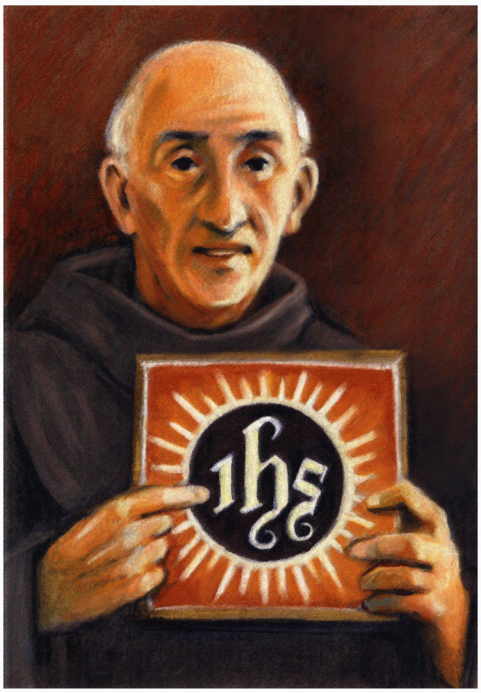
Franciscan Connections: The Cord - A Spiritual Review

Francis and Four Boys: Parenting with Franciscan Ethics
by Jay Hammond, Ph.D.

Bonaventure, The End of the World, and Work
by Holly Grieco, Ph.D.

Christ's Resurrection in Bernardino da Siena's Easter Sermons
by Steven J. McMichael, O.F.M., Conv.



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Franciscan Connections:
The Cord – A Spiritual Review

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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.

As we go to press, it is primary season in American politics and the mood is surly. Pollsters tell us that voters are angry and frustrated. David Brooks, a *New York Times* columnist, says that Americans are feeling the "anxieties of impotence," as they watch their wages stagnate and their dreams stall. Politics seems to be assuming a dark tone.

Maybe surprisingly, as Franciscans we stand in the midst of the same potent forces of frustration and we hope. Some might ascribe this hopefulness to a naïve Franciscan idealism, but our authors in this issue of *Franciscan Connections* would beg to differ. They source it elsewhere.

Steven McMichael's' analysis of the Easter sermons of Bernadine of Siena reminds us that our resurrected bodies will be graced with clarity, agility, subtlety, and impassibility. There are traces of that future glory even now. Michael Crosby sees it in St. Francis' "mystical stance" that allows everything in creation to become fraternal/relational. Holly Grieco tracks it in the changed ways in which we work, according to St. Bonaventure. Jay Hammond introduces us to his wonderful challenge of teaching Franciscan ethics, "encountering the other," to his four boys. The radiance of glory seems to have effect and impact everywhere!

It even finds its way into the marketplace. Michael Fischer studies the notion of profit in Luca Pacioli's Franciscan view of business. Pacioli, known as the father of modern accounting, reminds his business students to record and keep an eye on everything, "but above all keep God before your eyes." That's not a bad way to cast away the shadows and see the light of love and grace that the Resurrection of the Christ provides. Above all, keep God before your eyes!

Fr. Dave

Franciscan

International News

From January 28 through February 2, leaders of women's and men's active and contemplative religious communities gathered in Rome for **"Consecrated Life in Unity,"** an international meeting for the Year of Consecrated Life.

Organized by the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life (CIVCSVA), this meeting included five keynote speeches, questions for the presenters, *lectio divina*, a panel discussion, and participation in the **closing Mass with Pope Francis at St. Peter's for the Year of Consecrated Life.** Poor Clare federal abbesses were among the invited guests.

On January 4, Pope Francis visited the Franciscan shrine at **Greccio**, greeting the friars there as well as young people at a diocesan meeting "Giovani Greccio 2016."

"Living the Gospel Interculturally" is the theme of *Propositum* 2016, a publication of the International Franciscan Conference of the Third Order Regular. The Christmas letter from the IFC's leadership team focused on St. Francis and the current Holy Year of Mercy.

Relics of noted confessors St. Leopold Mandic and St. Pio of Pietrelcina were brought to Rome for the special Ash Wednesday Mass during which Pope Francis commissioned **800 Missionaries of Mercy for the Holy Year**. The Franciscan family was well represented among those confessors.

Pope Francis celebrated a Mass with the Capuchins at St. Peter's on February 9.

Approximately 250 friars who serve in the general houses of the Observants, Conventuals, Capuchins and Third Order Regular gathered in Rome at the **Seraphicum** (international college for the Conventuals) for a half day of prayer, input, renewal of vows, and a meal on November 28, 2015.

The general council of the Conventuals met in Assisi with about 60 friars from the assemblies of their conferences and federations (January 17-23). A similar meeting will be held there September 18-24 for approximately the same number of friars unable to attend the January meeting. Both gatherings made plans for inter-Franciscan collaboration, the 800th anniversary of the Pardon of Assisi (2016), and how to observe the 500th anniversary of *Ite Vos*, the papal bull formally separating the Conventuals and the Observants (1517).

CIVCSVA has issued **"Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church."** Section 39 notes that mixed institutes of priests and brothers are encouraged to establish "a way of relating based on equal dignity, without any differences other than those arising from the diversity of their ministries." The document hopes that the question of jurisdiction of brothers in these institutes "will be resolved with determination and within an opportune timeframe."

Key websites

www.ifc-tor.org
www.ofm.org
www.ofmconv.net
www.ofmcap.org
www.franciscanitor.org

Roundtable

National News

Dr. Michael Grandillo was inaugurated on last October as the first lay president of Madonna University in Livonia, Michigan. The Felician Sisters sponsor the school, which currently has 4,440 students; Sister Marie Kujawa, CSSF had led the university for 14 years.

Edward Tverdek, OFM of Sacred Heart Province has published *The Moral Weight of Ecology* (Lexington Press via Rowman and Littlefield or Amazon). The book examines our duties to contribute to a healthy, sustainable environment and is presented largely in terms of secular moral philosophy. The volume's Introduction and Afterward refer to Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*

Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF and **Giles Schinelli, TOR** will lead a TOR/OSF pilgrimage to Assisi (also for co-workers, associates, and sponsoring groups) this November 8-17.

Students from Franciscan high schools, colleges, and universities participated in **local and national pro-life events** in late January to mark the 43rd anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision on abortion.

Padua Franciscan High School in Parma, Ohio has 45 international students from a dozen countries in its 800-member coed student body.

Members of the entire Franciscan family are participating in diocesan, regional, and national initiatives flowing from the **Holy Year of Mercy.**

Father Malachi Van Tassell, TOR, PhD (president of St. Francis University in Loretto, PA) has been elected as chair of the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities.

Neumann University (Aston, PA) was ranked by *U.S. News and World Reports* in the top half of 300 colleges that offer bachelor's degrees that can be earned completely online.

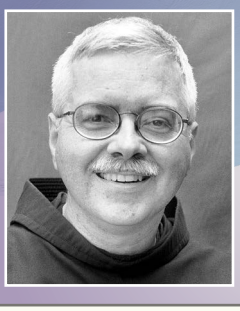
Mayo Clinic Health System-Franciscan Healthcare is sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and runs hospitals and clinics in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. It is affiliated with the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN.

The 7 OFM provinces in the U.S. have each designated 28 friars to attend one of four meetings this June and July, coordinated by the **Franciscan Interprovincial Team** of **Page Polk, Bill Beaudin** and **Richard McManus**. The gatherings in Danville (CA), Loudonville (NY), Albuquerque and Chicago are part of the reconfiguration process that the provinces are discussing.

The University of St. Francis in Joliet, IL serves 1,000 students at its main campus and more than 3,000 students at off-campus sites throughout the country. Two programs for health care professionals are especially popular.

Catholic University of America's Johannes Quasten award for excellence in scholarship and leadership in religious studies was recently given to **Joseph Chinicci, OFM**, president of Franciscan School of Theology in Oceanside, CA.

Key websites
www.franfed.org
www.escofm.org



Compiled by **Pat McCloskey, O.F.M.,** is the 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.*

A Response to "Saint Francis as Mystic: The Multifarious Mysticism of Francis of Assisi"

By Michael H. Crosby, O.F.M., Cap.

I am delighted that Brother Daniel Maria has offered us Franciscans, in his two-piece presentation in these pages,[1] such an in-depth approach discussing his interpretation of Francis of Assisi's mysticism. With this article, I would like to suggest some other points to consider that may serve as a nuance, if not a corrective (at least to this writer), to his insightful reflections. Perhaps, even more than a nuance or a corrective, let us hope they may be just another contribution to "the multifarious mysticism of Francis of Assisi."

First of all, let me say I think his insights in the last two publications of this journal offer us one of the finest discussions on the topic of Franciscan Mysticism that I have seen in a long time. He uses the classic sources on mysticism very well, especially Origin, Bernard McGinn, Ewert Cousins, and Evelyn Underhill (whose definition of mysticism he highlights as containing elements of experientialism and immediacy [free of cultural mediation] that I accept). Having reviewed these and various other authors on the topic, I was somewhat surprised he didn't include another classic offering: William James' *The Variety of Religious Experience*. Maybe, if he had, he would have recognized the critical need to distinguish between the "visionary mysticism" which he attributes to Francis' Mt. La Verna experience, and what I call Francis "mystical experience" which came from his encounter with the leper as he himself describes it in his *Testament*. Consequently, rather than seeing Mt. La Verna and the stigmata as revelatory of Francis' mysticism, I see it as a culmination and divine approbation of the mystical experience he had with the leper which grounded his whole subsequent effort to "live the gospel" in the manner of Jesus and Paul.

Where I find myself differing with the heart of Klimek's reason for classifying Francis as a mystic comes in the first of his two-part series where he declares: "Francis as a mystic achieved this in two major ways: 1) through his mystical experience at Mount La Verna in 1224, resulting in his stigmata, and 2) through a sensual spirituality which he inspired dedicated to contemplating and immersing oneself in Gospel scenes that depicted the life of Jesus" (34).

Regarding the first of Klimek's rationale, I do not think the La Verna event represents so much a "mystical experience" as much as what he earlier calls a "visionary experience." The distinction is critical. This distinction is found in the sixth and seventh mansions discussed by Theresa of Avila. I think almost 35-40% of *The Interior Castle* is found in her reflections on what happens in the Sixth Mansions. This involves her various articulations of peoples' "visionary experiences." Much of William James' *Varieties of Religious Experiences* does the same. However, both of them (Theresa and James) move on to discuss the uniqueness of someone's mystical experience that is beyond someone's experience of a vision. The vision is outside of them; the mystical experience is unmediated insofar as it is experiential and immediate. I believe that Francis' original mystical experience that came in his encounter with the leper in 1206 or 1207 (years before La Verna) in whom he discovered Christ being crucified again. This led him to a whole new worldview that changed him in "soul and body." It got expressed in his unique way of creating a community that reflected this *evangelical* vision of being one with leper's and all others' suffering violence in the world. In this sense, I also disagree with Bernard McGinn, whom Klimek quotes: "However we evaluate the significance of the 'mysticism of the historical event,' one thing is clear: the Franciscan contribution to mystical identification with Christ, especially his passion depended primarily on Francis' unprecedented identification with the Savior through his reception of the stigmata."[2] In other words, I believe that the event early on in the process of Francis' conversion with the leper was the "historical event" that represented his mystical experience which launched his subsequent life rather than the "visionary experience" of La Verna that highlighted the end of his life. Furthermore, the "change" in his soul and body that he experienced upon his encounter with the leper was ultimately ratified when he received in his body the stigmata that Jesus Christ experienced in his at the end of his life. But, like Jesus Christ, Francis' proclamation of the gospel toward the lepers and others (see Mt. 11:2-6) was the confirmation of something at the beginning not at the end of his life.

Why do I interpret Francis' mysticism in this way?

In my recent book, *Fruit of the Spirit: Pauline Mysticism for the Church Today,* I argue that the umbrella we call "mysticism" involves four key areas: 1) the mystical environment (such as taking quiet time for a retreat or to reflect and pray, including the practice of mindfulness and centering); 2) mystical prayer and praying (as described in writers like Theresa of Avila in her *The Interior Castle* or Peter of Alcantra), 3) the mystical stance (such as I try to describe in my book noted above) and 4) the mystical experience itself.

In my study of peoples' accounts, I believe we find at least three, if not four, elements involved in what can be called a "mystical experience" itself: 1) it is an inbreaking that comes unannounced; 2) which takes over one's whole being; 3) in a way that makes us aware of our connectedness to everyone and everything; 4) which now becomes the basis for what we consciously believe/consider to be "real." This brings about a radical change in the one with the experience - a totally new worldview. For people who believe in God, this experience is called an experience of God. The classic narration of this event is Paul's Damascus experience.

Francis' account of meeting the leper, notwithstanding our lack of details about the actual event and its unraveling, as well as its subsequent impact on his "evangelical option for the poor," represents

1 Daniel Maria Klimek, T.O.R., "Saint Francis as Mystic: The Multifarious Mysticism of Francis of Assisi," Part I, *Franciscan Connections: The Cord—A Spiritual Review*, 65. 3 (September 2015), 32-37 and Part II, *Ibid*. 65.4 (December, 2015), 29-33.

2 Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 59.

for me an almost step-by-step parallel to Paul's Damascus experience which impacted his whole subsequent theological articulation of us being "in Christ" and Christ being "in us." Where we who believe are very willing and desirous of calling this experience our "experience of God" and who God is and what God is about in us, people like the atheist Sam Harris will not call this "God," even though he will accept the four elements of the mystical experience.

Let me articulate the parallels between Paul's Damascus experience and Francis' leper experience that make me conclude that they are both examples of a mystical experience:

An Inbreaking: Saul was on his way to Damascus to do violence to the Christians when the experience *happened to him.* Francis was "led" somewhere with the violent attitudes society had inculcated in him toward the leper when the experience *happened to him*. Neither had anything to do with the experience; it came unannounced. I think this reflects what Underhill (and Klimek) describe as:

An Overpowering Reality: The experience for both Saul and Francis (on his way to ultimate conversion when he heard the passage of the Scripture) took over each of them; it claimed their whole being and subsequent stance in life. It moved them from one world view to another (but I'm jumping the gun here).

A Feeling of Not Being Separated but Part-Of Everyone/thing: This made them feel connected to the very ones from whom they were separated by varying forms of violence: Paul persecuting the Christians and Francis who had embraced the culture of persecution and marginalization of the lepers (who, along with heretics, Moslems [and other unbelievers] and homosexuals) were the recipients, at that time, of religiously-sanctioned violence.

Leading to a New Understanding of Reality: This experience made them realize that the very ones suffering their violence were "the Christ." For Paul the realization came in the words: "Why are you persecuting me." For Francis, Celano later tells us, it was his realization that whoever violates someone who is poor is crucifying Jesus Christ (1 Cel. 28). *This* experience contributed to the decision of both of them to embrace and proclaim what is called "the Gospel."

Saul, now Paul, was transformed in soul and body and so was Francis: to such a degree that they could say that they no longer lived (a normal life) but that Christ had come alive in them. Here I am in full agreement with Klimek:

There cannot be a more appropriate Scriptural passage that captures the essence of Francis' mystical transformation then that which came from Paul, who himself (very similar to Francis) underwent profound transformation through a mystical encounter with Christ. Paul's poignant phrase in Galatians 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).[3]

However, just as I argue in *Fruit of the Spirit* that Paul's mystical experience was the launching pad for his total Christology and Ecclesiology,[4] so, I contend, Francis' mystical experience that occurred in his encounter with the leper, launched his whole spirituality of inclusivity as well as his launching of the Order to "observe the Gospel of Jesus Christ" which was to bring "good news" to the poor and the planet. Both Paul and Francis called their experience not only "the Gospel" but the result of divine revelation (the in-breaking itself). For Paul it was *apocalyptic* (Gal 1:12c); for Francis it was his conviction that he had become divinely inspired: "the Lord led me."

Given this understanding of what I consider to be Francis' formative "mystical experience," and recalling that is one of the four forms of mysticism, I want to offer my nuance to a key element of the second part of Klimek's two-part article.

A key consideration he makes flows from Klimek's statement, "Origin's understanding of 'mystical' was exegetical in character, pertaining to a comprehension of the deeper, 'hidden' mysteries of Scripture and, it was not the hidden mysteries themselves present in Scripture that Origin considered 'mystical,' but the process—spiritual in nature—by which one would come to understand these hidden mysteries." Here he finds an application of this to Francis in Bonaventure's eleventh chapter of *The Major Legend* where the Seraphic Doctor talks about Francis' "unflagging zeal for prayer" and "a continual exercise of virtue." He (Klimek) sees in these two elements that which "helped him to penetrate the hidden mysteries of the holy texts . . . despite his lack of formal education in Scriptures."

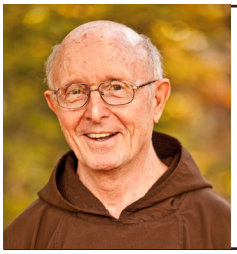
My reading of Francis' *Testament* offers another interpretation. Here Francis makes clear that the seminal divine inspiration that changed around his life and worldview was his experience with the leper. He then says that it was the same kind of divine inspiration that led him to create a community of brothers to make real (i.e. "live") the Gospel. Thus, the "Gospel" way of life was for him, as it became for Paul, now inseparably linked to a transformed life that would bring good news to all those people who were/are marginated insofar as he found Christ in them. Again, the mystical life of Francis began with his mystical experience but naturally led to the other two critical dimensions of mysticism: the zeal for prayer which led to his effort to develop a mystical approach to prayer, and a "continual exercise of virtue" that represents what I call in my book the "mystical stance" in life. That he often found places where he could go deeper into prayer and devotion represents the fourth dimension of mysticism: the mystical environment.

In the large scheme of mystical theology, my points of difference with Brother Daniel may be minor but I do think they are important for a more thorough discussion of "the multifarious mysticism of Francis of Assisi." However neither his nor mine are that significant in light of the absolute implication that all of us Franciscans have received from the Jesuit, Karl Rahner that is applicable to all Christians: "The devout Christian of the future will either be a 'mystic,' one who has experienced something, or he will cease to be anything at all."[5]

3 Sam Harris, an avowed atheist, elaborates on the mystical experience, which he believes comes to people independent of their belief in God ink *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), exp. 221. In a later book, *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality without Religion* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), Harris reveals the mystical experience he had at the Sermon of the Mount and argues why he believes in mystical experiences but doesn't believe in God (p. 81). For comments on Harris' narrative of his mystical experience by a "believer," see Frank Bruni, "Between Godliness and Godlessness," *New York Times*, August 30, 2014. Also noted is Klimek, Part II, 32.

4 I also note in *The Fruit of the Spirit* that this contention is argued. See 70ff.

5 Karl Rahner, "Christian living Formerly and Today," in *Theological Investigations* VII , trans. David Bourke (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971, 15. Also Karl Rahner, "The Spirituality of the Future," *Theological Investigations XX,* trans. Edward Quinn (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981), 149.



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Christ's Resurrection in Bernardino da Siena's Easter Sermons

By Steven J. McMichael, O.F.M., Conv.

The most important season of the liturgical year for medieval Christians was the forty-day period of Lent that led to the celebration of Easter. Most of these sermons, delivered by medieval preachers, were concerned with the Lenten themes of repentance and conversion that were to prepare Christians to celebrate this great feast of the Risen Christ.

It was quite common for these preachers to deliver a series of sermons dedicated to the general theme of the resurrection during the Easter Octave. For example, the fifteenth-century Franciscan Bernardino da Siena devoted his entire Easter Octave sermon cycle to the theme of the resurrection of Jesus and its impact on beatified creatures. Bernardino offers an extraordinary vision of resurrected life that is a culmination of centuries of reflection on what the effect of the resurrection of Christ will have on the cosmos, the spiritual world, and the beatified human beings who will join Christ in resurrected life.

In his series of Octave sermons entitled *The Glory of Paradise* (sermons 57-66), found in his *Forty Sermons on the Christian Religion* written between the years 1430-1436, the famed Franciscan preacher provides us with two Easter Sunday sermons dedicated to the necessity of the resurrection for humanity. Then the following days of Easter Week were dedicated to the themes of the universal reign and lordship of Jesus Christ; the glory of the angels in the Reign of God; the most admirable glory of the Mother of God; the substantial or essential glory of holy souls; the consubstantial glory of the blessed bodies; and the accidental glory which is in the blessed. The second Sunday of the Octave of Easter contains two sermons, one on the practices of the blessed in the glory of heaven and the other on the final battle and takeover of the celestial Jerusalem.

Cultural Context of the Sermons

The fifteenth century was a time of vast contrasts. This was the age of the Renaissance in which great works of literature and art were created. We see the emergence of Humanistic thought that challenged the theocratic world view. This was the age of the "four horsemen of the apocalypse" which meant the people of this century dealt with famine, plague, war, and death.[1] Because of the reality of the human vulnerability in relation to these four issues of human life, Bernardino's Easter message must have appeared as rays of sunlight that penetrated the darkness of the world around to those who listened to him preach. One must also put these Easter Octave sermons in the context of the forty days of Lent , which Bernardino used to challenge his audience to reject all worldly values for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Those who heard these words of the need for repentance from sin and conversion of heart from an evil world around them must have been shocked to hear the absolutely good news of his Easter Octave sermons!

The Resurrected Human Being in Late Medieval Franciscan Theology and Preaching

One of the significant issues for medieval theologians in regard to the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the effect this event will have on human beings at the end of time when they are raised from the dead. In medieval theology, this issue raised such questions as the nature of Christ's resurrected body and the risen human body, the soul-body relationship, the heavenly rewards of the soul and body, and the beatific vision.

