Table of Contents

Volume 67 Issue 2

From the Editor-in-Chief

At the end of a long semester of teaching undergraduate freshmen a course on "The Catholic-Franciscan Heritage," I wondered whether my students had caught the distinctive features of Franciscan thought. Had they understood the significance of Francis of Assisi's turn toward the leper as a profound rejection of an embedded social imagination of greed and violence? Had they grasped the power of Francis' embrace of a radical brother/sisterhood, even with creation itself, as a repudiation of social constructs of domination and deprivation at every level of his society? Would they be able to translate these historical realities into a usable tool that can disrupt the social lies we tell ourselves to socialize our own destructive pathologies?

The topics my students chose for a final project to apply their Franciscan learning covered a wide range of topics: Franciscans and World Hunger, Franciscans and Food, Franciscans and Human Rights, Franciscans and Volunteering, Franciscans and Abortion, and many others. These young and energetic minds see the dramatic utility of Franciscan values. They recognize how out of step those values are with current engines of public opinion. However, they find Franciscan values eminently refreshing and courageous; they are values that resonate with their Millennial spirit of optimism and realism. So, do our authors.

In this issue, Chinnici reviews the startling emergence of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition (FIT) and puts us on notice as to how critically important it is to know this FIT for mission today. Kirby enters into the Capuchin archives of Ireland to involve us in "the documentation of the intangible," helping us see how history conscientizes us and allows us to link historical memory, past ministries, and current evangelization.

Bill Hugo introduces us to a method he developed to bring our Franciscan history alive. A graduate of the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University, Bill provides a snapshot of formation education from the 1970s to today, detailing the "increasing dearth of formators with any special training, much less any Franciscan studies training." He rightly notes, "The church needs our Franciscan charism more than ever…"

Two other authors tell us why. Elphick details how Francis and Clare were trauma survivors and how they used their difficult experiences to develop the healing mission of San Damiano. Glaser uses a kinship model of creation to argue that we should embrace "our leprous Earth" as Francis embraced the lepers of his day. This attitude emerges from a spirituality of grace and mercy.

This issue teems with a blazing grace!

Fr. Dave

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

"The Tenderness of God: Reclaiming Our Humanity"

(Book Review)

By Kevin Elphick, OFS

Gillian T.W. Ahlgren is best known as an internationally recognized expert on St. Teresa of Ávila**.** Ahlgren studied under Bernard McGinn at the University of Chicago. In her early 20s, she lived in Spain while researching her dissertation on St. Teresa. With a letter of introduction in hand, she knocked on the door of the convent housing St. Teresa's original written manuscripts and was given access to them and welcomed by the Carmelite Nuns there.

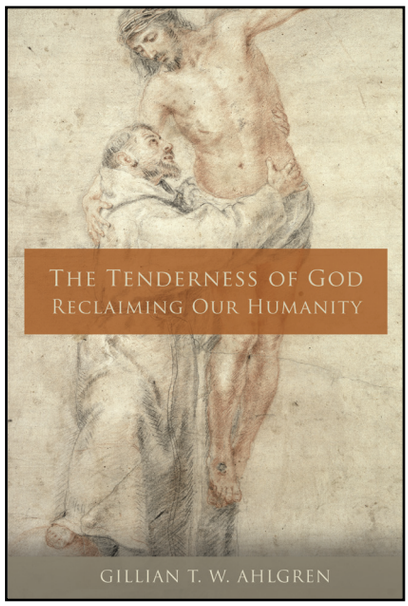
Her most recent book, *The Tenderness of God: Reclaiming Our Humanity* (Fortress Press, 2017), is her first foray into Franciscan spirituality. Ahlgren's approach to Franciscan studies parallels her strategy with Carmelites: immerse yourself in the original location and sources. For years now, she has been traveling to Assisi and La Verna, researching and leading pilgrimages there. Her book is the culmination of these efforts.

The title of the book is derived from Pope Francis' call for a "revolution of tenderness," and Ahlgren weaves the Holy Father's thoughts and writings into the synthesis of her book, recognizing him as a kindred Franciscan spirit. Ahlgren intentionally wrote her book as a remedy to avoid succumbing "to the posturing and violence that feed our anxieties," offering tenderness and community as the prescription and cure for our troubled times.

Ahlgren offers the reader a fresh approach to newly hearing the stories of Francis and Clare; she recovers from their biographies that they are both trauma survivors, and explores "the ways that their life narratives and practices can help trauma survivors." Ahlgren's personal work with and advocacy for trauma survivors has informed this important perspective which she brings to Franciscan studies. It is timely to hear in Francis the voice of a wounded, recovering military veteran. It is equally important to hear afresh Clare and her sister Agnes' encounters with domestic violence. "But after the news [of Clare's profession] reached her relatives, they…banded together as one… They employed violent force…. the increasing violence of her relatives…" (Thomas of Celano's *Legend of St. Clare*). Ahlgren's reading of the Franciscan sources not only recovers this important, neglected perspective, it also makes accessible new ways for contemporary readers to identify with the Franciscan story.

When leading pilgrimages in Italy, Ahlgren allows place locations to tell their stories: The site where Francis was shackled in chains; St. Clare's family in exile in Perugia; the family's confrontation of Clare at San Paolo; the assault on Agnes at San Angelo in Panzo.

But more importantly, she brings pilgrims to the places of their recovery and their practices of healing: San Damiano, the leper chapel of La Maddalena, the Porziuncola, and La Verna. She traces Francis and Clare's life journeys as they recover from personal and societal trauma by building intentional community. Ahlgren highlights their impulse to build these communities of fellow siblings in "absolute solidarity with the sick, impoverished, and marginalized" as a model of recovery. She conceptualizes San Damiano and the Porziuncola as successful "experiments" of trauma recovery in "the daily practice of *misericordia* as taught by Christ."



(c) Fortress Press

Ahlgren also attends to the healing work of contemplative prayer in the lives of Francis and Clare. In particular, she highlights Clare's formulation of it to Agnes of Prague: "gaze, consider, contemplate, and imitate." It is worth noting that this contemplative attentiveness is not at all dissimilar from the therapeutic practice of Mindfulness, pioneered by the psychologist Marsha Linehan. Mindfulness is derived from Zen Buddhist practice and a recognized tool in trauma recovery. Community and contemplation are two of the primary means Ahlgren gleans from Francis and Clare of the ways in which their life narratives and Christian praxis can guide and inform fellow trauma survivors.

As an initial venture into Franciscan spirituality, her book is an important contribution and has the potential to inspire meaningful dialogue with the emerging field of traumatology. The book is equally timely in its needful call for a revolution of tenderness, integrating "the wisdom of our past in order to address the urgent challenges of today."

Kevin C.A. Elphick, OFS, is a lay associate with the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities. His graduate degree in Religious Studies was completed through a cooperative studies initiative between Mundelein College and Spertus College of Judaica in Chicago, IL. He holds a Doctorate in Ministry from Graduate Theological Foundation. He currently works as a supervisor at a national Veterans suicide prevention hotline.

Franciscan

International News

The April 26 T**ED talk by Pope Francis** was thoroughly Gospel. Click www.ted.com and search for the video (talk in Italian with English subtitles). Click www.vatican.va and search "Messages" for the printed text in English. "We are precious," Pope Francis said, "each and every one of us. Each and every one of us is irreplaceable in the eyes of God." The theme of the TED conference in Vancouver, British Columbia was "The Future You."

The **ministers general of the OFMs, the OFMs Conventual, OFMs Capuchin and the TOR friars** met with Pope Francis on April 10 to talk about their steps to create deeper communion among members of all four groups through initiatives in Rome, the Holy Land, and worldwide. They also formally petitioned for **a dispensation from the canon law provision that currently excludes lay friars** from being elected superiors at the highest levels of these Orders.

The 1219 meeting of Francis of Assisi and Sultan Al-Malik al-Kamil continues to offer hope for **a respectful relationship between Christians and Muslims**, something encouraged by Pope Francis during his April 28-29 visit to Egypt.

The **Franciscan Family of Umbria** celebrated a Capitolo Generalissimo (the mother of all general chapters?) in Foligno in late May and early June to reflect on their impact in civil society and in thatregion's dioceses.

The movie **"Alleluia"** can be viewed and downloaded at the "Easter of God" section of www.fmm.org, website for the international headquarters of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary.

The **five OFM provinces of Mexico** held the Second Congress of Franciscan History (March 14-16) on the theme "Expansion of the Franciscans in Northern and Western Mexico." The first congress was celebrated in 2015, and the next one will be in 2019. These and the ones in 2021 and 2023 are preparing for the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the "**Twelve Franciscan Apostles of Mexico,"** who in 1524 began evangelizing in that country and implanting the Order there.

Last March in Abu Dhabi, the **Vicariate of Arabia** celebrated the 100th anniversary of the **Tuscan Capuchin presence on the Arabian peninsula.** Videos of that history and of the homily by Bishop Paul Hinder, OFM Cap can be accessed via links at www.ofmcap.org. This ministry now attracts friars from around the world, **especially India and the Philippines**, to work with Catholics employed in the oil industry. The vicariate has 43 parishes, often built on land donated by local sheiks. The Capuchins have had foundations in **Bahrain** (9139), the **United Arab Emirates and Oman** (1960s) and in other gulf states.

In 2017, the first **OFM continental congresses** on formation will be held in Indonesia (July) and Brazil (September). Similar gatherings will be held the following year in the U.S. (July) and western Europe (September). The congresses for Africa and Eastern Europe will occur in July and September 2019, respectively. Secretaries for formation and studies, ongoing formation and the vocation animators will meet with personnel from the General Curia.

For the 500th anniversary of the papal bull creating the Observant and Conventual Friars as separate Orders, **the first chapter of mats for the Friars Minor in Germany** will be celebrated in Hofheim this June, with participation from the Capuchin friars; they were established 10 years after that division.

A similar **all-day celebration** will occur on **November 4 at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Illinois.** Speakers will include Dominic Monti, OFM (The History and Context of Ite Vos), Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap (Common Franciscan Values" and Jude Winkler, OFM Conv (Common Franciscan Projects today").

"Make a Dwelling" was the theme of **IFC-TOR general assembly** held at Assisi's Domus Pacis May 7-13.

