of the poor Islanders... I am not afraid of any disease. Hence it would be my greatest delight even to minister to the abandoned lepers” (Letter dated July 12th, 1883). In this moment, Mother Marianne places herself in a long line of Franciscan saints (like Elizabeth of Hungary, Giles, Angela of Foligno, Vivaldo and Bartolo) who cared for people with Hansen’s Disease and other feared illnesses. She intentionally aligns herself with the marginalized and outcast, knowing this to be a further blossoming of her Franciscan vocation.

Following in the footsteps of Jesus, Mother Marianne knew Jesus’ journey placed Him in the company of lepers and the outcast. She too would follow Him there. In her journal she wrote: “I felt deeply effected [sic] by the thought that our dear Lord and Savior dwells in the poor tabernacle even here with the poor unclean lepers” (December 25th, 1888). On Christmas Day it is her reflection that God becomes Emmanuel, “God with us,” making family of all humankind. She is profoundly moved to discover that in a place where the government has cast out its own people, literally exiling them apart to a remote isle, even there God is incarnate and present. She made it her remaining lifework in Molokai to manifest this incarnate presence of God.

Mother Marianne perceived her role to be an agent to her fellow brothers and sisters of God’s own love. As such, she was a channel of God’s charity. She wrote to the Director of the Board of Health: “For us it is happiness to be able to comfort, in a measure, the poor exiles, and we rejoice that we are unworthy agents of our heavenly Father through whom He deigns to show His great love and mercy to the sufferers...” But astutely, she recognizes that existing social structures must also change in order to bring about the justice of the Reign of God, and so she reminds the government of its duty to the lepers: “...but we cannot accomplish much without the cooperation of the government and the Board of Health.” Like the early Franciscans, Francis, Leo, Clare, Agnes and others whose lives were a witness-filled challenge to the citizens of Assisi, Cope

command.” (*A Chronicle or History of the Seven Tribulations of the Order of Brothers Minor, “The Fourth Tribulation.”*)

too challenged the institutional structures of her day. After her arrival she intently listened to the native lepers and learned of their demise whereby the strong preyed upon the more vulnerable. Like a prophet of old she writes “The main cause of the terrible affliction resting upon the poor people, is well known... To us it is shocking, to see how poorly the helpless ... are protected, and how much they are exposed to danger.... Their pitiable condition appeals strongly to our sympathy.” Mother Marianne sought action from the Board of Health “without delay” (Letter to William Gibson, Board of Health, dated January 7th, 1884).

But her social justice impetus was not limited to appeals to civil government alone. She also wrote on behalf of the lepers to the Bishop of the Hawaiian Islands, demanding of him that he “...secure for us the rights we should have to be able to do justice to both the government and the poor entrusted to our care. ... Consider us your children and be to us a Father and a Protector... for the poor children of St. Francis” (Letter dated March 14th, 1884). Here it is notable to hear Mother Marianne invoking given rights so as to do justice to the poor, all the while addressing herself to the Bishop. One is reminded of St. Clare’s continued challenge to the Pope for approval of her community’s Rule and way of life, in which she also invoked their status as poor children of St. Francis. But here, Mother Marianne, freed of any monastic enclosure and living deeply in a secular context, demands that their God-given rights be secured, that justice be done, and she intentionally aligns herself with the poor, recognizing that she is one with them. By recognizing her kinship with the poor, Mother Marianne embodies the best and highest values of the Franciscan charism.

Saints are shared with the universal Church as role models and examples of the Christian life we should lead. Mother Marianne is shown to be an extraordinary exemplar and paradigmatic Franciscan as evidenced by both her actions and her writings. She is a founder of hospitals, teacher, healer, prophet, and advocate. Sometimes the heroism of our great saints can leave us despairing of ever imitating such heights of virtue. And so the final quote to be shared is intended to remind us of the humanness of our saints. On a sultry Hawaiian evening she wrote: “Weather warm- ... I was too tired to pray-“ (Journal, April 28th, 1900). I take comfort in a saint who is too tired to pray. Think of St. Francis who belatedly realizes he has been too hard on his body, “Brother Ass.” It is profoundly Franciscan to recognize the fragility of our human condition, our “fragilitas.”⁵ But as St. Francis said, God delighted to become human and share in our fragility. And that is what I hear in this aging saint, at the end of a long day, who solely takes notice of the weather, and then admits she is just too tired to pray. She embraces her human condition. And we all can imitate that. It is a Franciscan way of being.

5 In St. Francis’ *Second Letter to the Faithful*, he writes that in the womb of the Virgin, Christ received “our humanity and fragility,” our “fragilitatis.” Poor Clare, Ruth Agnes Evans, O.S.C., provides an excellent meditation on the Franciscan concept of “fragilitas” in her article “Fragilitas or the Capacity to be Broken” in *The Cord*, Volume 59, Number 4, (2009), pp. 391-408.



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Research and Rare Books:

An Interview with Paul Spaeth, St. Bonaventure University Rare Book and Manuscript Collection Librarian

Interview conducted by Marcus Jones

When was the St. Bonaventure University Rare Book and Manuscript Collection first put together?

The Collection's origins are almost as old as St. Bonaventure University. A newly ordained Italian friar began to collect materials for what was then a college in the later part of the 1800s. This coupled with books from one of the College's early presidents formed the foundation of the Rare Books Collection. The next phase did not happen until the 1940s when the Franciscan Institute was founded, and with that founding there was a gathering of materials by a group of Belgian friars to support a program of medieval text editing. The other five parts of the Collection came here from Franciscan provinces that had gathered rare materials, or brought materials with them when the provinces were formed in this country. From the mid-1970s through the 1980s collections came from the O.F.M., provinces of Holy Name, St. John the Baptist, and Assumption, along with the O.F.M. Conventual province of the Immaculate Conception.

Who commissioned it?

As the Collection has come from a number of Franciscan provinces I suppose you could say that the Franciscan Order itself commissioned it stemming from the time when the Order entered into the University life of the later Middle Ages. In this way, it can be seen as being part of the Franciscan Charism, but one that is usually not brought to the forefront; after all, Francis did not give much encouragement to such collecting among the brothers.

Where is it housed, and has it always been housed where it is now?

The Collection is housed in the Holy Name Library, which opened in 2008, and is a wing of the St. Bonaventure University's

Friedsam Memorial Library. Previous to the construction of this state-of-the-art facility, the Collection was housed in a number of different rooms in the main library.

What does it contain?

The Collection contains about 100 late medieval manuscripts ranging in date from around the year 1000 to the 1600s that are full books, another 100 modern manuscripts ranging from the 1600s to the 20th century, nearly 300 examples of early printed books called Incunabula (books printed from 1450 to 1500), and nearly 10,000 other printed books most of which were published in the 1500s, 1600s, and 1700s.

Why is the Collection important for the public to know about? Why should the general public care?

There is no collection like this in New York State outside of the New York City area. The Collection offers the general public a unique window into antiquity that they will not be able to find other places.

Why should Franciscans care?

All the materials from the various parts of the Collection have been gathered by Franciscans and, in many cases, produced by Franciscans. Some of the manuscript material was actually written at the same time when St. Francis himself was here among us. You would have to go to Europe to find a richer source for the study of St. Francis and his Order, and even going there, you would find collections that are on a par with what is here, not greater than what we have.

Why should Catholics care?

I suppose the easiest way to answer this question is simply to remind Catholics of the name that the present Pope chose when he took office.

What, in your opinion, are the rarest items in this collection?

This is a question I am often asked, along with asking what is the most valuable item. Rarity only means there are few of something around, or perhaps even that the item is unique. So in this case the rarest items we have are the manuscripts, which are of course unique, one-of-a-kind items.

What pieces excite you the most?

That is an impossible question to answer since the Collection is so large and varied that I am always coming across new things that I had not known about or had not been able to fully appreciate before. And of course, each new research inquiry from scholars throughout the world creates its own special brand of excitement and discovery.

What pieces excite visitors/tour groups the most?

There are a number of set items that I show people in order to talk about manuscripts and rare books, but I usually like to have a few people select a volume from the shelves and carefully bring it to a table where we can examine what it is and how it was made. Every item selected comes alive for the visitor who never thought they would have the chance to come into such personal contact with antiquity. [Visitors are] surprised when the item is usually much more durable than modern-day books.

What pieces excite Franciscan scholars the most?

Franciscan scholars are excited by the fact that all these resources are gathered in one place, and that all the materials have come here through Franciscan hands; they reflect the varied interests that have formed the intellectual and spiritual interests of Fran-

ciscans literally through the centuries.

How many people use this collection for their research, and who are they?

The Collection is used almost daily, but usually through email inquiries and the like, although there are many who come here and sit in the beautifully appointed reading room to use the physical materials. To give just one recent example from this past week, we have been finishing formatting digital images of a manuscript from the 1400s for use by a medievalist who teaches and lives on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. As a result, we incorporated the digital images of the full manuscript on our permanent website for that scholar and whoever else might want to have reference to it.

How does one arrange a time to conduct research in this collection?

Such arrangements are made through myself in my role as Rare Books and Special Collection Librarian, a role that, of late, has become my primary area of focus.

Is it open to anyone or just scholars?

It is open to anyone, but must be consulted through the mediation of a Librarian if for no other reason than that of security. Of course a majority of the collection is not in English, most being in Latin, which was the language of the Church and the universal academic [language] in Europe well into the 18th century. So there is a certain knowledge base that one must have to really make use of the Collection.

Can groups take tours of the collection?

Groups are certainly welcome, but groups of no more than a dozen at a time.

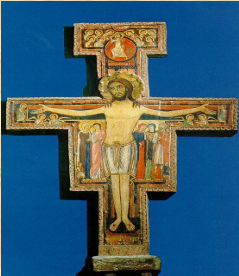
What does this collection add to the knowledge of the Franciscan tradition?

I like to characterize the Collection as being the embodiment of the Franciscan intellectual tradition. It is exactly that and is a reflection of the spiritual aspirations as well.

What are the challenges of maintaining and even building a Franciscan collection?

Possibly the greatest challenge, outside of obtaining funding support, is to make Franciscans take seriously the preservation of their own heritage. Francis himself did not exactly encourage the brothers in bookish activities, but with what the Order became in the fervent academic climate of the late Middle Ages, it is important to preserve this material for the sake of Western intellectual history in general, and along with that, for the sake of the history of Christian theology and spirituality.


Paul J. Spaeth, is the Rare Books and Special Collections Librarian at St. Bonaventure University, as well as Director of Friedsam Memorial Library. Among other things, he has been an active editor of the writings of Robert Lax and has translated St. Bonaventure's Collations on the Ten Commandments as part of his degree work in Franciscan studies.



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POETRY CORNER **BOB PHELPS, O.F.M., CAP.**

Prayer to Little God

I write a little verse
to praise you little god
for the beatitude of concavity;
inconsequential rule
of a passing world,
dimpled into meaning
and shorn of mass;
Love that doesn't
beat you over the head
but cleanly stabs you
in the heart. A wee love
divested of the barren bones
of self.

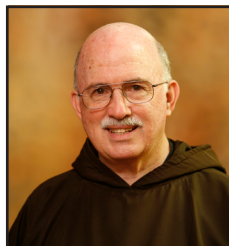
Dead Leaves in Winter

The hard winter ground lies in distress,
Sad, under a coverlet of death.
A Babi Yar of leaves, dry and brown;
Victims of massacre, and found as
Corpses on the hard and frozen ground.

Leaves once so proud, generous shade
For all in summer respite made;
Now brittle like an old man's bones.
With despair the winter wind groans
And freezing rain their chaperones.

Once green, now in fetal defense,
They're helpless from the death sentence.
Shoes, boots and paws will tear their skin
And to be mulch they are condemned
Nothing can stay as it has been.

The snow arrives from time to time
To cover over nature's crime. But
Such a wonder with these I've found
That if I could, I'd pile up a mound
and bury each in holy ground.



Bob Phelps, O.F.M., Cap., has been writing poetry since 1991 and has poems published in several journals. He is also the author of two chapbooks, *Ever* and *Point of View*, published by Finishing Line Press in Georgetown, Kentucky. He can be found on Amazon.com, under 'Robert Phelps, poetry.'



Br. Robert
Lentz, OFM



Br. Mickey
McGrath, OSFS



Julie
Lonneman



Lewis
Williams, OFS



Louis
Glanzman



Dan
Paulos



Fr. Bob
Gilroy, SJ



Br. Arturo
Olivas, OFS



St. Mary
Magdalene



Our Lady
of Hope



Christ in
the Desert



Our Mother
of Sorrows



Jesus



Good
Shepherd



As Jesus
Commanded



Our Lady
of Guadalupe

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Beauty and Franciscan Education

Adapted from Lecture to Siena College, Inauguration Weekend, Oct.2-4, 2015

By Mary Beth Ingham, C.S.J.

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you these days, to celebrate the inauguration of Brother Edward Coughlin as your president. I am also very honored to be invited to reflect with you for a few moments on the particular vocation of a Franciscan university, right here and right now. For you at Siena, this means taking your place in a tradition that goes back almost 800 years, to the medieval universities where education meant more than career development and academic research. It meant the formation of ‘understanding hearts,’ of persons of ‘character and compassion’ who can make a difference in the world: in the classroom, in the hospital, in the boardroom, and in civic efforts.

Over the past few years, I have reflected upon the centrality of beauty as part of the Franciscan educational experience. Today, I would like to focus my reflection with a more prolonged consideration of the experience of beauty in an educational setting. In other words, how might the Franciscan commitment to beauty inform an educational project, beyond career and resume concerns? How might a reflection on concrete experiences of beauty open toward a transformative educational vision, here at Siena and at any Franciscan institution?

In order to illustrate the transformative power of an educational experience of beauty, I begin with a story from my own undergraduate years:

Like many of the students here at Siena, I was a first-generation college student. After trying my hand at chemistry, and then at history, I realized that what I really loved was reading literature, studying other cultures and languages. I wanted to be a teacher, and I declared a French major. As part of my course of studies, I had the opportunity for a Junior year abroad in Paris. During that year, a friend and I decided to travel to Chartres for a Sunday liturgy. I had read and studied the architecture of the cathedrals; I had seen photos of Chartres, of the early gothic arches, of the stained-glass windows, of the interior of the cathedral. Ever since I had begun to study French in high school, pictures of France and of Chartres had been a central part of my academic preparation for the year in France.

As we walked toward the cathedral that morning in November, all of my years of study, analysis and reflection paled by comparison to what I experienced. The bells rang out, the massive façade rose up before us, the great figures above the doorway arch loomed above us. Here was no textbook encounter. Entering the Cathedral, blinded by the sudden darkness, I smelled the incense and heard the organ playing, filling the church with beautiful music. As the interior came into focus, I saw the candles and the statues. At that moment, I felt as if I were taken up into another dimension, transported by the experience, surrounded by the event.

My relatively small life was sharply put in perspective that day in November. All my studies prior to that moment had prepared me for the experience that morning. The experience of deep joy was also an experience of ‘wholeness,’ of ‘rightness,’ of things making sense. I was just where I needed to be. Everything was just where it needed to be.

Likewise, my experience opened my eyes to a reality far grander and greater than myself. It caused me to stop and ask: ‘what is happening around me?’ ‘What is happening within me?’ I was, as it were, lifted up beyond myself to see a bigger world around me, a world to which I had been blinded. A world to which I was now able to respond.

There are certain elements of an experience of beauty that we can highlight, based upon my own experience. The experience of beauty is unexpected and unplanned, by me certainly but also by my professors at home. The experience of beauty stopped me short, it opened me to a wider appreciation of reality. My experience of beauty prompted self-awareness and self-reflection, and finally, the experience of beauty is always accompanied by joy. Joy is not simply delight or pleasure; joy is the fruit of intellectual striving and the culmination of all the values that Siena holds dear: joy includes the love of learning, the desire for God, a deep reverence and respect for all that exists, integrity and service to those in need. And that experience brought a sense of wholeness and meaning that stayed with me long after I left the cathedral. I had experienced transformation.

I begin with this story because it provides a metaphor for the challenge of transformative education here at Siena. In my own story, years of intellectual development prepared me for the actual experience that day. And yet, no one of my teachers could predict that I would have that experience on that day and in that way. Today, as we educate our students, we seek to prepare them conceptually for a transformative experience whose coming and whose timing we cannot predict. While such transformative experiences may well happen in the classroom, they often occur outside of the classroom, in moments of reflection or meditation, in times of service or presence to those in need.

Challenges to this vision

There are two major challenges to this vision. The first is that today, our society identifies beauty almost exclusively with the areas we call the fine arts: sculpture, architecture, music and dance. These activities often hold a special place for us, but only in a corner of our lives: as decorations, as a gift to a friend, when we take a special afternoon outing to a museum, as our beloved hobby or a luxury.

We think that beauty belongs to that category called “matters of personal taste.” We don’t have to agree on what I find beautiful or what you find beautiful. We take for granted that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” We certainly do not see beauty as a foundational frame or lens through which we understand the world, God, ourselves, and our moral actions.

But the Franciscan tradition does just that. Franciscan life centers around, is unified by, and understands itself in terms of a foundational experience of beauty. In this, the tradition celebrates that deep and central insight: that beauty is a transcendental attribute of being, unifying the true and the good. Beauty is not just one aspect of reality, not just one element among many. Rather beauty is *the deepest* foundation of reality. Beauty can be another name for God.

Beauty is foundational and unifying. In beauty we recognize how all things fit together, how apparently opposing elements contribute to a larger picture composed of dark shades and bright colors, of sharps and flats, of important and unimportant things. In its affirmation that beauty is a central lens through which we understand all life, the Franciscan tradition offers something quite new, one might even call it scandalous, for our consideration today. It is a broader, more expansive and more inclusive vision of reality and human rationality.

Reflections on my own experience have led me to a vision of education framed by the Catholic and Franciscan Intellectual Traditions. We can imagine these traditions as forming a circle of meaning grounded in Christian doctrine and Christian humanism. Human inquiry and critical reflection play a central role in this tradition, in the sciences and the arts, in the humanities and social sciences. The centrality of the Incarnation, of God become human, brings us face to face with our beautiful world. God so loved this world as to become one of us; we are called to love and care for it and for one another. This Franciscan tradition at Siena offers a *way* of seeing the world, of seeing all persons and, especially, of viewing the project of education, all framed within the context of meaning and beauty. Indeed, all life has meaning, and our progress in life involves our discovery of that meaning.

The second challenge comes from within the academic community today. In his important study *Where is Knowing Going?* Jesuit John Haughey has identified the greatest threat to the Catholic Intellectual Tradition and to the project of Catholic education as the “learn to earn” mentality. This mentality reduces education to a commodity to be bought and sold. It reduces rational inquiry to instrumentalism, and education to job-training, skill enhancement, resume building and ultimately, to post-graduate financial success. It reduces assessment to products or outcomes, and can seriously overlook the humanity and the dignity of the student. It is also, unfortunately, an expectation that many of our students have when they come to college. Students too often ask: how does this class, this professor, this activity, enhance my resume?