This article presents how Bernardino da Siena envisioned what the resurrected person would be like in light of the process of death and the hope of resurrected life after the grave. He, as other friars of the fifteenth century, mined the scriptures and early/medieval Christian writings to provide the sources in which they could link the Risen Christ with human beings in their own risen state. This connection gave them the hope that human souls and bodies would enjoy the same state of transformation, spiritualization, and glorification after their own resurrection as Christ experienced on the first Easter Sunday.

In the fifteenth-century, Bernardino da Siena was greatly influenced by the earlier medieval approach to the vision of the human being in resurrected glory. He borrows from Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas (as well as other theologians and spiritual writers) in his own presentation of what risen life was to be like for human beings. They will be gifted with what was called the three glories of the blessed ones: substantial, consubstantial and accidental. As noted above, three of the ten sermons given during the Easter Octave were dedicated to the three glories of raised human beings. The substantial glory is the very essence of what the blessed souls are to become in their resurrected state. The consubstantial glory is a corresponding essence that is given to the body. The accidental glory is a glory that is added on to an individual's substantive and consubstantive glory as a special gift based on grace and merit.

The Resurrected Soul: the Substantial Glory of the Blessed

The substantial or essential glory refers to the natural state of the souls of the blessed as Psalm 5:12 states: *And all they that love your name shall glory in you.* Human beings were formed in the image of God and they have three powers or potencies related to the Trinitarian reality: the intellect, which corresponds to the image of the Son; the memory, which corresponds to the image of the Father;

1 Arthur White, *Plague and Pleasure: The Renaissance World of Pius II* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University Press of America Press, 2014. This book gives us a very good picture of the world of the fifteenth century in which Bernardino lived.

and the will, which corresponds to the image of the Holy Spirit.

Bernardino refers Psalm 4:7 to this Trinitarian reality in the human being: *The light of your countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us: you have given gladness in my heart. The light is signed upon us* refers to the intellect, which is similar to the Son; *your countenance, O Lord*, refers to the memory, similar to the Father; *and you have given gladness in my heart* refers to the will and to the Spirit, which exhibits love to the heart. These three natural powers are activated by the grace or glory that is given to the blessed.

Bernardino then relates the three theological virtues which were active in the lives of the blessed to the three natural powers of intellect, memory and will. These theological virtues are infused into the soul by God. The reward of faith, which has been rewarded to persons who have exercised their faith in this life, is given to the intellect to see God as the ineffable truth. The reward of hope is given to the memory to possess it as an extraordinary dignity. The reward of love is given to the will to love God as the greatest good. These theological virtues lead the soul to being reconfigured into its actualized glorified state that leads to total union with God.

The two main faculties of the human person in earthly life that bring blessedness to them are the intellect and the will. They will also retain their status as the principal faculties in the resurrected person. The intellect, enlivened by the virtue of faith, is led to the vision of God. He speaks of seeing and knowing the object of contemplation which is granted to the graced intellect. The will, in its participation in the vision of the intellect, will be able to love God and enjoy God as the supreme good. This is because God loves the human being first so that the human being can love God in return (*Ognuno che ama Idio, gode Idio*).[2] Love allows one to join the Beloved in an embrace that lasts forever; and in this embrace, the human person may rest completely. The person comes to completeness and perfection through the virtue of love. This theological virtue is the only one that lasts for all eternity because faith will not be necessary after one gazes on the one that is loved (face to face encounter) and neither will because one now possesses the One hoped for.

Based on the vision of God of the intellect, and the act of love of the will, the human soul will also enjoy the secure and eternal possession of God that is the reward of the memory. This is a fulfillment and perfection of the other two gifts (vision of God and love) that is given to the memory. These three gifts, the vision, love, and possession of God are united together and bring the human being to perfect peace and tranquility.

The human soul participates in the glory of God in heaven because it is there that it is totally united with its Object (God), it is totally transformed into God, and is joined to God in a unified spirit (*unico spirito*). Therefore, the soul becomes godlike, because it was made in the image of God, in its fulfillment of all God's grace and therefore it shares in the glory of God (*deiformitas gloriae*).

The Resurrected Body

As the soul is rewarded with the substantial glory of risen life, so also is the body rewarded with the gift of consubstantial glory. This does not mean that the body receives this gift without the influence of the soul. It was quite common for medieval theologians and preachers to discuss the role of the body primarily in relation to the soul. This was the case in life and in what they imagined was everlasting life in Heaven.

It is important to understand the Latin word *redundantia* (and its verbal form *redundare*) in this discussion of the soul-body relationship. The word means "overflow" and it speaks of the overflow of the soul into the body. As a recent study of the resurrected theology of Thomas Aquinas states: "Whereas the soul participates directly in the life of God, the body does so only by an 'overflow' (*redundantia*) of the beatitude of the soul."[3] The overflow of the soul has a dramatic, transforming effect on the body not only in life, but also in the resurrected state. The resurrected body is the end product of the complete conformity of the body to the glorified soul.

The body is rewarded in Heaven by four specific gifts (*dos*, *dotes* – meaning a dowry) that show the complete conformity of the body to the soul and the state of the body in eternal splendor.

In Bernardino da Siena's Italian sermon for Easter – which is a simplified form of his Latin sermon on the same theme in *The Glory of Paradise* – he speaks of the four dotes in the context of his linking Christ's risen body with the human body that is raised in the general resurrection of the dead. He asks the question: In what bodily form was Christ raised? He states that the Risen One appeared with his proper body, which included the five wounds on his hands, his feet and his side. He proclaimed that the blessed will raise like Jesus, at the age of thirty-three years, with the four *dotes* of the resurrected body on that day: clarity, agility, subtlety, and impassibility.

The first gift is clarity (or lucidity) which is spoken of in Matthew 13:43: *Then shall the just shine as the sun.* On Mount Tabor, Jesus Christ showed himself resplendent as the sun, transfigured before the three disciples, Peter, James and John. There was so much light that the human eye could not bear to see his dazzling presence. Therefore, in the Easter Day appearances, he revealed himself to Mary Magdalene as a gardener (JN 20:15) and to the disciples of Emmaus as a pilgrim (LK 24:15). Even though they felt his presence interiorly, he showed himself to them physically so that this presence would be made explicit. He also showed himself in this human form because they could not have endured seeing him in his full resplendent risen form.

The second gift is agility, as Christ was so agile in his movements after the resurrection. In one moment he showed himself to whomever or wherever he so desired. His body was as light as the spirit and thus raised human bodies will be as well. Bernardino sees the future gift of agility in Wisdom 3:7, when Solomon says: *The just shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among the reeds*.

The third gift is subtlety. As our soul passes through physical objects such as a wall or mountain, so will the glorified body be able to maneuver likewise. Our bodies will be like that of the risen body of Jesus who could pass through a door or a closed window before greeting his disciples with "*Peace be with you*" (JN 20:19; LK 24:36).

The fourth gift is impassibility. In the risen state, no one will suffer or experience any pain whatsoever. Bernardino refers to Saint Thomas who did not believe in the resurrection, so when Jesus appeared to his disciples a second time, he said to Thomas: *Put in your finger here and see my hands. And bring here your hand and put it into my side. And be not faithless, but believing* (JN 20:28). In this way, Thomas came to believe in the fact of the resurrection. In the act of touching, he felt much sweetness of mind, and therefore he said: "*My Lord and my God*" (JN 20:28). At this moment, he confessed in the divinity and the humanity of Jesus. Bernardino concludes his discussion of the gift of impassibility by stating that Jesus suffered greatly for us in his passion and death. In his risen state, Jesus' body

2 Renato Frison, *La Gloria del Paradiso in S. Bernardino da Siena* (Rome: Edizione Franciscane, 1962), p. 89.

3 Leget, *Thomas Aquinas on the Relation*, 170

did not suffer, and neither will the bodies of human beings ever suffer again

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The Imperative Claim of the Resurrection Gifts on Earthly Life

The major concern of medieval writers was on the four gifts that are given to the resurrected body in Heaven, but they also wrote about what effects these future gifts have on the body here on earth. In regard to life on earth, as the soul is rewarded by the merit of the theological virtues so the glory of the soul overflows (*redundantia*) into the body, so the body is rewarded by the merit that comes from the exercise of the four cardinal virtues during earthly life.

Bernardino saw clearly this connection between the cardinal virtues and gifts given by God to the resurrected person. The alignment of the gifts with the cardinal virtues parallels the association of the three powers of the soul (memory, understanding and will) with the theological virtues of faith, hope and love.

The virtue of temperance is manifest perfectly in the human being so that clarity or luminosity shows forth in the actions that we perform in the present life, as Jesus says: *So let your light shine before human beings, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven* (MT 5:16). This light that should shine in earthly life by our temperate actions will bring about the illumination of the body in Heaven.

Prudence is connected with subtlety. Prudence has three time dimensions: the past, the present and the future. Human beings should be thoughtful of the past as they approach present endeavors. The Lord said: *Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves* (MT 10:16). They should be careful about their use of temporal goods and be prudent managers of transient things in light of the eternal future: *But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven* (MT 6:20). Prudence is always aware of the immediate future: *And take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life: and that day come upon you suddenly* (LK 21:34). Prudence is exercised well when one lives in fear of divine justice and the hope of divine compassion, as the Psalm 36:27 states: *Decline from evil* (because of the fear of God) *and do good* (because of divine hope).

Fortitude is associated with impassibility. The virtue of fortitude applies itself through the act of the will and especially in the willingness to suffer for the love of God. As expressed in Christian prayer: "*Be strong in battle, fight the ancient serpent and receive the eternal kingdom*."[4]

Justice is correlated with agility. This is important in four ways. To the First Supreme Creator one renders love, obedience, glory and honor, just as Jesus proclaimed: *You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind* (MT 22:37). This means that one must treat everything temporal as secondary, because the one who loves God in this way, preserves all things. Second, one must have a certain self-hatred and contempt, as *he that hates his life in this world keeps it unto life eternal* (JN 12:25). Third, they must love their neighbor as themselves: *you love your neighbor as yourself* (LK 10:27). Fourth, one must make a choice between other creatures and love for God, just as the Prophet says, *For you have given me, O Lord, a delight in your doings: and in the works of thy hands I shall rejoice* (Psalm 91:5).

4 This prayer comes from the Antiphon in II Vespers of the Common of the Apostles.

Accidental Glory

Accidental Glory is a manifestation of the glory that the saints are enjoying now in Heaven and also what medieval Christians hoped for here on earth. Bernardino preached that the more meritorious a saint, the more his/her gifts. As we learned earlier, consubstantial glory of the body is an essential addition to the soul's substantial glory. Accidental glory is added on to the saint's personal glory in that, in and of itself, is not essential to the subject, but added on to what is, namely, the saint's substantial and consubstantial glory. The body and the soul share in this accidental glory as a communal gift because it concerns the entire glorified human person. For example, an accidental gift is the *aureola* which is a golden crown given to those with special gifts of heavenly reward: teachers, virgins, martyrs, and preachers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, what Bernardino has handed down to us in his Easter Octave sermons is a vision of what ultimate deification means for human beings who hope for resurrected life after death: the sanctified soul and glorified body are thoroughly united. Since the primary object of vision in the resurrected state is the glorified, transformed, spiritualized body of Christ – Christ's risen body will be totally splendid and beautiful (*splendor* and *pulcritudo*), even more luminous than the sun – human beings will only fully grasp this divine vision when their souls and bodies are completely transformed by grace.

This transformation is important for the dual "senses" of the body and soul. This graced transformation results in the exterior bodily "sense" being able to contemplate the humanity of Christ (his glorified flesh), and the "sense" of the interior soul being able to contemplate the divinity of Christ. In other words, the whole restored and transformed person will view the resurrected Christ in his entire person, both soul and body. Linked to this vision are two glorifications, one of which is the glorification of the flesh of Christ (which will be splendid at the general resurrection) and the other the glorification of human flesh when the sanctified soul and body are joined in the general resurrection.

What we see presented in these sermons of Bernardino da Siena, therefore, is a comprehensive vision of resurrected life. Not only does this concern the soul but especially the body in this risen state of the saints in everlasting glory. Not only will the raised ones see the face of God but also the fullness of the Risen Christ in all his glory. Human beings will need their souls in order to see the glorified soul of Christ and their bodies to view totally the transformed, spiritualized body of the Risen Christ. Their entire being – body and soul – are necessary for human beings to experience the entire risen being of Christ. In this vision of everlasting life, human beings will not only share in the harmony, peace and joy of Risen Life, but also the glory of Christ which is the ultimate gift of Easter Sunday.

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The Paschal Mystery in the Spirit of St. Clare

By Pacelli Millane, O.S.C.

All of the new translations for the life of Lady Clare, published in the last few years in several different languages, recount the manner that Clare of Assisi celebrated the Holy Week and the Easter Triduum. Clare has rarely spoken or written about her own personal spiritual experience; nevertheless, there are many texts which can help us to grasp something deeper regarding her experience of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Her Sisters recorded their experiences and the two main *Legends* expressed this in both poetic and prose forms.

Rereading these texts prayerfully can stimulate our hearts to look at renewed possibilities for each Franciscan of the three Orders to live the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ with greater clarity. The intimacy of Clare's relationship with Jesus Christ in His humanity and divinity has roots in her daily reality, which we are able to grasp in her compassion and desire to follow the poor crucified Jesus who becomes the Christ in glory. Hopefully, Clare's experience of mercy can also nourish our lives and hearts in this Year of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis for the whole world in 2016.

Different Approach for Francis and Clare

Some twenty years ago, Brian Purfield presented a thesis at Saint Bonaventure University on the spirituality of Clare. He writes:

> The profound attention paid by Clare to Christ's Passion has a typically feminine orientation. Francis longed to feel as much as possible, in his flesh and soul, the suffering of Christ and in his heart, the excess of love that led God's Son to die for sinners. He asked in his prayer to be made similar to the Crucified, and was granted the stigmata. The same aspiration to share the sufferings of Christ is seen in Clare, but her piety tends more to compassion than identification. The Lady Clare always places an accent on compassion, suffering out of love with Christ. With Mary and the holy women, she is standing at the foot of the Cross. [1]

The passion and resurrection of Jesus have a very important place in Franciscan Spirituality. However, as Purfield point out, Francis and Clare each had their own particular response to the Paschal Mystery. In the *Versified Legend*, we will be able to see how Clare's emphasis on compassionate love becomes very evident in the healing of her sisters and others with the sign of the cross. Also, the following text of Nguyen (Norbert)-Van Khanh develops further the different orientations of Francis and Clare of Assisi.

Van-Khanh explores the distinct understanding of the passion in Francis and Clare, specifically in their use of the expressions, Redeemer and Savior, which correspond to the verbs *redime* and *salvare*. He does not see these as synonymous words. Redeemer designates: God Who Delivers the human person from the captivity of sin through the death of His Son on the cross. The title *Savior* has an eschatological perspective to name the God of hope. The name, Savior, therefore has a broader understanding of who God is and of salvation in general and especially regarding His glorious return at the end of time.[2]

Francis uses the term, Redeemer, three times, but only once does the term actually refer to Christ. Similarly, Francis uses the title Savior five times, but it only refers to Christ once. Both expressions *Redeemer* and *Savior* refer to the Trinity and communion with the Father.

Clare used the title, Redeemer, only once in her letter to Ermentrude: "God is our Redeemer and our Eternal Reward" (*LEr* 22). She not only mentioned the name of Jesus, but added the adjectives, "poor crucified, King of eternal glory and the Lamb."

In the Middle Ages, and notably in Clare's writings, as today after the Vatican Council II, the passion of Christ is inseparable from the resurrection of Jesus and His glorification. Clare's spirituality is formed by the image of the crucified Jesus on the Byzantine Cross, which hung in the Chapel of San Damiano where Lady Clare and her sisters lived. The Sisters valued this magnificent Crucifix and took it with them inside the walls of Assisi after the death of Clare. Today it is very evident in the Chapel at the Basilica of Saint Clare after being hidden within the Cloister of the Proto-monastery for many years.

The spirituality and prayer of those formed in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries by the images of crucifixes that often vividly portray the agony and bloody sufferings of Jesus are quite different from the theological understanding of Clare of Assisi. Only one part of the mystery of the Incarnation is present, the suffering. For Clare, as for Francis, the victory of the Resurrection and the Christ of Glory are very important in their spirituality.

For Clare, the cross was a sign of life and salvation, a sign of joy and inexpressible blessing, but equally a sign that often provoked her tears and compassion. It is with the cross as part of her daily life that St. Clare searched for her communion and union with the King of Glory and the healing of her Sisters and others.

Clare's spirituality integrates two mysteries of the Christian faith: the Incarnation and the Redemption. Like St. Francis, Clare has always seen a link between Christ crucified and the life of poverty in San Damiano (cf. *1LAg* 18-20).

This article will address three different aspects related to Clare's experience of the Holy Week, that is, the liturgical period when

1 Brian Purfield. This work was presented as a Master's thesis to the Faculty of the Franciscan Institute, Saint Bonaventure University, New York, 1989 and later published. Brian E. Purfield, *Reflets dans le Miroir. Images du Christ dans la vie spirituelle de sainte Claire d'Assise.* Traduit de l'anglais par Jacqueline Gréal. Paris : Les Éditions Franciscaines, (1993) 69-70.

2 Nguyên-Van-Khanh, OFM. *Le Christ dans la pensée de saint François d'Assise d'après ses écrits.* Paris: Éditions Franciscaines, (1989): 108, 113-114. Translation: *The Teacher of His Heart. Jesus Christ in the Thought and Writings of Saint Francis.* St: Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, (1994) 78-79, 84-85.

the universal Church celebrates this Paschal mystery each year, as well as the experience of her Community. 1. The Paschal Mystery in Clare's life including her prayer and compassion; 2. Forming the Community within the Paschal Mystery; and 3. The Paschal Mystery today integrating a Franciscan Orientation.

1. The Paschal Mystery lived by Clare of Assisi, her prayer and compassion

After the splendor of the great procession of Palm Sunday in the Cathedral of San Rufino and in the streets of Assisi, Clare left her family home in the secrecy of night. Undoubtedly, there was a mixture of light and darkness in the Holy Week of 1212 after arriving at the Benedictine monastery of San Paolo and certainly with the unfortunate experience with Uncle Monaldo and her family struggle. The following morning, Clare's family discovers that she has left the family home and is at the Benedictine Monastery of San Paolo. Uncle Monaldo is outraged and with the other family knights, he arrives there and tries to remove Clare her by force. He does not succeed as she is protected by the "right of sanctuary" of the Monastery.

Clare accepts participation in Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. As she develops her spirituality, it is love that gives meaning to her suffering. However, Clare envisions that the contemplative union with God unites her relationship with the suffering Jesus and the glorified Christ. The imitation of Jesus includes the imitation of the ineffable love of the cross. It is the Passion of Jesus Christ that becomes the frequent object of her meditation and tears. Clare gazes on, considers, and contemplates the crucified Christ on the cross of San Damiano.

Clare becomes mature in her understanding of what it means to be united with Christ. Being united with Christ, she will not be exempt from living love without also experiencing trials and tribulation. Rather, she orients her person to live love in a constant commitment to Jesus who himself lived *the labors and sorrows without number* (*4LAg* 22).

In her second letter, Clare wrote to Agnes of Prague:

> If you suffer with Him, you will reign with Him,
> weeping with Him, you will rejoice with Him …
> and in the Book of Life your name will be called
> glorious among the peoples (2LAg 21).

In the 26th Chant of the *Versified Legend of the Virgin Clare*, the author portrays in poetic form her intense love of the Cross. She is filled with compassion for Jesus and His suffering pierces her mind and heart. His sacred wounds bring forth bitter tears, but they also bring consolation knowing that this is liberation for our salvation. Clare lives these moments intensely with Christ and forms her heart in a new form of compassion for all of humanity.

Her meditation and prayer hidden in the silence of her cell brings joy when she recalls the mystery of new life which Jesus Christ offers for the world and its restoration to grace. Her weeping and pain are not about her own suffering, but the tears flow in union with the sufferings and passion of Jesus. Salvation and redemption become possible for all. There is more than the mystery of suffering that is present; it is the more profound mystery of love. Clare clings to Jesus in love and she contemplates in the depths of this same mirror, "the ineffable charity that He chose to suffer on the tree of the cross and to die there the most shameful kind of death" (*4Lag* 23). Notice that she says: to contemplate the *ineffable charity* through which He suffers. She did not say contemplate the suffering, but rather contemplate the "ineffable charity." I find this to be the key to her spirituality expressed in the fourth letter:

"And at the end of that same mirror, contemplate the ineffable charity with which he chose to suffer on the tree of the cross" (*4LAg* 23). Clare was a woman who lived with love. This is evident in her compassion not only for Jesus when she meditates on the passion, but also in her daily life when she saw the suffering of her Sisters and Brothers.

Her relationship with the poor Crucified had its roots in her early life of prayer. On meeting Francis of Assisi and discerning her vocation with him, she discovers the importance of the cross and prayer in developing a life of poverty and compassion.

What are the forms of prayer in her life? Clare prays the Divine Office, (the vocal prayer which we call the Liturgy of the Hours today). She meditates, silently contemplates and prays other devotional prayers. It is interesting that we have no certainty whether Francis asked his brothers to pray the Office of the Passion, but Francis taught it to Clare according to the *Legends*. She enters profoundly the meditation, rumination and contemplation of the wounds of Christ.

Clare has expressed her compassion for Jesus Christ through a life of prayer full of sentiment and depth. It expresses her loving relationship of God united with the suffering of Jesus in her rumination on the Gospel events. These experiences of Jesus' passion touch every fiber of her heart, soul and body. When she sympathizes with Jesus' suffering, Clare weeps. The sight of the sacred wounds bathed her eyes with abundant tears. She suffers with him in her agony, and her compassion becomes intense in her soul whenever she experiences ecstasy.