CIOFS (Internal Council of the Order of Franciscan Seculars) is conducting a worldwide survey of Secular Franciscans (professed members, spiritual assistants, people in formation) regarding various levels of the Order, JPIC work, vocations, fraternal life, spiritual assistance/visitations, communications, relationship with the Church, experience of leadership, Franciscan youth programs and other issues. Over 2,000 responses had been received as of last fall. This survey is available in digital or hard-copy format. **Mary Stronach, OFS,** from the United States is one of the Order's international councilors.

Among the saints to be **canonized** by Pope Francis in October will be **Blessed Angelo D'Acri** (1669-1739). On October 7 in Milan's cathedral, **Venerable Arsenio of Trigolo** (1849-1909) will be beatified.

Key websites

www.ciofs.org
www.ifc-tor.org
www.ofm.org
www.ofmconv.net
www.ofmcap.org
www.francescanitor.org
www.fiop.org
www.sanfrancesco.org

National News

Jan Parker, OFS, became the national minister after the March 29, 2016 death of **Tom Bello, OFS**. Tom had been a Secular Franciscan for 33 years, was the husband of Judy, father of Jackie, Pierce and Years—and a permanent deacon for the Diocese of Arlington.

TAU-USA, a quarterly publication of the Order of Secular Franciscans, can be received in electronic form through contacting rherbelinger@gmail.com.

Numerous regional Franciscan and Muslim groups around the

Roundtable

country have sponsored or will soon sponsor a premiere of ***Francis and the Sultan***, a 55-minute docudrama produced by Unity Productions Foundation and narrated by Jeremy Irons. A trailer and list of premiere dates around the country are available through www.upf.tv. **Michael Cusato, OFM, Kathleen Warren, OSF, and Michael Calabria, OFM,** are among the Christian and Muslim scholars interviewed for this film. The **Sisters of St. Francis** (Clinton, IA) helped finance this film, which will have its television debut on December 19, 2017.

In the past eight years, **the Franciscan Community Volunteers Program** has attracted 43 young people to St. Cloud, Minnesota to offer more than 50,000 hours of community service. Sponsored by the **Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota**, the programs participants are committed to meaningful service, intentional community living and Franciscan spirituality. Five young people are currently pledged to a year of service.

Cincinnati's "St. John Passion Play" has celebrated its 100th season. Begun as a parish initiative by Richard Wurth, OFM in 1918 as a way to pray for that parish's young men serving in World War I. The play has been an ecumenical presentation at Catholic and Protestant churches after the founding parish closed in 1970.

The beatification cause of **Julia Greeley, a former slave and Denver's "Angel of Charity"** was opened in that city last December. She was born into slavery in Missouri (between 1833 and 1848) and worked in that state, Wyoming, New Mexico and Colorado until her death in 1918. A contemporary described her as a "one-person St. Vincent de Paul Society." A promoter of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, she became a Secular Franciscan in 1901. **Father Blaine Burkey, OFM Cap** has written ***Secret Service of the Sacred Heart: The Life and Virtues of Julia Greeley***. More information about that book and her life is available through www.juliagreeley.org.

The **Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia** urged other investors in Wells Fargo Bank to support a resolution seeking a further rigorous review of how the company defrauded customers by signing them up for unauthorized accounts. Wells Fargo's annual meeting was held in Jacksonville, Florida last April. A few executives have been fired, but it remains unclear what role the board of directors may have played in this fraud.

Intercultural living was the top of a three-day workshop led by **Moises Gutierrez Rivas, OFM**, for the Inter-Community Novitiate program that drew 60 participants, including OFM novices from U.S. provinces, to Racine, Wisconsin.

The three U.S. provinces of the **Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity** maintain a common website at www.**franciscanway.org**. The news link there has information about the provinces in Stella Niagara (NY), Denver (CO), Redwood City (CA) and sebven other provinces around the world.

The South Caroline Council of Catholic Women has named **Sister Mary Frances Cannon, OSF,** as Woman Religious of the Year. Since 2010, she has served as DRE and pastoral associate at St. Mary of the Angels Church in Anderosn, SC. She also works with a local soup kitchen, a group serving the homeless, in prison ministry and serving those in hospice. She belongs to the **Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Community** (Syracuse, NY), a congregation created in 2004 with the reunification of three community; a fourth community joined them three years later.

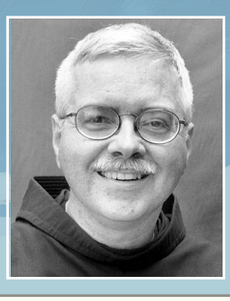
Renee Martin and **Logan Timmons**, students at the **University of St. Francis in Joliet, Illinois**, have received the Outstanding Undergraduate Research award from the Illinois Section of the Mathematical Association of America conference. They studied results from variations in the National Football League's sudden-death rule on tie games and have proposed an alternative rule.

The **Order of Secular Franciscans** will hold their national chapter September 26-October 1 at the St. Francis Center for Spirituality (Mt. St. Francis, IN)

A miracle attributed to the intercession of **Solanus Casey, OFM Cap** (1870-1957) has been approved. When this publication went to press, no date had been set for his beatification, which will presumably occur in Detroit where he is buried and his reputation for holiness and healing remains strong.

Key websites

www.poorclaresosc.org
www.franfed.org
www.USFranciscans.org
www.franciscancollegesuniversities.org
www.FranciscanHealth.org
www.RuahMedia.org
www.franciscanpilgrimages.com



Pat McCloskey, OFM, the author of *Peace and Good: Through the Year with Francis of Assisi* (Franciscan Media). Send news items for this column to pmccloskey@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.*

Cultural Openings, the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition, and Our Educational Mission

By Joseph P. Chinnici, OFM

Francis of Assisi's whole life, and that of his followers, is based upon the "Gospel as an Absolute," so it seems appropriate that I begin this talk with a citation from the Gospel of Matthew.[1] The Lord is talking about the kingdom of heaven as a "treasure buried in a field," a merchant searching for a "fine pearl of great price," "a net thrown into the sea" that is filled with good and bad fish." He poses a question to his disciples, "Do you understand these things." Of course, they answer "yes." He concludes his address, "Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old." (13.44-52). Augustine will later gloss this passage in the following way:

> Thus the old things are not taken away but are hidden in a storeroom. The learned scribe is now in the kingdom of God, bringing forth from his storeroom not new things only and not old things only. For if he should bring forth new things only or old things only, he is not a learned scribe in the kingdom of God presenting from his storeroom things new and old. If he says these things and does not do them, he bring them forth from his teaching office, not from the storeroom of his heart.[2]

It is time for us as stewards of the kingdom of God to bring forth from the storeroom of our Franciscan hearts something that is very old but today, in our contemporary world, will come to people as something very new. This is a treasure full of the Gospel vitality of the Holy Spirit. As a public presentation of the faith, the message finds resonance for the first time in over 700 years with the teachings of the papal magisterium. It is "Good News" about the dignity of the person. It is applicable to our social, political and economic situation. It is a story about God's love come to us in his Son. What I am speaking about is the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition, and we are challenged, within the culture of a Franciscan university and within a society that has in its public life forgotten what it means to be fully human, to realize its potential, give it birth, and embody it in personal and institutional ways. We do this to give witness so that people can see and believe the Gospel. Claiming the name "Franciscan," we are challenged in the university of today to continue claiming even more deeply the depths of our inheritance.

As a small prologue, for those not familiar with the term, let me begin with a definition of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition (FIT). The great medievalist Marie Dominique Chenu once noted that a "theology worthy of the name is a spirituality that has found rational instruments adequate to its religious experience."[3] In a correlative fashion, the FIT attempts to express and transmit in an adequate intellectual fashion the spiritual experience of Francis (1181-1226) and Clare of Assisi (1194-1253). This social and intellectual landscape is dominated by such people as: the composer of the legends of saints, Thomas of Celano (1200-1270); the poet Jacapone da Todi (1236-1306); the great schoolman Alexander of Hales (1185-1245) and his pupil St. Bonaventure (1221-1274); the first composer of an ethical system for economic exchanges, Peter John Olivi (1248-1298); the scientist and educational reformer Roger Bacon (1220?-1292); the subtle doctor, John Duns Scotus (+1308); and the magistra theologorum, Angela of Foligno (1248-1309). The genres of expression are multiple: popular narratives, poetry, painting, and music; travel logs and description of foreign cultures; visionary literature; scholastic treatises. In the last 15 years there has been an explosion of English language materials in this field; a website for resources has been established, and the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities has begun to mainstream many of the major ideas and practices of the tradition.[4] The tradition is so rich in its forms and so widespread in its practitioners that for the purposes of this lecture in an educational institution I will concentrate on its thematic expressions in two of its scholastic promoters, St. Bonaventure and Blessed John Duns Scotus.

The lecture is divided into three sections:

I. A Cultural and Ecclesial Opening, Here, I will try to present from the viewpoint of the historian, the startling and new

---

1* This article was first delivered as a lecture at Franciscan University, Steubenville, Ohio, March 7, 2017.

Yves Congar, "St. Francis of Assisi: or the Gospel as an Absolute in Christendom," first given in 1952 and republished in Maurice W. Sheehan, O.F.M.Cap., ed., St. Francis of Assisi: Essays in Commemoration, 1982 (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1982), 59-76.

2 Augustine, Sermon 24, (Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 1 6:337), cited in Manlio Simonetti, ed., Matthew I-I3, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament, Ia (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 291.

3 M.D. Chenu, O.P., "Théologie et spiritualité," Supplément à la "Vie Spirituelle", LI (Mai 1937), 65-70, with citation from page 70.

4 In addition to the footnotes for the present talk, see as a starting points for the resources available in English: Elise Saggau, OSF, The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition, Washington Theological Union, Symposium Papers, 2001 (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2002), and subsequent volumes; The Franciscan Heritage Series published through The Franciscan Institute. Other materials are listed on the major website: www.franciscantradition.org. The resource section of the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities webpage is a particularly rich source for materials applicable to the college curriculum, as are the articles in the Association's journal.

public emergence of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition.

II. The Tradition in Contemporary Church Teaching. In this section, by developing the

teaching of the conciliar and post-conciliar papacy, I would like to enumerate eight chief characteristics of the tradition.