Siena’s tradition sees all learning as a *formative as well as transformative experience*. As a Franciscan college, Siena belongs to a rich tradition that is inspired and informed by *spiritual* and *intellectual* intuitions; the ideal of learning is not reducible to career goals. For centuries, this tradition has given witness to an educational vision that is *eminently practical* without losing the conceptual dimension of solid intellectual formation, both analytic and synthetic. The *liberal arts* were seen to be critical tools, not only for the development of a profession and the advancement of one’s career, but for personal liberation: they truly “liberate” the individual from the false fears



and constraints of the everyday world. They develop those essential elements of character so needed today.

Franciscan Education as a Transformative Experience

The Franciscan intellectual and educational tradition is intentionally transformative. This means that the human rational journey is not simply about learning how to think correctly, it is a matter of learning to feel correctly, to sense correctly, to notice and, most importantly, to act correctly. Here at Siena, you call it ‘an education for a lifetime:’ the development of understanding hearts, men and women of compassion.

The educational mission here is a call to be, first and foremost, formative and *transformative* of whole persons. This educational mission encourages each one to promote an experience of integration and synergy in all aspects of campus life: in the classroom, in campus ministry, in social and service activities. This educational project engages each one here in an ever-widening circle of meaning and relationship, a growing and deepening awareness for the world beyond our particular location, beyond our time and our own ideas.

Perhaps some of you have had the privilege of visiting Assisi, the birthplace of Francis and Clare. Among the Giotto frescos in the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi are two images that recall important events from the saint’s life. Each fresco captures an aspect of Francis’s own transformation into beauty. The first is the well-known image showing him in ecstasy, at the moment he receives the stigmata. The second fresco recalls an event from Francis’s early life recorded in the *Legenda Major*. In this scene, a young Francis,

still dressed comfortably, encounters a poor knight and, without hesitation, removes his cloak and offers it to him. In a moment of spontaneous generosity, the legend recounts, the young man performs two acts of *pietas*: he gives away what he owns to someone who is impoverished, and he affirms the dignity of one who has been humiliated by the events of life.

These frescos are beautiful. They are also set in a beautiful basilica: bathed in light, their colors fill the eye of the visitor. Their story surrounds the pilgrim, drawing his eyes higher to the vaulted ceilings, resplendent with visual beauty. Once again, the cumulative experience is overwhelming. No one who visits the basilica, who walks around to admire the frescos, can leave Assisi unaffected.

In the Giotto frescos, through the lens of beauty, we witness the human journey, Francis' own life, from the selfishness of youth to his conversion and transformation into Christ. Together, the images serve as icons: they hold before our eyes the dynamic nature of the Franciscan vision of human perfection as growth into love. Like icons, they invite us to enter into the perspective, to engage with a personal transformation into beauty.

My own experience in Chartres and the Giotto frescos offer two examples of a central Franciscan insight: that all life can be best understood according to a *via pulcritudinis*, a journey or way of beauty, a transformative experience. For the Franciscan tradition, the experience of beauty is central to the journey toward the fullness of our humanity. It is a journey that involves information, formation and transformation. Here is a journey in which every member of an academic community takes part: administrators, faculty, staff, counselors, coaches, everyone here at Siena is a member of the formative team, whose goal is the personal transformation of each student.

Might we recast Franciscan education here to frame all of life's endeavors: studying creation through scientific analysis, considering the human person in philosophy and psychology, looking at human action in the creative and performing arts, in the social sciences, and reflecting on divine life and love through the prisms of harmony and beauty?

When we do, we discover how the path of beauty opens the doorway to a type of wholistic pedagogy. It both uses language and transcends language. It is expressed in nature and in art, in science and in literature. Beauty is the foundational human experience that unites mind and heart, spirit and body, activity and passivity, embracing and transcending time, culture, and point of view. Creation of beauty in art, literature, poetry and music is a distinguishing characteristic of the human person and every human culture.

Three Stages of Transformative Education

As a Franciscan college, education here at Siena differs from that of other institutions in the way that the Franciscan vision of wholistic pedagogy differs from a purely career-based education. Education forms a whole, not simply limited to the classroom, but to the residence halls, to the gym, to every moment of every day. And each person here: each staff person, faculty member, administrator, coach, public safety: everyone is involved in the Franciscan vision of education here at Siena as a formative and transformative endeavor.

So how might we deepen, strengthen and broaden the case for the Franciscan pedagogical vision, and in particular, how might we make an even stronger case for Siena's Franciscan educational vocation, centered on the values of respect, competence, character,

integrity, service, and stewardship?

So, how might these key elements of beauty, meaning, and interpersonal engagement help us to sketch out a 'map' for the different stages of transformative education that belong to the Franciscan tradition? I have chosen three stages for this map, inspired by two Franciscan classic texts, Bonaventure's *Journey of the Mind to God* and Clare of Assisi's *Letters to Agnes of Prague*. I name them 'Behold! Consider! Respond!' Each member of the academic community at Siena plays a key role in guiding students along this three-fold formative journey, ultimately a human journey into fullness of being and wisdom.

1) Behold!

The spiritual/intellectual journey surrounding beauty begins with a preliminary moment of *awareness* and *recognition*, the moment when we notice something beautiful in the world that is present to us. We also notice our experience, our feelings, thoughts and reactions, to it. This object of our attention delights us, and we rejoice in its beauty. In my own story of the visit to Chartres, this step took place when I first entered the darkened cathedral, when I first heard the organ, when I first began to notice what was going on around me and within me.

So, we might consider the following question:

How do the students at Siena grow in their ability to notice the beauty of the world around them, to treat it with respect, and to deepen their own integrity of character? Might these efforts be deepened and expanded?

How do administrators, faculty and staff members model an adult awareness of beauty, a reverence for creation and for persons, a life of integrity of character?

Might the first year of studies have as its goal helping students to *learn to notice beauty*? Students could be encouraged, in every class and at every turn, to *pay attention!* Could the first year of university education be that of *learning to see what is there?* Learning to notice the beautiful? Learning to attend with reverence and respect for the world around them?

Might each department, each major, each residence hall, each athletic program, each service program identify ways that they already promote the growth of students in this area? How could these efforts be intensified?

2) Consider!

Paying attention to the world around us is the first step; paying attention to our own internal world, to our attitudes, feelings, thoughts and reflections is the far more difficult second step. The path of understanding involves analysis, synthesis, critical reasoning, and creative thinking. It is here that the academic disciplines play the central and essential role.

This second step, or stage of the journey, involves the *reflective unfolding*, a deeper consideration of the experience. Key to the journey, this moment involves a shift from what is going on around me to what is going on within me: this is the movement toward the *inner person*. Attention to subjective awareness opens to greater *interiority*: to an awareness of God's presence within. As I stood in the cathedral, I had the experience of being taken up into a wider circle of beauty and meaning. As the experience unfolded, my sense of the depth and height of reality increased. I was no longer the center of my world: I belonged to something far greater, far more

beautiful.

So once again, we might wonder:

Is the goal of Siena education more than what our secular culture emphasizes: more than getting what we want, more than economic success, more than technological advancement?

Are the standards of excellence part of the everyday awareness of the students? Are they challenged to embrace excellence as a part of a life of integrity and character?

Do courses such as psychology, theology and philosophy work to assist students in the difficult tasks of introspection?

Does the educational experience here, in all its dimensions, offer opportunities for students to develop the skills of authentic self-awareness, self-analysis, self-consciousness that enhance their own sense of who they are and what they are doing, especially with their free time?

Do students find multiple opportunities, and good counselors, to deal with their own failures, whether in the classroom, on the athletic field, in relationships, in life?

3) Respond!

The third and final moment lies in the dynamic *transformative embrace* of beauty, the ultimate communion with the source of all that is beautiful. This is not an end, but a new beginning. Here, interiority and exteriority seem to collapse: the God within me becomes the God within whose embrace I am held and loved. Inner/outer, upper/lower, ascending/descending: now all of the categories of the journey collapse into one another: there is only Love. From within this experience of communion, each person is transformed and called to respond.

Here, the three values of Respect, Character and Competence come together to pour outward into Generous Service and Stewardship. In right action and right loving, all the values become incarnate in each person, whether student, staff, faculty, administrator.

We might be tempted to think that such a journey is *linear*, that it is a passage from this world to the next, from *here* to *there* or from *now* to *then*, as from one point on a line to another. We might think of the values as an ascending staircase, with service and stewardship at the summit. We might consider graduation the end point toward which all efforts are directed, with the graduate as a sort of Franciscan “product”. This, too, might even make sense with the Franciscan tradition, especially when we look at its emphasis on love and on action for the poor.

However, the examples from the Giotto frescoes clearly show how the journey of Franciscan pedagogy is not linear. Rather, it culminates in ongoing *praxis*: an ongoing transformation of mind and heart, in response to the world of beauty and to the beauty of each person, each being. As an actor bursting with enthusiasm, as a dancer bursting with energy, as an athlete bursting with the joy of excellent achievement, so the person at the fullness of the journey is filled to overflowing with a joy that can only come from a deep and internal experience of beauty, a spiritual encounter that is the fruit of any authentic educational experience.

So we might ask:

Do students here, at each step in their educational experience, and upon graduation fully incarnate a sense of service and responsibility, respect and reverence for all that God has done?

Are they joyful, faith-filled and faithful in their attitude toward life? Toward all persons?

Do they act with compassion and drive, creatively seeking solutions for some of our most urgent problems today? Have they developed informed minds, understanding hearts so as to live transformed lives?

This Franciscan vision is so important, so complex, so rich, and so beautiful that no one class, no one experience, no one person can achieve it. This education involves every person in this room: who you are, what you do, how you do it, and for whom you exist. Siena is not simply an academic institution, it is an educational institution, drawing on the great tradition of universities going all the way back to the Middle Ages: to places like Oxford and Paris, where the great Franciscan masters studied, lived and taught.

As they knew then, we know now: there can be no greater vocation than to be involved in the education and the formation of the young: these wonderful men and women who are the hope of tomorrow. May all of your work be informed by the profound joy of knowing the value of what you do, and the values that inspire you.



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Embracing What is Ours to Do: *Bonaventure and a Franciscan Education*

Adapted from Siena College Inaugural Address, Oct. 2, 2015

By Edward Coughlin, O.F.M.

A little over a year ago, I stood before the Siena College community as Siena's Interim President. I was on a steep learning curve and, yes, there were many surprises. And it was not very long thereafter, that I found myself needing to answer a few tough questions: Was I prepared to stay and lead? Was I prepared to convene open dialogues, engage in passionate debates, do urgent and difficult planning and make tough decisions? Could I build the campus partnerships necessary for Siena to assert itself and effectively succeed in these challenging times in higher education? After considerable personal reflection and many candid conversations with others, I accepted the Trustees' invitation to become Siena College's 11th President.

One month ago today, 190 Siena faculty, student life professionals, administrators and staff leaders convened to begin developing the College's next strategic plan. Our central question was/is: How do we more effectively and creatively deliver Siena's Promise: "a student-centered liberal education in the Catholic—Franciscan tradition" that, above all else, offers our students "the education of a lifetime?"

At the beginning of our planning efforts, Dr. James Nolan of our School of Business reminded us that in the midst of this work, one of the most important things we needed to be aware of was our attitudes, how "we" as individuals, and as a community, would embrace the complex demands of our strategic planning work in the challenging and changing environment of higher education today.

In light of that challenge, I chose as the theme of this inauguration, and all that it symbolizes at this moment in the history of this institution, "Embracing what is ours to do."

It is an attitude inspired by the words of St. Francis of Assisi when Sister Death was approaching him. As the community mourned his immanent death and wondered how they would proceed without his leadership and guidance, he encouraged them that just as he had learned from Christ "what was [his] to do,"¹ he hoped that they would, in turn, learn from the spirit of truth and goodness "what was [theirs] to do."

This "Francis" attitude is complimented by another attitude that Francis named, again in the final days of his life. For, although he had accomplished much and was almost totally transformed through the embrace of his life's questions and challenges as a person of faith, he also understood that there was more that he might do "by striving industriously" and could yet be done "by the grace of God."² And, so he said to them: "Let us begin again for up to now

we have accomplished very little."³

His attitude was not one of resignation, disappointment, nor frustration. Rather, it was an attitude through which he expressed his belief that, in the time given to him—to us—, there was always more to be learned and done, for example, in offering students at Siena today, the "education of a lifetime."

Perhaps today, we, the Siena community, after the initial moaning, groaning, and cries of "not again"—very human protests in the face of yet another Strategic Plan—might say, in the spirit of Francis and the seven Franciscan founders of this College: Let us embrace "what is ours to do." Let us, "begin again."

A significant number of Siena students are with us today, and I thank you for your presence—you are the primary reason why we are here. Your choice of Siena also challenges us to be very mindful of all that we have promised you as students. Society increasingly expects us only to provide you with the professional, skill based, technical education that will prepare you to find meaningful work and to earn a decent living. I believe that Siena has done that well over the past 78 years, and we certainly intend to continue fulfilling that expectation with excellence for generations to come.

But, we are also mindful that Siena's mission, with the Franciscan intellectual-spiritual tradition as its cornerstone, requires much more of us as an academic community. That mission and that tradition challenge us to not only offer quality instruction, but also to accompany and mentor you as individuals on a journey of discovering your potential to choose and to live a value-centered life, to explore your potential to make a significant contribution to the building of a more just, peaceable, and humane world through the creative and generous use of your newly acquired knowledge and skills—and to do so without regard to your occupation or lifestyle.

We are greatly encouraged in that effort today by the presence among us of alumni from almost every one of Siena College's graduating classes. From our very first graduating class of 1941, Joe Dulin accompanied by his son Tom, a member of the class of 1971. Caroline Bertholf is also here representing our most recent graduates, the class of 2015. We are honored by your presence and encouraged in doing what is ours today by your ongoing care for and relationship with Siena College.

So, I want to ask—no, I want to challenge, really—all of the members of the Siena community here today to join me in taking hold of the opportunity that this inaugural ceremony affords us to renew our commitment to stand together, to embrace "what is ours to do," and to set our hearts to "begin again" in ever more creative and effective ways to fulfill our promise to our Siena students.

As we take up the ongoing work of creating the firm foundation on which to build our future, I ask all of us to take seri-

1 Bonaventure, *Major Life of St. Francis*, XIV, 3, in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, II, trans. and edited by R. Armstrong et al., (New Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 200), 642.

2 Bonaventure, *On the Perfection of Life*, Ch. I: The True Knowledge of Self, in *Works of St. Bonaventure* X, edited by E. Coughlin (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2006), 144.

3 Bonaventure, *Major Life*, XIV.2 (Armstrong, 640).

ously the challenge Sister Mary Beth Ingham placed before the Siena community yesterday at our academic symposium.⁴ In her lecture, she encouraged us to take our place in the eight hundred year Franciscan educational tradition and to leave our mark within it. And, while there is no doubt that the early 13th century Franciscan Masters—Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, Roger Bacon and John Duns Scotus—would be baffled by today’s curriculum and course offerings, the spirit in which these Franciscan Masters did “what was theirs to do,” might offer us some helpful guidance in our continuous creation of a truly distinctive educational experience at Siena College

Allow me to offer just three examples:

First, at the time of his appointment as Master of Theology at the University of Paris in 1254, the Franciscan theologian-philosopher Bonaventure gave a required inaugural lecture.⁵

In one part of that lecture, Bonaventure articulated in a concise and timely manner a vision of education. And, although Modernity and Post-Modernity may have questioned and challenged, implicitly and explicitly, many of Bonaventure’s beliefs and key assumptions, I believe the core of that vision has enduring value. In fact, it might well assist us in better articulating a more integrated and holistic vision for higher education in the Franciscan tradition for the 21st century at Siena College today.

In his address to the academic community at Paris, Bonaventure expressed his belief in and respect for all of the then-known disciplines, their distinct methodologies, and the diverse ways each contributed to the larger whole of knowledge and understanding of which the human spirit is capable of and more.

At the same time, he envisioned an integral inter-relationship between the different disciplines as each only helps us to understand a part of a larger whole in our search for wisdom itself.

It is, therefore, a vision of education that challenges many of the specialized, strictly differentiated, and disciplined-centric assumptions of many contemporary academic curriculums and programs.

In 1254, Bonaventure had a vision of liberal education that asks us to honestly assess, for example, the degree to which different disciplines and areas of specialization are “in conversation with” one another in the search for truth. For example: How and in what manner, are the perspectives of different disciplines an integral part of our efforts to better understand our current social, political, economic, and religious problems? Even more specifically: Are we, as an academic community, willing to critically consider the value assumptions underlying our theories? Are we actively exploring the ethical-moral implications of our experiments and our preferred ways of living and acting as members of a global community?

Do we truly hope that a Siena education will play a key role in the formation of individuals who are “good”⁶ and always striving to become better; men and women who are prepared to become global citizens who are concerned both with the individual good and the common good;⁷ individuals who are already becoming practiced in

4 Mary Beth Ingham, “Siena’s Promise—A Liberal Education in the Catholic-Franciscan Tradition,” Academic Symposium at Siena College in conjunction with the Inauguration of Br. Edward Coughlin, OFM, October 1, 2015.

5 Bonaventure, *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*, in *Works of St. Bonaventure I*, translation with an introduction and commentary prepared by Zachary Hayes (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1996).

6 For Bonaventure, one of the purposes for studying theology was so the human person “might become good.” See Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, prol. 5.2, in *Works of St. Bonaventure IX*, trans and edited by Dominic Monti, (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), 17.

7 Medieval theology understood the good in terms of a three-fold distinction, that is, the noble good (*bonum honestum*), the useful good (*bonum confrens*), and

the service of others, especially those who are on the periphery of our society?

Pope Francis recently framed these kinds of questions in an address to educators in Ecuador.⁸ He asked the professors:

Do you watch over your students, helping them develop a critical sense, an open mind capable of caring for today’s world? A spirit capable of seeking new answers to the varied questions that society sets before them...Does our life with its uncertainties, mysteries and questions, find a place in the [college] curriculum or different academic activities? Do you enable and support a constructive debate that fosters dialogue in the pursuit of a more humane world?

And to the students he asked: Do you realize that this time of study is not only a right but a privilege?

Would it not be wonderful to discover that there is one, two, perhaps 202 students here today who might, like Bernardine of Siena, the 15th century patron of this College, take the Franciscan vision, and, together with the knowledge and skills they acquired here, enter the marketplaces of this country and world and offer an alternative way of looking at an issue—or provide the leadership that creates the possibility of building new partnerships to creatively solve a fundamental human, social, political or economic problem?