In a description of Clare's experience of Good Friday given in the text below, we understand that her interior experience of the passion deepens profoundly. Clare enters fully into the events and the texts of the liturgical celebrations. Her prayer becomes more passive. We have some understanding of her inner desire for deeper communion with Jesus as He suffers. And it was after the celebration of Holy Thursday that Clare withdrew and is alone in her cell. She prays the prayer of Christ in the Garden of Olives and relives it through meditation on the events of Jesus in His shame and humiliation.

The biblical and liturgical words are very important to form the mystery in her mind, but even more important is the rumination of these events in her heart and soul. Clare follows every step of the Passion - the faculties of the soul remain alert, but the faculties of her body remain inanimate. Her soul perseveres in holy peace - the word *peace* is mentioned several times.

Versified Legend, Chant XXVII – Clare's Experience of a Good Friday

The text from the *Versified Legend* is presented here in a different manner hoping that the text will be clearer and more understandable by identifying the various persons involved. It is not Clare who presents her experience, but rather the Author of the *Versified Legend* who recounts Clare's experience of this night, the sister Infirmarian's experience and brief texts from the biblical rendition of the Passion and from the Liturgical celebration which is taking place. Certainly this experience happens in the infirmary rather than in the chapel because of her health.

A CERTAIN MEMORIAL OF THE LORD'S PASSION

AUTHOR: It happened, and it helps to narrate it, that one time the sacred cycle of the Lord's Supper occurred.

LITURGICAL CELEBRATION: The night was at hand when that betrayer did not fear to sell the Master, the corrupter of peace presumed to betray the nourisher of peace with a sign of peace, to condemn the day to darkness, to destroy light with gloom, to sell life through a mortal contract. The fear of death was already threatening and the bloody sweat of the agony during which the Son, knowing His humanity, prays to the Father that the drinking of the chalice might pass.

AUTHOR: The virgin seeks the secrecy of a cell and secludes herself.

CLARE'S PRAYER: Prayer follows prayer, and sorrow upon sorrow.

CLARE RELIVES: The cruel capture,
The abusive mockery,
The bitterness which that holy and meek Lamb endured,
Enters the virgin's mind, more intensely remains with her.

AUTHOR: While she recalls each event, while her mind focuses on them,the holy virgin is rapt in ecstasy throughout the night and the following day, the light of her eye focuses on one thing.

Her soul's affections keep vigil and silence the demands of her body. Her mind pursues holy repose, while she thus remains focused, while she stays thus immobile. A watchful servant frequently returns and sees her remaining motionless. Her features do not change.

When Friday has passed and the night which precedes that blessed Sabbath arrives, the devoted daughter then returns to her mother, lights a lamp, reminds her by signs of that mandate according to which the holy man had not long ago directed her that no day should pass during which the virgin did not place something to eat before her.

AUTHOR: The mother awakens, as if she were then returning from some place.

CLARE: There is no need for a candle. Isn't it day?

AUTHOR: The servant responds to the lady,

INFIRMIRIAN: That night has passed, as well as the following day. Another night has come.

AUTHOR: Then the mother says to herself,

CLARE: Blessed be that sleep which I have greatly desired! I have finally received my wish!

INFIRMIRIAN: Yet, lest any arrogance arise or she swell with human praise, the mother forbade the young girl and said:

CLARE: While I am still alive, may you be careful not to tell this to anyone.

AUTHOR: You who read these things, I pray, should consider how great is the virgin's perfection, how pure her spirit, how free and uninhibited the movement and weight of her flesh!

Her mind is focused on Christ, and her body sleeps. Yet her sleep is not of the flesh: nature does not bring her sleep, yet the mind itself gives it peaceful rest.

Thus a wall is leveled, the flesh's flabbiness is made lean, all lust completely buried, the stirrings of the flesh destroyed. Thus pleasure is mortified, kindling subdued that obstacles do not impede the soul's intentions, nor stubbornness delay promises, nor affection stifle or resist eagerness. What a peaceful sleep! What an enjoyable contemplation! What a sweet taste and delightful refreshment of the mind!

What a happy drink with which the virgin inebriates her body, that it might be sobering for the mind. Thus foreign to the world, that, in heaven, she might be known close to her Spouse.

AS SAINT PAUL: Desiring to be dissolved in her body thus to be united with Christ

AUTHOR: more than him, that virgin, remaining in her flesh even for awhile, becomes familiar with Christ.

Her heart keeps watch, begs for the highest; her crooked flesh rests. Her body submits, rejoices to employ, strives to obey, struggles to serve the laws of the soul. Her spirit is director; her flesh is governed; it serves; it obeys.

The spirit is the driver and does whatever it is told. Whatever is unwelcomed it bore, it freely endured; whatever was harsh was made smooth: thus whatever was before burdensome is made completely bearable, whatever bitter, sweet *(Versified Legend, Chant XXVII).* [3]

Clare says, "Blessed be that sleep longed for." What is that sleep of peace? The soul rests in peace in the truth that Christ lives and loves. In general, the word *peace* has a sense of *good order*, but in the text the meaning seems to be of *rest in God*. The text repeats that:

> Her sleep is not of the flesh: nature does not bring this sleep, yet the mind itself gives it peaceful rest. Her soul perseveres in holy peace. It is the Spirit himself giving it the sleep of peace. Blessed be the sleep longed for.

It is evident that there is an inner pilgrimage in following Jesus Christ. We begin with a knowledge of ourselves, that of our sins, and must ask for pardon which comes from God. With a renewed inner light of grace, the soul gazing on Christ receives more light and illumination and therefore, the soul can enter profoundly in the reception of the fruits of contemplation, that is of peace, truth, and love - the love of Christ. Clare's experience of the death and suffering of Jesus Christ truly lead her to the fecundity of her Christian, Baptismal, and Franciscan mission.

2. Forming the Community within the Paschal Mystery

Clare and her sisters had the custom of reciting the Divine Office, and thus she prayed frequently at the sixth and ninth hour remembering how Jesus was nailed to the Cross. The *Legend* of Clare

3 The translation of the *Versified Legend* in its original form is published by Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M., Cap., editor, *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents. The Lady.* New York/London/Manila: New City Press, (2006) 232-234.

tells us that she prayed the Office of the Cross as Francis taught her. We also have the beautiful prayer in honor of the Five Wounds. No one holds that Clare composed these prayers, but rather that she prayed them. It is Sister Agnes, the 10th witness in the *Process of Canonization* who gives us this information. Each of these prayers begins with, "Praise and glory to Jesus Christ," and continues by asking for the different graces of salvation and victory through the generosity of the mercy of Jesus Christ. The prayer for the "Wound in the side also asks for correct faith, certain hope, and perfect charity,"[4] as Francis had prayed to Jesus in the little chapel at San Damiano while he was searching to know his life's vocation. These prayers become jubilant songs in Clare's heart. The author of the *Versified Legend* manifests the tears and sorrow of Clare in meditation on the Passion, but he also portrays the wonderful fruits of miracles that came from her prayer as she formed the sign of the cross on the head of the suffering sisters or on other persons who came asking for her intercession and love. Her life transforms the life of others who are suffering with illness, fear, or other difficulties through the tracing of the Sign of the Cross on their person.

The *Process of Canonization* reveals the immense sense of Clare's compassion that the sisters treasured in their memories. The love of the Passion of Jesus Christ is the inheritance that Clare gave to her sisters. In all the writings of Clare, meditation on the Passion appears as a characteristic element of her spiritual teaching.

Sister Benvenuta, the 11th witness, recounts that she always followed the guidance of Holy Mother Clare. According to the Sister, three points were very important and always repeated: first, to love God; second, to confess her sins often and without hiding anything, and finally, to always keep the memory of the Lord's Passion in her heart (cf *PrCan* XI: 2).

Clare shares this same idea with Agnes of Prague: "Be strengthened in the holy service of the Poor Crucified undertaken with a passionate desire" (1*LAg*13). "Be strengthened in the holy service" took many different forms in the communal life of San Damiano. For Clare, much of her service was a compassionate love of Jesus Christ, but also a warm compassion towards her sisters and others. For other sisters in the community, it was the daily household tasks that enabled a communal life to live and function in peace and love with each other. The longing for Jesus Christ and keeping His memory present is also part of the life of compassion as well. This was not only during the formal times of prayer, but whatever work or leisure they engaged in during the day would be accomplished in the same spirit of compassion and the gentle remembrance of their communion with Jesus Christ.

She taught the novices to weep with Jesus, but she herself was also a wonderful example of putting into practice whatever she taught. Often, as she encourages them to be faithful to contemplation, tears flowed as she spoke (cf. *Legend* 30).

Clare continues in her Letter to Agnes of Prague with this biblical text of Lamentations: "All you who pass by the way, look and see if there is any suffering like my suffering?" And she invites Agnes: "Let us respond to Him" (4*Lag* 25, 26). This is the source of her compassion for the sisters; her compassion for her sisters was visible and noted by many sisters throughout the canonical process before her canonization. We find many of Lady Clare's ordinary gestures to relieve the suffering and difficulties of her Sisters which are named expressly by the Sisters in the canonical process organized by the Pope to verify the holiness of Clare. In the Middle Ages when there was no modern means of antibiotics and medical care, Clare put her faith in the Cross of Jesus Christ. The result was often a miracle by a mere sign of the cross. The two main *Legends,* as well as the *Process of Canonization,* reveal her love and compassion for the many persons who invoked her intercession in person or after her death.

One last symbol to be noted is water. Sister Angeluccia, 14th witness also once said:

> When holy mother Lady Clare heard the Vidi Aquam being sung after Easter, she was so overjoyed and kept it in her mind. After eating and after Compline she had the blessed water given to her and her sisters and would say to the sisters: My sisters and daughters, you must always remember and recall this blessed water that came from the right side of our Lord Jesus Christ as He hung upon the cross.

Blessed water is a sacramental always to be revered. Even more poignantly, the blessed water of the Easter Vigil recalls for Lady Clare, Jesus' passion and death. When Jesus' side was pierced with a lance, there was a mysterious flow of blood and water flowing forth from the wound. The *Vidi Aquam,* a Latin antiphon, in translation has the following words: I saw water flowing from the right side of the temple, alleluia; and all to whom this water came were saved, Alleluia. The melody and the words of the chant are something that Clare continues to treasure.

3. The Paschal Mystery Today Lived in A Franciscan Manner

For those who have made a public profession to live in the tradition of Francis and Clare of Assisi, how is it possible to enter the spirit of the paschal mystery and to follow the path of the Passion of Jesus Christ today with freshness and courage?

Clare rooted her spiritual experience and her daily life in the Gospels and liturgy. Clare had no other model than Jesus Christ. Celebration of the liturgy is not only a religious celebration and a beautiful rite, but it also forms the Christian to live faithfully in the ecclesial community. In Clare's writings, there are clear indications of her vision of living fraternity and integrating the Paschal Mystery. Within these texts, the *Legends* and various *Sermons*, it is possible to understand how she envisions the unity of prayer and life. It is not always easy to follow the path of Jesus Christ in our world today with so much violence, ambition, and injustice; yet, that is the path of the Christian who wants to reach the throne of glory and live for eternity with the victorious Lamb, the King of Glory!

There is an important connection, which needs to be discovered, between daily life, the Holy Week and the Easter Triduum liturgical celebrations. The numerous symbols that are presented during the Holy Week's ceremonies can more easily create a visual relationship between daily life and the Liturgical expression.

Beginning with Palm Sunday, the elaborate ceremony of the blessing of the palms and the procession through the streets, which profoundly touched Clare's life, can also be new life for all. As the Palm Sunday procession forms, there is also the invitation to form and continue the inner pilgrimage which began with our Baptism; it is important to choose again to continue with joy and peace this journey of love.

The bread and wine to be shared and consecrated at the Holy

4 Cf. Armstrong, 424.

Thursday Eucharist unites together the ordinary symbols of our daily lives to be touched and transformed for our transformation and salvation for all of humanity. The rendition of the contemplative experience of Good Friday led Clare into the passive experience of the Holy Saturday silence of the tomb and the desire for the Light and Water of the Easter Mystery. For Clare it was not simply to experience the liturgical celebration, it was the experiencing of the Paschal mystery that formed her life and the life of her sisters. The *Legends* present us with multiple texts of how her daily life is transformed by this central mystery of the Christian faith. It is helpful to read them many times, meditate and discern their value for daily life.

The mystery of the Incarnation in the Franciscan charism is a central theme that Franciscans are invited to hold in their hearts. The weight of the common life is not always easy, but furthermore, our world today is heavy to bear. Not only the lack of peace, but the intensity of the violence everywhere; not just in poorer countries of war and other competitions, but on the streets of our big cities too many persons die each day from senseless killings. Persons who live in isolation and unwanted solitude do not often experience the dimension that Clare offers. Clare with gentle words and kind actions often traces the sign of the cross on a sister or other person and the spirit of healing, hope and peace returns to the crumpled spirits. Thus, she comes to the aid of the suffering and afflicted and lightens their burden or restores strength to the weak (cf. *Versified Legend* XXIX). Clare's experience of life can suggest that it is also possible for Franciscan men and women to likewise be instruments of peace and hope within the larger society today. The secular Franciscans are so often inspiring witnesses to that vision of peace that both Clare and Francis desired for the world.

One must live this peace and compassion, rooted in the passion, faithfully until death. Lady Clare lives faithfully her vocation of compassion to the very end of her life. Sister Agnes recounts that Blessed Clare, near to her death:

> urged the sisters and the witness herself to remain in prayer, and asked the witness to recite the prayer of the Five Wounds of the Lord. As far as we could understand, because she spoke very low, she continually recited? the Lord's Passion, and also often uttered the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (PROC X: 10)

The Lord's Passion is truly integrated into the entire life and death experience of Clare of Assisi. Clare then calls Brother Juniper and asks if there is nothing new from the Lord. Brother Juniper draws sparks from the Word of God. The virgin Clare is delighted and, at the end, her soul has great comfort (*Versified Legend*, XXXII).

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The Place of Business Profits:
A Franciscan Perspective from Luca Pacioli

By Michael J. Fischer, Ph.D.

The role of capitalism has been debated for many years. If anything, however, the questions appear to be intensifying. For example, numerous candidates for the United States Presidency have been advocating for changes that they believe will enhance the economy through "supply side" measures. On the other hand, Pope Francis has pointedly questioned the notion that "trickle down economics" will make all members of society, particularly those most disadvantaged, better off. Debates are raging regarding proposed increases to the minimum wage. And very significant questions are being raised regarding businesses' responsibility for the environment.

While not always specifically acknowledged as such, at the center of all these debates are questions regarding the appropriate place of business profits. There are many who believe that the *sole* goal of a business should be to maximize its profits, and that the existence of this singular goal is a fundamental axiomatic truth underlying capitalism. However, there are many who believe that the responsibility of those engaged in business should extend beyond only maximizing returns to the businesses' owners.[1]

So, is the maximization of business profits axiomatic to a capitalistic business system? Conversely, is it "wrong" for business owners to earn a profit?

This short article endeavors to provide answers to those questions through an examination of the writings of Luca Pacioli, a Franciscan friar who might be called the "father of profitability."[2]

Pacioli was born in 1445 in the Italian city of San Sepolchro. After joining the Franciscan order in 1472, he traveled and taught widely as a mathematician, garnering faculty appointments in the Italian cities of Perugia, Padua, Pisa, and Rome. In addition to his extensive teaching, Pacioli published some eleven books during his career. Two of Pacioli's books are considered particularly noteworthy:

De Divina Proportione – a treatise on the spiritual significance of mathematics, geometry and proportion - was published in 1509. Arguably the crowning accomplishment of his long career, *De Divana Proportione* featured illustrations by one of Pacioli's former students: Leonardo da Vinci.

Pacioli's other famous book, *Summa de Arithmetica, Geometrica, Proportioni et Proportionalita* – "Everything about Arithmetic, Geometry and Proportion" - was published in 1494. One of the first books to be published in Venice by the newly-developed Gutenberg process, Pacioli's *Summa* contained a relatively small section describing the "Venetian," or double-entry method of accounting.

While Pacioli laid no claim to being the originator of double-entry accounting, many point to his *Summa* as the source that led to the wide-spread dissemination of the method. It is on this basis that Pacioli is known as the "Father of Accounting." And many historians believe that double-entry accounting - which established the generally accepted method for rendering the "profits" of a business to be objectively calculable - was perhaps *the* seminal development enabling modern capitalism.

So what did Franciscan friar Luca Pacioli have to say about the pursuit of business profits when he first described the method for their calculation in the 15th century?

It is certainly clear from Pacioli's writings that he was not opposed to the profit motive. For example, Pacioli opened his treatise on double-entry accounting in his *Summa* by stating:

> Begin with the assumption that a businessman has a goal when he goes into business. That goal he pursues enthusiastically. That goal, the goal of every businessman who intends to be successful, is to make a lawful and reasonable profit. (Fischer, 2000, p. 304)

This view is reinforced by Pacioli's discussion in his section on the closing of nominal (profit and loss) accounts to the capital accounts, in which he states:

> The Profit and Loss account should be closed in this way: if the loss exceeds profit (*may God protect each of us who is really a good Christian from such a state of affairs*)… (Fischer, 2000, p. 304; emphasis added)

However, Pacioli did not advocate for the unbounded pursuit of profits. Rather, he indicated that there should be at least two limits.

First, he believed that profits should be "lawful and honest." Throughout his *Summa*, Pacioli reminds businesspeople to be mindful of the law, for "I know of many who, in the past, were punished (for failing to comply with the law in their business practices)" (Fischer, 2000, p. 305). Another example is found in Pacioli's condemnation of what was apparently a common business practice at the time, keeping "two sets of books" with the intent to deceive, about which Pacioli wrote:

> Apparently there are many who keep their books in duplicate, showing one to the buyer and the other to the seller. What is worse, they swear and perjure themselves upon them. How wrongly they act! (Fischer, 2000, p. 305)

Second, in addition to just being lawful and honest, Pacioli also believed that business profits should be "reasonable." What "reasonable" meant to Pacioli, however, remains somewhat unclear since

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1 By far the most notable proponent of the "profit maximization" view is Milton Friedman; e.g., Friedman, Milton, 1962, *Capitalism and Freedom*, The University of Chicago Press. Those who advocate for "corporate social responsibility" are among the proponents of the second view; for a relatively early example of this perspective see: Mintzberg, Henry, 1983, "The Case for Corporate Social Responsibility," *Journal of Business Strategy*, pp. 3-16.

2 This short article draws heavily on: Fischer, Michael J., "Luca Pacioli on Business Profits," *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2000, 25: 299-312. Readers interested in a much more detailed account, including full references are directed to that paper. Citations through the remainder of this article are to the *Journal of Business Ethics* paper; original references are contained therein.

he did not provide a clear definition of this term throughout his writings. However, it is noteworthy that Pacioli's statement that "the goal of every businessman who intends to be successful, is to make a lawful and reasonable profit" was followed directly by:

> Therefore businessmen should begin their business records with the date AD, marking every transaction so that they will always remember to be ethical and, at work always mindful of His Holy Name. (Fischer, 2000, p. 305)

In fact, Pacioli provides similar advice throughout his treatise, including suggesting that the principal accounting records - the "memorandum book," "journal," and "ledger" - should all be opened in God's name. With respect to the memorandum book, Pacioli provided the following colorful insight:

> Among the Christians, it is the good custom to initially mark their books with the glorious sign from which all enemies of the spiritual flee, and from which all the infernal pack justly tremble: The Sign of the Holy Cross. (Fischer, 2000, p. 305)

Pacioli also provided the following guidance in a section of his treatise titled "Warnings and Helpful Advice to the Successful Businessman:"

> I have added these reminders for your own good, so that you will give your affairs daily attention. Record everything that you require day by day, in the manner stated in the following chapters. *But above all keep God before your eyes*… (Fischer, 2000, p. 305; emphasis added)

His advice that the image of God should be kept at the fore during the conduct of business appears also in Pacioli's description of the preparation of business correspondence:

> It is customary for businessmen to place their names at the end of the letter in the right hand corner, with the year, day and locality at the top. But first, like a good Christian, remember to put down the glorious name of our Savior, the sweet name of Jesus (or in place of it, the Sign of the Holy Cross), *in whose name all business should be transacted.* (Fischer, 2000, p. 306; emphasis added)

So, what would Luca Pacioli tell us about the place of business profits if he were able to do so today?

Based on the analysis of Pacioli's writings, as briefly summarized in this article, it is almost certain that he would not tell us that there was anything wrong or undesirable about engaging in business activities nor the pursuit of profits. In fact, it appears that Pacioli would agree that the profit motive is *essential* to the pursuit of successful business enterprise; certainly one of the central tenets of modern capitalism.

However, it appears just as clear that Pacioli did not believe that the maximization of profits for the owners should be the *sole* goal

"Portrait of Fra' Luca Pacioli"
by Jacopo de' Barbari / Held at Museo di Capodimonte, Napoli

of those engaged in business. Rather, in addition to advising that business should be conducted honestly, Pacioli advocated that the profits from a business should be kept reasonable. While he did not endeavor to provide concrete recommendations regarding the determination of "reasonable" profits, Pacioli clearly recommends that business be always conducted with an eye toward what God would consider to be appropriate.

It is noteworthy that Pacioli did not write about the appropriate conduct of "businesses" - dispassionate and depersonalized institutions with no apparent consciences of their own. Rather, Pacioli wrote about the appropriate conduct of business *people*. Further, Pacioli clearly did not suggest businesspersons should somehow disconnect their business from their personal lives. Quite the contrary, he indicated that successful businesspersons should see the secular and spiritual aspects of their lives as inextricably intertwined, and further that in the conduct of their business affairs they should "above all keep God before [their] eyes" (Fischer, 2000, p. 305).