III. The Contemporary Challenge. I would like to conclude by giving a few indications of how we might continue to give birth within a university setting to this form of Good News and Catholic teaching and practice.

A Cultural and Ecclesial Opening

On Oct. 3, 1966, the great historian of medieval philosophy Étienne Gilson (1884-1978), wrote the following to a friend: "I have used up all my ammunition in favor of Duns Scotus. Now that Scotism in Purgatory has become Scotism Triumphant, I've no further interest in it. I need Scotists in order to be free inside the Church. Now that's all over and done with. Now Scotism is simply a doctrinal position opposed to St. Thomas' true metaphysic of being."[5] Gilson was here referring to the Franciscan philosopher-theologian John Duns Scotus, but his remarks may be taken as referring to the public resonance in Church and society of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. Only with the Second Vatican Council did the Church of the 20th century recapture on an institutional level the importance of its own pluralistic theological inheritance. Certainly the Council saw the mainstreaming of modern biblical scholarship and the reforms in the liturgy that had begun in a much earlier period. Yet the public acceptance of the resources available for philosophy and theology in the patristic ressourcement, the tradition of Augustine, the monastic schools, and the Franciscan spiritual, theological and social tradition had a more difficult time breaking the surface of official approval. This is an important history that I want to recall at the beginning of this lecture; it will indicate to us the difficulty and importance of the task before us.

In the wake of the condemnation of Modernism in 1907, the public presentation of the faith for 50 years favored a resurgent Neo-Scholasticism. An instruction of Piux X urged theological centers to base their curriculum on the major principles of Thomas Aquinas. This preference for Thomas was enshrined in the 1917/1918 Code of Canon Law (1366.1).[6] Despite disagreement from prominent members of the hierarchy and the educational centers, one well-placed group managed to develop and mainstream 24 theses they believed captured the thought of St. Thomas and provided the standard of orthodoxy. The pressure of these standards In the 1920s and 1930s spawned a full scale internal war. On one side, the proponents of a more intellectualized Neo-Scholasticism reliant on the 24 theses, and, on the other side, pioneers in the history of medieval scholasticism, Franciscan followers of Bonaventure and Scouts, and new breakthroughs represented by Dominican and Jesuit theologians. Pluralism, even within the interpretation of Thomas, was frowned upon. One prominent Thomist noted that St. Thomas himself was under "house arrest under the Council's direction."[7] The vibrant and well-founded theology found within the monasticism of the Cistercian school and associated with Jean Leclercq's Love of Learning and Desire for God also struggled for recognition.[8] And despite the work of the Franciscan Educational Conference here in the United States, up to the 1960s, the categories and interpretive framework of various schools of neo-Thomisim dominated ecclesial consciousness and American Catholic collegiate education.[9] The Franciscan tradition, distinctive in tone and in major themes from that of Thomas Aquinas, was in public eclipse.

It would be easy to give multiple examples of the difficulties for the Franciscan Intellectual tradition to find its public voice during this pre-conciliar period. But, let me give just two. In 1927, when the Franciscan theologian and historian Éphrem Longpré (1890-1965) lectured in Quebec, his presentation on Scotus caused a great stir; no one had been allowed to give a public lecture unless his comments were in conformity with the "last jot and tittle" of Aquinas.[10] At the other end of this period, in 1950, Gilson himself had been asked by the Franciscan specialist in Franciscan thought Charles Balić to lecture at a conference designed to show that neo-scholastic Thomism was not the only way of presenting theology. Gilson spoke on "Duns Scotus in the light of historical criticism." He followed this with a defense of theological pluralism and the medieval unity between theology and philosophy at the third International Thomist Congress. The letters of Henri de-Lubac (1896-1991) and Étienne Gilson reveal the constraints under which everyone worked in those days.[11]

---

5 Cited in *Letters of Étienne Gilson to Henri de Lubac, Annotated by Father de Lubac*, translated by Mary Emily Hamilton (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), 212-213.

6 Petro Card. Gasparri, *Codex Juris Canonici* (Romae: Typis Polyglottis vaticanis, MCMXVIII). For further reinforcements of the approach see T. Lincoln Bouscaren, S.J., dam c. Ellis, S.J., *Canon Law, A Text and Commentary* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, third edition, 1957), 740-741, fn.35,

7 See for examples, *Letters of Étienne Gilson to Henri de Lubac, pp 43 ff, 177-185 for Gilson's struggles with "so-called Thomistic school" and its dominance.* See also Giuseppe Alberigo, M.-D. Chenu, E. Fouilloux, J.-P. Jossua, J. Ladriere, *Une école de théologie: Le Saulchoir* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1985); Pierre Jaccard, "La Renaissance de la Pensee Francisaine," *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* XVIII (1930), 103-131; 207-233; XIX-XX (1931-1932), 168-195; Jurgen Mettepenninger, *Nouvelle Théologie, New Theology, Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II (London: T & T Clark International, 2010).* For varieties of neo-Thomism see Thomas F. O'Meara, O.P., *Thomas Aquinas Theologian* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 152-200. O'Meara cites Otto Pesch as making the "house arrest" remark, p. 197.

8 Jean Leclercq, *Memoirs, From Grace to Grace (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publicaations, 2000), 76-87.* See E.Rozanne Elder, ed., *From Cloister to Classroom, Monastic and Scholastic Approaches to Truth* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1986; David N. Bell, *Many Mansions, An Introduction to the Development and Diversity of Medieval Theology* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1996)

9 For the work of the Franciscan Educational Conference see Joseph P. Chinnici, OFM, "Institutional Amnesia and the Challenge of Mobilizing Our Resources for Franciscan Theology," in Elise Saggau,ed., *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition, Washington Theological Union Symposium Papers 2001* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2002), 105-150. For impact on Catholic Colleges in the United States see Philip Gleason, *Contending with Modernity, Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), Chapter 7.

10 See Edouard Parént, *Éphrem Longpré, Héraut de la Primauté du Christ et de l'Immaculée* (Montreal: Les Compagnons de Jésus et de Marie, 1985), 133. Cf. Anselme Longpré, *Ephrem Longpré 1890-1965 (Quebec: Imprimerie Notre Dame, 1974), 81-84.*

11 Gilson, "Les recherches historico-critiques et l'avenir de la scolastique," in Antonianum 26 (1951), 40-48. Gilson argued that all of the scholastics

With the Council and the cultural changes of the 1960s, the hegemony of this neo-scholastic philosophical tradition collapsed. The pluralism of approaches that lay just below the surface, sort of recessive genes within Catholicism's DNA, exploded into the public speech of the community. The Council's emphasis on ecumenism, and its call for religious orders to return to their charismatic foundations, furthered the opening to a pluralism of approaches. The ecclesial emergence of diversity was also aided and abetted by the newer intellectual currents of liberation theory, sociology, and anthropology.[12] The civil situation here in the United States with its emphasis on rights, market consumerism, and a new very secular humanism furthered the erosion of a public and social intellectual cohesiveness.[13]

The long-term impact of this diffusion of approaches on the institutional framework of Catholic Identity in the field of higher education is well-documented.[14] Multiple forms of what makes a university Catholic—what Callum Brown refers to in a different context as its "protocols of identity"—arose.[15] Different schools made different choices, some better than others. In the larger context, John Paul II's 1990 Ex Corde Ecclesiae on Catholic universities was an attempt to bring some overall pattern into this tapestry of diversity and struggle for identity.

It is probably safe to say that very few—if any—institutions built their new identity on the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. In the immediate post-conciliar period, to be honest, it was not well known and the tools did not exist for its dissemination. If colleges did claim Franciscan tradition, it was usually equated with certain pastoral and ministerial values: compassion, public service, peace and justice, community reconciliation, and, most recently, environmental concerns. Over time, a set of symbols and stories went with this tradition: Francis and the leper, Francis and the Sultan, the Wolf of Gubbio, the Canticle of Creatures.[16] For most people, the recovery of the tradition meant the spirituality of Francis and Clare, inspiring stories, and compassionate practice. Institutionally, the ministry department and service outreach programs carried the freight of specific religious identity. All of this is good, but within a university setting known for rigorous academic reflection and scientific precision, it could appear as simply "pastoral," a species of "soft intellectualism" expressing itself in an enthusiasm for community and outreach.

The difficulty was that the roots of these Christian values in a particular faith stance, their framing of a very particular philosophy and theology, and their manifestation in the liberal arts, politics, economics, and attitude towards God's presence in the scientific and natural world remained elusive. As a general rule, Franciscan institutions have little knowledge of how to communicate their visions in the categories of collegiate learning. The blockage has arisen for many different reasons: lack of English sources; declining membership in the Franciscan religious life; diversities in collegiate hiring; the turn towards increased disciplinary specialization and institutional compartmentalization; the rise of religious studies; the binary thinking and immediacy associated with technology. In this atmosphere, educational institutions had no other choice except to turn to other intellectual currents, whether contemporary or traditional, to find a cognitive framework for life. Lastly, the ecclesial framing of religious and civic identity for many institutions tended to follow the political framing associated with left and right, liberal and conservative, "blue" and "red," either/or divisions which cut across the national landscape. For example, within Catholicism, to be "ecumenical" could bifurcate into contrasting affinities with either liberal or evangelical Protestantism.[17] Yet, the Franciscan intellectual tradition lives more easily within a both/and world. It is meant to make a socially embodied and intellectually convincing public argument about God and God's world.[18]

The Tradition in Contemporary Church Teaching

Many of the developments listed above are well known. What isn't as well known is that the opening provided by the Council and the cultural challenges of modernity and post-modernity have also led to a resurgence of interest at the highest levels of the Church in recovering the Franciscan intellectual tradition as particularly pertinent to the Church's mission of evangelization. In fact, the succession of popes since the Council have called attention to this important strand within the Church of faith-seeking understanding and understanding informed by faith.

Continued on page 10

practiced an intellectus fidei, using different philosophical tools. True, some unity in their structures existed, but theology was the driving force and there was a pluralism of approaches. He continued: One cannot see the medieval synthesis simply through the eyes of Aristotle. For a report of the conference and the argument for a pluralism of theologies in the wake of Humani Generis see Primus congressus scholasticus internationalis, Ibid., pp. 184-197. See also *Letters of Étienne Gilson to Henri de Lubac, Appendix II, 183-185, fns 1-2; Appendix V, "É Gilson, Father Balić and the Scholastic Families", 209-216.*

12 For a critical approach to the changes see Christopher Shannon, *A World Made Safe for Differences, Cold War Intellectuals and the Politics of Identity* (London: Rowan & Littlefield, 2001).