A second example: Over the last one hundred years, educational theorists have put forward numerous recommendations about what the “curriculum” should be and how it is best delivered to enhance and promote student learning and assure measurable learning outcomes.

While Bonaventure would know nothing of that conversation in the 13th century, he did articulate “a philosophy of education” in his own time.⁹

This philosophy included the belief that study (*studia*) should involve a rich variety of, what we call today, learning activities and exercises— activities intended to expand the mind and invite the student into an ever-deeper understanding of many things both theoretical and practical.¹⁰

the agreeable good (*bonum delectabile*). See Bonaventure, *On the reduction...*, n. 14 (Hayes, 51).

In the ethical-moral philosophy of the early 14th century Franciscan philosopher John Duns Scotus understands “moral living” as “relational living within the human heart.” Drawing on Anselm’s discussion of the two affections (metaphysical desires) within the will, Scotus makes a distinction between the two natural and foundational orientations within the human heart, that is, an inclination to self-preservation (*affectio commodi*) and the higher affection for justice (*affectio iustitiae*). For a discussion of Scotus’ thought see Mary Beth Ingham, *Scotus for Dunces: An Introduction to the Subtle Doctor* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003), 87-91.

Catholic Social Teaching defines the “common good” as “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their members relatively thorough and ready access to their fulfillment” in *Gaudium et spes (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)*, n. 26, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. Abbott (New York: Guild Press, 1966), 225.

8 Pope Francis, Meeting with Educators in Quito, Ecuador, 7 July 2013.

9 In addition to the *On the reduction...*, one should look at the preface to Bonaventure’s *Itinerarium*, in *Works of St. Bonaventure II* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002), nn. 3-4, 37-41, and the notes on 149-153. See also Z. Hayes. “Toward a Philosophy of Education in the Spirit of St. Bonaventure,” *Spirit and Life: A Journal of Contemporary Franciscanism*, V. 2 (1992): 18-37.

10 In the *Itinerarium*, prol. n. 4, 39, Bonaventure suggests that seven different academic-intellectual activities constitute his understanding of study (*studia*): reading (*lectio*), speculation (*speculatio*=pure intellectual activity), investigation (*investigatio*),

Perhaps even more importantly, Bonaventure also believed that those activities should arouse the student's affections and passions,¹¹ that is, call forth the energy that might transform them as persons and/or empower them as individuals to care about and compassionately embrace not only the big, but also the small challenges of right living (*rectitudo vivendi*), right relationships (*pietas*) and right loving (*caritas*) for which our contemporary world hungers.¹²

I have many times attempted to create a syllabus, design a workshop, or organize a student life program that included various kinds of learning activities and experiences—all in the spirit of this approach to education. Each time, the success of my attempts could be gauged by the degree to which I had engaged the mind and touched the heart of the participants. I have been amazed—to borrow a phrase from Dr. Seuss—at “the places those minds and hearts can go.”

As last week's Summer Scholars Symposium on our campus clearly demonstrated, many of our faculty are already accompanying and mentoring our students in the spirit of this very philosophy. And, this is just one of many examples that might be the site of some amazing things that occur daily on our campus.

So I wonder: How might an even more intentional and committed embrace of this particular philosophy of education enable us to better define the “Siena difference”?

A final example: At the conclusion of his address to the academic community in 1254 Paris, Bonaventure expressed his hope that one of the outcomes of study would be “that in all ... character may be formed.”¹³ To state this in the terms of his moral philosophy, he hoped that individuals would “learn to live rightly,” that is, to strive always to have upright intentions, good and loving affections, and to act in ways that are just and loving.¹⁴

Obviously, Bonaventure's understanding of “right living” was shaped by his theological and philosophical perspectives. While today, those perspectives may be foreign to us or at odds with our own perspectives, how might a conversation with his perspective help a student to clarify her or his perspectives and convictions?

It is this kind of conversation, or dialogue, that is the essence of a truly liberal education.

To be sure, this kind of conversation and exposure to other perspectives, cultures and ways of thinking can indeed be dangerous. It may well cause students, and even a faculty member or two, to question her or his cherished beliefs, or evoke strong feelings, or even challenge one to consider, perhaps honestly reconsider, “the measure of [her or his] spirit”¹⁵ and the good she or he is, or is not, pursuing.

Ideally, a liberal education understands that this kind of per-

industry (*industria*=personal effort), knowledge (*scientia*), understanding (*intelligentia*). He “joins” each of these activities with an affective response, e.g., personal effort should be joined with *pietas* (right relationships), knowledge should be joined with *caritas*.

11 For more on this, see Elizabeth Dreyer, “The Lyre of Orpheus: Affectivity in the Teaching-Learning Process,” *Horizons* 17/2 (1990): 256-268.

12 Right living, Bonaventure's moral philosophy, is summarized in *On reduction...*, n. 23 (Hayes, 59), is also referred to as “the order of right living (*ordo vivendi*) is described in similar ways by Bonaventure in *On the reduction...*, n. 14 (Hayes 53-55), in *On Governing the Soul*, n. 8 (Coughlin, 207-209), and in *On the Way of Life*, in *Works of St. Bonaventure* X, n. 2 (Coughlin, 361-365). A description of the virtue of “right relationship” (*pietas*) can be found in Bonaventure, *Major Legend*, VIII.8, 586ff. For a definition of *caritas*, “right and ordered loving,” see Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, V.8.2-5 (Monti, 201-202).

13 Bonaventure, *On the reduction...*, 26 (Hayes, 61).

14 Bonaventure, *On the reduction...*, 17 (Hayes, 55).

15 Bonaventure, *On the Perfection of Life*, Ch. I.5 (Coughlin, 144).

sonal and practical consideration stands behind, beneath, and at the ultimate end of every program of study. At its best, a liberal education invites and encourages every student to better articulate their personal philosophy of life. A liberal education also asks students to consider carefully and critically the values that will shape and define their lives through their encounters with diverse persons, cultures and ideas.

This approach to education requires a great deal of creativity and imagination on the part of the teacher-mentor, widely understood and defined, who, in a very real sense, must always strive to be, in the first place, a good student.

Teaching is a vocation that is not for the faint of heart. The “expert” in one sense must also be ready to step down (*condescendere*)¹⁶ in relation to the need of the student and ask: How do I as the teacher-mentor invite and encourage my students to open their minds, expand their hearts, and extend themselves in the service of others by choosing to act justly, walk humbly, and love rightly?¹⁷

These questions point us in the direction of discovering the difference that an education in the Catholic-Franciscan tradition should make—the high bar that our mission challenges us to reach—whether it be in a classroom proper, a student meeting, a residence hall program, a well-designed internship, or on a service trip.

Siena students – know we are proud you have chosen to be with us. We thank you for the opportunity to teach you, to walk with you, to talk with you, to share with you, to spend time with you, to learn FROM you and to get to know you. Best of all, to be able to fulfill this opportunity all across our campus, in the Lonnstrom dining room, a Roger Bacon Lab, a Kiernan Hall classroom, the Siena Hall trading room, at a residence hall event. Wherever and everywhere you are.

Siena students—Be open. Be curious. Be attentive. Be reflective. Be responsive to what is happening around you. Be ready to challenge yourself and to challenge us. Be prepared to go beyond where we are today and what we are doing now. In other words, Siena students—fully embrace what is yours to do.

Members of the Siena community: Thank you for what you are all already contributing each and every day to making Siena the special place it is. I am honored to walk among you.

I invite all of you to join with me in striving to recreate the dream of our founders. Yes. Let us together begin again and embrace what is ours to do.

16 In Medieval Latin, *condescendere* meant to “step down in relation to” the need of another. Bonaventure uses the word frequently as a powerful image of Franciscan ministry as rendering service to another in a particular set of circumstances. For example, see *Major Legend*, V.7 (Armstrong, 564-565). Unfortunately, in contemporary usage, the meaning of the term has changed completely in that condescending/condescension has come to mean looking down on the other with pejorative implications.

17 See Titus 2: 12; Bonaventure, *On Governing the Soul*, 8 (Coughlin, 206); *On the reduction...*, 9 (Hayes, 49).



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Academic Freedom in the Catholic University

By Sean O. Sheridan, T.O.R., J.D., J.C.D.

August 15, 2015 marked the 25th anniversary of the promulgation of Pope Saint John Paul II's apostolic constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*¹ on Catholic universities. Yet, questions continue to be raised about how to implement this constitution, e.g., how to address the mandate to teach the theological disciplines, how to promote the university's Catholic identity and how to foster academic freedom within a Catholic university (e.g., *EcE*, Part I, Art. 12). Moreover, Catholic universities must also comply with civil law and remain competitive with secular institutions.

Ex corde Ecclesiae addresses academic freedom in three separate articles, which are found in Part I of the constitution. Article 12 states that a Catholic university "possesses that institutional autonomy necessary to perform its functions effectively and guarantees its members academic freedom, so long as the rights of the individual person and of the community are preserved within the confines of the truth and the common good."² Article 29 provides that "the Church, accepting 'the legitimate autonomy of human culture and especially of the sciences,' recognizes the academic freedom of scholars in each discipline in accordance with its own principles and proper methods, and within the confines of the truth and the common good."³ Lastly, Article 37 states that Catholic universities "have the full right to expect that civil society and public authorities will recognize and defend their institutional autonomy and academic freedom."⁴ Thus, *Ex corde Ecclesiae* recognizes the role of academic freedom in the search for truth and the promotion of the common good.

AAUP Statements on Academic Freedom

Academic freedom in Catholic universities has developed over the years. The basic concept of "academic freedom" originated in Germany. "The Germans believed that in order to achieve knowledge through research, two things were essential: *lernfreiheit* (the ability of the student to study freely) and *lehrfreiheit* (the ability of the professor to teach and research freely). Scholars needed these freedoms ... to be able to explore and discover all avenues of truth."⁵ This understanding of academic freedom placed importance on the students and faculty members, rather than the institution. This led to the conclusion that anything that limited the ability of students or professors to research a particular subject limited "the ability to discover that subject's truths."⁶

In 1915, the newly formed American Association of University

Professors ("AAUP") prepared a statement that emphasized academic freedom of professors and students over rights of the institution. "Academic freedom, as articulated by the AAUP, guarantees professors the right to teach, conduct research, and publish that research, all without administrative, governmental, or public interference."⁷ Nevertheless, as broad as this assessment might seem to be, it is not without limitation. For example, professors are competent to teach only within their particular fields. Offensive or hate speech is not protected by academic freedom, academic freedom does not include religious speech, and academic freedom is always subject to some limitation.

The AAUP later revised its interpretation of academic freedom. "The AAUP's 1915 and 1940 statements regulate the ability of a professor to engage in speech that is either unprofessional or dishonest. A professor may not blatantly lie or engage in meaningless scholarship without consequence."⁸ Significantly, the 1940 AAUP Statement also recognized certain limitations on academic freedom at religiously affiliated universities. "Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated at the time of appointment."⁹

The AAUP 1970 Statement alleged that "most church-related institutions no longer need or desire the departure from the principle implied in the 1940 Statement and we do not now endorse such a departure."¹⁰ Subsequently, a 1988 committee report further stated, "institutions that invoke the religious Limitations Clause of the 1940 Statement on Academic Freedom have 'no right to proclaim themselves as authentic seats of higher learning.'"¹¹

Although the AAUP has focused seemingly on the rights of the individual member of the academy, courts that have considered legal challenges based on academic freedom have been more concerned with the freedom of the institution and not the freedom of the individual. For example, in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*,¹² the United States Supreme Court recognized the significance of a university's academic freedom:

It is the business of a university to provide that atmosphere which is most conducive to speculation, experiment and creation. It is an atmosphere in which there prevail "the four essential freedoms" of a university – *the right to determine for itself on academic grounds who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study.*¹³

1 John Paul II, constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, Introduction, Art. 1, August 15, 1990: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 82 (1990). Translation in English by National Conference of Catholic Bishops in *Origins* 20/17 (October 4, 1990) 265-276. See also, Committee on Catholic Education, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Catholic Mission and Culture in Colleges and Universities: Defining Documents: 1965-2014* (Washington DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2014) 69-89.

2 *EcE*, Part I, Art. 12.

3 *EcE*, Part I, Art. 29.

4 *EcE*, Part I, Art. 37.

5 Eugene H. Bramhall and Ronald Z. Ahrens, "Academic Freedom and the Status of the Religiously Affiliated University," in *The Future of Religious Colleges*, ed. Paul J. Dove (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002) 315.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*, 318. See, Robert K. Poch, *Academic Freedom in American Higher Education*, -ERIC Higher Education Report No. 4 (Washington DC: The George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development, 1993), 31-35 (limitations on freedom in the classroom).

9 Bramhall and Ahrens, 318.

10 *Ibid.*, 319, citing, The 1970 Interpretive Comments on the 1940 Statement, in Sub-Committee of Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure, "The Limitations Clause in the 1940 Statement of Principles: Some Operating Guidelines," *Academe*, Sept.-Oct. 1988.

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265 (1978). See, Poch, 20-21.

13 *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. at 312 (emphasis added).

Thus, the Supreme Court specifically acknowledged a university's right to control who teaches at a university, the content of what a professor can teach, and the manner in which a professor can present material. Similar objections have been raised to *Ex corde Ecclesiae* in these areas on the basis that it violates the academic freedom of professors at a Catholic university.

Bramhall and Ahrens submitted that the AAUP 1970 Statement contradicted what academic freedom purports to advance because it excludes religiously affiliated institutions from the free exchange of ideas, and in particular, from the search for truth:

To deny a religious institution university status would dramatically limit the institution's standing to express itself with authority in the academic world. The academy must allow religious institutions to participate in the academic community; otherwise, the search for truth will be incomplete. Thus, the inconsistency in the AAUP's current approach is obvious: in order to foster a professor's academic freedom, some in the academy would deny the institutional academic freedom of religiously affiliated universities.¹⁴

Accordingly, the AAUP's attempts to deny religiously affiliated universities their status as universities violated the very principles of academic freedom for which the Association purportedly stands – the search for truth. A Catholic university has the same right as other universities to place limitations on academic freedom to advance the dialogue between faith and reason. A Catholic university enjoys the same right to search for truth found within the Church.¹⁵

Academic Freedom in Religiously Affiliated Universities

Pope John Paul II recognized in *Ex corde Ecclesiae* that a Catholic university places itself in the middle of the dialogue between faith and reason, an interaction that would not be found in a typical secular university:¹⁶

Religiously affiliated universities offer the academy a diverse method of discovering truth. While most of the scholarly world relies on the scientific method alone, many religious universities believe that understanding can be gained through two processes, reason and faith. According to those with this view, both intellectual study and spiritual inquiry can lead to truth. Each process 'plays an important role in [the fulfillment] of that ancient and all-important mandate to 'get understanding' (Prov. 4:7). ... [T]here is no inherent inconsistency between the two processes. ... [O]ur eventual achievement of total perfection will

require the use of both processes."¹⁷

Moreover, the fullness of truth cannot be ascertained without drawing on the principles of faith, which would be off limits for most scholars other than those who teach at a religiously affiliated university:

In the Christian scholastic tradition, truth is considered the proper object of the reasoning mind seeking knowledge. That tradition does not exclude the contribution of faith. The reasoning mind does not seek falsehood or error. The meaning and urgency of truth, however, are the goals of the believing heart and soul seeking truth's purpose. Truth is not true because we believe it; the truth is true whether we believe it or not. To consider truth as a category of knowledge or science or reason without at the same time seeking its deeper, God-given meaning, purpose, and value is to limit truth and, therefore, to separate the essential and integral relationship between reason and faith. Both seek and serve one truth.¹⁸

In actuality, there is more academic freedom at a Catholic university because professors are able to incorporate the faith into their teaching, their research and their scholarship. This is a unique contribution that only a religiously affiliated university can make to the academy.

Conclusion

Academic freedom involves the search for truth and the common good, as Pope Saint John Paul II recognized in *Ex corde Ecclesiae*. The search for truth is particularly well served at a Catholic university despite the objections that might be raised that a Catholic university places certain limitations on academic freedom. Yet it is often overlooked that a Catholic university actually promotes academic freedom by opening up areas of study that can only be researched and taught at a Catholic university. Most universities limit the research of professors to areas that can be appropriately proven within the realm of reason. Working within the confines of a Catholic university empowers a professor to not only research what can be proven but also allows the professor to incorporate his or her faith into the discussion. Thus, it is only in the interaction between faith and reason at a Catholic university or other religiously affiliated university that the fullness of truth can be discovered.

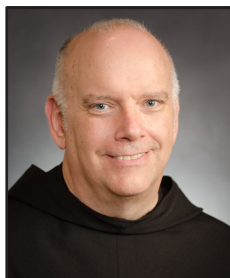
¹⁷ Bramhall and Ahrens, 328.

¹⁸ David M. O'Connell, "Staying the Course: Imperative and Influence within the Religious College," in *The Future of Religious Colleges*, ed. Paul J. Dove (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002) 65.

¹⁴ Bramhall and Ahrens, 325. See, Poch, 58: "The ambiguity and confusion that envelop academic freedom in some church-related colleges and universities results from incomplete policy statements and the failure to place academic freedom within the context of religious systems of thought."

¹⁵ Cf., Poch, 59: "A church-related college or university may hold sacred certain values or beliefs and, through faith, consider such values and beliefs – such as the existence and teachings of Jesus Christ – truth itself. Also, faith or divine revelation and not necessarily research alone may be considered the 'way of knowing' certain information."

¹⁶ See, e.g., *EcE*, Part I, Art. 15, 17, 19.



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Dedicated to Excellence:

St. Bonaventure University, Liberal Arts, and the Franciscan Tradition

By David B. Couturier, O.F.M., Cap.

Frank Bruni of the *New York Times*, has been writing several columns on “college’s priceless value” and, what he calls, the luxurious purpose of a liberal arts education.¹ Going against what he names as a “seemingly growing chorus of politicians and others whose metrics for higher education are skill acquisition and job placement,” Bruni recalls the transformative moment of his own college education. It was the class in which an English professor presented the way that Shakespeare’s beautiful language in *King Lear* introduces us to the art of close attention to power, purpose, and passion. Bruni recalls that one moment, that one luxurious educative moment, as his “steppingstone to a more aware (and) thoughtful existence.”