Franciscans have a long history of living among and providing guidance to those engaged in the business of the marketplace. Arguably, there are few Franciscans who have had a bigger impact on business and, in fact, the very foundation of capitalistic business enterprise, than Luca Pacioli. Tracing the origins of the method for determining business profits all the way back to Pacioli's seminal publication in 1494, and examining his writings at that time, has hopefully provided an important historical perspective on questions regarding business profits that continue today.

Pacioli's message that business profits should be "reasonable" was clearly delivered in his *Summa*. Unfortunately, he did not provide more explicit guidance in his writings regarding the determination of a reasonable profit. Further insights regarding Franciscan perspectives on the distribution of the proceeds from business enterprise may be able to be discerned through examination of the writings of other Franciscan scholars such as Alexander of Hales, John Duns Scotus, and Peter of John Olivi. That, however, is left for future research.

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Francis and Four Boys: Parenting with Franciscan Ethics

By Jay M. Hammond, Ph.D.

I have four boys (12, 10, 8, 6). The practical lived reality of parenting informs my understanding of Franciscan theology/spirituality, which in turn, informs my parenting. Over the past few years, this interplay has been more pronounced as my sons increasingly venture forth from our family into the world. The journey from "family" to "world" has exposed a basic contradiction in my parenting as my wife and I form our boys' worldviews as Christians. On the one hand, within the family, my boys have been taught over and over and over again: *share*. Any parent will understand this challenge. Yet, on the other hand, as they ventured out into the world, I found myself increasingly saying to them when things didn't go as planned: *life isn't fair*. Again, many parents might resonate with this "catchphrase" that tries to explain all sorts of difficult situations.

My ongoing examination of Saint Francis's writings, especially the *Earlier Rule* more recently, has moved me to change a key message in my parenting as I try to raise my kids to live the Gospel more authentically by simply realizing that so, so often for so, so many *life isn't fair because we don't share.*

To explain this claim that *life isn't fair because we don't share,* I'll examine three basic relationships that form Francis's own practice of living the Gospel: (1) Family – World, (2) Share – Fair, and 3) Word – Deed.

Family – World

At the very outset of the *Testament*, Francis states:

> The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, thus to begin doing penance in this way: for when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and *I showed mercy* to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body. And afterwards I delayed a little and left the world.[1]

I have read this so many times that I am rather immune to the profound yet simple dimensions of Francis's penance and conversion. He *encounters* the "other." By the time he dictated the *Testament*, Francis identified himself with familial language – Brother Francis. I tend to restrict this familial title to his formal *religio* with his confreres within the Order. However, it seems that in Francis's own mind, it was his encounter with the leper that helped him expand his realization of who his brother really included. In effect, Francis's encounter expanded his awareness of the actual parameters of God's family. In the encounter, Francis shared mercy with the other and what was bitter became sweet. The "world" had identified the leper as "outsider," but Francis' encounter invited the leper to be an "insider," that is, to be a fellow brother/sister in the Lord's vast family. Reading between the lines I recognize that the familial encounter is reciprocal. God gives to Francis (penance) and Francis gives to the leper (mercy). In other words, Francis simply shares God's mercy with another child of God. His conversion did not turn him towards God, it turned him towards his brother. Francis's expanded realization of God's family moved him to "leave the world," which tends to divide the family between "us" and "them" according to: class, race, gender, education, religion, etc.

Francis's writings demonstrate that familial language was important to him. It helped him define his identity as one within God's family:

> O how happy and blessed are these men and women while they do such things and persevere in doing them, because the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and make Its *home and dwelling place* among them, and they are *children* of the heavenly *Father* Whose works they do, and they are *spouses*, *brothers*, and *mothers* of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are *spouses* when the faithful soul is joined by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are *brothers* to Him when we do the will of the Father who is in heaven. We are *mothers* when we carry Him in our heart and body through a divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and give birth to Him through a holy activity which must shine as an example before others.[2]

Note how Francis combines the Trinitarian Persons with the human family that dwells in a home. Those who share the Lord's Spirit make a home and dwelling place for God's family. Those who live in the house are all the Father's children. Those who love Christ are the spouses. Christ's siblings do the Father's will, and the mothers are those who nurture and bring Christ into the family, that is, into the presence of others in the world.

Francis again employs familial imagery in his famous poem, *The Canticle of the Creatures*. Therein he describes creation with similar familial language to praise God, the Good Lord, and by such praise, Francis joins God's family. This is not mere sentimental imagery. Rather, three coupled siblings, surrounded by parents, order all creation into a reconciled cosmic family:

Good *Lord* (vv. 1-2)
Sir Brother Sun (vv. 3-4)
Sister Moon (v. 5)
Brother Wind (v. 6)

1 Test 1-3 (124). Citations include references to Francis' writings and page number of the English Translation found in: Armstrong, Hellmann, Short, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents.* Volume I: *The* Saint (New York: New City Press, 1999).

2 1LtF 5-10 (41-42); also see, 2LtF 48-56 (48-51); emphasis added.

Sister Water (v. 7)
Brother Fire (v. 8)
Sister *Mother* Earth (v. 9)
Sister Bodily Death (v. 12)

All the world's created things are brothers and sisters (vv. 3-9, 12) and fathers and mothers (vv. 3, 9) because they all originate from the same loving Father (i.e., the Good Lord, vv. 1-2). With this familial imagery Francis celebrates God's universal Fatherhood among "all Your creatures" (v. 3). Later in stanza 12 Francis introduces Sister Bodily Death, which seemingly breaks the familial parallelisms. However, Francis implies the parallel because he is the dying Brother who sings with Sister Death as they praise God through and in God's extended family. Their praise reconciles them. They both belong to God's family – and they rejoice. Stanzas 10-11 reinforce the idea of reconciliation within the wider human family via those who pardon with love and suffer for the sake of peace. The Father's love prompts his children to forgive their siblings so that there is peace within God's family.

Francis employed familial language to delve the Gospel truth that all are simultaneously the Father's children and Christ's siblings. I have often thought that Francis chose the name "lesser brothers," because he identified himself as Christ's "little brother," which placed him in a sibling relationship with all other humans, and even all of creation. If sibling, then too child. Francis often intermixes Trinitarian invocations with familial imagery. For me, I easily and often forget the Gospel truth the juxtaposition attempts to convey.

This familial language sounds so "nice." I have used it often to explain to my boys that in God's eyes the "world" and "family" are really the same because God is the "Father" of all creation. Yet, the same familial language can also be a stumbling block when we are confronted with the "other." You know, those who we forget are also children of God, Christ's siblings. It is here that I have inadvertently taught my kids that "inside" the family we "share" but "outside" the family, "the world just isn't fair." It is as if such familial language is okay for the kids, but not for us adults who must live in the "real world," which operates by different rules that creates haves and have nots. Francis might have thought something similar as he ventured further out into the world at twenty-five when he encountered the leper. I hope my parenting has helped my boys understand that Christianity has an expanded understanding of family that is inclusive. Hopefully their understanding manifests itself as some kind of holy activity that is not just an example to others, but includes the "other" too.

Share – Fair

So what might Francis teach us about sharing? Of course, we might think about poverty, of sharing our material things with those in need. Yet, a family doesn't just share things; such sharing can leave a family quite impoverished. There is more – much more. A focus on sharing *things* often misses the importance of personal encounters. Poverty for Francis was not an end in itself. Rather, it was a means to creating solidarity with those in need: a solidarity that values the *person* who needs *things*. It may seem like too subtle a distinction, but it is often easier to give *things* instead of encountering the *person*. It is also safer. Doing it the easy or safe way was not Francis's mode of operation. Nor was it Christ's.

Two words from the *Earlier Rule* can help us see what Francis meant by *share* and how he tried to make things *fair*: spiritually (*spiritualiter*) and need (*necessitas*). On the one hand, *spiritually* refers to living according to the Spirit, not the flesh,[3] i.e., "to have the Spirit of the Lord and Its holy activity."[4] On the other hand, *need* refers to the encounter with the other. First and foremost in the divine-human encounter that fulfills the human need for salvation,[5] but also in the numerous encounters among humans and creation[6] that either help[7] or hinder[8] that need for salvation, i.e., authentic, personal relationships.

Both these words, *spiritually – need*, appear in close proximity in Chapter 2 of the *Earlier Rule*, which concerns the reception of brothers into the Order. On the one hand, an initiate should sell all he has and give everything to the poor.[9] However, he should do this *spiritually* without any difficulty. Twice the brothers are told not to get involved in his "temporal affairs."[10] The initiate's possessions are for the poor, not the brothers. However, the initiate must be willing to part with his things spiritually, to let them go freely. Presumably, if an initiate can't do this spiritually, his possessions will go to his family, i.e., his temporal affairs, instead of to the poor. Yet, there is a bit of irony because spiritually giving to the poor is an act of solidarity in more ways than one. Entering the Order means the initiate is now one of the poor because, "if the brothers are in *need*, they can accept, *like other poor people*, whatever is needed for the body excepting money."[11] The brothers' spiritually give up what they have so they can be in physical solidarity with their poor siblings. In other words, the possessions are not *for* the brothers, they are for the poor, which the brothers must share *with* them. In effect, spiritually giving and physical needs are two sides of the same coin. Sharing things becomes secondary to encountering people in solidarity. To let go of things spiritually is to make room "in the home of the Spirit" so that the brothers inhabit a "dwelling place" *with* the poor. Sharing *spiritually* leads to *personal* encounter with the "other" in *need*. Both become *needy*.

Just as Francis does not limit *spiritually* to simply sharing *things* with the poor, he employs the term to describe the kind of relationships that the brothers should share with each other. Again the personal encounter with the other is the focus. Brother ministers should *serve* their brothers by visiting, admonishing, and encouraging them spiritually.[12] The same holds true for the mutual correction of the brothers: "Let all the brothers…be careful not to be disturbed or angered at another's sin or evil because the devil wishes to destroy many because of another's fault. But let them spiritually help the one who has sinned as best they can, because *those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do*.[13] Note the spiritual help one brother offers serves the needs of another brother who is struggling with sin. Since we all sin we all need help and we all can offer help; the encounter is again reciprocal. In fact, whenever and wherever the brothers meet they should encounter each other spiritually by honoring one another instead of complaining and by being joyful instead of sad.[14]

3 Adm 1.6 (126); ER 5.4 (67).
4 LR 10.8 (105).
5 ER 24.1-2 (86), 23.1-3 (81-82); Adm 1.14-22 (129).
6 ER 23.7 (83-84); CtC 3-12 (113-114).
7 1LtF 1.1-19 (41-42); 2LtF 1-62 (45-50).
8 1LtF 2.1-22 (43-44); 2LtF 63-88 (50-51).
9 ER 2.4 (64); also see Test 16 (125).
10 ER 2.2, 5 (64).
11 ER 2.7 (64).
12 ER 4.2 (66).
13 ER 5.7-8 (67).
14 ER 7.15-16 (69).

So what determines what is fair when sharing spiritually? Need. The *Earlier Rule*'s exception to the brothers receiving money makes this point well. The brothers cannot receive money,[15] nor should they work for money.[16] The brothers should not receive money for any reason[17] with two important exceptions: "the manifest need of the sick brothers;"[18] and "the brothers can beg alms for a manifest need of the lepers."[19] Just as the brothers can "receive" or "use" money to help the manifest needs of sick brothers, they can beg alms for the manifest need of lepers. Note a subtle but significant distinction that applies to both the brothers and lepers. Brothers cannot receive money for *things* – be it clothes, or books, or work[20] or places or houses, or horses[21] – but they can receive money as alms to help *people* in obvious need, i.e., sick brothers and lepers. The needs of people, not things, provide the exception to the prohibition of receiving money. This exception again focuses on the *encounter* between those who share and those in need. A focus on *things* makes the personal encounter secondary. Institutionalization risks depersonalization. Francis's experience taught him that money and things can alienate the intimate encounter resulting in something that resembles a business transaction more than a personal interaction. Actually, business is quite adept at saying, "it's not personal."

Accordingly, the brothers should forgo ownership so they can *live* in solidarity *with* those in need. But who are these others? They are the "marginalized" of society: the reviled, the despised, the poor, the powerless, the sick, the diseased, the destitute, i.e., the *needy*. Hence the brothers, "must rejoice when they *live among* people considered of little value and looked down upon, *among* the poor and the powerless, the sick and the lepers, and the beggars by the wayside."[22] Thus, when *necessary* the brothers may go for alms for the poor, that is, for themselves and for their neighbor.[23] They should not be ashamed of their need because Jesus Christ was not ashamed when he humbled himself to be with those in need.[24]

One practical need of the brothers is food.[25] The brothers should confidently look to their brothers to satisfy this basic need. The brothers should love and care for each other as a mother does her child, that is, just as a mother strives to feed a hungry child, so too do the brothers strive to feed each other. Given the mother/child imagery, the brother who eats should not reject the one who does not as if a child would reject the mother who feeds him; nor should the brother who does not eat judge the one who does, as if a mother would scold a child for being hungry. In effect, the brothers' *familia*rity should make them confident to share with each other so that their basic needs are satisfied. Such *familia*rity makes the brothers both beggars and benefactors to their fellow brothers who *choose* to live in solidarity with the "other." In short, need becomes the norm for discerning things spiritually. Such discernment guides the lesser brothers to "go through the world"[26] and be *with* or *among* the poor "without anything of their own."[27]

The last reference to "spiritually" in the *Earlier Rule* refers to yet another sphere of encountering the "other":

> As for the brothers who go, they can live spiritually among the Saracens and nonbelievers in two ways. One way is not to engage in arguments or disputes but to be subject *to every human creature for God's sake* and to acknowledge that they are Christians. The other way is to announce the Word of God, when they see it pleases the Lord, in order that [unbelievers] may believe in almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Creator of all, the Son, the Redeemer and Savior, and be baptized and become Christians…[28]

The text offers "two ways" that the brothers can "live spiritually" among the Saracens and non-believers. One way, contrary to the normal practice of the time, instructs the brothers not to engage in arguments or disputes. Rather, they should be subject to every creature because every creature is subject to God. Thus, the brothers are subject for God's sake, while confessing that they are Christians. The other way instructs the brothers to proclaim God's Word according to God's pleasure. If the Saracens who believe in almighty God who is the Creator of all come to believe in the Trinity and Christ, then they can be baptized and become Christians. Note the double parallel of the two ways.

The first way emphasizes *deeds* by (1) the brothers subjecting themselves to all, (2) for God's sake, and (3) confessing they are Christian.

The second way emphasizes *words* by (1) the brothers proclaiming the Trinity and Christ, (2) for God's pleasure, and (3) confessing Christ before others.

In effect, the two ways go hand in hand. In the encounter, the brothers must present Christianity by both their deeds and words. The relationship of the two ways explains what "living spiritually" means. While the text does not explicitly say this, its progression places deeds before words, that is, the brothers' behavior, or example, might attract attention, it may even result in friendly encounters that opens a "space" for dialogue. It is as if Francis knew the wisdom that "actions speak louder than words." To be subject means that, "For the love of God," the brothers "must make themselves vulnerable to their enemies."[29] Again, God's love provides the impetus. Enemy or not, *personal* encounter makes one vulnerable to the "other." In the end, the common denominator between the two ways of "living spiritually" is the brothers' encounter *with* the other that is authenticated by their deeds *and* words. Both should please God. Although this reference to "spiritually" does not explicitly mention "need," being *with* the "other" as subject does makes one vulnerable. Both need and vulnerability lead to personal encounter. Solidarity invites vulnerability. The focus always remains on the "other" as *persons*, who are often marginalized when the focus shifts to the *things* that can help them.

Again, helping those in *need* sounds so "nice." While I teach my boys to help others in need, I also protect them from encountering the "other." My boys have largely learned a hermetically safe form of charity that does things *for* those in need but does not risk personal encounter *with* the "other" in need. Thus far, I have

15 ER 2.6-7 (64).
16 ER 7.7 (69).
17 ER 2.6 (64), 7.7 (69), 8.3 (69).
18 ER 8.3 (69), 10.2 (71), 15.2 (73).
19 ER 8.10 (70).
20 ER 8.3 (69).
21 ER 7.1, 7 (68-69); 8.8 (70).
22 ER 9.2 (70); emphasis added.
23 ER 9.3 (70).
24 ER 9.4 (70).
25 ER 9.10-13 (71).
26 ER 14.1 (73), 15.1 (73).
27 ER 1.1 (63); also see ER 9.1 (70).
28 ER 16.5-7 (74).
29 ER 16.11 (74).

basically taught my boys to give *things* not themselves. For example, not long ago one of my sons asked me, "why are there homeless people?" The question piqued the other brothers' interest, and things got quiet. My mind raced with possible answers: mental illness, addiction, domestic violence, illness, unemployment, under employment, etc. I ended up answering, "It's complex." My answer did not satisfy him so he inquired, "what can we do to help?" All eight eyes turned back to me. I explained that we were already helping by donating money and things to charity, which help the homeless and other people in need too. My explanation of "intermediary" charity put a smile on their faces. They all felt better knowing we were helping. However, the simple question made me restless because while I believe the world is not fair because people do not share, I also believe that simply sharing *things* from a distance won't fix the problem of broken relationships that fragment *Our Father*'s family into haves and have nots. The Franciscan and Gospel traditions – now magnified by Pope Francis – remind me that personal encounter *with the other* is a concrete condition of living the Gospel. At some point, I need to expose my boys to the risks of personal encounter *with* the other, but not yet. They need to be older before they venture further out into that world of Christ's "lesser siblings." Right?

Word – Deed

The integration of words and deeds litter Francis' writings. It is especially prevalent in the *Admonitions*.[30] The dialectic opens the *Earlier Rule* and provides a hermeneutical key for understanding the "rule and life" it proposes. The dialectic is veiled and can easily be missed: "The rule and life of these brothers is… to follow the teaching and footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ." On the one hand, the brothers follow Jesus' teachings, which the *Earlier Rule* presents by citing Scripture, primarily the Gospel, but also St. Paul's letters and the Old Testament, especially the Psalms. However, the preponderance of Gospel citations fulfills what the text claims, "to follow the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ." On the other hand, the brothers follow Jesus' footprints, which the brothers do by their deeds. Accordingly, the *Earlier Rule* skillfully encodes a twofold hermeneutic of *teachings-words* and *footsteps-deeds* that operates throughout the text: Scripture reveals Jesus' teaching, and description of the deeds expected of the brothers reveals Jesus' footprints. The *Earlier Rule* assumes that the two go hand in hand as the brothers learn to live the rule as "lesser brothers" *with* their fellow siblings in God's family by following Christ.

The two terms "rule and life" parallel the *teachings-words* and *footsteps-deeds* dynamic. Their *rule* derives from Jesus' teachings and their *life* flows from Jesus's footsteps. On the one hand, the letter of their Rule flows from the words of Christ's teachings, which the brothers should obey, that is, they should listen to Christ (*ob* / to + *audire* / hear). On the other hand, the Spirit of the life occurs when the deeds of the brothers follow Christ's footsteps, that is, they should do as Jesus did. Basically, this is what the *Earlier Rule* proposes as the evangelical life. In effect, their rule becomes their life when the brothers follow Jesus, and their life fulfills their rule when the brothers follow Jesus.

This reciprocity of "rule and life" leads the brothers to an encounter with the "other" according to the words and deeds of the Gospel. Just as the Son leaves the Father to embrace the "other" who are in need of salvation, the brothers follow Jesus to an encounter *with* the "other" so that all can share the Good News of salvation in God's vast family, which is nothing less than "the life of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."[31]

Follow Christ in word and deed by living the rule. While the entire *Earlier Rule* tries to explain this directive, the four Gospel references of Chapter 1 provide insight into what it evangelically means, "to live in obedience, in chastity, and without anything of their own,"[32] as the brothers strive to follow Christ's teaching and footprints. Let us look at each in turn.

The first Gospel text combines Mt 19:21 and Lk 18:22: "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."[33] Poverty is the first dimension to the "proposal of the life" and it concerns, what it means, "to live without anything of their own." As mentioned, this expects more than just sharing material things. It envisions a life centered on encountering the "other" who are so often considered and treated as being less than a child of God, that is, those who seem to be of little worth, i.e., dignity (*dingus* = worth). Embracing a poverty of things so as to embrace the value of people is precisely what the *Earlier Rule* means by the Gospel warrant to "give to the poor." Yet, Francis doesn't expect his brothers to just give things to the poor; he expects them to give themselves to the poor, to be *with* the poor, to be *among* the *poor,* to be *one* of the poor just as Christ became one of them. By such

30 Adm 2.3 (129), 3.4 (130), 6.3 (131), 7.4 (132), 8.3 (133), 9.4 (133-134), 17.1 (134), 20.1 (135), 21.2 (135), 28.2-3 (137).

31 ER Prol.2 (630).
32 ER 1.1 (63).
33 ER 1.2 (64).

giving, the brothers follow Christ.

The second Gospel text is from Mt 16:24: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."[34] Obedience is the second dimension to the "proposal of life" and it concerns denying oneself by obeying the example of Christ's cross. Again, obey means that the brothers should listen to Christ's teaching. Accordingly, "to live in obedience" means to "deny yourself" and literally listen to someone else who you choose to follow. As mentioned, this listening to the "other" involves personal encounter where the needs of the "other" become your needs in solidarity. Such encounter involves a vulnerability that opens to the self-sacrifice of the cross: a cross that reveals God's love in Christ as well as a disciple's love for neighbor by which one follows Christ.

The third Gospel text is from Lk 14:26: "If anyone wishes to come to me and does not hate father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."[35] A brother who wishes to live in chastity leaves his family, forgoes having a family, and places being a disciple even before one's own life. These are hard words. Yet, as mentioned, the risk of the Gospel involves an expansion of the parameters of God's family. It is a realization that all are God's children and that all are siblings to Christ. Thus, to love our own father and mother *more* than *Our Father* may cause us to forget that there aren't barriers in the Father's family; to love our spouse *more* than God may lead us to forget about the divisions between the haves and have nots; to love one's own children *more* than God's many children may result in a social hierarchy that places a higher value on some; to love our own brothers and sisters more than Christ, is to forget that Christ is our sibling; and to love ourselves more than others is to subvert the meaning of family altogether. Indeed, these are hard words. Especially for a man who is married with four kids.