13 The best long-term overview and consequences of these social movements can be found in Daniel T. Rodgers, Age of Fracture (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2011). For an early critique of secular humanism and its impact see James Hitchcock, On the Present Position of Catholics in American (NY: The National Committee of Catholic Laymen 1978), found in St Bonaventure Library, St. Bonaventure, New York.

14 Alice Gallin, O.S.U., Negotiating Identity, Catholic Higher Education Since 1960 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press,2000) is the best overview. See for documents, Gallin, ed., American Catholic Higher Education, Essential Documents, 1967-1990 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992).

15 Callum G. Brown, The Death of Christian Britain. Understanding secularization 1800-2000 (London and NY: Routledge, 2001).

16 See as a recent example The Matrix of Franciscan Knowledge and Values for the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities.

17 The classic study in this area is Robert Wuthnow, The Restructuring of American Religion (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988). See also his "Church realities and Christian identity in the 21st century," The Christian Century 110 (May 12, 1993), 520-523; "Divided We Fall: America's Two Civil Religions," Ibid., 105 (April 20, 1988), 395-399. See also Patrick Allitt, "The Transformation of Catholic-Evangelical Relations in the United States: 1950-2000," in Nancy Christie, Michael Gauvreau, eds., The Sixties and Beyond, Dechristianization in North America and Western Europe, 1945-2000 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 144-156.

18 On the "social embodiment" of the Franciscan approach and its differentiation from that of Aquinas see as a starting point Scott Matthews, Reason, Community and Religious Tradition, Anselm's Argument and the Friars (Burlington, USA:2001).

FRANCISCAN EDUCATION FOR FORMATION TODAY

By William Hugo, OFM Cap.

In the beginning

I'm old enough to remember the Church before the Second Vatican Council. As a child, I was more aware of diocesan priests and religious women who taught in neighboring parish schools. Everything seemed the same to me. Parishes and schools had different names, but the same programs. Priests were like cookie-cutter figures. Personalities varied, but function and style remained pretty much the same. Religious women seemed to run their various schools in similar ways, but wore different habits. As I grew aware of male religious life, I saw the same pattern.

Most of the religious men I knew really wanted to be priests; their big vocational question was what kind of priest, meaning in which order or diocese. In fact, much of religious life was the same. The 1917 Code of Canon Law had been a great leveler for religious life, forcing religious communities to fit into its established categories and to conform to its numerous regulations.

The Franciscan renaissance followed by Vatican II

The Second Vatican Council had as profound an effect on religious life as the 1917 Code. Perfectae Caritatis, the Council's document on the adaptation and renewal of religious life, called on all religious to renew themselves based on the sources of Christian life, the original inspiration of their founding period, and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time. This essay focuses on how Franciscan groups achieved the retrieval of their Franciscan origins, shortly after the Council up to the present, with a view toward formation.

Most religious orders and institutes were unprepared for the challenge of Vatican II. Few groups had a strong grasp of their charismatic origins, by which I mean the inspirations of their founding period. Though some Franciscans lived according to a generic religious identity, others stood out as being among a handful of orders and institutes that had already begun to explore at the scholarly level what contributed to their founding period and subsequent development.

Ironically, the French Calvinist historian Paul Sabatier was a major catalyst for this when he published his Vie de St. François d'Assise (1893). It was quickly translated into numerous languages and repeatedly printed in English. His portrait of Francis of Assisi was upsetting to many Franciscans, which catapulted the birth of a rich renaissance in Franciscan studies to counter his portrayal.

Just before the Second Vatican Council, an important figure among these researchers and writers was the German historian Cajetan Esser, OFM. His pre-Vatican II research was ready for widespread translation around the time of the Council, which, in English, included The Order of St. Francis: Its Spirit and Mission in the Kingdom of God (1959), Love's Reply (1963-a popular work on spirituality focusing on the charisms of Franciscanism), Origins of the Franciscan Order (1970), Rule and Testament of St. Francis: Conferences to the Modern Followers of Francis (1977), and Meditations on the Admonitions of St. Francis of Assisi, which, after various lesser-known English publications, ended up in Greyfriars Review (6.suplement 1992). In 1976 and 1978, Esser published new critical editions of the writings of St. Francis on which most translations into modern languages were based. Obviously, many others contributed to the wealth of Franciscan research and popularization during this period, but Esser stands out in a special way because of how his works were translated into so many languages and for us into English.

Franciscan formation in the 1970s

I entered the Capuchins in 1973, right in the middle of this burst of scholarly and popular publications. Marion Habig, OFM, had just published the first edition of "The Omnibus," shorthand for a much longer titled collection of primary sources for the life of St. Francis and his writings. This omnibus was a photocopied collection of numerous legends, florilegia (plural of florilegium), and other sources on the life of St. Francis. It also contained Benen Fahy's English edition of St. Francis' writings. It was treated like the new "bible" of Franciscan studies, preserving the sources of our Franciscan charism to which the Second Vatican Council directed us.

Just before my novitiate, Thomas Kessler, OFM Cap., had returned from studies at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, California and was assigned assistant novice director,it appeared that for the first time in the history of my Capuchin province, the novices were beginning to study and compare the various sources for the life of St. Francis and his writings. We had the sources and the teacher needed for the job. Many senior friars in my province commented that we novices knew more about St. Francis of Assisi than they knew after a lifetime of being Capuchins.

Despite this encouraging chain of events, I quickly came to realize that most Franciscan neophytes did not have the same kind of Franciscan training. Instead, many new Franciscans were simply handed some popular secondary source biography of St. Francis. They read it and sometimes had class discussions on various chapters. Without a doubt, the most popular in that day was Omer Engelbert's St. Francis of Assisi: a Biography (1965 and numerous reprints).

A sea change

The entire direction of my life and ministry as a Capuchin-Franciscan changed when my provincial minister sent me to the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University for a master's degree in Franciscan studies. So much happened there. But undoubtedly, the most important teacher for me was Maurice Sheehan, OFM Cap., who taught about the sources for the life of St. Francis and the evolution of the First Order rule. More important than any information about Francis or a writing, Maurice taught us about historical method.

Understanding historical method is not that complicated. However, it is a mindset that takes some getting used to and can be very threatening when confronting other strongly held viewpoints and worldviews. Some of the most important features of a historical-critical approach to the life of St. Francis include these.

Continued on page 11

Recognition of this recovery and magisterial call represents a dramatic ecclesial opening and perhaps indicates that now is the time to call attention to the intellectual formulations of the Franciscan tradition that have carried its spiritual and social intuitions. In addition, on the cultural level, many scholars have begun to call attention to the positive contribution the Franciscan tradition makes to the Church's attempts to evangelize a post-modern world.[19] Referring to the teachings of the modern papacy, let me identify a few of the general characteristics of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. I will confine myself to eight elements.

Pope Paul VI

Right after the Council, an academic congress held at Oxford and Edinburgh celebrated the seventh centenary of the birth of John Duns Scotus, the philosopher-theologian "standard-bearer" of the Franciscan tradition (Paul VI, Alma Parens). For the occasion, Pope Paul VI and the Apostolic Delegate to Great Britain Archbishop Igino Eugenio Cardinale (1916-1983) addressed the participants, the pope in the form of an apostolic letter, the archbishop in a closing address.[20] For purposes of this lecture, I would like to highlight several common themes that emerged from their presentations.

(1) The Franciscan tradition values the "actual, the concrete, and the individual."

The Apostolic Delegate in his commentary on Alma Parens calls special attention to the scientific, positive, and experiential cast of Franciscan thought, particularly as that emerged from the Oxford school that Scotus inherited.[21] By his focus on the singularity of the person, the cast of thought associated with Scotus critiques any "general trend" that gives "pride of place to the universal" and relegates the individual to the domain of the accidental and perishable." Scotus "takes his stand against all totalitarian systems." Today, we can see this theme evident within this tradition of scientia experimentalis in the methodological attention to natural things and systems; the importance of mathematics as a tool to comprehend the structure of the universe; the exact meaning of terms, concepts, and language; the role of temporality as conditioning all things; and the turn toward the empirical, analytic, the experiential, and tentative dimension of knowledge.

(2) The Franciscan tradition concentrates on dialogue

Paul VI sees the Franciscan intellectual tradition as providing a "golden framework for serious dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion as well as the other Christian Communities…" Scotus' combination of epistemological humility, calm judgment, concentration on fundamentals, the gradual learning of truth, critical method, and respect and obedience for the Church's teaching authority provide a solid base which circumscribes over-reaching intellectualism and fundamentalism and their partners, social quarrels and divisions. The Apostolic Delegate will elaborate: "By dialogue we mean the establishing of friendly contacts, between differing groups with a view to some serene study and mutual knowledge, brotherly understanding and sincere respect." This attitude of dialogue extends to "non-Christian believers as well as with those believers who are men of good will." I will refer to the theological foundations for dialogue a little later.

(3) In the Franciscan tradition knowledge is for love

The Apostolic Letter enunciates a basic principle of the Franciscan tradition: The purpose of the knowledge of the faith (theology) is praxis.[22] Praxis is "right action," and the action that faith-based education produces is the transformation of the person into a truer image of God, who is love-in-action. Paul VI notes that Scotus was "a constructive theologian, and he loves with that real and definitive love which is a praxis, according to his own dictum: 'It has been shown that true love is a practical thing.'" Put simply, even if somewhat awkwardly, "virtue is of greater value than learning." And the Apostolic Delegate argues "to fully appreciate Scotus' personality theory we must also understand his fundamental doctrine on the will, the primary faculty in his system, and on the pre-eminence of love over knowledge." The focus on love leads to the centrality in this tradition of the rational will, the affections, and freedom for others, a counterpoise to any reduction of knowledge to instrumental reason or to the delivery of knowledge in a mathematized model of education. To be true, the intellectual tradition must embody itself in human activities. Franciscan education needs to translate our deepest desires and affections into patterns of thinking. This feeling and thinking must then become public performances opening up others to an infinite horizon of embodied beauty. Put another way, Franciscan learning issues in participatory theatre.[23]

(4) The Franciscan tradition has political corollaries

The focus on love, the freedom of the will, and the uniqueness of the person establish clear pathways for educational method and goals directed to a humanistic civic end. The Apostolic Delegate points to the implications of the tradition for political thought. In Scotus' writings, he notes, "we can

Continued on page 12

19 Cf. Orlando Todisco, Lo stupore della ragione: il pensare francescano e la filosofia moderna (Padova: Messaggero, c2003); Todisco, "L'IO e L'Altro Sedondo G. Duns Scoto e E. Levinas," Antonianum LXXI (Apriles-Junius, 1996), 264-306; Mary Beth Ingham, Scotus for Dunces: an introduction to the subtle doctor (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2003), 129-149.