We have all had that moment. I remember mine. I was an English major at St. Anselm’s College in NH, another Catholic liberal arts college, and I was sitting in a political science course with Dr. Richard Gabriel, a brilliant military historian with a snarky attitude toward simplistic and pious bromides, whether they came from professors, politicians, or popes.² He had been challenging us for several classes to carefully consider our worldviews and basic social assumptions. He introduced us to Thomas Hobbes’ philosophical position that we are in “a war of all against all.”³ I sat up electrified. Was this true? Was this the way that the world was actually constructed and meant to be? I remember asking myself: “Was injustice inevitable?” Was the way of the world simply war, competition, and aggression? Where was the proof that this was so? Where was the guarantee that it need not be so? These questions and Hobbes’ stunning provocation have stayed with me through my work in theology, psychology, and organizational development. I have come to believe that a good liberal arts education should keep you occupied, agitated, and attentive for the rest of your life. A liberal arts education should never be just about helping students find their first slot in the economic mainstream. A liberal arts education is an opportunity for students to wrestle with the “basic questions of love and judgment, justice and violence, grace and forgiveness,” because these are the questions that will track an individual and her career all throughout her life.⁴

We want our students to think beyond the immediate and the pragmatic and to see fairly and squarely “how ideas of knowledge,

politics, and ethics have been intertwined with religious faith and practice” from the beginning of time.⁵

What we are about, sisters and brothers, as faculty members of a Catholic liberal arts college is the *luxury of thoughtfulness* and *the transformation to close attention*. At a time when everything must have a price tag and it seems that every one has been “commodified,”⁶ we offer students something priceless, a four-year opportunity to develop the “muscle of thoughtfulness.” We have dedicated ourselves to giving our students the opportunity to take a sustained look at the grand sweep of history, to understand it, to reflect on it, to critique and debate it, and to shape it anew and creatively for a common good and for a greater purpose. And we do so with a unique lens that stands the test of time and discovery, the Catholic-Franciscan tradition. What makes us distinctive, and what differentiates us from all the public and private colleges competing around us is precisely our Catholic-Franciscan character. We have a distinct mission as the first Franciscan university in the country, and it is our task and duty to make St. Bonaventure University more, not less, Franciscan. We want our students to come to a sharp and decisive awareness of what the late and great Canadian Jesuit philosopher, Bernard Lonergan noted as the goal of all insight (and excuse his non-inclusive language) – “A man has to learn for himself that he has to decide for himself what he is to make of himself.”⁷

The Great Mysteries and the Grand Narratives

St. Bonaventure University has always been about this grand art of universal “inspection.” That is why our mission statement begins with the powerful words, “Founded in 1858, St. Bonaventure University is a Catholic university dedicated to excellence in the Franciscan tradition.” *Catholic, excellence, Franciscan* – these are the provocative words that stretch the mind, the heart, and the will to universality, to a positive and progressive engagement and, indeed, to confrontation with truth.

We bear in our various and variegated disciplines a 5000 year narrative of inspection and thoughtfulness over what I would like to call the “great mysteries,” the questions of purpose and possibility that have cut across cultures and empires and by their provocation lead us to once unimaginable levels of discovery, invention, and opportunity.

That particular narrative of Western civilization is as deep as it is complex and complicated. It asks questions and demands atten-

5 Ibid.

6 David B. Couturier, *Franciscans and their Finances: Economics in a Disenchanted World* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2015).

7 Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *A Lonergan Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 390.

1 Frank Bruni, “College’s Priceless Value,” (February 11, 2015) accessed at: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/11/opinion/frank-bruni-higher-education-liberal-arts-and-shakespeare.html?_r=0.

2 Richard A. Gabriel, *A Military History of Ancient Israel* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).

3 Carl Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

4 Michael S. Roth, *Beyond the University: Why Liberation Education Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

tion. *Is there meaning and purpose to life? Are there grounds for hope? Why is there evil in the world? Is human nature totally depraved? Are we alone in the universe and can we build unity in humankind, even with our differences? Will we ever find peace and is there life after death?*

These are the great mysteries, the character actors who keep coming back onto the stage of our lives at various moments of tragedy and ecstasy, in the quiet ordinary, behind every business deal that begs for integrity, and every romantic loss that requires lamentation. Answers to the great mysteries aren't expedient. But, neither are they expendable except in crass commercial times. The great mysteries are the grammar we use to make sense and make love, to do business and to do good, to understand ourselves and our world with integrity and ingenuity. Our students deserve to learn this grammar from us, so they can think mighty thoughts and cry copious tears when life and its tragedies require them.

We live in a time and in a culture that wishes to sideline and sidestep these questions. We are in an age that wishes to bracket out these issues by commodifying the human experience, reducing all that we are and all that we can become to a quantifiable economic project.⁸

No one in our time has done a more incisive job at this analysis than the French-Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor, in his epic 900 page volume, *A Secular Age*.⁹ He traces the progress of an ideology of secularity that is so much more than the dismantling of denominationalism and the emptying out of our churches, synagogues and mosques. The "secular imagination" is a narrative, a grand experimental narrative that imagines us in the universe alone, without ultimate purpose, facing the wall of our mortality with nothing more than the power of our own ingenuity and our tenuous trust in our instincts for mutuality. Taylor describes the teleology of education in a secular age in a succinct formula. The goal of education in a truly secular age, what we are called to do in a world without logos, is to teach students the art of "self-invention for self-sufficiency."¹⁰

"Self-invention for self-sufficiency" is becoming the tacit and reductive goal of higher education. Instead of helping students develop enduring habits of the mind, heart and will, educators are being forced to become "customer service" representatives for slots in the economy, something akin to greeters at the Intellectual Mall of America, where every child arrives "extraordinary" and receives a diploma to verify their right to self-sufficiency.

And, in the process, the great hope of Western civilization in the potential of constructing a world and a future by "self-transcendence," through a correspondence with a higher and greater good, is denied and replaced by self-interest, self-invention and self-sufficiency, perhaps the most profound reversal of fortune and hope in all of intellectual history.¹¹

We stand at the cultural intersection of these two grand narratives of self-invention and self-transcendence. And today, we begin our faculty conversations around this great drama and the position we will take in the contest between these two grand narratives. It may be hard to keep our focus on the big picture. There are so many real and immediate personal interests at play in the commerce of

modern educational institutions, but it would be a tragedy and a disservice to our students to ignore the stakes involved in our discussion.

The Franciscan Imagination and the Incarnation

It has been the conviction of this university since its founding that the "Franciscan tradition" is a language and a lens powerful enough, confident enough, and convincing enough to engage the great mysteries of purpose and possibility that have teased the mind and heart of the West since medieval times. There has been a renaissance and a "resourcement" of Franciscan theology and history over the last 50 years that we have a duty to access, one that can provide our students with the tools they need to inspect their world effectively for a common and greater good.¹²

For more than 50 years, the Franciscan Institute, here at St. Bonaventure, has been quietly about a new and more intense research into the 800 year language and lens of inspection and thoughtfulness that started with Francis of Assisi's revolution. We have a library collection and a crypt filled with books that demonstrate this great reservoir. Unfortunately, the Institute has often stayed in the basement and in the background, possessed by its medieval texts and historical discoveries. And we haven't shared that legacy effectively enough with you and engaged our undergraduate community strongly enough with the convictions we have about the positive and progressive possibilities of this Franciscan imagination. We are here today to start a new partnership and a new search for effective ways to meet the drama of our times.

What is at the core of this Franciscan imagination and how can it engage the secular imagination of our time?¹³ How do we inspire a new generation of Millennials who have been turned off by the ineffectiveness and inattentiveness of the great institutions of their lives?¹⁴ How do we help them not close up inward into a life-stream of philosophical "selfies?" How do we embolden young adults who want solidarity when what they receive from culture is a doctrine of "self-sufficiency?"

The Franciscan imagination doesn't start with a text. It starts with a moment when a young man faces a profound disillusionment with his family, with his culture, with his church, and with his past and dramatizes that disillusionment by standing naked before his father and his bishop. Francis of Assisi had grown up with the ambitions for greed and glory that he learned from his entrepreneurial father. He had gone to war to advance the economic hopes of Assisi and had been taken prisoner. In the year he was held in captivity, he sank into a deep spiritual and intellectual depression as he revisited every assumption and every claim he had taken for granted.¹⁵ His adolescence of party-games and cheap relationships crumbled. His attachment to the frightening and judgmental imperial God of the soldier-bishops of his times came crashing down as he watched how clerics and politicians lined their pockets and their consciences with greed and self-promotion and absolved themselves from the struggles of the poor and the vulnerable, the lepers of the day.

8 David B. Couturier, "The Globalization of Indifference and the Franciscan Imagination," *Franciscan Connections* 65:1 (2015), 14-19.

9 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2007).

10 Cf. James K.A. Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B. Eerdmans, Co., 2014), p. 23 and Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 4.

11 Thomas Naickampambal, *Through Self-discovery to Self-transcendence: A Study of Cognitive Self Appropriation in B. Lonergan* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1997).

12 Kenan Osborne, *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition: Tracing Its Origins and Identifying Its Central Components* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003).

13 William H. Short, OFM, "What is the Franciscan Imagination?" *Franciscan Connections* 62:1 (2015), 8-13.

14 David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving the Church and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011).

15 Andre Vauchez, *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).



This unlettered man upended the contracts and convictions of his age. Against a cultural background of nobility, he singlehandedly retraced his steps back to the essentials of the Gospel and focused his eyes not on a majestic God but a humble, self-emptying God interested in and committed to all that was ordinary, simple, and personal. No one and nothing was outside of God's concern. History would no longer be the story of the high and mighty. Everyone, no matter their station or status in life, had infinite dignity and was to be respected and protected in conscience as they pursued the infinite range and creativity of their great desires. Against the backdrop of a frightening apocalypticism of his day, Francis fell in love with a God he had come to recognize as good, all good, supremely good, all the time and to everyone.¹⁶ Francis' God was not the stingy, distant, and unresponsive God that we have inherited from the Enlightenment.¹⁷ God was close, amazingly close, stunningly close, and seen most clearly in the poor, vulnerable and disfigured of Francis's day.

Unlike the other rebels and revolutionaries of his time, Francis didn't reject the binaries of his world. He understood their relation in a new way as a "coincidence of opposites."¹⁸ Francis didn't reject majesty and replace it with minority, as much as he peered deeply into the majesty of God and found that divinity expressed itself most clearly and decisively in its ability to become minor. The fullness of God was not found holding back, standing above and apart, but in giving with immense generosity. Francis didn't invent Greccio and devotion to the baby in the crèche to project a pedestrian sentimentalism. He did so to upend a cultural and religious system that denied access to God and the common table of creation to the most vulnerable of society, those locked out by nobility because of their physical and moral diseases.

Francis rejected any objectification of human beings, any and

16 Regis A. Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellman, William H. Short, *Francis of Assisi: The Prophet* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 11.

17 Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 114-129.

18 Ewert H. Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978).

all domination and denigration by the selfish whims and desires of the noble class. He redefined nobility itself. Francis was the first to allow "the other" an equal place at the table of medieval society. He created a fraternity of equal access. It would take centuries for social groups to imitate what Francis created out of his spiritual conviction that God made access available to all by bending low in absolute humility, to the point of death.

The first great truth of the Franciscan tradition is the inherent, infinite, God-given and God-driven dignity of the individual human person, no matter her status or station in life.¹⁹ The conviction emerges and is ever protected by the belief Francis had in the incarnation of the Christ, the God-made-man, the God-come-among-us to share our life, our hopes and sorrows with us. Because of this divine entrance into the daily commerce of living, everything that is human is holy. Sometimes distorted but never destroyed; beauty and passion, science and knowledge are always portals to the divine in the Franciscan imagination. The absolute distance between the sacred and the profane collapses, so that any human search, all human discovery, every venture into human desire breaks us open to the divine. As the great Catholic theologians and philosophers of the 20th century (Rahner, Lonergan, Marechal, Blondel, von Balthasar) would remind us -- at the end of every act of knowing and willing is not a reach for facts alone, but a grasp for infinity and a touch of divinity itself.²⁰ The Catholic-Franciscan tradition is anything but the eclipse of positive possibility. For Francis, access to the divine is not just a promise. It is a presupposition of authenticity and the foundation of integrity.

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Solidarity and the Franciscan Imagination

In the postmodern social imaginary that controls our markets and our secular imaginations, the human person is isolated and individual; we are inevitably in the Hobbesian world of a "war of all against all." Sometimes our competition is benign and sometimes it spills out in dangerous new forms of economic and cultural tribalisms.²¹ In our postmodern world of contracts without covenants, we have become competing self-interests up against one another without anything to adjudicate our competing interests, except the raw and increasingly exclusive power of our new economic elites.²² Nietzsche knew well the logical conclusions of his secular version of the good life.²³

19 Dawn M. Nothwehr, *The Franciscan View of the Human Person: Some Central Elements* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005).

20 Anne Rogers Devereux, *Der Vorgriff (the Pre-apprehension of Being) and the Religious Act in Karl Rahner* University Microfilms International, 1973; Andrew Beards, *Insight and Analysis: Essays in Applying Lonergan's Thought* (NY: Continuum Books, 2010); Alan Vincelette, *Recent Catholic Philosophy: The Twentieth Century* Marquette Studies in Philosophy No. 71 (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2011).

21 Robert Reich, "The New Tribalism and the Decline of the Nation State," accessed: February 28, 2015, at: <http://robertreich.org/post/80522686347>.

22 Oxfam, *Working for the Few: Political capture and economic inequality* (January 20, 2014), accessed at: <http://www.oxfam.org/en/research/working-few>.

23 Luc Ferry, *What is the Good Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005)

Francis believed in the individual. He also believed in communion. The human agent in Franciscan thought has a profoundly social nature and a primordial obligation to belong. Solidarity grounds the self. In an age split between the *majores* and *minores* of his time, the have's and the have-not's, Francis re-oriented his followers to a foundational brotherhood and sisterhood, grounded not simply in an enlightened instinct for mutuality, but in a profound acceptance of a Trinitarian form that sublates all of human life. Francis understood that the inner life of God was social.²⁴ The Father was the profound and mysterious ground and origin of all being, who overflowed with infinite goodness, wisdom, and creativity. St. Bonaventure imagines the Father as a *fons plenitudo*, an overflowing fountain, who in every instance and every age spills out all that God is, first into the Son, the Logos, the Wisdom, and the Order of all things, through whom and for whom all things were made. And, through the Son, God's knowledge spills into the world. If the Father is perfect generosity, then the Son is perfect receptivity and that dynamic interplay of generosity and receptivity is the anthropological framework of all human rights secured and strengthened in the memory and communion of the Spirit who motivates and inspires in every age.²⁵

In this way, Francis and Bonaventure retain a powerful interpersonal dynamic in the experience of creation. The universe is not

and Luc Ferry, *A Brief History of Thought: A Philosophical Guide to Living (Learning to Live)* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2011).

24 Zachary Hayes, OFM, ed. *Bonaventure's Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity - Works of St. Bonaventure, Volume III Bonaventure Texts in Translation Series* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1979).

25 Meghan J. Clark, *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought: The Virtue of Solidarity and the Praxis of Human Rights* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014).


just matter and stuff to be inspected as "facts," bought and sold on the open market, commodified and abused for profit. When we look up into the sky, we are to see more than the spluttering of hot gasses and cold dust. Francis and Bonaventure remind us that the world is creation, and not just matter. Every principle, particle, and person in creation is rooted in the person of the Logos. The Bible says, "All were created through Him and all were created for Him. He is before all else that is." (Colossians 1:16-17). Thus, St. Francis sets the ground for ecological respect.²⁶ The universe reveals its status as "creation," not as an impersonal compost of ashes and gasses. It is a network of brothers and sisters, "Brother Sun" and "Sister Moon."

The Franciscan tradition takes us a long way from the anthropology of "self-sufficiency" that the secular age proposes. The narrative of the Catholic-Franciscan tradition challenges the burden of continuous self-invention for self-sufficiency that Millennials are now required to fulfill in order to make it in the modern consumerist culture we have created. The Catholic-Franciscan narrative presumes solidarity. Human persons are essentially interpersonal and intersubjective. The goal of a non-relational autonomy, so central in the emergence of a post-Enlightenment secular mindset, comes to be seen as deficient. Charles Taylor says it this way:

"I am arguing that the free individual of the West is only what he is by virtue of the whole society and civilization which brought him to be and which nourishes him."²⁷

26 Ilia Delio, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution, and the Power of Love* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 2014) and *A Franciscan View of Creation, A: Learning to Live in a Sacramental World* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003).

27 Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers: Volume 2, Philosophy and the Human Sciences*



Executive Director -- Franciscan Federation

The Franciscan Federation of the Sisters and Brothers of the Third Order Regular of the United States is searching for an Executive Director to begin duties on **July 1, 2016**.

The mission of the Franciscan Federation is to promote the exploration and study of the TOR charism through national and regional programming. The Executive Director will work closely with the National Board, whose Ad Hoc Dare to Image Committee is preparing a proposal for the future of the Franciscan Federation to be presented at Celebration 2016 in Milwaukee in June. To achieve this important work, and the beginning of a new era in the life of the Federation, the Executive Director must be able to work creatively and collaboratively with a variety of groups. The Executive Director also assists the Board in creating policies and maintaining various communications media, including the monthly *Musings* newsletter and the Federation Web site.

The Office of the Federation is located at the discretion of the Executive Director, with the approval of the National Board.

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Pope Francis shares a similar thought, when he says – “Self-knowledge is only possible when we share in greater memory.”²⁸

It is this greater memory that we seek to present in our courses in a refreshed and refreshing form. And we must do so in a way that doesn't destroy discovery but protects it and that doesn't corner the individual into a narrow and reductive consumerism.

Catholic and Franciscan thought emphasizes, respects and promotes self-knowledge and human freedom, but always within a greater memory, within constant and continuous relationships with the community, in solidarity with the least today, as it does with a living communion with previous and future generations.

The Catholic-Franciscan tradition is a long trail of inspection and thoughtfulness in theology and philosophy, for sure, but also in economics, literature, cosmology, astronomy, biology and physics, in arts and sciences, in business and communications. Nothing human stands outside of the Franciscan intrigue. The Franciscan tradition takes a positive and confident posture in its discovery of the world and in its experience of human desire because of the abundance and generosity it experiences at the heart of divinity and its relation to the world. In the Middle Ages, Franciscans started a grand debate over the question as to whether Jesus would have come among us had we not sinned.²⁹ Behind the debate lay an important perspective and question: was our relationship to God defined only by sin, guilt and negativity, or was there some other ground to that relationship?³⁰

Franciscans took the position then as they do now, against major objections, that Christ would have come anyway because the Father of us all is generous and abundant before anything else, and Christ is the greatest good and the highest gift. That being so, the all good and all loving Father would have shared His greatest gift and His highest good with us, even if we hadn't sinned. The purpose of the universe, therefore, the goal of all living in the Christian dispensation, is abundance and generosity. The Catholic-Franciscan tradition is all about this root belief in the “extraordinary goodness” of God and the call and claim that this good and gracious God makes on all of us to live in and for that great and abiding beauty and goodness.

Which world do we live in and which world do we propose—the disenchanted world of stripped purpose and isolated meaning or the enchanted world of shared abundance and infinite generosity? Students should have a choice, an informed and educated choice to inspect this world of theirs with thoughtfulness, with an alternative lens and narrative that can carry them safely, securely, and meaningfully through the great mysteries of life in every career and crisis they will attend.