The fourth Gospel text is a compilation of Mt 19:29, Mk 10:29, and Lk 18:29: "Everyone who has left father or mother, brother or sisters, wife or children, houses or lands because of me, will receive a hundredfold and will possess eternal life."[36] If obedience, chastity, and poverty refer to the first three scripture citations, then why is this fourth citation included? How does it fit in? Those who give up family will be adopted into God's family. It's not really an either/or because if I leave my family to join God's family, my family is invited too. Actually, everyone is. God's family is inclusive. Yet the familial relationships Francis invokes remind and challenge me that my words and deeds should help build a home and dwelling place of the Spirit[37] wherein all of creation – fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters – can join in with all of creation and: "Praise and bless my Lord and Give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility."[38] In effect, to "possess eternal life" is to join God's entire created family with the Son, in the Spirit to praise the Good Lord, who is *Our Father,* the loving Father of *our entire* family "on earth as it is in heaven."[39]

Of course, teaching our children to pray the *Our Father* is "nice." However, as we get older we realize the realization of God's will "on earth as it is in heaven" is easier said (word) than done (deed), especially when faced with the ubiquitous "other." Yet, those who give up control and listen to the "other" (even the powerless), who give up exclusive relationships by including the "other" (even the marginalized), and who give up worldly security to help the "other" (even the poorest of the poor), are following Christ, step by step, encounter by encounter, so that *Our Father*'s will becomes reality "on Earth as it is in Heaven." In meditating on this line from the *Our Father*, Francis invokes the Golden Rule, "may we love our neighbor as ourselves."[40] Following Christ as a lesser brother showed Francis that this concretely means we must give ourselves when we encounter the "other," including the "leper" a wayfarer might encounter along the wayside. Although certainly different in some ways, the same vision of following Jesus Christ's teachings and footsteps by word and deed certainly continues to inspire and challenge people today. I know it challenges me as a parent as I discern how to best raise my four boys to follow Christ in their words and deeds as they go forth into the world as brothers and someday fathers with a desire to expand *Our Father*'s home to "the other" – one encounter at a time.

34 ER 1.3 (64).
35 ER 1.3 (64).
36 ER 1.5 (64).
37 1LtF 6 (41); also see 2LtF 48 (48).
38 CtC 14 (114).
39 Mt 6:9-13; PrOf 5 (158).
40 PrOf 5 (159).

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Women and Gender in Islam: From Revelation to Revolution

By Michael Calabria, O.F.M., Ph.D.

India's Taj Mahal is arguably one of the most beautiful and most recognizable works of architecture in the world. While many people can identify the structure as "Indian," perhaps fewer know it is as a work of *Islamic* architecture and as a mausoleum built to honor the memory of a *Muslim woman*: Arjumand Banu Begum (1592-1631), more commonly known as *Mumtaz Mahal* – the beloved wife of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628-59). No woman anywhere in the world, in any other culture or era, has been memorialized by so grand a funerary monument.[1]

Although honored in death by a magnificent mausoleum, it is difficult to assess what role Mumtaz Mahal might have played during Shah Jahan's reign as she died in childbirth just three and a half years after he ascended the throne as emperor. Mumtaz's aunt, Nur Jahan, who preceded her as empress, had wielded tremendous influence and authority during the reign of her husband Jahangir (r. 1605-27), the father of Shah Jahan.[2] Not only does Nur Jahan's name appear alongside her husband's on imperial decrees (*farman*), but she issued orders under her own seal, minted her own coins, designed and executed building projects, engaged in charitable works, international diplomacy and commerce, and was skilled in the use of the bow and musket.

After Mumtaz's death, her eldest daughter Jahanara, assumed her role as head of the imperial household. Like her great aunt, she amassed a fortune through trade and was responsible for a number of building projects. After Shah Jahan was overthrown by his son Aurangzeb and kept under house arrest for the last seven and a half years of his life, it was Jahanara who cared for her aging father, eventually laying him to rest along side her mother in the crypt of the Taj Mahal. A woman of deep intellect and spirituality like her brother Dara Shikoh, she was initiated into a sūfi order (*Qadiriyya*) and wrote a biography of her spiritual teacher Mulla Shah (d. 1661) among other works.[3]

Women of the Mughal imperial family such as Nur Jahan, Mumtaz Mahal and Jahanara, are not unique in Islamic history and culture, and numerous parallels may be found among their peers in the Ottoman Empire, as well as in the medieval Middle East. From the very advent of Islam, Muslim women have played significant roles in religion, politics, commerce, and culture in every period and in every domain, even as they faced the patriarchal limitations characteristic of all pre-modern societies, not unlike women in the Byzantine Empire.[4] Women, their rights, roles, and significance in Islamic faith and spirituality, history, tradition and society, and how they compare and contrast with the Catholic and Franciscan traditions are the subject of a summer course offered by the Franciscan Institute in July 2016 in conjunction with the *Conference on Medieval Women*. This article introduces women and gender in Islam, and some of the specific topics and issues explored more fully in the course.

Women in the Early Islamic Period

The story of women in Islam begins with Khadija, the devoted first wife of the Prophet Muhammad. Twice widowed, Khadija operated her own trading company in Mecca and hired Muhammad to sell goods on her behalf. In time, it was she who proposed marriage to him. For the twenty-five years of their marriage, until her death in 619 CE, she would be his only wife. When Muhammad received his first revelation from God through the agency of the Angel Gabriel, it was to she whom he fled in fear and incredulity. It was she who comforted him, assured him of the authenticity of the revelation, and was the first to believe in his mission as God's prophet.

Fatima, the youngest daughter born to Khadija and Muham-

1 A possible exception from the ancient world is the funerary temple of Hatshepsut (ca. 1478-1458 BCE) at Deir el-Bahari in Egypt. See: *The Temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari,* Ministry of Culture, Supreme Council of Antiquities (Cairo, 2000).

2 Ellison Banks Findly, *Nur Jahan: Empress of Mughal India* (Oxford, 1993).

3 Ursula Sims-Williams, "Princess Jahanara's Biography of a Sufi Saint," British Library, Asian and African Studies Blog, http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/2013/02/princess-jahanaras-biography-of-a-sufi-saint.html

4 Judith Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence: Women and Empire in Byzantium* (Princeton, 2013), 1-11.

mad, also had an enduring impact on the Islamic community and faith, although she died just months after her father (633 CE). According to tradition, Muhammad said to her: "You are the highest of the women of the people of Paradise, excepting only the Virgin Mary, the daughter of Imran."[5] Due to her faith and devotion, Fatima is considered a model for all Muslims and is honored as *al-Zahra,* "the shining/splendid one," and *al-Batul*, "the chaste/pure one," a designation she shares with Mary.[6] Fatima is also particularly significant for Shī'ī Muslims, who trace their line of *imams*, the leaders of the Shī'ī community, through her sons, Hasan and Husayn, whom she bore to 'Ali (Muhammad's cousin).[7]

A third important woman of the early Islamic period is A'isha, the daughter of Muhammad's closest friend Abu Bakr, who was betrothed and married to Muhammad in the years following Khadija's death. Although an adolescent at the time, she became one of the most important and influential figures after Muhammad's death.[8] When 'Ali was named the fourth caliph in 656 CE, A'isha organized an opposition army to depose him. Their armies met at the Battle of the Camel near Basra in southern Iraq, where A'isha was defeated and sent back to live out her days in Medina. Nevertheless, she remained an important figure in the Muslim community, narrating over two thousand *hadīth* – that is, sayings by Muhammad and anecdotes about him, which are an important (if not frequently debated) source of information about the Prophet.

Women in the Qur'an

As with other sacred texts and faith communities, an imprecise, uncritical, decontextualized, and gender-biased reading of the Qur'an has often resulted in the oppression of Muslim women. In recent decades, women scholars of the Qur'an have attempted to correct erroneous readings and interpretations. Particularly noteworthy are the works of Fatima Mernissi,[9] Barbara Freyer Stowasser,[10] Amina Wadud,[11] Asma Barlas,[12] and Kecia Ali,[13] among many others, who provide learned correctives to the incendiary views expressed by Ayaan Hirsi Ali.[14]

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, views of women as fundamentally flawed and dangerous are often ultimately based on the story of Creation as described in Genesis 3 in which Eve is enticed by the serpent to eat the forbidden fruit, gives it to Adam, and is then punished by God with the pains of childbirth and submission to her husband. The Qur'an, on the other hand, emphasizes that the first man and woman *both* share the blame equally. This is achieved linguistically by the use of the dual pronouns *humā* – "them two" – and *kumā* – "you two" as in 7.20-22, often lost in translation:

> Then Satan whispered to *them two* … He swore to *them two*: 'I am a sincere adviser to *you two*!" He lured *them two* with deceit…Their Lord called out to *them two:* 'Did I not forbid *you two* from that tree, and say to *you two* that Satan is a clear enemy to *you two?*'

While the Qur'an, like other pre-modern texts, speaks of *functional* differences between women and men in terms of traditional gender roles, it repeatedly declares that women and men are *fundamentally equal* in God's eyes. They are rewarded equally for their righteousness:

> For the men who submit (to God) and the women who submit (to God), and the believing men and the believing women, and devout men and the devout women, and the true men and the true women, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the charitable men and the charitable women and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their chastity, and the women who guard their chastity, and those men who remember God much and those women who remember, God has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward." (33.35)

Indeed, there are several women mentioned in the Qur'an who are intended to serve as examples of faith to both believing women *and* men. Among them are: the wife of Pharaoh, who believed in the one God and recognized her husband's evil; and, above all, Mary, the mother of Jesus, the most revered of all women in Islam.[15] Not only is the Annunciation to Mary recounted twice in the Qur'an (3.42-49 and 19.16-29), but also described are Mary's own Nativity and Presentation in the Temple (3.36-37). Her house in Ephesus is a place of pilgrimage for Christians *and* Muslims alike, as are sites in Egypt and Palestine associated with her.

For many Westerners, however, the veiling of Muslim women is the most visible sign of *inequality* and oppression. It must be noted, first of all, that veiling did not originate with Islam, but was practiced by Persians, Jews, and Christians before the advent of Islam. In the early seventh century, an Egyptian bishop wrote:

> As for women who go about unabashedly, their eyes staring unashamedly into the faces of every man: don't go about with uncovered faces – not just here, but also in the streets of your own town ...that no woman at all go outside the door of her house with her head uncovered...[16]

Although veiling in various forms – from a simple head cov-

5 Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources,* 2nd ed. (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2006), 345.
6 Mary F. Thurlkill, *Chosen Among Women: Mary and Fatima in Medieval Christianity and Shi'ite Islam* (Notre Dame, 2007).
7 Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge, 1992), 58.
8 A'isha's young age at the time of her marriage to Muhammad has been the subject of much discussion in recent years, particularly by those wishing to discredit the Prophet Muhammad. For discussion, see: Adil Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet,* rev. ed. (Markfield, Leicestershire, UK: Islamic Foundation, 2002), 808-819.
9 Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: a Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1991).
10 Barbara Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation* (New York: Oxford, 1994).
11 Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford, 1999).
12 Asma Barlas, *"Believing Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Austin: University of Texas, 2002).
13 Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).
14 *Heretic: Why Islam Needs a Reformation Now* (2015).
15 Jane I. Smith and Yvonne Haddad, "The Virgin Mary in Islamic Tradition and Commentary," *Muslim World* 59 (July/Oct. 1989), nos. 3-4, 161-187; Aliah Schleifer, *Mary the Blessed Virgin of Islam,* 3rd ed. (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2008); Robert C. Gregg, *Shared Stories, Rival Tellings: Early Encounters of Jews, Christians, and Muslims* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 543-593.
16 T.G. Wilfong, *Women of Jeme: Lives in a Coptic Town in Late Antique Egypt* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 2002), 26.

ering (*hijab*) to a face covering (*niqāb*) – has become increasingly widespread in the contemporary Muslim world, the Qur'an *does not explicitly* require it. What the Qur'an *does* require is modesty in behavior and attire – for *both men and women*:

> Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their privates. That is purer for them. Surely God is aware of all that they do. Say to the believing women that should lower their gaze and guard their privates; and that they should not display their adornment except for what is visible; and that they should draw their kerchiefs over their bosoms & not display their adornment except to their husbands...(24.30-31)

While Muslim women living in more conservative cultures may feel compelled to veil in some form, for others it is a personal choice that serves as an outward expression of their faith and piety, as a statement against the objectification of women, or a rejection of anti-religious secularism.[17]

As with veiling, the practice of polygamy in Muslim societies is often viewed as an injustice against women. Its purpose is, however, quite the contrary. The verse in the Qur'an that gave men the permission to marry up to four wives (4.3) was revealed shortly after the Battle of Uhud in 625 CE that left many Muslim men dead. Consequently, many children and widows were left without means of support. The permission for polygamy was thus intended to protect and provide for vulnerable women and their dependent children. Moreover, the verse makes it clear that if a man cannot deal justly with all the wives he has married and provide for them equally, he should have only *one* wife – and this is what the Qur'an clearly prefers. The historical abuse of this important limitation on polygamous marriages by Muslim rulers who took numerous concubines in addition to legal wives was due to cultural custom, not religious rights *per se.*

17 Leila Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution: the Veil's Insurgence, from the Middle East to America* (new Haven: Yale, 2011).

Women and Islamic Law

The subject of woman and Islamic law (*sharī'ah*) is a controversial one as well as a complex one due to the different interpretations offered by the fours schools of Islamic law, as well as the differences between *Sunni* and *Shī'ī* opinions. Although it is often assumed that *sharī'ah* deprives Muslim women of rights, *in principal it protects* several important rights, including a woman's right to consent to marriage, to receive a dower from her husband at the time of their marriage, to be educated, inherit and sue for divorce.[18]

In some Muslim countries today, particularly with the rise of political Islam in the 20th century and militant groups like the Taliban, al-Qaeda, ISIS/ISIL, Boko Haram, etc., *sharī'ah* has been applied in draconian ways that contradict Qur'anic principles of justice and mercy inherent in Islamic law such that both women and men suffer with tragic consequences.

Women and Sufism

Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam gave rise to a contemplative and mystical dimension. In Islam, it is called *Sufism* (Ar., *al-tasawwūf*) and its adherents *Sufis,* terms derived from the Arabic word for wool (*sūf*), the material worn by itinerant preachers, not unlike Christian mendicant orders, such as the Franciscans. Also, like their Jewish and Christian counterparts, Sufism flourished especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries CE, with poets and authors such as Fariduddin Attar (1145-1221), Mohyuddin Ibn 'Arabi (1165-1240), Umar Ibn al-Farid (1181-1235), and Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-73). However, one of the earliest mystics of Islam was a woman: Rabi'a al-'Adawiyyah (713-801 CE) of Basra. Like the "bridal mysticism" (*Brautmystik*) of medieval Christianity, Rabi'a expressed her desire for God in amorous words:

> You have infused my being through and through,
> As an intimate friend must always do.
> So when I speak, I speak only of You,
> And when silent, I yearn for You.[19]

Centuries before sufis like Ibn 'Arabi and Rumi expressed the transcendent unity of religions (*waḥdat al-adyan*), Rabi'a wrote:

> In my soul
> There is a temple, a shrine, a mosque, a church
> That dissolve, that dissolve in God.[20]

18 John Esposito with Natana J. DeLong Bas, *Women in Muslim Family Law,* 2nd ed. (Syracuse, 2001); Judith E. Tucker, *Women, Family, and Gender in Islamic Law* (Cambridge, 2008).

19 *Islamic Mystical Poetry: Sufi Verse from the Mystics to Rumi,* ed. Mahmood Jamal (Penguin, 2009), 7.

20 *Islamic Mystical Poetry,* 12.

In his discussion of Sufi women, Abu 'abd al-Rahman al-Sulami (937-1021 CE), noted that the Islamic scholar Sufyan al-Thawri (716-778 CE) sought Rabi'a's "advice on legal matters and referred such issues to her. He also sought her spiritual advice and supplications."[21]

Revolutionary Women

Since the advent of Islam, Muslim women have played significant roles in the faith life of the community, and subsequently in its political life as well, in spite of the patriarchal cultures in which Islam took root. In the early 20th century, women understood they could not secure women's rights in their countries until both men and women were first free of colonial oppression. In Egypt, one of the most significant figures of this period was Huda Sha'arawi (1879- 1947), who formed a women's committee in 1919 dedicated to ending the British occupation. That year she wrote:

> We women held our first demonstration on 16 March to protest the repressive acts and intimidation practiced by the British authority...They blocked the streets with machine guns...When I advanced, a British soldier stepped toward me pointing his gun, but I made my way past him.[22]

In Syria, Naziq al-Abid (1898-1959) actually fought in battle against the French occupation at the Battle of Maysaloun (1920), earning her the honorary rank of general and the moniker: "The Syrian Joan of Arc." Although the Syrian army was defeated, she continued the fight for Syrian independence during the revolts of 1925-27.

Given this history, it should, therefore, come as no surprise that in the revolutions of the early 21st century called the "Arab Spring," Muslim women have continued to fight against injustices, whether perpetrated by secular or Islamist governments. It is estimated that a fifth of the young demonstrators in Cairo's Tahrir Square who forced the resignation of President Mubarak in 2011 were women. Subsequently marginalized politically by an Islamist administration, Muslim women also participated in the protests that led to the downfall of President Morsi in 2013.[23]

While many myths about women, gender, and Islam continue to prevail – that Islam is inherently hostile towards women, that it condones the exploitation and oppression of women, and that it deprives women of social, political, and economic activity – modern scholarship in Qur'anic exegesis and Islamic history, as well as current events, present a more complex and positive picture than does the contemporary world.

21 Abū 'Abd ar-Rahmān ās-Sulamī, *Early Sufi Women (Dhikr an-nisaw al-muta 'abbidāt as-sūfiyyāt)*, trans. Rkia E. Cornell (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1999), 74.
22 Huda Sha'arawi, *Harem Years: the Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist,* trans. Margot Badran (New York: Feminist Press, 1986), 112-113.

23 Juan Cole and Shahin Malik Cole, "Women in Egypt After the Arab Spring: Gains and Losses," *Truthdig*, Oct 7, 2014: http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/women_in_egypt_after_the_arab_spring_gains_and_losses_20141007

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Bonaventure, the End of the World, and Franciscan Work

By Holly J. Grieco, Ph.D.

Every three years, members of the Franciscan Order gather in a General Chapter to address current issues within the Order and to update their statutes to reflect these concerns. In 1260, Franciscans, led by their Minister General, the theologian Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (1221-1274), held their General Chapter at Narbonne, a city in southern France. The Constitutions resulting from that chapter contained the following outwardly unremarkable statement regarding the consumption of meat: "In their own houses the brothers may not eat flesh meat at any time, except for those who are weak or infirm….However, the guardian may provide meat for those he reasonably judges to need it because of their weakness."[1] A few years later, Bonaventure wrote to clarify these statutes so the brothers would be sure to observe them correctly. In response to the question of whether the prohibition on eating meat applied to lectors and brother artisans constructing buildings, Bonaventure did not bind lectors to the prohibitions against the consumption of meat, on the grounds of their "great, useful, and continual labor," whereas "this exemption [did] not extend to workmen, except as it does to other brothers."[2] Bonaventure's statement about the labor of Franciscan lectors juxtaposed with his dismissal of the construction work done by other brothers reveals something important about Bonaventure's perspective on human labor, in which the intellectual exertions of lectors were deemed more taxing than the manual labor of those engaged in construction. How did Bonaventure understand the friars' work and what led him to deem intellectual (or, perhaps, spiritual) labor more exhausting and demanding than physical labor?

This past year, I received a research grant from the Franciscan Institute at Saint Bonaventure University to work on a project entitled "Bonaventure, Pastoral Labor, and Notions of Perfection," which has as its goal recovering Bonaventure's understanding of Franciscans' work and its greater purpose in the context of his *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection*. Disputations were a kind of formal academic exercise in the Middle Ages, with masters taking different positions on an issue and debating against each other in a public forum. Theologians also used this format when they composed treatises, since the genre of the disputation permitted the author to set out arguments for both sides of the question, then systematically refute those he rejected. More than an academic exercise, Bonaventure's *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection*, delivered to the university community at sometime between 1254 and 1256, addressed core aspects of the Franciscan life and charism at a critical moment in the Order's history.[3]

Why look at how later Franciscans understood the things they did—that is, their work? Although scholars do not completely agree on early Franciscan history, some trends within the Order are clear: the first Franciscans worked with their hands; very few of them were ordained as priests; and for their labors, they received the necessities of life. The Dominican Order, founded around the same time in the early thirteenth century, had a defined pastoral charism from the start, unlike the earliest Franciscans who did not. Rather, the Franciscan charism was to imitate Christ in all that he did. For an example of this charism and its breadth, we only have to think about the kinds of ministries Franciscans are involved in today. Just as thirteenth-century Franciscans did not have one way through which they expressed their call to live like Jesus Christ, twenty-first-century Franciscans are active in pastoral work, prison ministry, education, health care, activism and lobbying for environmental and social justice causes, and so forth. The breadth of Franciscan work, in the Middle Ages as well as today can open our eyes to the diversity of human work in general to give us a new appreciation for the work all humans do.