20 Pope Paul VI, Alma Parens; July 14, 1966; Archbishop H. e. Cardinale, Aspotolic Delegate, "The Significance of the Apostolic Letter 'Alma Parens'. In Franciscan Studies 27 (1967), 5-10, 11-20. Citations below are taken from pages 8, 9, 14, 15

21 See for background A. G. Little, "The Education of the Clergy," and "The Franciscan School at Oxford," in Studies in English Franciscan History (Manchester: University Press, 1917), 158-192, 193-221. Little gives the general characteristics of this "scientia experimentalis." Cf. Keith Douglass Warner, Knowledge for Love: Franciscan science as the pursuit of Wisdom (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2012); Amanda Porter, Roger Bacon and the Defense of Christendom (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Raoul Caton, L'Expérience Physique chez Roger Bacon (Paris: J. Vrin, 1924).

22 Commentary on this insight may be found in Fr. Edward D. O'Connor, C.S.C., "The Scientific Character of Theology According to Scotus," De Doctrina Ioannes Duns Scotus (Romae: 1968), 3-50. For the importance of the focus see Oleg V. Bychkov, "The Nature of Theology in Duns Scotus and His Franciscan Predecessors," Franciscan Studies 66 (2008), 5-62.

23 For some interesting reflections along this line see Antonio Attisani, translated by Jane House, "Franciscan Performance, A Theatre Lost and Found Again," Performing Arts Journal 73 (2003), 48-60.

First, it's always important to understand the genre of any source. For the life of St. Francis, that usually means understanding the genre of hagiography. There are mostly two types of hagiographies about St. Francis. Legends are works that present Francis' life primarily in chronological order. Florilegia group stories according to types or themes, e.g., virtues like poverty or obedience or story types like animal stories. However, the most important aspects to understand about hagiographies are goals and literary rules. Basically, hagiography seeks to increase devotion to a saint or one hoped to become a saint. It strives to do this by edifying the reader, verifying the sanctity of its subject, moving the reader to moral change, and pleasing the reader with an interesting literary style.

It's important to note that objective history as we understand it today is not a goal of hagiography. While this doesn't mean that objective history is absent, it warns us as readers to always be suspicious about the basis of the text, especially when it includes miraculous occurrences. Often, a hagiographic story is rooted in a historical fact, but augmented in various ways to achieve the overall hagiographic goal of increased devotion.

Then the historical-critical reader wants to understand the particulars of each source being read. This involves discerning the author and her or his purpose, vested interests, and biases. The source's originally intended audience, dating, and patron help discern those previous aspects. Finally, a comparison of the same story across various sources is almost always illustrative since through this method we can see the various authors making additions, subtractions, and other changes.

A beginner's workbook

Immediately upon completing graduate studies, I was teaching the life and writings of St. Francis in my province's formation program and have continued to do so for 32 years. I immediately began to use a historical-critical approach, but not without receiving many warnings. Most of my critics predicted that this method would destroy the idealism and "faith" of my students. However, I knew that unless I could use this method, I could not do the ministry asked of me. I deeply believed that all good spirituality needed to be based on as accurate a history as was possible. Without a firm historical foundation, spirituality builds on shifting sandy soil.

Equally important was my observation that students struggling with sources while using a historical-critical approach deepened their appreciation for the complexity of the lives involved in the texts before them. Through my teaching, this occurred because I essentially guided the study of St. Francis' life as a study of his conversion from start to finish. Doing so awesomely led the students I guided to explore their own lives, conversions, and vocations.

After teaching the life and writings of St. Francis this way for four years, I began to write it down in book form, giving birth to Studying the Life of Saint. Francis of Assisi: A Beginner's Workbook, first published by Franciscan Press in 1996 and then in revised edition by New City Press in 2011. My own experience teaching in this way was validated by the many comments I received from around the world about how it helped others study Francis. I also heard from many beleaguered formators who were grateful for a useful tool. They were no longer handing their neophyte Franciscans a secondary source biography, but asking them to study the primary sources themselves.

A new challenge

Thus far, this essay reads like a historical survey of sorts. It still needs to assess what's happening today and the challenges coming in the future.

Studying the Life was possible because of my degree from the Franciscan Institute completed in 1983. We were enough students then to populate a year-long master's program. Summer school was a bustling experience. Soon after my time there, the program continued largely because of international students. Domestic students dwindled, reflecting the dwindling number of Franciscan-religious in the U.S. and Western English-speaking countries. Then, the scholarships that funded international students began to dry up, and St. Bonaventure University had to suspend its M.A. program in Franciscan studies.

The result in the Western English-speaking world is an increasing dearth of formators with any special training, much less any specific Franciscan studies training. Franciscan congregations and jurisdictions are hard pressed to devote anyone to formation while their numbers dramatically shrink and prized ministries are hand over or closed. The increasingly typical Franciscan formator today is one who had no idea yesterday that she or he would be involved in formation ministry, much less has done any preparation.

The result is formators who know little more than their charges. The increasing inclination is to, once again, hand an aspirant or postulant a secondary source biography (admittedly one of the newer ones) and maybe have a discussion on a chapter or two while the evermore beleaguered formator stays involved in four or five other ministries or jobs.

The challenge of Franciscan formation today reflects the host of challenges flowing from the sharp decrease of membership in our congregations and jurisdictions. I leave it to those who study the life cycle of institutions to give a complete analysis,but it is obvious to me that the call of the Second Vatican Council for the renewal of religious life is as important as ever. Learning about our Franciscan charism has to be a top priority. Any alternative would suggest there is little future to anticipate.

The church needs our Franciscan charism more than ever, and the world is eager to receive it as evidenced by the response to Pope Francis' message and example. To be prepared to give what's asked, we need to keep the study of our charism at the top of our ministerial endeavors, especially for our new members. Are we ready and willing to devote more of our resources to such a noble task?

William Hugo, OFM Cap., is a member of the Midwest Capuchin Province of St. Joseph. He's a graduate of the Franciscan Institute and has published Studying the Life of St. Francis of Assisi: A Beginner's Workbook (1996; revised in 2011). He has ministered in vocation, postulancy, novitiate, and postnovitiate formation since 1980. Hugo served on the planning commission for the 7th Plenary Council of the Capuchins on minority and helped to write the current Capuchin Constitutions of 2013.

trace the beginning of modern, political, and social science. Political authority, according to Scotus, may belong both to a single person or to the community as a whole; but in either case the legitimate sanction of authority is derived from the consent of the individuals who are governed." Scotus himself argues that because of God's infinite self-diffusive goodness and blessedness, many varieties of the same species are created; principally, however, it is the individual who is intended by God.[24] Later studies will root Scotus's political theory in the English constitutional tradition.[25] This Franciscan focus on the infinite liberality of God, the bonding power of love, and the uniqueness of the person has enormous consequences for our engagement in the public sphere as citizens committed to participatory and political love-in-action.

(5) The Franciscan tradition is a Christian humanism

Almost at the beginning of his Apostolic Letter, Paul VI called attention to the ability of Scotus' synthesis to respond to "the black cloud of atheism which hangs darkly over our age." The pontiff pointed in particular to Scotus' theodicy built up from the Scriptural principles regarding God, namely, "I am who am," and "God is love," (Ex. 3.14; 1 Jn.4.16). The philosophical rigor that Scotus brings to a consideration of the absolute centrality of the infinite love and freedom of God, and, therefore, the human condition as truly contingent and free but made to be for others furnish two poles of reference. His starting point—which stresses the Trinitarian God as dynamic goodness—translates the creedal formula of "God creates all things" into the terms, "God freely loves all things into existence."[26] The Apostolic Delegate puts it this way: In moving towards God, the person does "not lose his individuality, liberty, self-determination, and spontaneity of the will." The synthesis makes God as love and communion not the enemy of human development; nor does it associate the name of God "with vengeance or even a duty of hatred and violence."[27] Rather, God as love becomes the fulfillment of all human aspirations and the companion of all human suffering. If we are looking for a powerful narrative of Christian humanism to counteract the secular humanism of our age, we need look no further than this tradition. It represents a faith-based argument which both values and critiques modernity and post-modernity.

Given the history that preceded the Council, Paul VI's Alma Parens was a breakthrough, but as an apostolic letter it was delivered to a fairly narrow audience of academics. It remained for John Paul II and Benedict XVI to really highlight the vision of the Franciscan school as an important theological tool for the universal Church. They did this both through a personal confirmation of the orthodoxy of the Franciscan school and a theological analysis that showed a strong affinity with the thought of Scotus and Bonaventure. On July 6, 1991, John Paul II recognized the centuries old cult of Scotus; on March 23 1993 he declared him "Blessed." John Paul referred several times to this Franciscan teacher as presenting a theological doctrine of some significance for today's world, describing him as the "minstrel" of the Incarnation and "defender" of the Immaculate Conception.[28] In a similar fashion, Benedict XVI, clarifying the misinterpretation of his own remarks at Regensburg, noted with approval the same key elements in the thought of Scotus, including his vision of freedom and the recognition that in any truly human action free will and reason are conjoined.[29] This same pope was the first to present a lengthy public catechesis on the Franciscan tradition in its scholastic, vernacular, and visionary expressions.[30] He had written previously on Bonaventure's view of history and his encyclical Spe Salvi incorporated the major themes of this "theologian of hope."[31] The importance of these approvals should not be underemphasized. The pall that had hung over Scotus' thought since Aeterni Patris in 1879, the ascendancy of neo-Thomism, and the public disappearance of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition as a viable way of "faith seeking understanding" had finally been lifted.[32] An ecclesial opening had occurred for the articulation of the Franciscan tradition as a viable faith-based argument in response to the challenges of modernity. Let me mention three more points as illustrations, particularly those touching the evangelical character of our tradition, its focus on Jesus Christ and the role of the Holy Spirit.