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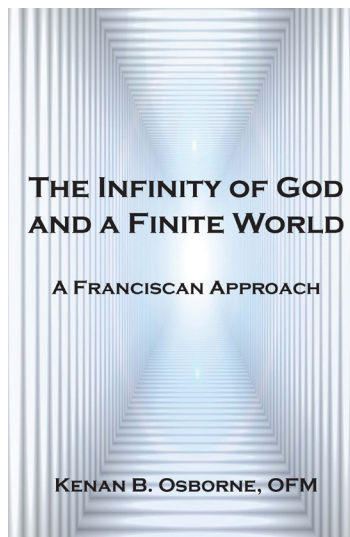
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 206.

28 *Lumen Fidei*, 38 (June 29, 2013) accessed at: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html

29 Daniel P. Horan, OFM, “How Original Was Scotus on the Incarnation? Reconsidering the History of the Absolute Predestination of Christ in Light of Robert Grosseteste.” *The Heythrop Journal* 52 (May 2011): 374-391

30 Cf. Philip Yates, “The Primacy of Christ in John Duns Scotus: An Assessment” in Andre Cirino and Josef Raischl (eds.), *A Pilgrimage Through the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition* (Canterbury: Franciscan International Study Centre, 2008), p. 197; Allan B. Wolter, O. F. M. “John Duns Scotus on the Primacy and Personality of Christ” in Damian McElrath (ed.), *Franciscan Christology* (New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1994), p. 139.

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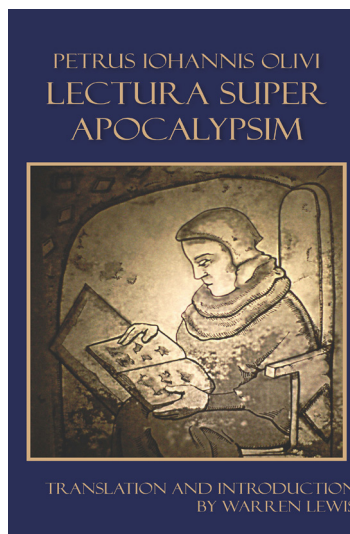
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Saint Francis as Mystic:

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Combining the Mystical and the Institutional

In the fall issue of *Franciscan Connections*, we looked at what Ewert Cousins termed “the mysticism of the historical event,” a powerful spirituality influenced by the life of Francis that encouraged devotees to place themselves at the center of Gospel scenes, through pictorial contemplation and didactic concentration on the life of Jesus. It is a mystical spirituality which greatly influenced devotion toward the humanity and suffering of Jesus in the late-medieval period, as well as influencing later spiritualities, such as the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, noting a worthy connection between the Franciscan and Jesuit spiritual traditions. Furthermore, we examined the mysticism of Francis of Assisi by exploring the relationship between mystical phenomena like visions, ecstasies, the stigmata, and the spiritual journey of Francis; thus highlighting the hermeneutical importance of understanding such mystical phenomena in the life of Francis as guiding phenomena that assisted him in fulfilling God’s purpose, assisting Francis on his spiritual journey. Here we will examine this reality further by exploring what role mystical phenomena played in the inspiration and ecclesial confirmation of the Rule of the Friars Minor. We will also explore how the mysticism of Francis transcends any time-period or singular categorization by considering its multifarious dimensions, particularly considering an earlier, patristic understanding of the term *mystical* which foreshadows facets of Francis’ mystical life: showing, therefore, how it would be erroneous to restrict an understanding of Francis’ mysticism to a late-medieval framework while, at the same time, not depreciating the fact that Francis’ mysticism did much to influence late-medieval spirituality.

Interestingly, the mystical life of Francis of Assisi cannot be separated from his institutional achievements in considering the foundation and ecclesial confirmation of the Friars Minor. What Bonaventure does in his life of Francis is intertwine the mystical with the institutional. In other words, he directly connects the Rule of the Order of Friars Minor with divinely-bestowed mystical graces accompanying Francis. We see this not only in the confirmation of the Rule, through the “seal” of the stigmata,¹ but also in the *formation* of the Rule which, in Bonaventure’s retelling, is connected with a visionary experience, an inner-locution, and divine dictation – thus various mystical phenomena (or graces).² To be exact, it is in the revising of the Rule, and thus forming it into the shorter, condensed version that Bonaventure connects these phenomena. “When the Order was already widely spread and

Francis was considering having the rule which had been approved by Innocent permanently confirmed by his successor Honorius, he was advised by following the revelation from God,” Bonaventure explains.³ He then proceeds to describe the revelatory vision that Francis experienced:

It seemed to him [Francis] that he was gathering tiny bread crumbs from the ground, which he had to distribute to a crowd of hungry brothers who stood all around him. He was afraid to give out such little crumbs, fearing that such minute particles might slip between his fingers, when a voice said to him from above: “Francis, make one host out of all the crumbs, and give it to those who want to eat.” He did it, whoever did not receive it devoutly, or showed contempt for the gift received, soon appeared obviously covered with leprosy.⁴

In the subsequent paragraph, Bonaventure describes Francis as regretting, the following morning, that he did not understand “the mystery of the vision.”⁵ Therefore, to try to comprehend the meaning of the vision Francis holds a prayer vigil, in the midst of which he experiences another mystical grace – this time, a locution – in the form of a heavenly voice, telling him: “Francis, the crumbs of last night are the words of the Gospel; the host is the rule and the leprosy is wickedness.”⁶ Francis follows this locution by climbing up “a certain mountain” (Fonte Colombo) where he is led by the Holy Spirit with two companions. “There he fasted, content with only bread and water, and *dictated the rule as the Holy Spirit suggested to him* while he was praying.”⁷ Here we see a third mystical grace – this time, divine dictation – becoming associated with the Rule. Of course, there is greater ambiguity in this case – for whether Francis received direct dictations, *verbatim* telling him what he should write or, conversely, whether his mental faculties were simply *guided* (thus, inspired) by the Holy Spirit to find the right words is unclear. Notwithstanding, this external ambiguity should not take away from the internal significance – which is unambiguous – that Francis, either way, was divinely guided (whether through direct or indirect dictation) in forming the condensed version of the Rule. Thus a spiritual, likely mystical, component was involved in the institutional formation of the Friars Minor. The fact that Bonaventure alludes to Deuteronomy 9 in this paragraph hints at the possibility that the dictation was indeed direct since, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Moses received the Ten Com-

3 Ibid., 75-76.

4 Ibid., 76.

5 Bonaventure, 76: “In the morning the holy man told all his companions, regretting that he did not understand the mystery of the vision.” The fact that Francis shares the content of the vision “[in] the morning” signifies that the mode of visionary experience may have been a vivid dream, as corroborated by the language of the locution (“the crumbs of last night”).

6 Ibid., 76.

7 Ibid., 76; emphasis mine.

1 Meaning, as the fall issue covered, the way in which Francis stigmata wounds were interpreted as a divine seal affirming his Rule and way of life.

2 Bonaventure, “The Major Legend of St. Francis,” in *Such is the Power of Love: Francis of Assisi as Seen by Bonaventure* (New York: New City Press, 2007), eds. Regis J. Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellmann, William J. Short, 76.

mandments directly from God on Mount Sinai, beyond mediated inspiration (Dt. 9:10).

The Mystical Sense of Scriptural and Theological Knowledge

While Francis of Assisi is most often associated with a late-medieval type of mysticism, one which he was influential in pioneering, a mysticism that is both visionary and Christocentric in character, it is important to recognize that Francis as a mystic encapsulates other – even earlier – forms of *mysticism*. In other words, Francis, in his mysticism, transcends the compartmentalization of being *fully* understood in association to, or in light of, a certain time-period. We should not reduce Francis' mysticism simply to a genre of "medieval mysticism" or "late-medieval mysticism," because such a restricted approach, although paying high respect to important anthropological considerations, does not account for the multifariousness of Francis' mysticism—a multifariousness that extends beyond the medieval framework, beyond the medieval understanding of *mysticism*. For example, if we look at the earliest Christian source to use the word "mystical" in his writings – namely, Origen – we see that Origen's early understanding of the term, which is different from the late-medieval understanding of Francis' time, encapsulates the type of mysticism that Francis would personify. This reality shows us that it may be erroneous to categorize Francis' mysticism, in all its diverse facets, into a particular mode or timeframe – e.g., as a form of "late-medieval mysticism." Let us delve into this matter deeper by turning to Origen's earlier understanding of mysticism.

Louis Bouyer explains that the "first uses of the word 'mystical' applied to a certain way of knowing God, directly and as it were experimentally, are clearly to be found in Origen. It is very noteworthy that they are present in texts which are more or less directly concerned with the interpretation of Scripture."⁸ Amy Hollywood elaborates on this point, explaining: "Origen designates as 'mystical' the spiritual knowledge produced through allegorical interpretation of the Bible (the uncovering of its hidden meanings). This usage marks a shift toward the experiential: the process by which one comes to know hidden things is designated as mystical rather than the things themselves."⁹ There are, thus, at least two important facts to highlight here: 1) Origen's understanding of "mystical" was exegetical in character, pertaining to a comprehension of the deeper, "hidden" mysteries of Scripture, and 2) it was not the hidden mysteries themselves present in Scripture that Origen considered "mystical," but the process – spiritual in nature – by which one would come to understand these hidden mysteries. Thus, the epistemological process of understanding, seen as illuminating, was what Origen denoted as *mystical*. This, again, in Origen's framework, cannot be separated from Scriptures. "For him, indeed, this interpretation [of Scriptures] is not merely a scientific labor. No one may understand scriptures without a profound communion with the realities of which they speak. It follows that exegesis, without thereby ceasing to call upon all the resources of erudition and culture, must be a veritable religious experience."¹⁰ Of course, by this definition, it is not difficult to see where the early understanding of *mystical*, as promulgated by Origen, incorporates

Francis' own mysticism. For this, we simply need to turn to chapter eleven of Bonaventure's *Major Legend*, the chapter that deals with Francis' understanding – in fact, as we will see, his *mystical* understanding – of Scriptures. To gain a deeper appreciation of these facts let us first consider the etymological connections.

It is not inappropriate for Origen to use the word *mystical* in association to the exegetical process of uncovering and comprehending *hidden* mysteries in Scripture. The accentuation of the idea of "hidden" is important to consider in understanding mysticism for this emphasis highlights a significant etymological component that is present: from the ancient Greek, the word *mustikos* (mystical), stemming from the verb *muw*, meant "to close," more particularly "to close the eyes," being used as a noun to denote *hidden* realities or as an adjective to denote *veiled* realities.¹¹ Thus, the process of using a *mystical* sense of interpretation for Origen was directly connected with *unveiling* the deeper, *hidden* mysteries of Scripture. Bouyer explains how historically, even before early Christian exegetes adopted the word, the term *mystical* was used by mystery religions as a reference to "hidden" (or secretive) rituals. "The earliest use we find of it [the word *mystical*] in pre-Christian times is in connection with the Mystery religions, that is, with those cults whose essential rites were kept hidden from all but the initiated."¹² Considering the etymological and historical usage of the word, particularly in its association to *hidden* or *veiled* realities, and especially in the early Christian context of coming to comprehend the *hidden* or *veiled* realities of sacred Scriptures, let us return to Francis of Assisi and consider the connection.

Bonaventure dedicates chapter eleven of *The Major Legend* to Francis' understanding of Scripture and to the spirit of prophecy working in him. Immediately as he opens the chapter we can see how the early-Christian (or the Origenic) understanding of *mystical* is applied to Francis. Bonaventure writes:

Unflagging zeal for prayer with a continual exercise of virtue has led the man of God to such serenity of mind that, although he had no expertise in Sacred Scripture through learning, his intellect, nevertheless enlightened by the splendor of eternal light, probed the depths of Scripture with remarkable incisiveness. For his genius, pure and unstained, penetrated *hidden mysteries*, and where the knowledge of teachers stands outside, the passion of the lover entered.¹³

There are quite a few details here that merit recognition. First, let us begin with the most obvious: Francis is penetrating the *hidden mysteries* of Scripture. He is, therefore, someone who has acquired that *mystical* sense of exegesis wherein the hidden realities of the text become evident to him, or *unveiled*. Consider, once again, that what Origen called *mystical* was not the hidden knowledge itself (of Scripture) but the process by which one comes to grasp this hidden knowledge (of Scripture). To Origen, it was a deeply spiritual – essentially, devotional – process. Let us recall Bouyer's explanation: "For him, indeed, this interpretation [of Scriptures] is not merely a scientific labor. No one may understand scriptures without a profound communion with the realities of which they speak. It follows that exegesis, without thereby ceasing to call upon all the resources of erudition and culture, must be a veritable religious experience."¹⁴ Francis personifies the meaning of these words. Consider that for Francis, also, finding the *mystical* interpretation

8 Louis Bouyer, "Mysticism: An Essay on the History of the Word," in Richard Woods, ed., *Understanding Mysticism* (New York: Image Books, 1980), 50.

9 Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 146-147.

10 Bouyer, "Mysticism," 50.

11 Bouyer, "Mysticism," 43.

12 Ibid., 43.

13 Bonaventure, "Major Legend," 130.

14 Bouyer, "Mysticism," 50.

was not merely a process of scientific labor but one that required “a profound communion with the realities of which they speak.”¹⁵ Bonaventure clarifies:

For although he [Francis] was unskilled in word, nevertheless, full of knowledge, he often untangled the ambiguities of questions and brought the hidden into light. Nor is it inconsistent! If the holy man had received from God an understanding of the Scriptures, it is because, through his imitation of Christ he carried in his activity the perfect truth described in them and, through a full anointing of the Holy Spirit, held their Teacher in his heart. (emphasis mine).¹⁶

Thus, Francis, who was not academically trained in the study of Scriptures, “brought the hidden into light” nevertheless in regard to Scriptural knowledge, because “through his imitation of Christ he carried in his activity the perfect truth described in them” (ibid.); he exemplified, therefore, Origen’s point that no one can come to the hidden mysteries of Scriptures, a proper understanding of them, “without a profound communion of the realities with which they speak.”¹⁷ And, according to Bonaventure, it is exactly that profound communion with the mysteries of Scriptures that Francis possessed, most notably through his imitation of Christ. Thus, Francis was able to acquire that deeper, mystical understanding of Scriptures because he *lived the Scriptures*, he lived the Gospels. Here we see how the mystical sense of interpreting the hidden realities of the Word of God is directly connected to Francis giving birth to the Word of God *in himself*, through his life, by bringing Christ to life and *becoming* that “Second Christ.”¹⁸ A profound communion with the mysteries of Scriptures was indeed present—*profusely present*—in the life of Francis.

Notice also a second component of Origen’s point that merits attention: for the mystical sense to be functioning in the understanding of Scriptures exegesis must, Origen argued, inherently be a veritable *religious experience*. This component was mutually a part of Francis’ mystical life. Notice that in Bonaventure’s opening paragraph to chapter eleven, when he explains that Francis had no formal expertise in sacred Scripture, Bonaventure clarifies that Francis, nevertheless, was “enlightened by the splendor of eternal light” in comprehending the sacred texts.¹⁹ Thus, a religious experience was present in Francis’ exegesis, for it was divine illumination itself which led Francis to comprehend those hidden mysteries that the mystical sense reveals. Consider also that, in the opening paragraph, Bonaventure provides the “tools” (so to speak) which Francis used to grasp a mystical interpretation of the Bible. “Unflagging zeal for prayer” and “a continual exercise of virtue” are the essential components which led Francis to “such serenity of mind” that, despite his lack of formal education in Scriptures, helped him to penetrate the hidden mysteries of the holy texts.²⁰ Here we see how Francis’ spirituality fostered the illumination and enhancement of his cognitive abilities in gaining a deeper, more mystical, understanding of the Bible. We also see an element of Bonaventure’s theology of grace in play, as present throughout *The Major Legend*. While it all depends on grace, there is a corresponding relation-

ship between Francis’ spirituality and virtuous life (in this case, his unflagging “zeal for prayer” and “continual exercise of virtue”), on the one hand, and the accompanying grace that God bestows upon Francis, on the other hand, as a result of his efforts. In other words, Francis’ personal efforts in prayer and virtue lead him to receive, through God’s response, *the grace* of mystical understanding, of comprehending the hidden mysteries of Scripture that only a sanctified soul can truly grasp. In this context, let us also consider the interesting contrast that Bonaventure portrays between Francis’ theological knowledge and, conversely, the knowledge of learned scholars.

Bonaventure writes of an occasion in Siena when “a religious, who was a Doctor of Sacred Theology” once asked Francis “about certain questions that were difficult to understand.” Francis apparently “brought to light the secrets of divine wisdom with such clarity in teaching, that the learned man was absolutely dumbfounded.”²¹ Here, of course, we have a fascinating dichotomy in knowledge between the simple man, Francis, and the learned man, the Doctor of Sacred Theology who, while being so prominently educated, cannot rise up to the sublime stature of Francis’ wisdom. At this realization, the Doctor of Sacred Theology makes an admirable and humble admission about Francis and, in contrast, about himself and his fellow scholars. “Truly the theology of this holy father, borne aloft, as it were, on the wings of purity and contemplation, is a soaring eagle; while our learning crawls on its belly on the ground.”²² Consider the powerful contrast and symbolism used in the language: Francis’ theological knowledge comes from a higher source, it is “borne aloft” on “the wings” of purity and contemplation, a “soaring eagle.” Such imagery is reminiscent of that which is often associated with the Gospel of John, understood as the most spiritual and sublime of the Gospels with John being represented by the image of an eagle, soaring in its flight. Francis’ knowledge is essentially recognized, by this learned scholar, as being sublime. The imagery used here, connoting flight and elevation speaks for itself. It signifies an otherworldliness in his knowledge, something higher and truer. Of course, the essence of flight, not to be overlooked, is in the wings of *purity and contemplation*, again being rooted in Francis’ virtuous and spiritual life, in his personal sanctity. These are the means that inspire flight (i.e., grace). Conversely, consider the imagery that the learned scholar uses in reference to his own, and his fellow scholars’, learning: it is learning that crawls on its belly on the ground. Of course, the imagery is reminiscent of the serpent in the Book of Genesis, as something vile. The deeper point here, however, could be seen in the fact that the source for this type of theological knowledge, *grounded* and *crawling*, nothing lofty as in Francis’ case, is purely human or natural. Francis, on the other hand, transcends reason and looks to revelation, transcending nature and looking to the *supernatural*, as his guide toward understanding. We have seen this throughout Francis’ spiritual journey and mystical life, as apparent in his *Testament* when Francis looks to a higher source to show him what to do, to guide him. His learning, infused and illuminated as it is by the Holy Spirit, is truly of the higher kind, constituting a mystical epistemology.