Issues related to human work interest me as a citizen of the twenty-first century, as a Catholic, and as a faculty member at a Franciscan institution. What do I mean when I use the word work?[4] The Protestant theologian Miroslav Volf has defined work as an

> honest, purposeful, and methodologically specified social activity whose primary goal is the creation of products or states of affairs that can satisfy the needs of working individuals or their co-creatures, or (if primarily an end in itself) activity that is necessary in order for acting individuals to satisfy their needs apart from the need for the activity itself.[5]

Note that Volf's definition does not restrict work to materially or financially compensated activities, nor does it restrict work to activities that result in a tangible product. In my study of human work, I draw on Volf's definition because of its inclusivity. Although we cannot haphazardly impose Volf's definition on Bonaventure, this contemporary definition might aid our own understanding of the thirteenth-century theologian's definition of work. If nothing else, it may help us to articulate where our own views of human labor differ from those of the Seraphic Doctor.

As a medievalist who focuses on Franciscan history, my primary interest resides in turning to medieval Franciscans to learn more about the way they understood their work and its purpose in the decades after Saint Francis' death in 1226. But I am also interested in considering whether there might be useful lessons for people in the twenty-first century. Perhaps these medieval Franciscans can help us

1 *The Constitutions of Narbonne*, in *St. Bonaventure's Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order*, edited and translated by Dominic Monti, Works of St. Bonaventure, vol. V, (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Press, 1994) IV.4-5, 89-90

2 This commentary may date from 1266, when the Franciscans had a General Chapter. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Explanations of the Constitutions of Narbonne* in *St. Bonaventure's Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order*, edited and translated by Dominic Monti, Works of St. Bonaventure, vol. V, (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Press, 1994) no. 27, 214-215.

3 Marianne Schlosser, "Bonaventure: Life and Works," in *A Companion to Bonaventure*, edited by Jay M. Hammond, J.A. Wayne Hellmann, and Jared Goff (Leiden: Brill, 2014) 21, n. 30.

4 I use the words "work" and "labor" interchangeably.

5 Italics in original. Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001; first published 1991) 10-11.

by providing a framework for welcoming the diverse contributions of community members within society through their labor, or in a more limited context, within a Franciscan institution of higher learning.

Early Franciscans and Work

For a view of how Francis and the early friars regarded their work we can look at some of the earliest Franciscan sources. Although Francis did not single-handedly author the *Regula non bullata* of 1221, also known as the *Earlier Rule*, the document still gives an indication of how he envisioned work fitting into the structure of the brotherhood. The *Regula non bullata* limited the brothers to working in subservient positions. They should not manage finances or other workers. Moreover, the work they did should not cause scandal or jeopardize their souls.[6] In other words, the friars' labor should be consonant with God's will for humankind and appropriate for men who had taken a three-fold vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and whose rule emphasized the virtue of humility. This latter point is reiterated in the *Regula non bullata* VII.3-6:

> Let the brothers who know how to work do so and exercise that trade they have learned, provided it is not contrary to the good of their souls and can be performed honestly. For the prophet says: *You shall eat the fruit of your labors; you are blessed and it shall be well for you.* The Apostle says: *Whoever does not wish to work shall not eat.* And *Let everyone remain* in that trade and office *in which he has been called*.[7]

Metaphorically speaking, early Franciscans did eat the fruits of their labors: they received food in exchange for their work. If they could not find work or if, perhaps, they were not adequately compensated for their labor, the brothers had permission to beg for alms like the involuntary poor. Evidence suggests that begging was not the primary means of support for the first friars.[8]

The papally-approved *Regula bullata*, or *Later Rule*, of 1223, also presented work in a positive light, yet raised the concern that work not jeopardize a brother's spiritual life: "The brothers to whom the Lord has given the grace of working may work faithfully and devotedly so that, while avoiding idleness, the enemy of the soul, they do not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all temporal things must contribute."[9] That is, work is good and keeps a brother from idleness, but the brother must maintain a balance so his work supports and nurtures his spiritual life rather than distracting him from it.

To what kind of human work did the *Regula bullata* refer? This work seems to have been manual labor and perhaps skilled trade labor, based on a reference in the *Regula non bullata* about the brothers having access to the tools of their trade.[10] Another clue comes in Francis' *Testament*, composed shortly before death, in which the *poverello* returned to the subject of work, and wrote, "And *I worked with* my *hands*, and I still desire to work; and I earnestly desire all brothers to give themselves to honest work. Let those who do not know how to work learn, not from desire to receive wages, but for example and to avoid idleness. And when we are not paid for our work, let us have recourse to the table of the Lord, begging alms from door to door."[11] The *Regula bullata* forbade illiterate brothers from learning how to read, requiring that brothers remain in the state in which they entered the Order.[12] Yet in his *Testament*, Francis urged "honest work" on all brothers: it was something they should learn to do if they did not know how. As in the *Regula bullata*, Francis seems to refer to manual labor or skilled craftwork. Contrast this call to manual labor with the statement in the *Regula non bullata* III.8-9 that restricted the possession of psalters to laymen who knew how to read, and a related passage already alluded to above, found in the *Regula bullata* X.7-10 in which illiterate brothers were told not to be anxious to learn to read.[13] When friars learned to work with their hands, they embraced humility and joined themselves with others in medieval society who performed such work, whereas literacy and the possession of costly books were signs of privilege that the friars rejected. According to Francis, literacy was not incumbent upon all friars, but learning to work with one's hands was.

Bonaventure's Understanding of Franciscan Work

Many changes occurred within the Franciscan Order between the time of Francis' death in 1226 and the middle of the thirteenth century. To give a sense of the rapid change in the Order, only ten years after Francis of Assisi died, Alexander of Hales joined the Franciscan Order in 1237 to become the first Franciscan master of theology at the University of Paris. This event marked the beginning of a long association of the Franciscan Order with the University there as well as in other medieval centers of learning.[14] Long before the 1250s, most Franciscans had ceased to work with their hands. Instead, Franciscans preached, heard confessions, and studied at universities. They were missionaries, advisors, bishops, and heresy inquisitors. At the same time, as friars moved away from manual labor, they were more likely to rely upon alms collected while begging in order to meet their basic needs.

Because Minorite life looked radically different in the mid-thirteenth century than it did during Francis' time, the friars needed to justify contemporary Franciscan life to those inside as well as those outside of the order. How could the brothers claim to follow Francis of Assisi when their way of life differed so greatly from his? Bonaventure defended the friars' current way of life in a number of formal texts, including his *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection* and later on in the *Defense of the Mendicants* (1269). For an overview of Bonaventure's understanding of the changes in Franciscan life from Francis' day until his own, however, we can look to a response the theologian supposedly wrote to a young master

6 *The Earlier Rule*, *Francis of Assisi. Early Documents: The Founder* (Hereafter, *FA:ED*), vol. 1, ed. by Regis J. Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, (New York: New City Press, 1999) VII.1-2, 68.

7 Ibid. VII.3-6, 68-69.

8 Augustine Thompson, "The Origins of Religious Mendicancy in Medieval Europe," in *The Origin, Development, and Refinement of Medieval Religious Mendicancies*, edited by Donald S. Prudlo, (Leiden: Brill, 2011) 17: "[W]hen we look directly at Francis' own writings and the earliest stories about him, begging is not really a central concern. Francis expected his friars to live by manual labor, and have recourse to begging only in times of necessity." Thompson notes the stress on manual labor in the *Testament*.

9 *The Later Rule*, *FA:ED*, vol. 1, V.1-2, 102.

10 *The Earlier Rule*, *FA:ED*, vol. 1, VII.9, 69.

11 *Testament*, *FA:ED*, vol. 1, sec. 20-22, 125-126.

12 *The Later Rule*, *FA:ED*, vol. 1, X.7-9, 105.

13 *The Earlier Rule*, *FA:ED*, vol. 1, III.8-9, 65-66; and *The Later Rule*, *FA:ED*, vol. 1, X.7-10, 105.

14 On this transformation, see Neslihan Şenocak, *The Poor and the Perfect: The Rise of Learning in the Franciscan Order, 1209–1310*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012); and Rosalind B. Brooke, *Early Franciscan Government: Elias to Bonaventure*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1959).

who had raised numerous questions about contemporary Franciscan life.[15] Questioning the legitimacy and authenticity of the way Franciscans lived, others had challenged the young man, who may have been interested in joining the Franciscan Order. In 1254 or 1255, Bonaventure composed his brief reply, focusing on the three topics of concern to the young master: poverty, manual labor, and academic study within the Order.

In *A Letter in Response to an Unknown Master*, Bonaventure defended the current practices of the Franciscan Order, while still expressing concern about relaxed standards among the friars.[16] When he came to consider manual labor, the theologian claimed it was neither counseled nor commanded for all within the Order, because Saint Francis had feared that too much manual labor would be detrimental to the brothers' spiritual life.[17] Bonaventure also questioned what constituted hard work: just because most friars no longer worked with their hands did not mean they were idle. On the contrary, Bonaventure wrote to the young master, "In [the Order] you will find plenty of hard work, both in the pursuit of truth as well as in the exercise of piety, humility, and all the other virtues."[18] Intellectual and spiritual labor fatigued the mind and the spirit, rather than the body.

In their communities, the brothers had numerous other duties, including cooking, cleaning, caring for the sick, and begging for alms. Bonaventure stressed that Franciscans found joy in this menial work, valuing it above prestigious positions they might otherwise occupy. The theologian carved out a surprisingly capacious realm of human work, one in which hard work included not only the manual labor of plowing fields or craft work, such as barrel-making or iron-smithing; but also domestic work—women's work—was hard work, and part of the brothers' life in common. Hard work, in other words, was not simply labor that resulted in a sweaty brow, callused hands, and tired muscles. Hard work included the daily domestic labor of women (which also led to bodily exhaustion) as well as intellectual and spiritual labors.

The Order had become more learned; known for its theologians and houses of study, friars now all had a basic level of Latin literacy, some much more so. Ambition and pretentiousness had to be condemned, but Bonaventure insisted that friars should take on teaching positions in universities as eminently qualified men who lived the Gospel life.[19] Indeed, in 1254-1255 Bonaventure would have written his response to the young master from Paris, where he had attained the rank of master of theology at the University. These changes in the Order led Bonaventure to tackle the young master's question regarding friars who studied philosophy. Although idle curiosity was a waste of time, the writings of philosophers could aid Christians in learning more about God and the faith, even if they were not Christians.[20] Bonaventure sought to alleviate the young master's concerns about the transformation within the Franciscan Order that led the friars to take on increasingly clerical and pastoral responsibilities as well as to seek out the study of philosophy and theology:

> Let it not disturb you that in the beginning our brothers were simple and unlettered; rather, this very fact ought to strengthen your faith in the Order. For I confess before God that what made me love St. Francis's way of life so much was that it is exactly like the origin and the perfection of the Church itself, which began first with simple fishermen and afterwards developed to include the most illustrious and learned doctors. You find the same thing in the Order of St. Francis; in this way God reveals that it did not come about through human calculations but through Christ. For since the works of Christ do not diminish but ceaselessly grow, this undertaking was proved to be God's doing when wise men did not disdain to join the company of simple folk.[21]

God works with purpose through human history. Bonaventure identified God's own hand in the humble origins and subsequent growth of the Church and the Franciscan Order. God, in fact, had directed the Order's growth over time, which paralleled that of the Church. That did not mean that Franciscans did not sometimes (or even often) fall short of living out Francis' charism, but Bonaventure still saw the divine plan unfolding in the Order, through its transformation and its role in human history. Bonaventure also seemed to argue that the Order itself was progressing towards the fullness of perfection over time: "[L]ike the origin and perfection of the Church itself," he wrote, so too the Franciscan Order had developed over time, first attracting simple men, then learned ones, starting with simple roots, and becoming a massive, many-branched, deeply-rooted, tree.

Bonaventure implied that the developments noted by the young master in his letter were intended by God and spoke to the Order's dedication to a life of evangelical poverty and the role of work within that life. There is even a suggestion here of the eschatological purpose of Franciscans' labor and its place in their desire to live lives of evangelical perfection that Bonaventure would develop in subsequent work, including the *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection*, as well as the *Defense of the Mendicants* (1269) and the *Collations on the Six Days of Creation* (1273). That is, a hint of the claim that Bonaventure would make about the role of the Franciscans in the final moments of God's plan for human history emerges in this comparison between the development of the Church and the Order of Friars Minor. Here, in his response to the young master, Bonaventure informally answered questions that many were asking

15 Scholars have debated whether the young master whom Bonaventure addressed was real or merely a literary conceit; but regardless of whether the young master was Roger Bacon, John Pecham, or a literary fabrication, he afforded Bonaventure the opportunity to address pressing questions about the Franciscans' origins and current way of life to an internal audience. See Dominic Monti, editor and translator, *A Letter in Response to an Unknown Master*, in *St. Bonaventure's Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order*, Works of St. Bonaventure, vol. V, (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Press, 1994) 41-42.

16 The following paragraphs draw heavily from the article I am finishing on Bonaventure's view of Franciscan work in the *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection.*

17 The language mirrors that in *Regula bullata* V. 1-2. See *FA:ED*, vol. 1, 106. This language is repeated in Francis' letter to Anthony of Padua regarding the study of theology: "I am pleased that you teach sacred theology to the brothers providing that, as is contained in the Rule, you 'do not extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion' during study of this kind." *Letter to Br. Anthony of Padua*, *FA:ED*, vol. 1, 107.

18 Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *A Letter in Response to an Unknown Master*, sec. 9, 50.

19 Ibid., sec. 11, 51.

20 Ibid., sec. 12, 53. Learning feeds one's knowledge of God through exploration of God's creation. Bonaventure considers such study useful for the friars' pastoral responsibilities, including preaching and hearing confessions. What Bonaventure neglects to say here is that these were responsibilities that the brothers often actively sought to avoid, even through legislation. For example, see Lezlie Knox, "Audacious Nuns: Institutionalizing the Franciscan Order of Saint Clare," *Church History* 69 (2000) 41-62.

21 Bonaventure, *A Letter in Response to an Unknown Master*, sec. 13, 54.

at the time, both inside and outside the Order.

The *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection*

In the *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection*, Bonaventure set out to refute critics of contemporary Franciscan life at the University of Paris as well as to justify the Franciscan life to the friars themselves. He accomplished this task by employing an eschatological framework that placed the Franciscan Order in a key role in the last age of human history.[22] God had chosen the friars for this role, and they fulfilled it by bearing witness to Christ through the work they did.[23] The friars endeavored to act as Christ had in the world, and ultimately strove to become *alii Christi* by living lives of evangelical perfection.[24] Bonaventure addressed the evangelical perfection in four chapters, focusing on humility, poverty, continence, and obedience in turn—three vows made by every Franciscan who professed the rule, plus humility, a key virtue bequeathed to the friars by their founder through his words as well as through his example.

Internal and external critics argued that the Franciscans had moved so far from their origins that they no longer could justify their claim to be living the evangelical life. In the *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection*, Bonaventure launched his counter-argument, to demonstrate that the friars' life measured up to the example set by Jesus Christ in the Gospels. For the theologian, many things belonged within the scope of a life of evangelical perfection, though some possessed the fullness of evangelical perfection while others did not. In understanding the evangelical life and articulating the friars' desire to imitate Christ as closely as possible, Bonaventure drew on the ecclesiological writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius, a fifth- or sixth-century Christian Neoplatonist theologian who claimed to be Dionysius the Areopagite, the first-century disciple of Saint Paul. In his writings, the Pseudo-Dionysius elaborated an ecclesiology founded on a series of hierarchies, each level of which progressively increased in the fullness of perfection or degree of closeness to God. These hierarchies explained the order in the heavens and the ranks of the angels as well as the structure of the Church on earth, which paralleled the celestial hierarchy. Bonaventure borrowed liberally from the Pseudo-Dionysius in his own understanding of the structure of the Church, man's journey towards God, and the final events of human history. Although neither the Pseudo-Dionysius nor Bonaventure denigrated the material world, in their respective cosmologies, spiritual things necessarily occupied a higher ranking and enjoyed a greater degree of perfection than material ones.

Bonaventure relied upon this Pseudo-Dionysian framework in his *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection*, understanding evangelical perfection in terms of a hierarchy, much as he envisioned man in a hierarchical relationship with God, bound by hierarchies within the Church and the heavens. Because soul and spirit were above the body, spiritual labor was more perfect than manual labor. Manual labor, then, was not an overriding good such that brothers more inclined towards intellectual or spiritual work should divert their attention from it; it shared in evangelical perfection, but did not embrace its fullness. Spiritual labor, by contrast, allowed one to come closer to knowing and experiencing God, something that manual labor did not afford. Thus, Bonaventure argued that manual labor was not required of all friars so that they would be able to make the best use of their individual gifts.[25]

In keeping with this Pseudo-Dionysian framework, ultimately, the Franciscans worked in order to bring themselves and others to the point of abandoning such work. Neoplatonists argued that all would eventually return to the One. For Christian Neoplatonists, as well as for Bonaventure in the thirteenth century, that meant a return to God and mystical contemplation. A few years later, in the *Mind's Journey into God* (1259), Bonaventure would outline three successive, two-fold paths for learning about and experiencing God. The last of these twinned stages, contemplating God as Being and as Good, brings us as close as we can be to knowing and experiencing God through the intellect. To move further, we must abandon such intellectual pursuits entirely, cease working altogether, and submit ourselves to pure contemplation of the Divine Presence. The ultimate purpose of Franciscan work was eschatological. In the *Disputed Questions* Bonaventure did not explicitly identify Francis as the angel of Revelation 7:2, who bears the seal of the living God, although he did assert that Franciscans (as well as Dominicans) would be the ones to sign the 144,000 at the end of time.[26] Elsewhere,

22 Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection*, edited and translated by Robert J. Karris and Thomas Reist, Works of St. Bonaventure, vol. XIII (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Press, 1994) 14-20. I am very interested in the eschatological dimension in Bonaventure's work, which has been analyzed, among others, by Joseph Ratzinger in *The Theology of History in St.* Bonaventure, translated by Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971); originally published as *Die Geschichtstheologie des heiligen Bonaventura* (Munich and Zürich, 1959). For a different take, see (for example) E. Randolph Daniel, "St. Bonaventure: Defender of Franciscan Eschatology," *Theologica* 4 (1974) 793-806 and David Burr, "Bonaventure, Olivi and Franciscan Eschatology," *Collectanea Francescana* 53 (1983) 23-40.

23 Patricia Ranft has discussed the concept of work as bearing witness in her work. See, for example, Patricia Ranft, "Franciscan Work Theology in Historical Perspective," *Franciscan Studies* 67 (2009) 41-70.

24 In the *Defense of the Mendicants*, written in 1269, Bonaventure has Francis say, "'Let the brothers pay attention to what they must desire above all else: to have the Spirit of the Lord and Its holy activity, to pray always to Him with a pure heart, to have humility and patience in persecution and infirmity, and to love those who persecute, rebuke and find fault with us.' Here Francis touches on the other three points, for he first mentions elevation to God and finally adds condescension towards one's neighbor. Between these he places patience with enemies. Therefore, in the first three the perfect man is crucified to the world. In the next three he is made to conform to God. Like a six-winged seraph, he is elevated above the things of the world and carried aloft to the divine. How fittingly, then, in the seraphic apparition, did Christ impress his stigmata as a sign of approbation upon the holy little poor man who perfectly served and perfectly taught the perfection of the Gospel so that he might show us a clear sign of the way of perfection against the dangerous darkness of the final times." *Defense of the Mendicants*, edited and translated by Robert J. Karris and José de Vinck, Works of St. Bonaventure, vol. XV (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Press, 2010) III.10, p. 76-77. The passage implies that the brothers should embark on a path of transformation into an *alter Christus* similar to that of Francis. There are examples in the *Legenda maior* and the *Itinerarium* as well.

25 For example, Bonaventure, *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection* q. II art. II, ad 6, 117: "[I]t is true that manual labor is consonant with evangelical perfection provided that it does not impede greater goods." And also, ibid., ad 9, 123: "So corporal work is laudable and advisable, provided that it does not impede fervor in prayer or the fruits of preaching or the observance of the common life." There are other examples throughout.

26 Bonaventure, *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection* q. II art. II, add. Resp. 5, 157-158: "Should anyone claim that they have not been sent to do these things, he is clearly mistaken, since the express witness to this is found both in the Rule and in the privileges and in the institution and approbation of this double Order." Note that 'Rule' (*tam in regula quam in privilegio*) is singular here, which would seem to go against the interpretation that Bonaventure includes the Dominicans when he says "double Order;" however, Bonaventure is referring to the bull *Nimis prava* issued by Pope Gregory IX in 1231, which granted both the Franciscans and the Dominicans exemption from episcopal control, and which collectively referred to the Rule of the two orders. See Rosalind B. Brooke, *Early Franciscan Government: Elias to Bonaventure* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1959) 133. Later he says that "religious institutes of little poor men" will seal the 144,000, implying the involvement of both the Franciscans and the Dominicans. See *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection*, q. II, art. III, ad 12, A-184. In the NRSV, Revelation 7:1-3 reads, "I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to damage earth and sea, saying, 'Do not damage the earth or the sea

however, Bonaventure *did* identify Francis with this apocalyptic angel, including in the *Mind's Journey into God*, composed only a few years after the *Disputed Questions*, as well as in the *Collations on the Six Days of Creation* (1273).

As they worked towards this final end, the Franciscans increasingly took on intellectual, pastoral, or spiritual labor and moved away from manual labor. Such a transition made sense within Bonaventure's framework and understanding of the human journey towards God, which progressed by stages, each containing something of that perfection, but not all of them possessing its fullness. In the *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection*, Bonaventure did not denigrate manual labor, but he plainly asserted that spiritual labor took precedence, particularly in this moment of the friars' history, because it brought the friars one step closer to abandoning labor altogether for pure contemplation of God and it allowed the friars to help others achieve this end as well.