(6) The Franciscan tradition emphasizes God's gifted condescension to us in the person of Jesus Christ who is the foundation of creation.

The two popes have found in the thought of Scotus and Bonaventure deep affinities with their own focus on the centrality and primacy of Christ. John Paul returns repeatedly in his writings to the foundational phrase for Christian humanism taken from Gaudium et Spes (22): "For by his incarnation, he, the son of God, in a certain way united himself with each [human being]. He worked

24 "Unde propter bonitatem suam communicandam, ut propter suam beatitudinem, plura in eadem specie produxit. In Principapllismis autem entibus est a Deo principaliter intentum individuum." Ord. II, Dist. 3, Pars 1, q.7.

25 Philippe Yates, "The English Context of the Development of the Franciscan Constitutions and of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition," in Andre Cirino, OFM, and Josef Raischl, A pilgrimage through the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition (Canterbury, England: Franciscan International Study Centre, 2008), 65-82.

26 See Kenan Osborne, "A Scotistic Foundation for Christian Spirituality," Vita Evangelica, Franciscan Studies 64 (2006), 363-405, with citation from 383.

27 Cf. Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006), #1.

28 For a listing of speeches and insights see Sjaak Zonneveld, "Blessed John Duns Scotus and Recent Papal Pronouncements," *Revue LISA/LISA e-journal* VII.3 (2009), 411-421.

29 Benedict XVI, "General Audience," 7 July, 2010. However, even in this speech Benedict frames Scotus' discussion of the relationship between intellect and will in a way foreign to the thought of Scotus. For clarification see Mary Beth Ingham, C.S.J., "Scotus's Franciscan Identity and Ethics: Self-Mastery and the Rational Will," in Mary Beth Ingham and Oleg Byshkov, eds., John Duns Soctus, Philosopher (St Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2010) 139-155.

30 See for examples his General Audiences on Blessed Angela of Foligno and St. Elizabeth of Hungary, October 13 and October 20, 2010; the series of audiences on St. Bonaventure, September 6, 2009, March 3, 10, 17, 2010.

31 Joseph Ratzinger, "Sulla Speranza," in Bruno Giordani, ed., La Speranza, II (Brescia: Scuola Editrice, 1984), 9-28. Compare with Spe Salvi (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2007).

32 See Sjaak Zonneveld, "Blessed John Duns Scotus and Recent Papal Pronouncements."

with human hands, he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved….For if the [human being] is the way of the Church," he writes, "this way passes through the whole mystery of Christ, as man's divine model."[33] His writings will expand this focus on the "whole mystery of Christ" by placing the Lord's humanity at the foundations of creation itself. Even after a detailed examination of the structures of sin in the world, he writes: "The Church has confidence also in man, though she knows the evil of which he is capable. For she knows well that—in spite of the heritage of sin, and the sin which each one is capable of committing—there exist in the human person sufficient qualities and energies, a fundamental "goodness" (Gen. 1.31), because he is the image of the Creator, placed under the redemptive influence of Christ, who "united himself in some fashion with every man," because the efficacious action of the Holy Spirit "fills the earth." (Wis. 1.7)[34]

Benedict XVI in his references to Scotus also refers to this placement of the Mystery of the Incarnation at the foundation of the world: "…unlike many Christian thinkers of the time, [Scotus] held that the Son of God would have been made man even if humanity had not sinned. …This somewhat surprising thought crystallized because, in the opinion of Duns Scotus, the Incarnation of the Son of God, planned from all eternity by God the Father at the level of love is the fulfilment of creation and enables every creature, in Christ and through Christ, to be filled with grace and to praise and glorify God in eternity. Although Duns Scotus was aware that in fact, because of original sin, Christ redeemed us with his Passion, Death, and Resurrection, he reaffirmed that the Incarnation is the greatest and most beautiful work of the entire history of salvation that it is not conditioned by any contingent fact but is God's original idea of ultimately uniting with himself the whole of creation, in the Person and Flesh of the Son"[35]

This focus on the humanity of Christ and the Incarnation as the "greatest work of God" (summum opus Dei, as Scotus would say) places God's irrevocable intentionality and desire to have co-lovers at the foundation of Franciscan Christian humanism. Basically, this is a stance of faith that values all that is human, views it from its source in God, and directs and purifies its operations to love in the following of Jesus Christ. As the book of Proverbs puts it: "Playing before him all the while, playing on the surface of the earth; I found delight in the children of [men and women]." (Pr. 8.30) Framed in God's love, this vision founds a methodology of evangelization that expresses itself in a "mysticism of open eyes," the ability to see the presence of God in all things.[36] Here, the whole intellectual enterprise is given a prophetic tone of hope and positive evangelical engagement in the world. For the practitioner, given the reality of sin, it is also a path that aims towards humanization through penance and solidarity with others in redemptive loving. The cross is no longer primarily a sign of the depth of our sin. It is rather a revelation of the depth of God's humility and charity, God's desire to invite us into communion.

(7) The Franciscan tradition places the Gospel at the service of a universal sense of fraternity

The unity between Creation and Incarnation indicated in these papal statements are leitmotifs of the Franciscan intellectual tradition, opening up its Christian vision to embrace all people as "brother" and "sister." In other words, the tradition, when appropriated, has ethical consequences for how we interpret the religious diversity in our contemporary world. Benedict XVI will write in his Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini:

> Scripture tells us that everything that exists does not exist by chance but is willed by God and part of his plan, at whose center is the invitation to partake, in Christ, in the divine life. Creation is born of the Logos and indelibly bears the mark of the creative Reason which orders and directs it…The tradition of Christian thought has developed this key element of the symphony of the word, as when, for example, St. Bonaventure, who in the great tradition of the Greek Fathers sees all the possibilities of creation present in the Logos, states that "every creature is a word of God, since it proclaims God."[37]

The universality of Christ's Logos and image present in every creature is clearly illuminated even more by John Paul's focus on the unity between Christ's presence and that of the Holy Spirit. It was not accidental for the Franciscan tradition that the pope chose Assisi for his universal day of prayer in 1986 and again in 2002.[38] The city of Francis became the symbolic meeting point for the world's religions.[39]

John Paul II explains his reasoning behind this event in Redemptoris Missio[40]:

> Thus the Spirit, who "blows where he wills" (cf. Jn 3:8), who "was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified," and who "has filled the world,...holds all things together [and] knows what is said" (Wis. 1:7), leads us to broaden our vision in order to ponder his activity in every time and place. I have repeatedly called this fact to mind, and it has guided me in my meetings with

33 See Redemptor Hominis (March 4, 1979), 8, 13, 18; Dominum et Vivificantem (May 30, 1986), 53, 59.
34 Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (December 30, 1987), 47; cf. #36 for "structures of sin."
35 General Audience, 7 July 2010.
36 The phrase is taken from Johannes Metz, "Theology As Theodicy," in A Passion for God (NY: Paulist Press, 1998), 54-71, where Metz talks of an "open-eyed mysticism" on page 69.
37 Benedict XVI, Verbum Domini (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 2010), 8.
38 For commentary from a Franciscan viewpoint see Maria Diemling, Thomas J. Herbst, OFM, eds., Interpreting the 'Spirit of Assisi', Challenges to Interfaith Dialogue in a Pluralistic World (Phoenix, AZ: TAU Publishing, 2013).
39 Gerald O'Collins, S.J., "Christ, the Holy Spirit, and World Religions," Irish Theological Quarterly 72 (2007), 323-337.
40 Redemptoris Missio (1990), 29. Cf. Ecclesia in Asia, 16: " Following the lead of the Second Vatican Council, the Synod Fathers drew attention to the multiple and diversified action of the Holy Spirit who continually sows the seeds of truth among all peoples, their religions, cultures and philosophies. This means that these religions, cultures and philosophies are capable of helping people, individually and collectively, to work against evil and to serve life and everything that is good. The forces of death isolate people, societies and religious communities from one another, and generate the suspicion and rivalry that lead to conflict. The Holy Spirit, by contrast, sustains people in their search for mutual understanding and acceptance. The Synod was therefore right to see the Spirit of God as the prime agent of the Church's dialogue with all peoples, cultures and religions."

a wide variety of peoples. The Church's relationship with other religions is dictated by a twofold respect: "Respect for man in his quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life, and respect for the action of the Spirit in man." Excluding any mistaken interpretation, the interreligious meeting held in Assisi was meant to confirm my conviction that "every authentic prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in every human heart."

From our perspective, the pope's teaching is given philosophical and theological roots in the thought of John Duns Scotus who also concentrates on the unity between the mission of the Son and the mission of the Spirit at the foundation of the world.[41]

(8) The Franciscan tradition envisions a political economy whose fundamental faith experience places us before the "astonishing experience of gift."

In the Franciscan vernacular, a key moment of conversion is represented in Francis' embrace of the leper. Today, we refer to that practice as embodying "solidarity." In his encyclical On Social Concerns John Paul II outlines several major dimensions of this catch phrase "solidarity." Here is a social virtues that (1) seeks to go beyond itself; (2) takes on a specifically Christian dimension of total gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation; and (3) then one's neighbor becomes "not only a human being with his or her own rights and a fundamental equality with everyone else, but becomes the "living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit."[42] Going beyond oneself, total gratuity, and recognition of the imago Dei in each person become three dimensions of a new political economy proposed by Benedict XVI in Caritas in Veritate.[43]

Pope Benedict establishes his vision for society on the concept of "gratuity": "Charity in truth," he writes, "places us before the astonishing experience of gift." (#34) We come from gratuity and are drawn by gratuity. "Gift by its very nature goes beyond merit, its rule is that of superabundance." "It takes first place in our souls as a sign of God's presence in us a sign of what he expects from us." This gift is received by everyone by virtue of his or her existence and as such "charity in truth is a force that builds community." The pope argues that this reality of the gift expresses itself concretely in friendship, solidarity, reciprocity, the ethical criteria for a just and fraternal economy. Benedict, following John Paul II, contrasts this "logic of gratuity" with other types of social logics (#39): the logic of exchange, where we give in order to acquire; the logic of duty, where we give because we are obliged to pay our tax. The "logic of gratuity" directly confronts the dominant "commercial logic" of market consumption, with its utilitarian view of life and the environment, its focus on globalized efficiency and self-interest. (#38) We live, as one author puts it, in a commodity civilization" with its "fables of abundance." Redemption, in contrast, is a gratuitous affair.[44] "…Economic and political development, if it is to be authentically human," the pope writes, "needs to make room for the principle of gratuitousness as an expression of fraternity."(#34) For Pope Benedict, our fundamental view of the human person challenges us to create a sociology and political economy of communion between peoples.