Transformation

While there is—as we have observed in the fall issue of this essay—a diverse amount of interpretations, among scholars, as to

15 Ibid., 50.

16 Bonaventure, “Major Legend,” 131.

17 Bouyer, “Mysticism,” 50.

18 Consider how Bonaventure begins and concludes chapter 3 with allusions to the birth of the Word of God. The chapter begins with Francis praying at the church of the Virgin Mother of God, who “conceived and brought to birth the Word full of grace and truth,” and, the chapter concludes with “the word of God” coming to birth through the preaching of the friars. See pp. 60, 67, “Major Legend.”

19 Bonaventure, 130.

20 Ibid., 130.

21 Ibid., 131.

22 Ibid., 131.

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what *mysticism* truly means, there has been a predominantly coherent agreement of at least one element that mysticism must entail: transformation, or a transformative experience. In other words, even if scholars have differed on whether mystical experiences are mediated or unmediated, whether they are cultivated or spontaneous, whether they should be understood in relation to physical phenomena or not, one element of mystical understanding has, for the most part, been consistent among scholars: transformation – a mystical experience has a transformative effect on the individual. The great Swiss psychologist Carl Jung explained the matter nicely when, ironically, he criticized the modern mentality that undervalues mystical truths like transformation through spiritual conversion. “The modern mind has forgotten,” Jung explained, “those old truths that speak of the death of the old man and of the making of a new one, of spiritual rebirth and similar old-fashioned ‘mystical absurdities.’”²³

In considering the mystical components of Francis of Assisi’s life, the most essential part should not be overlooked: the fact that his life was a life of transformation; a life of conversion; a life, to echo Carl Jung, of spiritual rebirth, wherein an old man died in order for a new man to be born. That new man that Francis was born into, or *transformed* into, was Christ-crucified. Bonaventure wrote: “Jesus Christ crucified always rested like a bundle of myrrh in the bosom of his soul, into Whom he [Francis] longed to be totally transformed through an enkindling of ecstatic love.”²⁴ The language of transformation here, accompanied by the language of

23 Carl Jung, *Religion & Psychology* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1960), 41.

24 Bonaventure, “Major Legend,” 115.

ecstasy, encapsulates mysticism. Combine this with the language of Christo-centricity, especially in the form of the Passion (or Christ-crucified), and the mysticism of Francis of Assisi is conveyed. There cannot be a more appropriate Scriptural passage that captures the essence of Francis’ mystical transformation than that which came from Paul, who himself (very similarly to Francis) underwent profound transformation through a mystical encounter with Christ. Paul’s poignant phrase in Galatian’s 2:20 encapsulates the mystical transformation that Francis of Assisi, both literally and spiritually, experienced: “I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me” (ESV, 2001).

Francis’ biographers attributed various virtues to the saint: humility, obedience, poverty, piety, charity, chastity, zeal for prayer and preaching. Bonaventure particularly made sure to portray how sincerely Francis strived to achieve these ideals, how through his virtuous efforts God rewarded Francis with His special grace, with various graces, many of them mystical graces. In considering the aforementioned virtues that Francis both strived for and reached, and in giving fair consideration to what an essential role transformation played on his spiritual journey, we only have to turn to an earlier description of Francis that Thomas of Celano provides:

...that man whom we today venerate as a saint—for he truly is a saint—passed his time from childhood and miserably wasted and squandered his time almost up to the twenty-fifth year of his life. Maliciously advancing beyond all of his peers in vanities, he proved himself a more excessive inciter of evil and a zealous imitator of foolishness. He was an object of admiration to all, and he endeavored to surpass others in his flamboyant display of vain accomplishments: wit, curiosity, practical jokes and foolish talk, songs, and soft and flowing garments. Since he was very rich, he was not greedy but extravagant, not a hoarder of money but a squanderer of his property, a prudent dealer but a most unreliable steward.²⁵

Conclusion

Ewert Cousins explained that Francis pioneered a new, late-medieval mysticism, both visionary and Christocentric in character, that constituted a significant shift and transition from the dominant speculative and neoplatonic mysticism of the Middle Ages. This is, of course, true. However, in examining Francis of Assisi’s mysticism it is important to capture its multiple dimensions, its multifariousness. In other words, while accounting for the anthropological considerations of his late-medieval culture and observing how Francis inspired new transitions in the mystical thought of that culture, it is also important to see that the diversity of Francis’ mysticism, in its manifold manifestations, extends beyond the culture of that one time period. As we have observed, there are earlier understandings of what mysticism is which do foreshadow dimensions of Francis’ own mysticism. This does not necessarily mean that Francis or his biographers were directly influenced by these earlier sources, but it means that there is a depth to Francis’ mysticism which transcends simple and absolute categorization, like “visionary mysticism.” While such an attribute is certainly true of Francis’ mysticism, it only constitutes one, albeit

25 Thomas of Celano, “The Life of Saint Francis,” as cited in *The Saint, Volume I of Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, (New York: New City Press, 1999), eds. Regis J. Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellmann, William J. Short, 183.

important, component of his multidimensional mystical life.

Through a nice trajectory, we can see the various dimensions of Francis' mysticism coming together. Origen explained that one needs to live the mysteries of the Scriptures in order to grasp the mystical sense of interpretation that uncovers those mysteries. Bonaventure, in complementarity, explained that Francis was able to uncover the hidden mysteries of Scriptures – therefore grasp the mystical sense – because he lived those mysteries in his life through the imitation of Christ. Thus, here we see how a mysticism of the historical event is combined with uncovering the mystical consciousness necessary to grasp the hidden mysteries of the sacred texts. By living the Gospel life, bringing the Word into himself and into the world, Francis was able to acquire a deeper knowledge of the Word of God. The mysticism of the historical event here intertwines with the mystical sense of exegetical and theological knowledge. Francis was able to understand, in a way that carried greater depth and sublimity, because his knowledge depended on a higher source, essentially depending on an ecstatic experience that allowed Francis to step beside himself and to be guided by a greater "I." It was no longer Francis who lived, to echo Paul, but Christ who lived in him.

Finally, in considering the mysticism of Francis and its multifariousness it is important not to abide by a reductionist approach, or a restricted hermeneutic, that undervalues the significance of certain forms of mysticism, such as extraordinary phenomena associated with Francis like ecstasies, visions, or locutions. After all, ignoring such phenomena as a rule would, by definition, require a scholar to operate under a restricted lens that ignores the most powerful manifestation and symbol of Francis' mysticism: his stigmata, wounds that constitute another extraordinary phenomenon. What is most important in dealing with both the stigmata and accompanying phenomena is not to dismiss the importance of these *graces* in Francis' mystical life but to place them in the proper context of his mystical life. The greatest danger lies in succumbing to a dualistic framework that separates such external phenomena from their deeper, internal and spiritual, purpose. One cannot fully grasp the importance of the stigmata, for example, without connecting them to the interior transformation, through spiritual rebirth in the figure of Christ crucified, that Francis experienced in the form of his conversion. Nor can one truly appreciate the numerous visions, ecstasies, and locutions that Francis experienced without considering how, through direct divine intervention (and, thus, mystical union) they guided him on his spiritual journey toward founding the Friars Minor and (consequently) renewing the Church; thus the reason why these extraordinary graces should *not* be understood, in the mystical life of Francis of Assisi, as *extraneous* phenomena but as *guiding* phenomena and, therefore, intrinsic to both the founder's spiritual progress and (as we have observed) the Order's institutional confirmation.



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CLARE AND FRANCISCAN WOMEN
(3 credits)
Dr. Jean Francois Godet-Calogeras

SFS 501
SURVEY OF FRANCISCAN HISTORY
(3 credits)
Dominic Monti, OFM

SFS 520
FRANCIS: HIS LIFE AND CHARISM
(2 credits)
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SFS 538
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David B. Couturier, OFM. Cap.

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AND GOODNESS
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YESTERDAY AND TODAY:
A FRANCISCAN PERSPECTIVE
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Franciscan Ethics:

An Interview with Thomas Nairn, O.F.M., Catholic Health Association Senior Director of Ethics

Interview conducted by Kevin Cooley

What is the Catholic Health Association? How many hospitals, clinics, nursing homes and other health care facilities does it represent?

The Catholic Health Association (originally the Catholic Hospital Association) was founded in 1915 by religious congregations that were sponsoring hospitals to ensure that, with the changes beginning to occur in health care at the time, Catholic hospitals would remain true to their mission and identity. Today, 100 years later, the mission of the Catholic Health Association (CHA) remains basically the same: to ensure that the Catholic health care ministry in the United States remains true to its Catholic identity in caring for people and communities, especially the poor.

CHA is a membership organization comprised of over forty Catholic health care systems that in turn include more than 600 hospitals and 1400 long-term care and other health facilities in all 50 states. The Catholic health ministry is the largest group of non-profit health care providers in the nation. One in six people who need hospital care are served by a Catholic hospital.

Please describe your role as Senior Director of Ethics at the CHA. How long have you been Senior Director of Ethics at the Catholic Health Association, and how did you become interested in the position?

My work is simply responding to the ethical needs of our members systems and facilities.

Much of this work is done through writing. CHA publishes a bi-monthly publication called *Health Progress*. In every issue there is an ethics column dedicated to issues the Catholic health care ministry is confronting. If invited, I will also write for other professional journals and more popular magazines. I also make presentations to people in member organizations about Catholic health care ethics. Often this takes the form of explaining a document that the U.S. bishops have developed for Catholic health care called *The Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*.

CHA has also developed programs and resources for our members. I spend a lot of time preparing for a yearly meeting of ethicists involved in Catholic health care. I am also involved in developing resources for members. I've just finished two such resources for end-of-life care, one entitled *Teachings of the Catholic Church: Caring for People at the End of Life* and the other called *Advance Directives: Expressing Your Health Care Wishes*. Both resources are in pamphlet form and in question-and-answer format.

Finally, we at CHA are available to help with ethical questions we receive from members, either by phone or e-mail.

Related indirectly to my work at CHA, I was recently appointed by the Vatican to be the ecclesial assistant to the International Catholic Committee for Nurses and Health Care Workers.

I have been Senior Director of Ethics here at CHA for seven years. I was teaching moral theology at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago when I received a phone call from the Vice President for Mission Services at CHA asking me to consider the position. At first, I had no intention of leaving CTU, but once I visited the CHA office and met its staff, I became very interested in the ministry and working with my colleagues. It has been a wonderful place to work!

What are the main challenges, ethical or otherwise, facing Catholic health care facilities today?

Health care today in general is going through a period of tremendous change, some of it because of the Affordable Care Act and some of it not. Its current task is to move from taking care of people when they are sick to keeping people healthy. The hospital is becoming less and less of a center of health care as we concentrate more on issues of public and population health. This ultimately will be good for the population as a whole, but it poses many challenges for Catholic health care. An important challenge will be how we keep our Catholic identity while necessarily collaborating with other organizations that may not have our value commitments. I'm not sure anyone knows what health care will look like ten to twenty years from now.

How many Franciscan health care institutions are there in the country?

That's really an impossible question to answer. There are over 18 Franciscan communities of women that are involved in health care in this country. Some have hospitals and other facilities that are fully sponsored by the Franciscan community. Examples would be the hospitals in Illinois and Wisconsin sponsored by the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis or the hospitals in Louisiana sponsored by the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady. In other systems, Franciscan congregations have joined with other Catholic religious communities to jointly sponsor Catholic health care ministries. Still other Franciscan communities have collaborated in ecumenical or secular settings. For example, it was Mother Mary Alfred of the Rochester Franciscans whose vision inspired the creation of Mayo Clinic.

From your perspective as a Franciscan moral theologian, what does Franciscanism offer to the challenges faced by health care institutions in America today?

There has always been a close link between Franciscanism and the care of the sick poor. Francis began his process of conversion because of an illness. In his last years of life, he suffered from a chronic debilitating illness. The early biographies of Francis explain that he

committed his care to “certain brothers who were deservedly dear to him.” Elsewhere he is chided by a brother for not taking greater care of himself. Clare was ill for the last 28 years of her life—often bed-ridden. The founders of the Franciscan family understood sickness.

The early history of the Franciscan Order shows that the brothers considered care for the sick as part of their vocation. Soon care for the sick became a special task for what we now call the Secular Franciscan Order. St. Elizabeth of Hungary, the patroness of the Third Order, has been singled out as a person who embodied care for the sick.

I think that these wonderful exemplars can challenge today’s health care in at least three ways:

1) Following Francis and Clare, Catholic health care needs to listen to those who are sick and help our hospitals and other health care institutions become places where sick people are truly respected.

2) We need to understand that medicine is (only) a creature of God. We tend to believe that medicine can do anything. For Franciscans, rather, it is a creature not to be used as an end in itself but at the service of humanity in the praise of God, as the *Canticum of Creatures* suggests.

3) Francis and Clare were not afraid to address the negative elements of life but rather embraced them with love. I think that we in Catholic health care cannot let the negative elements of the industry keep us from engaging today’s health care issues with that same love.

How does being a Franciscan Priest affect your approach as Director of Ethics?

It doesn’t take a priest to do the work that I’m doing. In fact, my colleague, Ron Hamel, who just retired from CHA, is a dedicated layman. Perhaps rather than my priesthood affecting my approach to this ministry, it may be the other way around. I think that this ministry has had a profound effect on the way I engage my priestly ministry. In the seven years since I’ve been at CHA, care for the poor and especially the poor sick have become more central to my ministry. There is a shared statement of identity developed by Catholic health care that commits the ministry to promote human life and dignity, to care for the poor and vulnerable, to act on behalf of justice, and to promote the common good. Catholic health care has also been a strong advocate for environmental issues. My time at CHA has thus helped me to strengthen my own commitment to those issues of justice and peace that have long been part of our Franciscan heritage.

What is the most rewarding experience you’ve had as Director of Ethics at the Catholic Health Association?

It’s hard to pick just one experience. But among the best experiences I’ve had has been visiting member facilities and seeing Catholic health care in action. A few years ago, for example Ron Hamel and I were asked to assess the ethical culture of a particular Catholic hospital. One of the strongest impressions we took from that hospital was the personal commitment that the staff had toward service to the poor and marginalized. Almost everyone to whom we spoke expressed the importance of respect for the poor. There was an obvious sense of pride that the hospital served all, regardless of ability to pay, and treated all with the same respect. That hospital was in a very poor neighborhood and had a significant percentage

of its population living well below the poverty line. The hospital had an outreach program for those with HIV/AIDs which was the most comprehensive program in the area, an outreach to pregnant women by means of an all-inclusive prenatal service which rewarded women who kept their pre-natal appointments, and a service for the homeless in the area. Employees supplemented the hospital’s commitment through a variety of activities such as fund raising and food drives. They said that they had been blessed by God and needed to share that blessing with those less fortunate—and this coming from many employees who did not earn much money themselves! Seeing the values of Catholic health care lived out has been the most rewarding experience I’ve had.

Have there been any particularly challenging situations you’ve faced as Director of Ethics, and if so, how did you deal with them?

Before he died, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, the late archbishop of Chicago, explained that Catholic health care has one foot planted firmly in the Catholic Church and the other in our pluralist society. He added that it should be no surprise that this creates tensions, with some people believing that Catholic health care institutions are too secular and others considering them too religious and sectarian. This tension that the cardinal described as early as 1991 is probably the greatest challenge that Catholic health care and Catholic health care ethics face today. Remaining in this tension creates situations where Catholic health care is often attacked both by those who do not believe it is Catholic enough and by those who demand that it give up its values in the name of what they understand as standard practice. This tension will remain and it’s something all in Catholic health care ethics must continually negotiate and explain.

What can the average person do to help build an ethically responsible Healthcare system?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that “Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good” (#2288). I think that the average person would move a long way in helping to build an ethically responsible health care system by taking this teaching to heart:

1) Because life and health are precious gifts, we need to take care of ourselves. This includes not only the care we need when we are sick but also doing what we can to keep ourselves healthy.

2) However, we must take *reasonable* care of ourselves. At a time where there is such a heavy reliance on technology and there always seems to be one more thing that can be done, we must ask ourselves what is reasonable from the point of view of our Catholic faith.

3) In determining what is appropriate, we need to take into account not only our wants and desires but also the needs of others and the common good.



Thomas Nairn, O.F.M., is a member of the Sacred Heart Province and is currently the Senior Director of Ethics at the Catholic Health Association of the United States. Prior to his current ministry, he taught at the Catholic Theological Union at Chicago. He is the editor of *The Franciscan Moral Vision: Responding to God’s Love* available from Franciscan Institute Publications.”

Caravaggio and his First Religious Painting:

St. Francis in Ecstasy, 1595

By David Haack, O.F.M.

Over the last hundred or so years, a resurgent interest in the work of Caravaggio has catapulted many of his works and him to the artistic ranks of innovator, master of light, shadow, and pictorial rejuvenator of religious themes in painting after the Council of Trent decrees. This article examines Caravaggio's early career only and these subjects in context; art within the institutional church, the evolution of the elements of art, the principles of design in the discipline of art, and the Baroque viewers' role in reading the painting *St. Francis in Ecstasy* (1595).

The intention of this artistic/contextual analysis of Caravaggio's early career and paintings, especially *St. Francis in Ecstasy*, is to offer readers information for their discernment of his work. Depending upon the viewer's life experience and contemplative skills when reading a visual work of art, the expectation is that the viewer/reader enter into dialogue with the work, thus allowing the work to be meditative in nature and beauty, uplifting their spirit when interpreting visual imagery that has a definite history.

Caravaggio's Early Life

Caravaggio's real name was Michelangelo Merisi. Only scant and contradictory information is available on his early life. According to Guasti and Neri, "originally it was thought that he was born on September 28, 1573 in Caravaggio, but recent research has revealed that Michelangelo was the eldest child of four children of Fermo di Bernardino Merisi and Lucia Aratori, his second wife, and was actually born in Milan, probably in late 1570 or early 1571. His parents were both originally from Caravaggio, where they returned in 1577, perhaps fleeing the plague and periods of famine."¹

In 1584, the date of the apprenticeship contract, reveals the young artist was thirteen when he was sent to Milan to be an apprentice for four years in the workshop of the Bergamo-born Simone Peterzano, a former student of Titian. Michelangelo lived in the master painter's house at Porta Orientale. He completed his Milanese apprenticeship in 1588 at the age of seventeen, then returned to Caravaggio. His earliest works exhibit the realism, immediacy, and concreteness found in Lombard painting of that time. This can be evidenced in his early 'genre' works that included figures from daily life, such as fishmongers, fruit sellers, and cooks. He may have visited Rome while an apprentice in Milan, but extant evidence is unavailable. No letter, drawing, or document penned by him remains; the sole records in which he appears are those kept by police, along with scant references by contemporaries confirming him as a brilliant troublemaker. According to police records of the time, he

was known to have been a patron of taverns and places of ill repute. Caravaggio had established no school nor direct pupils unlike his contemporaries. After the death of his parents, and selling, with his brother, of all the lands previously owned by his father, he used his savings for his move to Rome, c. 1592. He stayed for several months with Monsignor Pandolfo Pucci of Recanati, although he had an uncle already living in Rome, Ludovico Merisi.