Franciscan Perspectives on Work and Pope Francis

When Jorge Maria Bergoglio chose Saint Francis of Assisi as his papal namesake, he made a statement about the framework within which he understands the relationship between God and humans, and the relationship between humans and all of creation. Although Pope Francis is a Jesuit, the 2013 apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium*, and this year's encyclical, *Laudato si'* reveal the pope's profoundly Franciscan approach to the connectedness of all creation. *Evangelii gaudium—The Joy of the Gospel*—stresses the importance of moving beyond ourselves as finite human beings. Pope Francis writes, "We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being."[27] Many things within human society complicate the full realization of who we are as human beings in relationship with God, each other, and all of creation. In particular, the pope asserts that the relationship we have with money often leads us to "the denial of the primacy of the human person."[28] That is, humans often privilege money and profit over human life, something which does not reflect the life-giving nature of the Gospel, and which certainly does not radiate its joy.

In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis draws explicitly on the Franciscan tradition, even taking the name of his encyclical from Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures*, a hymn in which God is praised through all of creation. The pope writes, "[Francis of Assisi] shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace."[29] Put a different way, in *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis demonstrates that environmental justice and social justice are intertwined, that humans are not only in relationship with each other, but also in relationship with all of creation. Pope Francis joins these concerns together and articulates them in a way that no pontiff has done before, even though his encyclical is heavily indebted to his predecessors, including Benedict XVI and John Paul II.[30]

Within this framework, Pope Francis asks in *Laudato si'* what the meaning and purpose of human work are. Work is not only manual labor, but also "any activity involving a modification of existing reality."[31] Work takes us outside of ourselves and puts us in relationship with something that is "other than ourselves."[32] Because it takes us out of ourselves, work is an occasion for humans to grow and change, to know each other, and to praise God.[33] To borrow from Pope Francis' language in *Evangelii gaudium*, work is something that makes us more fully human, precisely because it puts us into relationship with other people, with creation, and with God. Human labor should nourish this interconnectedness.[34]

In developing this encyclical, Pope Francis drew on the rich tradition of Catholic Social Thought in addition to multiple Franciscan sources. Pope John Paul II elaborated the tradition in the 1981 encyclical *Laborem exercens*, issued on the ninetieth anniversary of Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum*, which has long been held to mark the beginning of Catholic Social Thought. Although *Rerum novarum* was the first social encyclical, it did not truly mark the beginning of the Catholic tradition's concern with social conditions, work, and humanity's relationship to God. On the contrary, that tradition extends back to the beginning of the faith.

The Franciscan influence is explicit within Pope Francis' *Laudato si'*, though perhaps not explicit in the other papal documents mentioned. The pope's Franciscan approach to human society, the environment, and social justice are particularly of interest within the context of Franciscan institutions of higher learning, where many people come together—students, faculty, staff, and administration—to work as well as to explore what it means to be human and how to live in the world as merciful and just citizens. Thinking about human labor in a Franciscan context may offer a model for understanding and appreciating the various contributions of individuals from each of these groups within the community as work—and as forms of service. Analyzing human work within this Franciscan context may also help us to understand work more broadly within contemporary society. Pope Francis' view of human work and relationships is grounded in the realities of the twenty-first century, thus his message is more immediately accessible than Bonaventure's. Still, the two men both focus on the importance of the interconnectedness of all creation and the human effort to encounter God through and beyond that creation.

or the trees, until we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads.'" The Douay-Rheims translation of the Vulgate, which is the Latin edition Bonaventure would have known, is virtually identical.

27 Francis, *Laudato si'* [Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Home], sec. 8, accessed October 1, 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

28 Ibid., sec. 55.

29 Francis, *Laudato si'*, sec. 10.

30 On the continuity between Pope Francis and his predecessors, Benedict XVI and John Paul II, see the excellent essay by Rowan Williams, the former Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury. Rowan Williams, "Embracing Our Limits: The Lessons of *Laudato Si'*," *Commonweal*, 23 September 2015, published online at www.commonweal.org, accessed on 6 October 2015. <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/embracing-our-limits>

31 Francis, *Laudato si'*, sec. 125.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., sec. 127.

34 Bonaventure sees the friars' labor as assisting others, at least insofar as he claims in these works. This goal is reflected in the friars' pastoral work of preaching and hearing confessions, but isn't limited by it: the friars also claimed to aid others by mirroring an example of the evangelical life. Within the *Disputed Questions*, however, Bonaventure doesn't address these broader questions of connectedness, except with respect to aiding others in their quest to come to know God.

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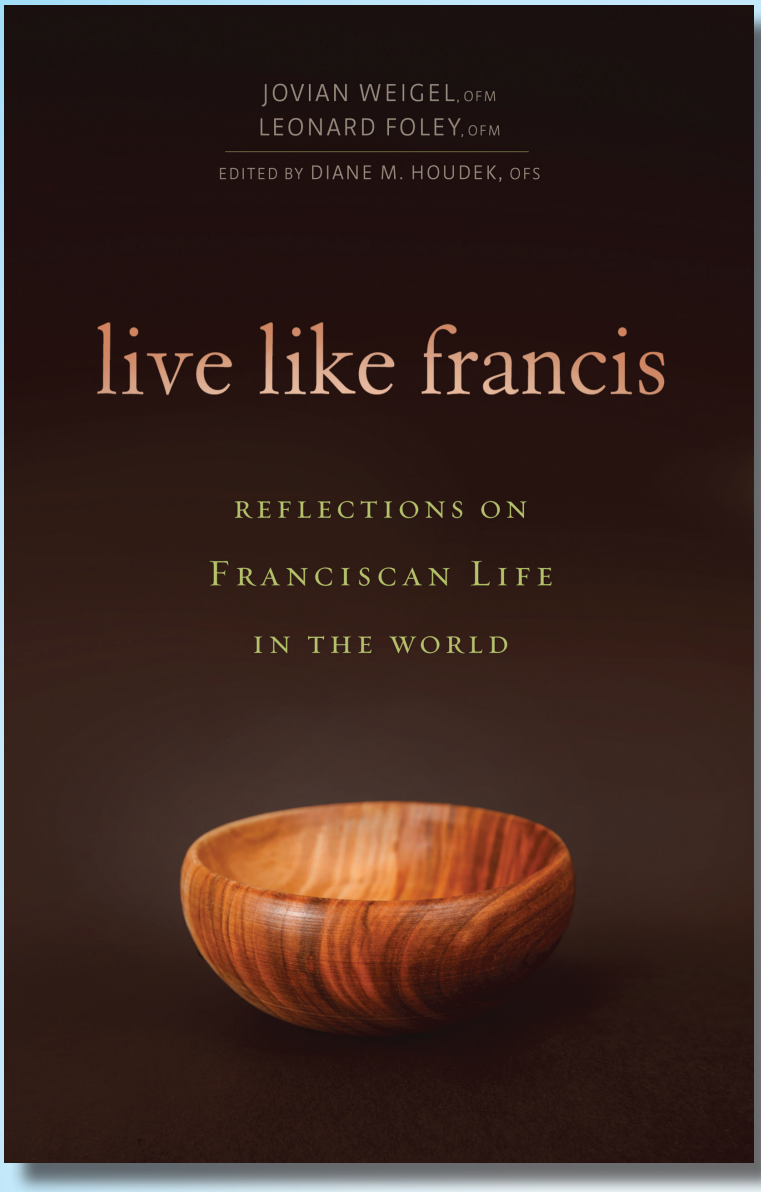

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St. Francis' "Vision of the Tree:"
A Reinterpretation

By Marcus Jones

Chapter XIII of Br. Thomas of Celano's *Opusculum Prium de Vita Prima Sancti Francisci,* or *The First Book of the Life of St. Francis*, recalls Pope Innocent III's oral approval of St. Francis' *Propositum Vitae*. At the end of his chapter, Thomas provides a detailed account of Francis' "Vision of the Tree," which he interprets as Pope Innocent's bending to Francis' will: "the lord Innocent, a very high and lofty tree in the world, bent himself so kindly to his wish and request."[1] However, given the historical context of the event, the canonical and hagiographical biases behind Francis' biography, and what we now know about Francis from his earlier writings, I believe that we can reinterpret this dream as a manifestation of his self-proclaimed goal for his *novus ordo*: "to follow the teaching and footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ."[2] To support my interpretation, I will provide an historical overview of Thomas of Celano's work, and the historical event he refers to in Chapter XIII of Book I – Francis' meeting with Innocent; a summary of Francis' vision; and a literary analysis of Thomas' account to compare with Francis' autographs. My intention behind this essay is not to disprove Thomas of Celano's interpretation of Francis' dream, but to show how teachers of Francis' charism can use this interpretation to introduce others to the rich spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi; which will hopefully have a secondary effect of inspiring them to use their own "Franciscan Imaginations"[3] to rethink other interpretations of St. Francis' life.

Historical Context of Thomas of Celano's *Vita Prima*

Thomas of Celano was commissioned to write *The Life of Saint Francis* by Pope Gregory IX in 1228.[4] Before becoming Pope Gregory, he was Ugolino (Ugo) Di Segni, a nephew of Pope Innocent III who was Cardinal bishopric of Ostia, Cardinal-protector of the Franciscans, and adviser to St. Clare of Assisi.[5] Given his previous support for the Franciscan order, it is no wonder that Gregory expedited Francis' canonization process, construction of his Basilica in Assisi, and papal approval of Thomas' biography.[6] However, as the editors of Thomas' *The Life of St. Francis* note, Gregory's promulgation of St. Francis's life was deeply connected to his own goals for the Catholic Church: "At a time when heresies abounded, crusades failed and the struggle for power between the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy intensified, the poor and humble follower of the gospel, Francis of Assisi, offered an alternative way of Christian living."[7]

Given the canonical context behind the commissioning of Francis' biography, Thomas' interpretation of Francis' "Vision of the Tree" at the end of chapter XIII, Book I of the *Vita Prima* must also be viewed under this light. Did Francis, himself, interpret this dream to signify Pope Innocent III's bending to his will, or is this a politically influenced interpretation on the part of Thomas of Celano or his sources? While there is no definitive answer to this question, as the saint behind the vision, and the author of his life have both left this earth in bodily form, it does allow the modern reader some room to reflect on what this dream might have signified about Francis within the context of what we now know about his life.

In addition to the canonical context underlying Thomas of Celano's *Life of St. Francis*, there is a strong hagiographical element running throughout the work as well. We can see this most clearly when Thomas describes Francis as "a soldier of Christ,"[8] "an athlete for Christ,"[9] and "a reader of hearts."[10] The editors also take note of this hagiographical component in their introduction to Thomas' account, and they suggest that in these instances, Thomas is drawing from the memory of martyrs, ascetics, and monks to show that Francis is "a saint rooted in the tradition of the Church."[11] Knowing the aforementioned canonical context of this work, it makes sense that Thomas would be sure to ground his respect for Francis firmly in the Catholic faith, so that Pope Gregory IX could use Francis' life as a fresh example of an alternative Catholic position. Remember, Gregory chose to officially support the production of Francis' life, so that he could expedite the canonization of St. Francis, and use that new saint to unite the Catholic Church against the various heresies and political unrest plaguing his time.[12] Thus, Francis' militaristic associations, ascetic way of life, and unique powers/miracle performances before and after his death while also representative of Thomas' own respect for that *little poverello*, were also strategically placed within the text to give Thomas' thirteenth century society the leader and direction they so desperately craved. Now that we understand the canonical and hagiographical biases driving Thomas of Celano's account, let us turn to Francis' meeting with Pope Innocent III to observe what may have happened on that momentous occasion.

Historical Context of St. Francis' Meeting with Pope Innocent III

As is still the case today, holding an audience with the pope is no easy task. However, Francis and his followers were able to successfully call a meeting with Innocent III in either 1209 or 1210 through the aid of Bishop Guido of Assisi, and Giovanni di San Paolo - the Cardinal Bishop of Sabina - both of whom Francis won

1 Thomas of Celano, *The Life of St. Francis: The First Book* trans. Regis Armstrong et al. in *Volume I of Francis Of Assisi: Early Documents* (New York: New City Press, 1999), 33.
2 ER 1
3 Couturier, David B., "The Globalization of Indifference." *Franciscan Connections: The Cord – A Spiritual Review* 65, no. 1 (2015): 19-20.
4 Armstrong, Regis J., Hellmann, JA Wayne, and Short, William J, *Volume I of Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (New York: New City Press, 1999), 172.
5 *Britannica Academic*, s. v. "Gregory IX," accessed July 05, 2015, http://academic.eb.com/EBchecked/topic/245638/Gregory-IX
6 Armstrong, *Early Documents,* 172.
7 Ibid., 175.
8 Thomas, *Life of St. Francis*, 9.
9 Ibid., 10.
10 Ibid., 48.
11 Armstrong, *Early Documents,* 175.
12 Hellmann, Wayne J.A., "Francis of Assisi: Saint, Founder, and Prophet" in *Francis of Assisi: History, Hagiography and Hermeneutics in the Early Documents,* Edited by Jay M. Hammond (New York: New City Press, 2004), 19.

over with his magnetic charism.[13] At this meeting, Innocent supposedly gave oral consent to Francis' *Propositum Vitae*, which allowed him and his early followers to continue living their proposed way of life without fear of being labeled heretics by their neighbors. It also initiated the group's process of moving from a *Propositum* to a *Regula*, which is the highest level of papal approval that a religious community can receive. This later detail is especially important to note because with the conclusion of Lateran Council IV in 1215, Innocent III declared that *Regulas* were no longer able to be created[14]; however, since Francis and his followers initiated the process five to six years prior to the council, they were the last community able to propose a *Regula* for the pope's approval.

As noted by Thomas of Celano within the *Vita Prima*, Pope Innocent III did not give Francis, or his followers written evidence of his approval of their *Propositum*, which is quite strange since Innocent resurrected the use of the *chirograph* – "an apostolic letter in the handwriting and with the signature of the pope"[15] - and made extensive use of it throughout his papacy. This lack of official documentation calls into question two major things: first, whether or not Francis actually had the "green-light" to continue living his proposed way of life; and second, whether we should take Thomas of Celano's quotation by Innocent III directly before his relation of Francis' dream-vision as truth: "Go with the Lord, brothers, and as the Lord will see fit to inspire you, preach penance to all. When the almighty *Lord increases* you in numbers and grace, come back to me with *joy*, and I will grant you more things than these and, with greater confidence, I will entrust you with greater things."[16] If there is no written confirmation of these words, where did Thomas get this quotation? Is this the papal report of approval that Francis orally gave to new followers interested in joining his community? Did Thomas take liberties with this quotation when he composed the *Vita Prima*? If Thomas, or Thomas' sources did happen to alter the wording of this oration, what other elements of Thomas' account are up for debate? These are the sort of questions that begin to arise on a closer examination of Thomas' account, and given the canonical and hagiographical biases influencing the creation of his text, it would make sense for Thomas to ground Pope Gregory IX's anticipated canonization of St. Francis in the papacy of his predecessor Innocent III. Francis' ability to sway the preceding pope to grant him approval shows that he truly is an "athlete for Christ,"[17] and Gregory IX's canonization of him showed his thirteenth century world that this new papacy is fully aware of this saint's unwavering Catholic virtue, which should be a model for all "true" Catholics to follow.[18]

Now that we understand the canonical and hagiographical influences driving Thomas of Celano's text, and the potential for biased interpretations regarding certain unknowable facts of Francis' life, we can revisit "The Vision of the Tree" recounted at the end of chapter XIII of the First Book of Thomas' *Vita Prima* to observe what other possible interpretations could be applied to this vision – interpretations guided with what we truly know about Francis' life from his own writings.

13 Armstrong, *Early Documents*, 211-12.
14 Leclercq, Henri. "Fourth Lateran Council (1215)." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 9. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910. 7 Jul. 2015 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09018a.htm>.
15 *Merriam-Webster.com,* s.v. "Chirograph," accessed July 6, 2015, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/chirograph
16 Thomas, *Life of St. Francis*, 33.
17 Ibid., 10.
18 Gregory XI, *Mira Circa Nos*, Papal Bull Canonizing St. Francis of Assisi, Vatican Web Site, July 7, 2015, http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Greg09/g9mira.htm

Summary of Francis' "Vision of the Tree"

Thomas begins his account of Francis' vision by using Biblical language found in 1 Sm 3:19 and Gn 20:16 to say that the Lord was always with Francis wherever he went, and the Lord blessed him with revelations and gifts.[19] Already at the outset of this vision account, we see Thomas depict Francis like Moses, Ezekiel, and other ancient prophets from the Old Testament to establish his legitimacy for sainthood. Once Thomas lays the foundation for Francis' inclusion in this exclusive club of Holy Men and Women, he makes his way into Francis' great revelation from God – "The Vision of the Tree."

The vision opens with Francis walking down a path and seeing a magnificently tall tree alongside his route that was both gorgeous and strong. Francis makes his way towards the tree, stands directly underneath it, and stops to marvel at its glorious beauty and supreme height. As Francis contemplates the brilliance of this magnificent creature, he begins to feel himself grow in height – much like Alice after consuming the food in Wonderland. Once he reaches maximum altitude, Francis takes the top of the beautiful tree firmly into his hand, and bends it directly to the ground. Thomas' account of Francis' vision abruptly ends, and he concludes by offering us an interpretation of the dream: the tree represents Pope Innocent III – a strong and glorious man - bending to the will of St. Francis upon hearing his *Propositum Vitae*.

Literary Analysis

This text falls under the dream-vision literary genre, and it follows the Biblical tradition of prophets and other holy persons receiving divine revelation through dream-visions.[20] The vision beings with Thomas' acknowledgement of Francis' place within this tradition, continues with Thomas' relation of the dream as he understands it, and ends with what is most likely either his or his source(s)'s own interpretation of the dream. The account is told through a third person narrative with no explicit reference made to any outside sources; however, as the editors to the volume note, Thomas does draw from five Biblical passages to use language that would have appealed to the Catholic audience of his day (1 Sm 3:19; Gn 20:16; Dn 4:7-8; Lk 7:11-12; and Jdt 10:14).[21] Additionally, Thomas writes his Latin in *cursus* – "a pattern of cadence at the end of a sentence or phrase in Medieval Latin which aimed by varying rhythm to avoid stressing the ultimate syllable"[22] - to make it more appealing to the ear.

The major literary themes prevalent throughout Thomas' text are Francis' holiness: "*The Lord* was truly with Saint Francis *wherever he went;*" the inherent beauty of nature: "That *tree was lovely and strong*;" the power of human contemplation on the natural order: as Francis marveled over the beauty of the tree, "the holy man himself rose to so great a height;" the power of free-will to change what is: "Taking it into his hand, he easily bent it [the tree] to the ground;" and Francis' political power through spiritual prowess: "lord Innocent … bent himself so kindly to his [Francis'] wish and request."[23] The first and last of the themes are characteristically Thomas', as Francis, himself, would never emphasize his own holiness or polit-

19 Thomas, *Life of St. Francis,* 33
20 See Gen 15:1; Gen 46:2; Ex 3:2-3; Job 4:13-16; 1 Sam 3:2-15; and Acts 7:30-32 for a sense of this tradition.
21 Armstrong, *Early Documents,* 212.
22 *Merriam-Webster.com,* s.v. "Cursus," accessed July 7, 2015, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/chirograph
23 All quotes in this sentence come from Thomas, *Life of St. Francis*, 33.

ical influence over others. However, his admiration for the inherent beauty of nature, respect for the power of contemplation, and emphasis on free will are all deeply Franciscan themes that present themselves throughout many of Francis' early writings.

One place where we can most clearly see these aforementioned themes in Francis' early writings can be found in the *Canticle of Creatures* where Francis praises "Sir Brother Sun;"[24] "Sister Moon;"[25] "Brother Wind;"[26] "Sister Water;"[27] "Brother Fire;"[28] "Sister Mother Earth;"[29] and "Sister Bodily Death;"[30] thus, presenting both his admiration for the beauty of nature through his attribution of "sister and brother" to each inanimate element, and his respect for contemplation as the entire Canticle is a carefully written reflection from the contemplative mind of St. Francis. The editors of *Francis of Assisi* also note these two components of the Canticle when they state:

In Francis' use of the passive voice, "Praised be you …", and his linking the praise of the Lord with that of creatures, this verse provides many insights into the interpretation of the entire Canticle. While the sun, moon and stars, wind, water, fire, and earth may be seen as instruments of praise or as reasons for praise, praising them also implies praising the God Who created them and acknowledging that they are symbols of their Creator. Thus Francis' poetic use of adjectives is important to comprehend his images of God.[31]

We see the third inherently Franciscan theme – emphasis on free will – present in "The Vision of the Tree," and continuing within the *Canticle of Creatures* when Francis proclaims:

> 10 Praised be You, my Lord, through those who *give pardon* for Your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation. 11 Blessed are those who endure in peace For *the second death* shall do them no harm.[32]

In a footnote to verse ten, the editors of *Francis of Assisi* tell us that this verse signifies a transition into a second section of the Canticle where Francis incorporates humanity into the praises of God: "However, such praise is only achieved through identifying with the suffering Servant of God, Jesus, who endured weakness and tribulation in peace. In this way, reconciliation is achieved in light of the Paschal Mystery."[33] In other words, humanity can only be praised when we make a consciously free decision to identify with the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, if one is forced against his or her will to praise Jesus, then he or she is not praising His name out of his or her own volition, and such praise is not worthy of respect.

Now that we have a better sense of the three Franciscan themes of respect for nature, admiration of contemplation, and regard for free will that are present in "The Vision of the Tree," and consistent throughout Francis' earlier autographs, as evidenced within the *Canticle of Creatures*, let us return back to Thomas of Celano's interpretation of the "Vision of the Tree" to see if his interpretation is in accordance with what we now know about Francis of Assisi.