In the Franciscan lexicon, the pope's vision is translated by the code word "poverty," or "generosity-in-action." Most recently it has been described as an "oeconomia franciscana" by scholars.[45] The Lord made himself "poor for our sake, so that we in turn might become rich" is the biblical foundation (II Cor. 8.9). In his image, our life begins beneath "goodness" and is meant to be gratuitous.[46] The economic vision is fundamentally faith based, a Trinitarian and Incarnationally centered penitential praxis. It is of one piece with our previous elements. The thought of Bonaventure and Scotus is structured around this faith experience of liberality/gratuity; it implies freedom, self-giving, solidarity with others, superabundance, and represents a stance of prophetic humanization in a context of meritocracy. And the theory joins with practice—love is a praxis--in the numerous performances taking place in Franciscan communities, universities, social-service projects, soup-kitchens, non-profit enterprises, and commercial businesses injected with this vision. Educationally, the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition is meant to give words and reasons for the hope that is within us; it is meant to provide a rationale for what we already do, to give a credible intellectual explanation of our identity so that we can inject something new into the public discourse about social and economic reform.

The Contemporary Challenge

The elements I have tried to outline through the teachings of Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI have been given coherent expression in the teaching and practice of Pope Francis. One is struck not only by his "praxis" but also by its intellectual counterparts in Evangelii Gaudium, Laudato Si', and Amoris Laetitia. The Pope was formed by the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, and I do not think it accidental that a great scholar of the Spiritual Exercises has indicated their foundational impulse in the Christology of John Duns Scotus. Ignatius' "Contemplation to Attain Love" concludes with the person moving beyond him or herself "to recognize how things speak of [God] who has given them, who dwells within them, who works in them for the liberation of [men and women]."[47] This is very close to the charter of Franciscan education, Bonaventure's Reduction of the Arts to Theology. Franciscan education concludes in wonder at God's presence: "And so it is evident how the manifold Wisdom of God, which is clearly

41 Cf. Kenan Osborne, "A Scotistic Foundation for Christian Spirituality."
42 Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 40.
43 Benedict XVI, Charity in Truth, Caritas in Veritate (Washington DC: USCCB Publishing, 2009).
44 Cf. Eugene McCarraher, "The Enchanted City of Man: The State and the Market in Augustinian Perspective," in John Doody, Kevin L. Hughes, Karen Paffenroth, Augustine and Politics (NY: Lexington Books, 2005), 261-295.
45 This theme has been well explored in recent works now in English: Giacomo Todeschini, Franciscan Wealth, From Voluntary Poverty to Market Society (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2009); Peter of John Olivi, A Treatise on Contracts, Critical Edition and Commentary by Sylvain Piron (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2016). For application in the field of moral theology see Thomas A. Nairn, O.F.M., ed., The Franciscan Moral Vision: responding to God's love (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2013).
46 The total vision is well explained by Orlando Todisco, "L'être comme don et la valeur-lien, La pratique économique franciscaine du solidarisme," in Luca Parisoli, ed., Pauvreté et Capitalisme (Palermo: Officina di Study Medievali, 2008), 175-213.
47 See Hugo Rahner, S.J., Ignatius the Theologian (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1964), 53-93; for commentary on the "Contemplation to Attain Love" and its importance see Michael Buckley, "The Contemplation to Attain Love," The Way Supplement 24 (Spring 1975), 92-104, with citation from 104.

revealed in Sacred Scripture, lies hidden in all knowledge and in all nature…It is likewise evident how wide is the illuminative way and how in everything which is perceived or known God himself lies hidden within."[48] The convergence of these papal teachings with the insights of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition have given to those of us who inherit the tradition in the contemporary world powerful tools to articulate, publicly present, and disseminate our convictions.

The task of this retrieval of the Franciscan tradition has already begun in numerous venues. Yet, with the closure of the Washington Theological Union and the Franciscan Study Center in Canterbury, with the cessation of the year-long training program in Franciscan studies at the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, there remains only the colleges and universities with a Franciscan heritage and the graduate program of the Franciscan School of Theology in Oceanside to carry the tradition forward in any focused institutional way. As good as these efforts are, they are still disparate, and the tradition continues to lack cohesion and a public voice. Many of the elements mentioned earlier in this presentation mute the overall message. Let me conclude with just two areas that build on what is happening and which seem to me could spawn a multi-pronged effort both within our institutions and between them to make the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition a vital force in the Church's task of evangelization.

(1) Service learning integration

Our intellectual tradition is meant to inform the mind and move the heart so that knowledge ends in praxis. This praxis is very evident here at a Franciscan University in the Missionary Outreach in peace, mercy, and ministries. Other Franciscan colleges, universities, and the graduate school of theology sponsor service learning work in care for creation, a year-long, campus-wide reflection on Francis' Canticle of Creatures, immersion experiences with the poor, and alliances with the Franciscan Action Network.[49] A challenge is embedded in this focus on service-learning: Within a large university setting it is pillarized? Does it move beyond the experience of a sociological "event community" voluntarily embraced by a few to an established institutional strategic commitment? The transformation of heart and mind through rigorous analysis, experiential participation, and explicit connection between classroom teaching on the Franciscan tradition of Christology, poverty, and mission in society? How much is "service-learning based pedagogy" integrated with "core curricular goals and objectives"? How much are best practices shared?

(2) Curricular development, course integration, and public mission

Although there are numerous English language resources in the Franciscan intellectual tradition now available for various disciplines, are they adequately known and adopted in classroom reflection and requirements in any collective way? The Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities lists many examples of individual teachers using Franciscan themes in the art appreciation, business, core curricular courses, ethics, education literature/poetry, psychology, mathematics, nursing, oral communication, theatre, philosophy, multicultural studies, media, social work, science, and the environment.[50] On the web page of the Association there is a show of 178 slides illustrating "Teaching the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition in Your course." The Secretariat for the Retrieval of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition on its web page makes available to multiple audiences both high academic reflection, study guides, slide presentations, and small volumes tracing the interface between the tradition and contemporary issues (franciscantradition.org). A major work on the Franciscan tradition in moral decision making integrating spirituality, philosophy, theology, and political thought has recently been published.[51] On the horizon is a major work by Dr. Mary Elizabeth Ingham comparing and contrasting the thought of Aquinas and Scotus.[52]

Overall practices, such as the focused dissemination of these resources, inclusion of the tradition in faculty evaluations, interdisciplinary sharing, hiring for Franciscan mission, assessment instruments for campus culture, symposia, public advocacy, media marketing, and intercollegiate communication on the tradition are all valuable tools that would push otherwise personal initiatives forward into some type of overall institutional visibility.[53] Is it possible to create an alliance for the sake of training people in this tradition of praxis and thought between a particular university and the graduate Franciscan School of Theology? A process of focused commitment to our shared Franciscan educational purpose in line with the ecclesial and cultural openings I have indicated is needed.[54] The Church is calling us to a mission. Do we have the collective political will to do it?

Let me conclude with where I began, a Gospel witness. The great medievalist Jean Leclercq in his Memoirs outlines the stages of intellectual development in the Church: (1) "longings 'at the base' in the men and women who are the subjects and the agents of history"; (2) resistance; (3) liberating research and the elaboration of doctrine; (4) the appearance of islands of immobility; (5)

48 Bonaventure, De Reductione atrium ad Theologiam, A Commentary with an Introduction and Translation by Sister Emma Thérèse Healy (Saint Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1955), # 26, p. 41,

49 Cf. Daniel P. Horan, OFM, "Profit or Prophet? A Franciscan Challenge to Millennials in Higher Education," The AFCU Journal 81 (January 2011), 59-73, with its numerous references; Matthew Sills, "Reconstructing the Gift: Using Franciscan Thought to foster Service Learning," Ibid. 71 (January 2010), 65-79.

50 See for numerous examples, The AFCU Journal 6.1 (January 2009); 5.1 (January 2008).

51 Thomas A. Nairn, OFM, The Franciscan moral vision: responding to God's love.

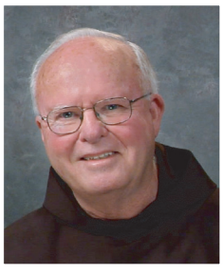
52 Mary Elizabeth Ingham, CSJ. 'Of realty the rarest-veined unraveller' Understanding John Duns Scotus (St. Bnaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Press, forthcoming).

53 See for some examples, Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ, "Responding from the Tradition: Franciscan Universities in the Third Millennium," AFCU Journal 4.1 (January 2007), 6-18; Paricia Schmakel, Ph.D. & Associates, "Development of a Faculty Evaluation Process in the Franciscan Tradition," Ibid., 37-42.

54 A good outline of an assessment process on the course and programmatic levels may be found in Sheila T. Isakson, "Assessing Franciscan Values in a Business Course," AFCU Journal 1.1 (January 2004), 54-71.

"finally, always, life will win."[55] In this schema, the life of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition is actively responding to the longings of the people "who are the agents of history". Cultural and ecclesial openings have been created, elucidations of Franciscan intellectual insights are being articulated in numerous quarters. Resistance and islands of immobility are certainly present, as they must be for the purposes of purification. Yet, "in the end, always, life will win."