Caravaggio in Rome

Arriving in Rome, he joined the workshop of the painter Lorenzo Siciliano, where he became known for painting portraits. Next, he trained with the Roman painter, Antiveduto Cramatica. In early 1593, he worked as an assistant for Giuseppe Caesari, known as the Cavalier d'Arpino, who had several commissions in Rome. The Cavalier was also one of the favorite painters of the newly elected Pope Clement VIII. For Cavalier d'Arpino, the young Caravaggio painted flowers and fruit, both subjects having become popular among a more refined Roman public. It was during this time that he met the Cardinals, Emanuele Pio, and Maffeo Barberini, the future Urban VIII. After about eight months, Caravaggio left the Cavalier d'Arpino and formed a friendship with another painter, Prosperino delle Grottesche, who also moved among the aristocratic circles of Rome. Early paintings are only known through copies, the originals now lost, and include *Boy Peeling a Pear*, c. 1592, and *Boy Bitten by a Lizard*, c.1594. Simultaneously, Caravaggio was regularly sent to the city's Tor di Nona jail for: cracking a plate in a waiter's face over a dispute about an artichoke; defacing doors; throwing stones; telling a policeman to "stick it up your arse;" and many other infractions. Each time, an alert to a noble or patron got him released.² The patron most closely associated with Caravaggio was Cardinal del Monte.

Caravaggio and Cardinal Francesco Maria Bourbon del Monte

Circa 1594, Caravaggio met his first real patron, Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte, a major force at the curia, as he was the ambassador of the Medici to the papal curia. He was the confidant of the grand duke Ferdinando I de' Medici of Tuscany and the Medici representative in Rome. The Cardinal offered Caravaggio room and board at his palazzo (now Palazzo Madama) and introduced him to the art collectors of the local aristocracy. Among the aristocracy that commissioned Caravaggio for work were the noblemen Vincenzo Giustiniani, Barberini, Ciriaco Mattei and Borghese families, Cardinal Federico Borromeo and Massimo Massimi, and the banker Ottavio Costa. Paintings, not tapestries,

1 Alessandro Guasti and Francesca Neri. *Caravaggio: The Complete Works*.2007. New York: Barnes & Noble, p. 5.

2 Jackie Wullschlager. "Caravaggio speaks to our times" in *Financial Times*, The Financial Times LTD. Oct. 1, 2010.



“St. Francis in Ecstasy”

*The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund /
Held in the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut*

were now what the rich wanted to line the walls of their newly built Roman palazzi. The church also needed public art, rigorously policed and ideologically correct, to address the inquisitive hearts and minds of the people and promote its own greater glory.³ Rome had become the world’s great image factory, thus attracting many of the finest painters of the day.

The paintings executed for Cardinal Del Monte reflected the Cardinal’s taste in fine art. Those paintings, similar in theme and style, became part of the Cardinal’s personal collection. The unifying theme in these early works is the relationship between art and nature. The development of metaphors used, objects painted as they appear in nature, as well as something other than itself, became metaphors that suggested an additional concept, a mood.⁴ Metaphors used in this way were somewhat of a novelty, allowing the Baroque viewer another level of understanding what was he/she saw, adding to the meditative quality of the content of the work.

Caravaggio employed live models for his figural works, usually using Roman street people found just outside his studio door, and frequently himself, a new innovation. For example, he painted *The Musicians*, a painting using live models and his first choral work. The theme of music here is an allegorical theme as a metaphoric vehicle for human passions, especially love. The second musician from the right may be yet another self-portrait. A twentieth-century restoration revealed wings and a quiver of arrows on the boy on the left, identifying him as Eros.⁵ Caravaggio also painted *The Lute Player* for Cardinal del Monte. This painting is currently exhibited at

3 Peter Robb. *M the Man who Became Caravaggio*. Australia: Duffy & Smallgrove, 1998, p 33.

4 Alessandro Guasti and Francesca Neri. *Caravaggio: The Complete Works*. 2007. New York: Barnes & Noble, p. 18..

5 Giovanni Baglione, a contemporary painter, late Mannerist/Early Baroque style) wrote about Caravaggio’s early works in *The Lives of Painters, Sculptors et architects. From the Pontificate of Gregory XII in 1572 up to the time of Pope Urban VIII in 1642*, reprint in 1733 in Naples. Now unavailable. Another English source is *The Lives of Caravaggio: Lives of the Artists Series*, Padas Athene Edition, 2005.

the Hermitage in St. Petersburg. Through Caravaggio’s association with Cardinal del Monte, he attracted a very select group of connoisseurs, among which are Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, the Doria, Giustiniani, Borghese families, and collectors such as Ottavio Costa and Ciriaco Mattei.

Caravaggio: A Troubled Life

Throughout his life, Caravaggio was a man of restless and turbulent character. Caravaggio frequently got into brawls and trouble with the law. The most serious of these episodes occurred on May 28, 1606, when the painter killed Ranuccio Tommasoni over a game of tennis. Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi) was placed under a “capital ban” (i.e. the death penalty could be inflicted on him by anyone in any place). He was forced to flee the city and wander for the rest of his life. Caravaggio was in Syracuse in 1608. He sought asylum with the Capuchin Convent while on the run from Malta, after he was convicted of murder several years before. The actual house he stayed in was next to the convent, near what is called the Quarries of the Capuchins in Syracuse. We do not know the extent of his relationships with the Capuchin Friars in Syracuse or in Rome, other than the testimony at the libel trial in 1603, noted below.

Caravaggio died alone at the age of thirty-eight on July 18, 1610 at Porto Ecole. He was buried in an unmarked grave.

Caravaggio paints *St. Francis in Ecstasy*, c. 1595

Cardinal del Monte’s name-saint was St. Francis of Assisi. The painting was the first religious subject Caravaggio painted when he was only 24 years old. The work depicts Saint Francis of Assisi being supported by a large angel while Brother Leo appears in the middle distance, oblivious of the miracle that had just taken place. It is Brother Leo’s recollection that becomes the pattern of all writers who interpret the miracle, they include Celano, St. Bonaventure, Henri D’Avranche, and many others. In 1224, Francis retired to the wilderness with a small number of his followers to contemplate God. On the mountainside at night Brother Leo saw a six-winged seraph come down to Francis in answer to the saint’s prayer that he might know both Christ’s suffering and His love. The earliest artists depicting the miracle took care to draw lines of light streaming from the vision to Francis’ hands, feet, and heart. Caravaggio, in this work, paints only the wound in Francis’ heart. The action taken in this regard reflects the concern by sixteenth century Franciscan devotees for images that express a visual reality, but perhaps more importantly, express a spiritual dimension in visual format that enlivens their meditations on the episode.

By 1595, there was no need to prove the stigmatization, as it was universally accepted., but it was the spiritual effect, not the literal miracle story, that interested Caravaggio. His painting is less dramatic than previous depictions. For example, the six-winged seraph is replaced by a two-winged angel, and there is none of the violent confrontation described by Leo – no streams of fire, no pools

of blood, no shouts or fiery images of Christ - just the gentle angel, bulking far larger than the saint who is portrayed as if in ecstasy. Francis' companion, Leo, is in the middle distance, almost invisible in the darkness. The only wound we can clearly see is the stab to the heart, drawing our attention to the love that united Francis with the Savior. Contemporaries of Caravaggio would have understood this as it provided limitless meditational inspirations for the viewer. Caravaggio composes his painting with the placement of Francis and the Angel strongly in the forefront of the picture plane, unlike all religious paintings previously executed that placed most of the important figures in the middle ground or background. This placement can have a profound effect upon the viewer. Our present day understanding of this work differs greatly from the viewer of 1595. We are placed very near the action or drama taking place. Our opportunity to be voyeuristic is negated, and we are asked to partake and acknowledge the miracle before us.

In the course of a libel trial in 1603, Caravaggio's friend Orazio Gentileschi states that several months earlier he had lent the artist a capuchin friar's habit, as well as a pair of angel wings previously used in religious dramatic presentations. Caravaggio recruited from the street outside his studio an elderly poor man who posed for the artist wearing the habit.⁶ Most of Caravaggio's models were poor, rough types, and prostitutes culled from the streets.⁷

Some art historians have suggested the saint has the features of Cardinal Del Monte; other art historians attempted to claim it was a self-portrait, but contemporaries described Caravaggio as a large young man, with a thin black beard, black eyes and bushy eyebrows. As for the angel, Caravaggio painted from life. The angel bears a marked resemblance to the boy in *Boy Peeling a Fruit* and to the winged Cupid on the far left of *the Musicians*, and even more to the boy being cheated in *Cardsharps*. The boy/angel wears a sheet and stage prop wings mentioned above.. There is very little to indicate the specific new appearance of the saint's Capuchin robe- no sign of the Stigmata in hands or feet, and no blood or the fearsome seraph Brother Leo's text portrays. Strange glimmerings flicker on the horizon. The scene is at once real and unreal. Cardinal Del Monte kept the painting till the end of his life, and several copies went into circulation soon after.

One of those copies may be one sold to Ottavio Costa, a Genoese banker living in Rome, one of Caravaggio's first patrons. Costa bought this work and two others (*Judith and Holofernes* and *St. John*) for his personal collection. In his will he stipulates that the *Saint Francis in Ecstasy*⁸ painting be given to Abbot Ruggero Triconio from Udine, secretary to Cardinal Alessandro Montalto. Soon restored to full health, in 1606/07 Costa gave the painting or, more likely, a copy of it, to his friend Tritonio. After several exchanges with other nobles and Cardinals, the work, in 1857, was finally installed at the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Connecticut. The painting did pass through the hands of Cardinal Del Monte, and is thought to be an original signature from Caravaggio's hand. It seems to have been standard practice to commission a copy of a new original painting for an art collector, and that it be painted as soon as possible after acquiring the original work.

Now we turn our attention to the actual artistic composing of

St. Francis in Ecstasy and the practice of painting as generated by Caravaggio.

Caravaggio's Composition

Renaissance compositions were described as symmetrical, balanced geometrical formulas set upon a basic grid of circle, triangle, or curvilinear shapes. Figures were then placed on the grid in order of their importance and spiritual significance relating to church doctrine. Now during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation the underpinnings of the composition need to reflect new directives that include paintings as a meditational device for the people. Several compositions that express spiritual or meditative themes now are based on a rather strict diagonal across the canvas from left to right, at times causing the physical body of the model to conform or contort to the intended diagonal composition. Perhaps for Caravaggio the rising, or falling diagonal, depending on the intended depiction, strengthened the viewer's experience of rising from earthly toward heavenly contemplation, a concept originally introduced during the early Medieval and Gothic era, the body abandoned in prayer.

The basic construction of the design of the painting being investigated here expresses elements of the northern European pictorial tradition. For example, the composition is composed on a simplified structure based on intersecting diagonals. The diagonals form the armature for the two main figures in the painting. The intimate night setting was influenced by the painters Moretto and Savoldo. Some art historians believe Caravaggio's construction was harkening back to his earlier training, especially when asked to create an entirely new subject, a religious painting. Motif of the angel holding up the saint is new, and may find its precedence in more traditional representations of Mary supporting her Son, the pieta motif.

Caravaggio's Palette

The color palette of Caravaggio was typical of 17th century painters, albeit very limited. Colors were arranged around the edge of the palette, and included iron oxide colors: red ochre, yellow ochre, umber. Other colors were a few mineral pigments such as vermilion, lead-tin yellow, and lead white. Rounding out the painters color wheel were organic carbon black, or bone black, and vertigris. Earths and ochres predominated, and brighter colors were always veiled with thin glazes. The mixture of reds, yellows, and grains of malachite were Caravaggio's trademarks.

Caravaggio's Painting Technique

It was not uncommon for the finished painting to be rejected, including some of Caravaggio's finished paintings. On occasion when his finished panels done on cypress wood as a support were rejected, he hastily created a second version of the same motif but this time using canvas rather than wood. He never used preparatory drawings or cartoons for his paintings as master painters before him had done. In fact, there are no drawings or cartoons that can be attributed to him.

Chiarascuro was a method of portraying light and dark throughout a painting. This technique was already in practice for several decades, but Caravaggio made the technique definitive, darkening the shadows and transfixing the subject in a blinding shaft of light. Tenebrism, from the Italian, tenebroso (murky), also

⁶ Peter Robb. *M the Man who Became Caravaggio*. Australia: Duffy & Smallgrove, 1998, no pg.

⁷ Jackie Wullschlager. "Caravaggio speaks to our times" in *Financial Times*, The Financial Times LTD. Oct. 1, 2010.

⁸ Also called *Saint Francis receiving the Stigmata* (Hartford, Wadsworth Athenaeum).

called dramatic illumination, is a style of painting using very pronounced chiaroscuro, where there are violent contrasts of light and dark, and where darkness becomes a dominating feature of the image. Chiaroscuro and tenebrism are clearly evident in Caravaggio's painting of *St. Francis in Ecstasy* and satisfy the spiritual significance of the painting.

The Spiritual Significance of the Painting

Caravaggio's religious paintings were nourished by Counter-Reformation meditative techniques and liturgical piety. Carlo Borromeo had published in 1577 a *magnum opus* of instructions on the building and decoration of churches. In Chapter seventeen Borromeo prescribed how sacred events were to be represented. He emphatically suggests punishments for painters who failed to maintain decorum. Any painter, who wanted church commissions from the most powerful patrons of all, had to bear these instructions in mind from now on. Then Borromeo's friend, Paleotti wrote *On Sacred and Profane Images*. This work also spelled out the rules for painting, not only in churches, but 'in houses and every place'. As mediators of the counter-reformation to the unlettered public, painters had a unique responsibility.⁹ Caravaggio's explicit choice not to represent the stigmata in hands and feet, but only the side wound, confirms his desire to express the spiritual dimension of the episode rather than its visible physical manifestation. Perhaps the most radical, generous, and therefore most "Franciscan" insight into the perspective and character of Brother Leo's relationship with Francis is depicted by Caravaggio selecting the moment of ecstasy after the stigmata in which the saint has fainted in the arms of an angel. The presence of Brother Leo metaphorically takes on new significance, allowing the composition to ask the viewer how they will perceive the painting.

It has been pointed out that Caravaggio's painting was "unprecedented" in that the artist "made visually lucid the mystical rather than the literal meaning of the seraphic miracle."¹⁰ For Caravaggio, the angel is a comforter, the one who catches the saint as he falls and lets us see him through his loving eyes. It may seem that Caravaggio has drastically altered the story to suit his own artistic purposes. Perhaps, but in doing so he has made a powerful and moving argument for how Francis might have retold the story himself. This angel is grounded; he has wings, but they are shrouded in shadow whereas his bare arm and leg – his vividly human limbs – support the fainting man. The stranger, the victim, the companion, the witness, the seraph, and the Christ-figure are brought together in one image. In choosing Leo as his witness, Francis seems to be offering a way to interpret the Stigmata miracle. In admonishing Leo to come close to him, but not too close, he leaves room not merely for skepticism and fear but, perhaps most importantly, for individuality. Francis' "cross" may have been, among others, an extreme literal mindedness that led him to the agony of becoming an *alter Christus*. Leo's cross, more familiar to most of us – his nosiness, his need for proof, his restless conscience, his ambivalence, his spiritual timidity – may have seemed to Francis heavy enough for one person.¹¹

9 Peter Robb. *M the Man who Became Caravaggio*. Australia: Duffy & Smallgrove, 1998, p 23.

10 Pamela Askew, "The Angelic Consolation of St. Francis of Assisi in Post Tridentine Italian Painting," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutions*, vol. 32 (1969), pp. 285-287.

11 Robert Kiely. *Blessed and Beautiful, Picturing the Saints*. New Haven & London:

The dramatic contrast between the dark night sky and the light falling on Francis and the Angel also adds to a mystical connotation. The painting is one of the few times Caravaggio represents a nightscape. In the dark background sky are yellow and orange strips that show the sky's last gleams as manifestation of divine power. Investigations into light and its effects may have been the influence of Antonio and Vincenzo Campi, brothers from Cremona.

Art Theory in the Time of Caravaggio

The art theory formulated at that time was partly represented by the proliferation of a vast literature produced by men of the church – rather than by professional artists- who were trying to mark out the boundaries assigned to art in the reformed church and society¹². In December, 1563, while countering extremist currents forbidding any depiction whatever of the godhead, the last convocation of the Council of Trent decreed that the representation of sacred subjects was to not only be permitted, but be able to foster interests in religious education. Artists who wanted to work became more attentive to the guidelines concerning devotional works issued by the Council of Trent.

It was then thought that it was the clergy's job to supervise the artists and judge their work according to the dictates of the Church of the Counter-Reformation. Now writings about art and art theory were subject to specific rules that addressed not the essence of art but its effects. A 1482 essay on sacred and profane images, by Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti, archbishop of Bologna is emblematic of the prevailing climates. Following a purely theological point of view, Paleotti's *Discorso* stated principles artists were to follow: simplicity and intelligibility, realistic interpretation, and an emotional appeal to piety. In response, Caravaggio portrayed the saints as ordinary folks – often as penitent sinners – with ragged garments, dirt under their fingernails, and dirty feet.¹³ The age, sex, type, expression, gesture, and clothing had to be appropriate to the character of the figure being represented.¹⁴

Caravaggio's dark style was immediately recognized for its radical novelty, but many found it objectionable because of its supposedly crude realism and lack of concern with beauty and decorum.¹⁵ Critics thought his art only relied on the study of the model, in other words on the sense of sight in its most immediate and physical aspect. This was in contrast to the ideal of classical painting, based on the study of the most beautiful aspects of nature and art.

Michael Fried, an American theoretical critic, has spent a lifetime refining the argument that Caravaggio's 'illusion' was achieved by "absorption". First, "through the persuasive representation of figures so deeply absorbed in what they are doing, feeling and thinking that they appear oblivious to anything else", and second by "a pictorial unity according to which all the elements in a painting are perceived as motivated by a single dramatic imperative, so that the beholder instinctively feels that they cannot be other than as

Yale University Press, 2010.

12 Peter Robb. *M The man who became Caravaggio*. . Australia: Duffy & Smallgrove, 1998, p. 33.

13 Susan Hodara, "Caravaggio, and Some of His Admirers" in *The New York Times*, May 3, 2013, pg. CT9.

14 Alessandro Guasti and Francesca Neri. *Caravaggio: The Complete Works*. 2007. New York: Barnes & Noble, p. 43-44.

15 The most elaborate criticism of Caravaggio is in Giovanni Pietro Bellori's 1672 *le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni*. Seventeenth and eighteenth-century sources on Caravaggio in English translation can be found in H. Hibbard, *Caravaggio*. London, 1983, pp. 343-87.

they are". The painting's human truth and formal structure are inseparable.¹⁶ On the other hand, some modern readers and viewers blame Brother Leo, Bonaventure, Giotto, the Church, the Friars, and many others who, in representing Francis, seem to have distorted so much the original that we can no longer see or even imagine the real person.