Revisiting Thomas' Accounting of Francis' "Vision of the Tree" and My Interpretation

As we have already seen, Thomas tells us that the tree in Francis' dream-vision represents Pope Innocent III, and Francis' overtaking of that Tree illustrated by his physical manipulation of it represents Innocent's bending to Francis' will. The problem with this interpretation, however, is that it goes against two of the most important things that we have just learned about Francis through the *Canticle of Creatures*. First, Francis respects nature, which includes both human and non-human creatures, so why would he want to outgrow and bend a beautiful tree that he obviously esteemed? Second, Francis values free will, so if the tree does represent Innocent III, why would he want to force him to submit to his will? Given these two fundamental problems with Thomas' interpretation, I submit another interpretation that follows more closely to what we know about St. Francis of Assisi.

In the Early Rule, Francis states that in addition to living in obedience, chastity, and poverty, all brothers must "follow the teaching and footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ." If we apply Francis' belief in faithfully living the Gospel to his "Vision of the Tree," we can interpret the tall, strong, and beautiful tree within his dream to be a representation of the Catholic tradition handed down to Francis' thirteenth century Church from the Apostles, and Francis' bending of that tree as a fulfillment of his original intention behind his *novus ordo* - to live faithfully the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. In Francis' time, much like our own, Catholic theology had gotten to such a high and refined level that only the best educated could understand the abstract principles of its teachings. Francis recognized this, and he responded by taking the high theology of his day and bringing it down (bending it) to an understandable level, so that all people could comprehend the Gospel through their witnessing his faithful living of it.

In summary, I interpret the path Francis walks within his dream-vision to be the path of salvation that leads to God, the tree that he bends to signify his teaching on the Gospel, and his intention for bending the tree to be not an exercise in physical or spiritual dominance, but to help those who are too small (weak in spirit or understanding) to grasp the Catholic teachings that were once too high for them to reach. I find that my interpretation is in better accordance with what we know about St. Francis' life through his early writings – especially the *Canticle of Creatures* – and this new interpretation can prove extremely useful when introducing others to the rich tradition that is the Franciscan heritage. My interpretation through the lens of the *Early Documents* illustrates that there is still a wealth of material present within the Franciscan tradition for spiritual reflection, and while this interpretation may not be exactly what Francis, his early followers, or Thomas of Celano explicitly saw within their time, it does give modern readers hope of what might be able to be seen within these visions and writings today.

24 Francis of Assisi, *Canticle of Creatures* in *Volume I of Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (New York: New City Press, 1999), 3.
25 Ibid., 5.
26 Ibid., 6.
27 Ibid., 7.
28 Ibid., 8.
29 Ibid., 9.
30 Ibid., 12.
31 Armstrong, *Early Documents*, 113-14.
32 Francis, *Canticle of Creatures*, 10-11.
33 Armstrong, *Early Documents*, 114.

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From the Bookshelf

Francis of Assisi: A New Biography and ***Francis of Assisi: The Life*** both by Augustine Thompson, O.P.

Reviewed by Sr. Frances Teresa Downing, O.S.C.

Saint Francis of Assisi must be one of the most written about saints of Christianity. There is a fascination about Francis, an elusive quality and both books leave us convinced that there is more to be learned, more to be understood, and more to be unraveled. So it is not surprising that one who could be called a "first cousin" has now written about Francis, a Dominican this time, instead of the usual stream of biographies and studies of Franciscan origin. This could be a good thing, a family view from one sharing the same mediaeval roots, whose founder was said to have been a friend of Francis', although Augustine Thompson considers the evidence for this to be so late and so politically invested as to be worthless (p.220).

There appear to be two almost simultaneous editions of this book. There is a hardback edition that gives notes on groups of pages and some references. These make it clear that Thompson has read widely and understands many of the issues under debate. The paperback edition has neither notes, footnotes, endnotes nor bibliography, though there are suggestions for further reading. This lacuna is all the more surprising in view of Thompson's own comment (p.159) about the lack of notes in Manselli's study of Francis due to Manselli's cancer. Today, when most of the early sources are available on the open market and are no longer the preserve of specialists, such a total lack of any *apparatus criticus* is quite a serious gap. The price difference is not really enough to justify this unusual editorial decision.

In his introduction, Thompson explains that his biography is the fruit of a critical project to find the man behind the legends, a venture in which he is not the first. He says: "I am convinced that until we examine carefully and critically all the texts about Francis of Assisi and decide which are the most trustworthy, we will never find the man behind the later legend" (ix).

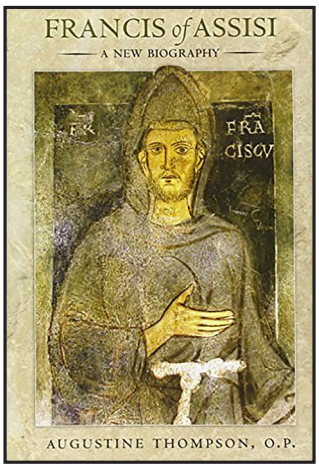
The hardback edition commentary on this Introduction offers a very balanced and thorough survey of what is generally known as "The Franciscan Question." This concerns the way we read the texts, how we discern which are historically reliable, which came first, which set out to tell us what happened, and which comment on the meaning of what happened. Reading this summary makes it clear that Thompson is not only providing a very thorough survey of the material at his disposal, but is also clarifying the reasons why he feels that there is still a need for a "careful and critical examination" of the sources about Francis.

Thompson speaks well of the relatively recent three volume collection of sources, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (1999, 2000, 2001) and notes correctly that Manselli's study marked a watershed after which scholars must look into the writings *by* Francis rather than the writings *about* Francis. The textual problems began, in Thompson's view, in the mid 1240s, which must be one reason for Thompson's respect for the information given by Jacques de Vitry. It is true that Jacques writes in 1216 about a group calling themselves Lesser Brothers and Sisters. However, some scholars today even question whether he means the early Friars and Sisters. For instance, Cremaschi in *Donne emerse dall'ombra* (Porziuncola 2011) omits de Vitry altogether.

In the light of this evident research, it is surprising that as early as page 5 of the hardback edition (from which all page references are taken) we find the first of a number of confident and apparently unchecked solutions to age-old problems. This one occurs when Thompson confidently places Francis' family home at the piazza end of the Via San Paolo. Reference to Thompson's notes (p.172) only adds to the confusion. Although he mentions the Chiesa Nuova and San Francesco Piccolino sites, he refers to archaeological work at the end of the Via San Paolo and the exposure of some old walls which he says extend "under the tower and palazzo del Capitani del Popolo, the Costanzi house as well as the Sacro Convento." Since the Sacro Convento is the friary attached to the Basilica of San Francesco almost a mile away (0.9 to be precise), this is manifestly incorrect. He also speaks of San Nicolò as the birthplace identified by Fortini in 1959, but in volume 1, part 1, p. 112 Fortini says clearly that the birthplace was "*tra la chiesa di San Nicolò e quella di San Paolo*," "between the churches of San Nicolò and that of San Paolo." San Nicolò (now pulled down and replaced by an information center) was the church where Francis, Bernard, and Peter heard Mass and asked the priest to explain the Gospel to them. This is told in The Legend of the Three Companions, VIII, a source, which Thompson on the whole respects (*Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. 2, pg. 85). There are other similar errors of fact, many of which would have been picked up by a proofreader familiar with the terrain.

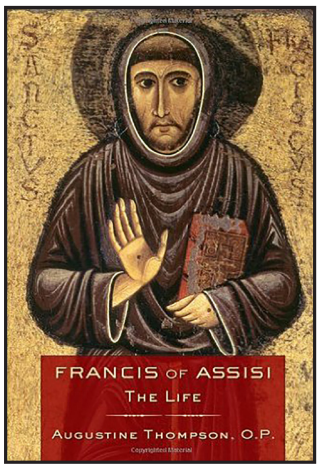
Familiarity of another sort would have saved him from confusing the historian Marco Bartoli with the unrelated paleographer Attilio Bartoli Langeli to give us Marco Bartoli Langeli, (p. 221). On page 90, Thompson records Jordan of Giano, anxious to note the names of those going on the 1221 mission to Germany because, he says, the names of those martyred in that previous year in Spain had not been recorded. In fact we do know the names of those brothers and they were martyred not in Spain but in Morocco. Their names were Berard, Peter, Accursio, Adiuto, and Ottone, martyred on January 16, 1220. Again, on page 105 we are told that Francis was given a Breviary:

> as a gift from an anonymous official of the Roman Curia who had used it from 1216 to 1223. Francis had the Mass gospels of the year bound into the back of this volume for his devotional reading each Sunday. He used the breviary until his death, when it passed to the Friars, who used it until Francis' companion Br. Leo finally gave it to the sisters at San Damiano. It can still be seen in the reliquary in Assisi today. (105)



Francis of Assisi: A New Biography **by Augustine Thompson, O.P.**

Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012, 312 pages, $29.95 (hardcover)



Francis of Assisi: The Life **by Augustine Thompson, O.P.**

Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013, 200 pages, $14.95 (paperback)

Book cover images courtesy of amazon.com

No references or sources are given for this very specific and effectively new information concerning a Breviary traditionally known as Leo's and thought to have been copied by him for Francis. Reference to the notes gives no source for this whatever.

Unfortunately, such examples can be multiplied, but the saddest and most reductive pages are those devoted to Clare of Assisi (pages 46 to 49). These are full of factual errors and the best biographer so far of St. Clare is consistently named Bertoli instead of Bartoli. There is no record, only a possibility, that it was Clare's cousin Rufino who spoke to Francis about her. We know from Clare herself that her call from God was to do "penance after the example and teaching of our most blessed Father Saint Francis" (Rule, 6,1). Many scholars today have settled on 1211 as the date for her leaving home, though Thompson affirms that the debate is fixed at 1212. He also states (p. 217) that the author of the Legend of St Clare was not Thomas of Celano even though there has recently been a doctoral thesis published proving to the satisfaction of many that Celano was the author (*Una Leggenda in erca d'autore*, Marco Guida, O.F.M.). Pacifica was not Clare's sister nor did she accompany Clare to the Porziuncola on that Palm Sunday night. Francis did not 'place' a passive Clare with the nuns of San Paolo. She certainly went there to stage her public confrontation with her family and, true to her commitment to having no privileges, she made no claim to the privilege of sanctuary.

St. Clare's father is never mentioned in the sources at this point and the conflict with the family was under the control of the uncle Monaldo. There were violent words, hatred, threats, and hostility. Later at Sant'Angelo, violence broke out to the extent that Clare's sister Agnes was kicked and punched and handfuls of her hair were strewn on the pathway, yet Thompson summarizes this as, Clare "succeeded in sweet-talking her father" (p.47). It is inaccurate to say that Clare disappears from Francis' life after this, though he certainly did not visit often. We know that he consulted her about a vocational decision and that he preached to the sisters. When he was ill, stigmatized and dying, he went to San Damiano where he completed his "Canticle of the Creatures." She writes in her letters about his fasting instructions because her correspondent had asked her about them, as simple as that. The unavoidable impression is that Thompson sees Clare as irrelevant to the main story and not of particular interest, which means that the feminine dimension of the Franciscan movement is largely uncharted in this biography.

Thompson solves at a stroke several on-going debates, saying that (p.104) only three went to Rome in 1209 (which may have been 1208); that there were indeed two if not three bishops in succession all called Guido (p. 48). There are some notable gaps too. Little is said of the lay followers who became the Secular Franciscans, who received an early papal letter from Honorius III and who are today the largest section of the Franciscan movement. The symbolic Tau cross and its significance is given no place, the challenging advice of the beautiful letter to a Minister (p.101) is shorn of all its troubadour overtones and with them, its tenderness.

There are some puzzling mistakes: David Flood is said to interpret Francis through the lens of liberation theology and Desbonnets through Teilhard de Chardin and physics (p.159). Bertoli is printed for Bartoli, Biglaroni for Bigaroni, Delaruelle for Dalarun. These men are great scholars and the names and facts should be correct.

The biggest problem with this book, apart from inaccuracies (*caveat emptor),* is that Thompson's agenda is unclear. Even after reading it all, it was still not clear whether or not he was motivated by admiration for Francis, or by a desire to get away from much of the nonsense which, it cannot be denied, has been written about him. Throughout, Francis is portrayed as difficult and "conflicted," which was probably true, but little comes through of the passionate love of Christ or the fervent charisma which drew 5000 to follow him within very few years, and still to do so today. It even seemed possible that Thompson was being driven by a dislike of Francis, a rejection of him for his popular appeal and charismatic influence. Recurring words are "conflicted" and "angry" and "difficult." Yet, it cannot be said that this is a debunking book. It would probably be more accurate to say that it is so reductive that sometimes nothing seems to remain except a dictatorial and grumpy, sick and disordered Francis. It certainly does not present a Francis to explain the extraordinary expansion of his movement and values, or the Francis who has touched people's hearts with tender love for Christ and helped them clarify their values for eight hundred years.

Frances Teresa Downing, O.S.C., is a member of the Poor Clare Community in Arundel, West Sussex. She has taught at the Franciscan International Study Centre in Canterbury and St. Isidore's in Rome. She has written two books of Clarian spirituality, *Living the Incarnation* and *This Living Mirror*, and is currently engaged in collecting all her material on Clare into five volumes, of which the first three are in print.

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Newly Discovered Life of St. Francis Found in America

By Bobbie Stewart

It is being hailed as one of the biggest medieval finds in the last century — a 13th century manuscript of St. Francis of Assisi that Flagler College Distinguished Professor of Religion Dr. Timothy Johnson is now translating into English.

The mystery of the relic began to unfold last fall when French medieval scholar Dr. Jacques Dalarun learned of a miniature hand-written book roughly the size of an iPhone that turned up at an auction house in America.

What was in it? Where did it come from? What secrets might it reveal?

The handful of scholars that got wind of the find were dying to know, including Johnson who for most of his professional career has studied and written extensively on 13th to 17th century Franciscan topics.

"Jacques told me he had been on the hunt for a manuscript," the Flagler professor said. The manuscript, it turns out, was a codex — a sort of ancient anthology of articles.

Initial examinations by scholars unveiled it to be a combination of sermon collections, biblical books and biography of St. Francis, one of the most venerated Catholic figures in history. The manuscript's biographical section (15 folios out of 122), referred to as the "Life," was entirely written by Thomas of Celano, a famous chronicler of Francis' life in the 13th century. This second "Life" (the first was published by Celano in 1228), also called the "Rediscovered Life," stresses the role of poverty and love of creation in Francis' mind and experience. It was written between the years 1232 and 1239.

Dalarun, who had previously found fragments of the biography, suspected that a more comprehensive version of it existed and had been on the hunt for eight years. "I was very astonished and excited," the international specialist in Franciscan history said, "because such a discovery is very exceptional — the last one is dated 1922."

The first step was finding a home for the relic. Dalarun, also the former director of the Institute for Research and History Texts (IRHT), convinced the National Library of France to purchase it, for a price tag of 60,000 euros, or roughly $65,000. He deciphered the miniscule Latin text on poor-quality parchment paper and wasted no time in translating the text's contents. One can only imagine the process of decoding ancient script — the excitement of discovering, word-by-word, insights critical to the identity of a saintly paragon, and a physical task tempered by patience and a delicate hand.

Once the Latin translation was complete and transcribed into a tidy Word document, the next step was translating it into other languages, chiefly French, Italian, Spanish and English.

Johnson, who with Dalarun and two Italian scholars, had been working on a project translating the neglected stories of the performed-prayed celebration of Francis of Assisi, was the first to be considered for the job.

"Professor Johnson is one of the best specialists of Franciscan history and theology in America and in the world," Dalarun said. "He knows very well Franciscan legends and renewed entirely their approach in these recent years … After my discovery, I naturally alerted our little international team, and Tim was obviously the right man to publish an English version of the 'new' legend. I am convinced that he will bring to English-speaking readers the flavor and the significance of this amazing document."

But with a full load of ongoing projects, Johnson was at first reluctant to take on the task. It was the wide-eyed delight of his wife Agnieszka, also a Flagler College professor who has worked with Franciscans in Peru, Poland and Tunisia, that compelled him to acquiesce. As of this writing, he has translated 14 pages of 64.

The Life of St. Francis

Before St. Francis became a saint, he was by most accounts an ordinary young man. Born Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone to a wealthy cloth merchant in Assisi around 1181, Francis grew up speaking Latin, Umbrian (an Italian dialect) and French and was being groomed by his father to one day assume the responsibility of the family's thriving cloth business.

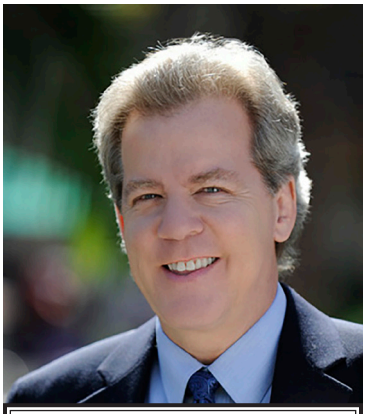
But the trauma of war with a neighboring city, and encounters with lepers on the fringes of town had a profound impact on the 20-something's worldview — one that accentuated life's fragility and recast repugnant physical manifestations as beautiful. For Francis, there was no turning back. He gave away merchandise to the poor, rejected his outraged father and embraced a pious life. To him, a meaningful existence was to be found in faith and poverty.

"Francis is the undergraduate who decides that their major is not enough," Johnson said when asked how one might view Francis today. "This is a person who would be a business person — his dad wants him to go into it — and something happens and he says 'I don't feel that anymore.'"

Within two years of his death, Francis was canonized, setting in motion rituals endemic to the Catholic faith. An annual day of remembrance would be designated and a "vita," or story that illuminates pivotal points in the saint's journey, would be written and shared with the church.

St. Francis, who has come to be known as the patron saint of animals and the environment for the Catholic Church, is celebrated annually on Oct. 4.

"Francis of Assisi has universal appeal," Johnson said. "You'll meet people from every religion and every part



Dr. Timothy J. Johnson, Ph.D.

of the world [that love Francis] … he showed great interest in the environment, the poor, interfaith dialogue and has inspired art, poetry, architecture and peacemakers."

Flagler students gain insider's perspective

For students studying St. Francis in Johnson's 400-level course titled "The Gospel according to Saint Francis," rarely has there been a better example of being in the right place at the right time. At the beginning of the semester, Johnson shared with students his initial translations.

"To me seeing that manuscript was incredible," said Rebekkah Balint, Religion and Philosophy major. "The honor of holding a document that most people didn't even know existed left me speechless … When I held the document, and as the class discussion progressed I and my classmates felt a sense of responsibility to take Dr. Johnson's work as a serious matter."

First-year student Angelina DeVincenzo agreed. "It was incredible to have the opportunity to hear the English translation for this recently discovered manuscript," she said. "I have discovered so much about this simple yet complex saint in this past semester, and it blows my mind that we are still uncovering more information about him."

As a first-year student, DeVincenzo had reservations about taking a course that some deemed "too much and too difficult." But her instincts to take it persevered.

"I feel blessed to be able to take this class as a first year student because it has proved to me just what a perfect place Flagler is for my area of study," she said.

In a world so seemingly fractured with disparate religious teachings, people may wonder if the recent discovery holds any significance beyond the Franciscan community. Are St. Francis' teachings — the original and new — relevant to a wider audience? Balint and DeVincenzo say yes.

"By living to God's will so happily and pliantly, Francis became known as a man whose relationship with God and with creation, whose lifestyle of poverty, whose dedication, and whose love serves as an example for Christians," Balint said. "His example calls believers to thankfully follow, even to the point of banishment, poverty or disease, God's calling. It is in these ways, and many more, that St. Francis should be more familiarized and more known by modern Christians."

DeVincenzo noted the impact of St. Francis' teachings on an increasingly complex society.

"The Christian culture today is teeming with a 'lights, camera, action' form of worship," she said. "It is busy. Prayer and church teachings are excessively frosted with entertainment as a form of engagement. Bringing Francis' teachings to modern culture would allow Christianity to return to the beautiful simplicity that Francis experienced and would allow people to encounter God through prayer in a new, unifying way."

A third student in Johnson's class, senior Blair Hall, has also been inspired by St. Francis and is particularly interested in his life in the military, teachings after the war and the possibility the saint experienced post-traumatic stress disorder.

From Translation to Book

What exactly one can expect from the forthcoming translations and in-depth studies is unknown. At this writing, Johnson and Dalarun noted greater insights into Francis' experiences, including his relationship with Franciscan friar Elias and an emphasis placed on "physically-experienced poverty," his youth and conversion, and the struggles he endured as a businessperson.

For Johnson, writing about these themes has been an exercise in self-awareness.

"This translation project is forcing me to re-look at how I understand Francis," he said. Flagler's first-ever endowed professor, he has written two books, edited four, completed major translations and published numerous peer-reviewed articles on religion, film, architecture and theology.

There's also the dilemma many in the social sciences label "construction of identity." Translators have to be particularly mindful of their power in shaping identity as they translate words and stories from one language to the next.

That is why peer reviews and critique is essential, Johnson said. Upon completion of the translation, he will share his document with other medieval translators and they will collectively address discrepancies.

By the end of the summer, Johnson hopes to be completed with the translation, and the book, likely titled "A Rediscovered Vita: The Life of Our Blessed Father Francis," will be published in 2016. The French version of the manuscript, titled "Rediscovered Life," has already been published and the Latin and Italian versions will be soon.

When asked if divine intervention had a hand in him being selected to translate the medieval find, Johnson enumerated the many things that brought him to this point: attending conferences, networking, building relationships and doing translations. But then he paused and smiled: "In my work," he said, "I guess there's always some divine intervention."

This article originally appeared on flagler.edu and has been reprinted with permission from Flagler College. Bobbie Stewart is Coordinator of News and Information for Flagler College.

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