Caravaggio and Contracts

Art historians are zealous about discovering written contracts between painter and patron. The original documents can produce a wealth of evidence regarding dating of the work, provenance, medium used, payment records and cost of paint and canvas for each work produced. While there may have been some form of contract between Caravaggio and Cardinal Del Monte, there is no extant evidence that contracts were formulated while Caravaggio was painting for Cardinal Del Monte. The earliest single painting contract involving Caravaggio is dated 1599, but was between Caravaggio and the Fabbrica di San Pietro, stating Caravaggio was to finish the wall frescoes begun by Cavalier d'Arpino, who had died c. 1593. Caravaggio was now assigned by the priests of the Contarelli Chapel in the Roman Church of San Luigi dei Francesi to execute two paintings of stories of the life of Saint Matthew. On February 7, 1602, Caravaggio was commissioned to paint a third work of *Saint Matthew and the Angel* for the chapel altar.¹⁷ Currently, *The Calling of Saint Matthew* may be his most famous work today in terms of analyzing his style, composition, and technique for the modern viewer.

In Conclusion

Before Caravaggio and the Counter-Revolution in the Roman church, paintings were considered successful when their didactic mission satisfied current church teachings and the calendar of saints using, on occasion, causes for the martyrdom or profound portrayals in relationship to God. With, and after, Caravaggio and his contemporaries descended upon Rome and the Papacy, the skill and imagination of the painter/artist had to span not only truth in nature and the human form, but also create depictions that fostered a spirit of contemplation, another layer of meaning beyond the earthly representations, and now included, when successful, a visual means that assists the practice of meditation using an image. This revolutionary action required changes in how a viewer perceives the work, thus creating a new responsibility upon the viewer.

The response or dialogue, of the viewer to the work, now is dependent upon the viewer's religious knowledge, education, and perhaps above all, faith. When the dependence is considered fruitful, the image becomes timeless addressing viewers of any age and any experience of a Christian life. The painting by Caravaggio, *St. Francis in Ecstasy*, painted in 1595, is now four hundred and twenty years old, and while the image has not changed, the viewers over the years have sought and found new inspirations that may enhance their devotional practice, based on their life experiences.

16 Michael Fried. *Absorption and Theatricality, Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, 1st. Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. No pg. Also see Michael Fried. *The Moment of Caravaggio*. Prequel, The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Arts, Aug. 17, 2010. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Bollingen Series XXXV: 51. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010.

17 Alessandro Guasti and Francesca Neri. *Caravaggio: The Complete Works*. 2007. New York: Barnes & Noble, p 69.

Other Saint Francis of Assisi Paintings by the Hand of Caravaggio

The total number of paintings attributed to Caravaggio by art historians varies greatly. David Littlejohn records only 64 paintings have been attributed to Caravaggio; however, other art historians disagree. Half of them (the paintings) are in Italy, and the best Caravaggio's – mainly altarpieces in churches – do not travel for exhibition purposes.. Only six United States museums own certified works by Caravaggio.¹⁸ In general, most art historians are of the opinion that only 34 other extant paintings are by his own hand, several of them commissioned by Cardinal del Monte. Those that involve Franciscan themes are listed below:

Adoration of the Shepherds, 1609, Capuchin Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Messina.

Saint Francis in Meditation, c. 1600 for the Capuchin Church and Museum in Rome. This church is now called Santa Maria Immacolata in Via Veneto.

Saint Francis a copy after Caravaggio, c. 1606, Rome, the Capuchin Church of Santa Maria della Concezione. This meditative work has an unresolved date and patron, but was probably made for Pietro Aldobrandini, who then gave it to the monastery of the Reformed Friars Minor at Carpinto. Historians Guasti and Neri offer a hypothesis based on the habit's hood. They claim the Francis figure was dressed "Capuchin-style," with several patches on the worn out habit and a thin gold halo above his head, unlike the work in question here of Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata at the Athenium in Connecticut. But in this panel Caravaggio altered the pointed hood into the rounded hood of the Reformed Friars Minor. This *pentimento* is attributed to a change of heart on the part of Cardinal Aldobrandini, who when he founded the church of Santa Maria della Concezione in 1609, at first gave it to the Capuchins but subsequently preferred the Reformed Friars Minor. At this time, Caravaggio was living in the Colonna domains, which adjoined the Aldobrandini lands.¹⁹

Saint Francis in Meditation, c. 1606, size 51.22" x 35.46". Cremona, Museo Civico Ala Panzone. Evocative spiritual atmosphere and an inwardness of expression.

The Nativity with Saints Lawrence and Francis, 1609, size 105.6" x 77.6". Palermo, Church of San Lorenzo (now lost).

Saint Francis in Prayer. Cc. 1602-1604, in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica in Rome, in the Palazzo Barberini. There may also be a copy in the Chiesa dei Cappuccini, and the Church of San Pietro..

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Baglione, Giovanni, a contemporary painter, late Mannerist/Early Baroque style) wrote about Caravaggio's early works in *The Lives of Painters, Sculptors et architects. From the Pontificate of Gregory XII in 1572 up to the time of Pope Urban VIII in 1642*, reprint in 1733 in Naples. Now unavailable. Another English source is *The Lives of*

18 David Littlejohn. "Caravaggio in Context" in *The Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 19, 2012.

19 Alessandro Guasti and Francesca Neri. *Caravaggio: The Complete Works*. 2007. New York: Barnes & Noble, p 121-2.

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From the Bookshelf

The Earliest Franciscans. The Legacy of Giles of Assisi, Roger of Provence, and James of Milan by Paul Lachance, Pierre Brunette, Kathryn Krug. Paulist Press, 2015.

Reviewed by David Flood, O.F.M.

Pierre Brunette introduces this slim book (xvii and 118 pages) by acknowledging Paul Lachance (RIP) as its primary author. Paul succeeded in drawing Pierre into the study and discussion that lies behind the book; he won the kind collaboration of Kathryn Krug for all things Latin. The book suggests a great deal of savvy about early Franciscan history. With that history in mind, the three authors introduce us to three not well known friars of the early Franciscan years.

Of the three, Giles of Assisi is the best known. He joined Francis at the Portiuncula as his third companion. He belonged to the group that went to Rome in the spring of 1209, seeking papal approval. We know about Giles through three distinct sources and above all in: *The Beginning or Founding of the Order and the Deeds of Those Lesser Brothers Who Were the First Companions of Blessed Francis in Religion* (*Religio* means religious life.) The author was John of Perugia, a companion of Giles. He wrote his account in 1240-1241. From the accounts offered by John of Perugia, Giles opposed the changes to the brotherhood building up before and after Francis's death. Certainly he did, for the change did occur and it was of a cast that could not please Giles. Giles was a reputed contemplative who often rose above the human composition that weighs us down. The sayings, however, called *Dicta*, which he left behind, focus on the control one exercises as preliminary to prayer. Lachance and Brunette offer a selection of them. Recently Stefano Brufani gave the *Dicta* a critical edition.

The simple and wisely balanced Giles is followed by wildly uncontrollable Roger of Provence (southern France). The date of Roger's birth is not known, nor are the details of his clerical education. He entered the Franciscan Order in 1297 at a mature age and died in 1310. Grace abundant seemed too much for Roger. Especially at mass, which often lasted three to four hours, he did not show control of himself. He struck many as insane. He enjoyed acceptance in the Order, however, and even a group of admirers, for he was

appointed Novice-Master to some twenty friars and elected too as Custos at a chapter. Roger left behind a brief collection of writings, which Lachance and Brunette have divided into forty paragraphs, all well translated by Kathryn Krug. An excess of grace also got into some of Roger's reflections. The great devotion of Roger of Provence to God, his fascination with God, easily scrambled his rhetoric and bothered his terminology, but he was singing God's praise rather than lecturing on theology. His translator has done a fine job getting him into English.

About James of Milan there is little to say, save that he wrote an influential piece of spiritual theology, the *Stimulus Amoris* (We hardly need a translation of the title, although a few are noted). The author lived in northern Italy in the second half of the thirteenth century. The book was good enough to get listed, over a few centuries, among the writings of Bonaventure of Bagnoregio.

Although the *Stimulus Amoris* was written for Franciscans, it found favor among a much larger audience and was translated into the vernaculars. That success among seculars as well as religious, as Lachance and Brunette propose (56), arose from the variety and the quality of the book's encouragement to Christian living. The two authors introduce us to the *Stimulus* and then, thanks to their translator, offer us a selection of chapters from the text. At Chapter 14 they draw attention to James's emphasis on the motherhood of Christ. They do so in reference to a stained-glass window in the Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi. It cast Angela of Foligno into a trance. Jerome Poulenc has argued that the *Stimulus Amoris* supplied the theological basis for the window (59). To complete their presentation of James of Milan and his *Stimulus Amoris*, at note 29 on page 108, Lachance and Brunette give the data to an online translation of the whole text. It was done by Campion Murray, an Australian friar known for his work as translator.

Lachance and Brunette introduce their data and their presentation of the three friars with the tantalizing line from the *Sacrum commercium*. Lady Poverty, the personification of Christ's poverty, looks down from her century-old abode high in the hills at a few men scaling the obstructed way to her presence. They show the resolution needed to get there. They are the earliest Franciscans. Lachance and Brunette extend the question's reach to the three subjects of their book. It's a good question, and it bears extension.

The Loneliness and Longing of Saint Francis by Gerard T. Straub.

Book: New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2014, 287 pages, \$19.95. Film: Pax et Bonum Communications, 2015, 2 DVDs, Part 1: 2 hours 10 minutes, Part 2: 1 hour 47 minutes, \$30.00.

Reviewed by Jean-François Godet-Calogeras

The book has a subtitle that tells the reader right away what it is all about: "A Hollywood filmmaker, a medieval saint, and a life-changing spirituality for today." Blending his own life experience

and the life of Francis of Assisi, Gerard Straub depicts a Franciscan way to live in today's world.

This is not the first book about the saint of Assisi written by Straub. His first book came at the turn of the new millennium, when he published *The Sun and Moon Over Assisi: a personal encounter with Francis and Clare*,¹ a book of over six hundred pages in which he narrates in detail the history of Francis and Clare alongside his own spiritual conversion, mixing historical facts and pilgrimage diaries. Some fourteen years later, with this new book, the author wants "to enter more fully into the internal spiritual life of the saint" (xii). While recalling the important moments in the life of Francis, Straub offers an ongoing meditation on the life of the saint of Assisi as well as on his own. Throughout the pages of

¹ Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2000. An updated and revised edition was recently released by Tau-Publishing.

this book, the author keeps the reader traveling in time and space, from the Middle Ages to the 21st century, from America to Italy, to Haiti, to Brazil, and all over the world, while following the main stages in Francis' life.

First, the setting in the 13th century Assisi with its dramatic changes and conflicts. Straub quotes Thomas Merton who rightly wrote of the thirteenth century that it "was a century of great saints and great sinners, great greed and great charity, great mercy and great cruelty" (22). A world of strong contrasts: war and peace, wealth and misery, beauty and ugliness, pleasure and suffering.

Then comes the time of conversion, when one realizes "the emptiness of all material things" (41). But the conversion is a journey, a pilgrimage through failure, disenchantment, depression, loss of direction, desert. However, there is the moment when one is caught by surprise. It happened to Francis with the lepers outside Assisi. Straub's recounting of Francis' experience of mercy, *miseri-cordia*, with the lepers is very evocative. Not only does he recall how lepers were treated in medieval times by the society as well as by the Church, but he also calls for a change, a conversion of mind and of language today, following the advice he received from a Medical Missionaries of Mary sister. It is time to realize that the word "leper" is pejorative, while we now know that leprosy is simply a disease, nowadays treatable. Hence we should talk of "people with Hansen's disease or a person with leprosy" (64), which is indeed more respectful.

Francis' experience with the people suffering from Hansen's disease outside Assisi was the turning point in his life. In their relationship, Francis discovered compassion, he gave them their humanity back, and he began to discover God as the *Summum Bonum*, the Supreme Good. And it is also when he began to discover the humanity of God in Jesus, in his incarnation, and in his passion. With all that, Francis had to leave, without anything, naked like the Crucified.

In part III, "The Founding," Straub continues his reflective remembrance of Francis' journey from the beginning of his life of penance to the progressive development of a way of life with companions. He stresses the importance of solitude, silence, places, and times of prayer and contemplation in the life of Francis, something that he contrasts with the noisy and agitated life of today's world:

Today, it is normal for earphones to be almost permanently hammed into ears, earphones connected to myriad devices that are channels for endless chatter. We watch life through little screens that distract us from the real life in front of us. We film our lives with our cell phones and then e-mail selected scenes from our self-centered lives to everybody we know. No one looks up anymore; we are all looking down at our i-Whatever and typing something that someone else needs to know. Writing has become "texting." We tweet away the day and keep God at bay (118).

In Part IV, "The Mission," Straub continues to blend episodes of the life of St. Francis with his own life, reflecting on love, peace, poverty and freedom, action and contemplation. The passage "St. Francis of Brooklyn" (218-22) is a good example of that symbiotic approach. Looking back at the cultural environment that surrounded his youth, Straub tries to imagine Francis had he been born not in medieval Assisi, but in the twentieth-century Brooklyn. Could he have become Saint Francis in the dominant rationalism of the time? Could he have developed his fraternal relationship with all of creation? Would he have been able to pay deep attention to his inner life?

Our lives have become so splintered, divided among so many responsibilities, so many demands upon our time, that most of us feel frazzled and fatigued. So much of modern technology, designed to make things easier for us, has in fact increased the things that tug for our attention. (...) Entering into our interior life, where we can encounter the love and mercy of God, is becoming increasingly more difficult (221).

The last three parts of Straub's book evoke and reflect on the events marking the final years of Francis' life: the stigmata, the composition of the *Canticle of the Creatures*, and his death. In Part V, "The Stigmata," Straub reflects on the suffering of Francis and Jesus, but also on the suffering of the poor, the refugees, inequality, and injustice. "Christ wants us to respond to the suffering that torments the poor. Jesus wants a new social order where human lives are dignified with justice, uplifted in compassion, and nurtured by peace" (241).

Part VI, "The Canticle," is a celebration of Francis the poet for his wonderful *Cantico di frate Sole*, Canticle of Brother Sun—or of the Creatures. Composed in Umbrian in the early months of 1225, when he was staying in San Damiano, suffering and almost blind, this is Francis' song of gratitude, his hymn to life, to the beauty of life, all life.

The book comes to an end. In Part VII, "The Transitus," Straub remembers the circumstances of Francis' death and has a final meditation of the meaning of the life of the poor man of Assisi.

To understand St. Francis and to fully appreciate him, you must penetrate the mystery of his deep devotion to the humanity of Jesus, a devotion not born of a learned tradition but which sprang directly from his heart and his personal experience of God's love (276).

St. Francis of Assisi is a saint of incarnation. There was a visible manifestation of the conversion process that was going on inside of him. He preached by the witness of his life. His life was his sermon. And that sermon still has something to say to us today (284-85).

The Loneliness and Longing of St. Francis is not another life of the saint of Assisi, even though it does follow its unfolding. In reality Straub wrote "this book in order to fall in love with Francis again" (xii). So, this book is actually a long meditation, and should be approached as such, slowly savoring a few pages at a time.

Also an accomplished filmmaker, Straub released a film by the same title, *The Loneliness and Longing of St. Francis of Assisi*. In reality, it is not a film. The total length of the two video disks is almost four hours. It is not really made to be watched in one or two sittings. Like the book and using parts of it, this is a long meditation—for a total of sixty-five chapters.

The sixty-five chapters are organized in ten acts and one epilogue: Rome, Assisi, Conversion, Interior Journey, Ambassador of Peace, In the Footsteps of St. Francis, The Stigmata, The Tireless Messenger of Love, Brother Sun and Sister Moon, Going Home, and Poverty and Prayer.

It is a kind of retreat with Francis through a pilgrimage to places of important and meaningful events in his life. Straub takes us to Rome and Assisi, of course, to various places in Umbria and Tuscany, suggesting us to watch in small pieces, like "in the *lectio divina* tradition: watch, pause, reflect, pray." Straub's intention is to take us through the images, the music and the spoken words to the meaning of Francis' life and spirituality with the hope that it inspires us in our own lives today.

CALL FOR PAPERS

“Franciscan Women: Medieval & Beyond”

Women and the Franciscan Tradition

The Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University

July 12-15, 2016

From July 12-15, 2016, the Franciscan Institute at Saint Bonaventure University will host a major conference dedicated to women and the Franciscan Tradition, ranging from the Middle Ages to the contemporary world. The organizers seek to bring together women and men who are living the Franciscan tradition in various ways -- as members or associates of the three Franciscan orders, coworkers in Franciscan institutions, etc. -- with academic scholars who want to bring their research into a mutually enriching conversation with a broader audience.

We also are pleased to announce three key note presentations which will highlight this rich tradition:

- [Dr Marco Bartoli](#), professor at the Pontificia Università Antonianum (Rome) and author of numerous studies on Clare of Assisi and other medieval Franciscan women (including 2012's *La santità di Chiara d'Assisi: una lettura storica delle fonti*).
- [Florence Deacon, OSF](#), former director of the congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi and past president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.
- [Dr. Amy Koehlinger](#), professor of History at Oregon State University and author of *The New Nuns: Racial Justice and Religious Reform in the 1960s*. Her current project *From Charity to Justice* is a history of the apostolate of Franciscans in the U.S. for the Academy of American Franciscan History.

Individual papers, panels, and workshop proposals are sought that engage academic, pastoral, and socio-political aspects of this topic. Possible areas of focus include, but are not limited to the following:

- Franciscan women and leadership
- Female Franciscanism during the Middle Ages
- Female Franciscanism and the Early Modern World
- Franciscan women in the "New World"
- Franciscan women and ministry
- Scholarly trends for religious women
- Women and the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition through the ages
- Franciscan Women and the Contemporary Church

Proposals are due by **December 15, 2015 (note extended deadline)**. Notifications of acceptance, rejection or need for alterations will be sent to authors by **January 15, 2016**. Send a paper proposal/ draft of your text no later than December 15, 2015, directly to dcouturi@sbu.edu or mail to:

Women & the Franciscan Tradition Conference/ Franciscan Institute St. Bonaventure University
Murphy Building – Room 100 St. Bonaventure, NY 14778

Organizing Committee: David Couturier OFM Cap. (St. Bonaventure University), Timothy Johnson (Flagler College), Lezlie Knox (Marquette University), Diane V. Tomkinson OSF (Neumann University)

*Grant funding is available for those attending the conference. For more information, please visit:
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