Our mission as educational institutions is to send forth faithful disciple of Christ transformed by the Gospel and able to give a public reason for the hope that is within them; "in the end" this Franciscan vision of life speaks volumes about civic engagement, social transformation, public discourse, and dynamic ecclesial commitment. We are called by the Church to perform in word and deed what Bonaventure presents as the end of our educational endeavors: "This is the fruit of all sciences, that in all, faith may be strengthened, God may be honored, character may be formed, and consolation may be derived from the union of the Spouse with His beloved, a union which takes place through charity…a charity without which all knowledge is vain because no one comes to the Son except through the Holy Ghost who teaches us all the truth, who is blessed forever. Amen."[56]



Joseph Chinnici, O.F.M., President Emeritus of the Franciscan School of Theology, Oceanside, in affiliation with the University of San Diego, was chairman of the Secretariat for the Retrieval of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition from 2001-2012 and editor of numerous volumes of the Franciscan Heritage Series. He has written extensively on the Franciscan tradition in its contemporary application, among them a chapter on the Franciscan social vision in Thomas A. Nairn, ed., The Franciscan Moral Vison: Responding to God's Love (Franciscan Institute, 2013).

55 Jean Leclercq, Memoirs, From Grace to Grace (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 2000), 86.
56 De Reductione Artium ad Theologiam, 26.

San Damiano and the Franciscan Impulse Toward Healing

By Kevin Elphick, OFS

Healing is an ongoing theme in the earliest memories of the Franciscan movement. The stories of both Clare and Francis involve their own personal healings, as well as the impulse to heal others. Striving to live out the Gospel message, they act on Jesus' message to "Heal the sick and cleanse the lepers." (Matt. 10:8) Both were in recovery from the violence of their day. Francis had been a wounded prisoner of war. And as a youth, Clare and her family fled besieged Assisi to seek asylum in Perugia. Hearing Francis' and Clare's stories anew, with attention to their own responses to the impact of violence and trauma, will allow us greater appreciation for their own healings which took place specifically in the context of shared Christian community, the nascent Franciscan family they were creating. Together they discovered that healing is most fully and effectively realized as a communal experience in which care for the wounded is a shared core activity among all its members.

Francis was a veteran of warfare and had been imprisoned in Perugia until his family paid for his release. His conversion story begins as he is recovering from the effects of civil conflict and imprisonment. Thomas of Celano explains that "God visited his heart through a bodily illness."[1] Although a modern concept, it is speculated that among his illnesses as a veteran, Francis may have suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.[2] Needful of healing, St. Francis visited a nearby place of healing, the Church of San Damiano, which became a means to his recovery. It is possible to hear the importance of healing at this earliest moment in the Franciscan narrative and see the Church of San Damiano as a locus of that healing.

In his first biography of St. Francis, Thomas of Celano uses the language of disease and cure to preface Francis' journey by which he came to San Damiano: "…he made his way… He could no longer delay, for by then a fatal disease had spread everywhere and infected the limbs of so many that, were the doctor to delay just a little, it would stifle breath and snatch life away."[3] On this journey, "he came across a church on the side of the road. It had been built in ancient times in honor of St. Damian."[4]

Why does Celano use the images of disease and a doctor to help introduce Francis' transition to dwelling at San Damiano? Understanding the patron saint of the small church helps explain. St. Damian was a 3rd-century martyr, who, with his brother, Cosmas, were physicians that provided their healing services to the needy at no charge. The brothers are included in the canon of the Mass and are quintessentially associated with healing. Among their many miracles, is the replacement of a gangrenous limb on an ill deacon. By virtue of its patron saint, San Damiano was a church necessarily associated with healing and cure.

Jean-François Godet-Calogeras indicates that "San Damiano was an old church with a little hospice. It was a place of healing under the patronage of San Damiano…"[5] Archeological research suggests that the foundation structure of San Damiano dates back to the 7th or 8th century.[6] In Francis' day, the terms "hospice" and "hospital" were interchangeable and "could refer to an institution that cared for the sick, a poorhouse, a rest home for the elderly, an orphanage, or a hostel for travelers."[7] The patron name of St. Damian ensured that this hospice was understood to be associated with care for the sick.

Additionally, the central icon of the church, the "San Damiano Crucifix," itself dramatizes a healing miracle depicted for the faithful. Opposite the Blessed Virgin, the Centurion stands by the Crucified with the healed member of his household peering over his shoulder. Considering himself not worthy that Jesus should enter under his roof to effect the healing, the Centurion was lauded by Jesus for his "great faith." In the San Damiano Crucifix, this miracle of Jesus' healing is thus recalled and centered in the Passion. We echo the Centurion's words to Jesus at each mass: "Only say the word and my soul shall be healed." It was this icon which also spoke to St. Francis giving him a therapeutic exercise to ensure his own personal healing recovery: "Go repair my church." As a man recovering from illness, Francis was given a prescription

1 From the title of Chapter II of The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Volume I, ed. Regis Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellmann, & William Short, (New York: New City Press, 1999), 184.

2 Holly Baumgartner, "Francis and Levinas: Radical Ethics and the Inheritance of War" in The AFCU Journal: A Franciscan Perspective on Higher Education, March 2014/ Volume 11, Number 1, p. 43. Baumgartner references John Quigley, OFM, as arguing for this diagnosis for Francis. In The Assisi Compilation St. Francis states: "I was ill from the beginning of my conversion to Christ.." No. 106.

3 Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Volume I, 188.

4Ibid. 189.

5 Jean-François Godet-Calogeras, "Francis and Clare and the emergence of the Second Order" in The Cambridge Companion to Francis of Assisi, ed. Michael J. P. Robson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 118. When Agnes the Bohemian princess establishes her community imitating Clare's, she followed "the model of San Damiano" and thus "founded a hospice and a monastery in Prague." p. 123.

6 Marino Bigaroni, "San Damiano- Assisi: The First Church of St. Francis," Franciscan Studies 47 (1987), p. 56.

7 Joan Mueller "A Dowry Given, Returned, and Given Again: Agnes of Bohemia and the Politics of Founding a Medieval Hospital" in The Journal of Religion & Society, Supplement 7 (2011) Religion, Health, and Healing: An Interdisciplinary Approach, ed. Alexander Rödlach and Barbara Dilly, p. 135. See also Margaret Wade Labarge's explanation of the conflation of hospital and hospice in her chapter, "Women as Healers and Nurses" in A Small Sound of the Trumpet: Women in Medieval Life (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 168-194, p. 182 in particular.

San Damiano in Assisi
(Creative Commons)

directly from God—a physical therapy of rebuilding the decrepit church[8] and reorienting Francis to a purpose-filled life, restoring that which had fallen into disrepair. Francis now had a narrative framework upon which to ground his recovery. His purpose was to rebuild this church. Implicitly, there is also the expectation that worshippers, community, will come to the church which is repaired. Celano uses the word "propositum" to describe this sense of purpose which Francis here embraces. The same word is used for the "Propositum Vitae," the primitive Rule of the Order.[9]

When Francis would later seek approval from the Pope for this Rule, he used the language of medical care to frame his request: He and his brothers are "asked to heal a whole world… to guard all who are brethren to us. Would you have us neglect to bring medicine to a plague-ridden world…? …to stoop down to the fallen—That is my work… I earnestly yearn to follow Christ thus…"[10] In this telling, Francis conceptualizes the impetus and purpose of the Franciscan beginnings in the language of healing.

The Rediscovered Life of St. Francis newly tells us that "Francis, the saint of God… had the grace of healing."[11] The word translated here as healing is curationum; our word "cure" derives from the same Latin root. Julian of Speyer had expansively proclaimed that "He cured every illness…"[12] After Francis' death, Celano wrote "he poured out everywhere the grace of health on those afflicted…"[13]

It might seem odd then that for himself, when faced with a disease of his eyes, Francis had resisted practical medical care. In a misguided ascetical impulse, Francis endured the illness, spurning medical treatment. It was his community which guided him back to healing. "Brother Elias, the one he chose for the role of mother to himself… finally forced him not to refuse medicine but accept it…" Quoting the Book of Sirach (38:4), "The Most High created medicine from the earth and the wise will not refuse it," Elias finally convinced Francis to comply. "The holy father then gladly agreed with him and accepted his direction."[14]

The Assisi Compilation places similar advice to Francis in the mouth of Cardinal Hugolino. "Brother, you do not do well in not allowing yourself to be helped with your eye disease, for your health and your life are of great value…..If you have compassion for your sick brothers… you must not be cruel to yourself in such

8 Consider the positive results of complex, physical therapy in this research: "Effects of complex manual therapy on PTSD, pain, function, and balance of male torture survivors with chronic low back pain" by Hyun Jin Kim, PhD, PT and Seong Hun Yu, PhD, PT, in The Journal of Physical Therapy Science, 2015 Sep; 27(9): 2763–2766.
9 Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Volume I, 189, footnote d.
10 The Versified Life of St. Francis by Henri d'Avranches verses 85-90, in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Volume I, p. 471.
11 The Rediscovered Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano, trans. Timothy J. Johnson (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2016), 17.
12 Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Volume I, 402.
13 "Legend for Use in the Choir" in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Volume I, 324.
14 The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Volume I, 267.

a serious… illness. I therefore order you to be helped and treated."[15] The Assisi Compilation then connects Francis' acceptance of this needed medical care with his return to living at San Damiano. There, Elias also "wanted to be present when the doctor began the treatment, especially so that he could more effectively arrange for him to be cared for and comforted, since he was suffering a great deal…"[16] Mueller explains the reason for Francis being cared for at San Damiano, rather than living with his brothers: "There, Clare's sisters were able to nurse him with food prepared by the sisters and Clare's knowledge of herbs – used to cure all sorts of medieval maladies – grown in the monastic garden."[17] San Damiano continued its healing ministry, welcoming back its founder.

Francis had also characterized the Poor Clares' vocation at San Damiano by focusing on illness and care of the sick. He described the community there as being composed by: "Those weighed down by sickness and the others wearied because of them" and urged them: "all of you: bear it in peace." He concludes that both those enduring illness and those sisters caring for them "will sell this fatigue for a very high price," wherein each "will be crowned queen in heaven."[18] When Clare would later write her Rule for her community at San Damiano, she made it a normative expectation that the sisters would "find in" their Mother Abbess "the means of health" lest "the sickness of despair overcome the weak."[19] Both Francis and Clare conceptualized San Damiano as a place of healing and a community in which care for its fragile and sick members was constitutive.

The cover story for the December 2016 issue of National Geographic, "The Healing Power of Faith," concludes that "belief-based healing requires not only a good story but also the effort of an active listener—one with the ability to make what is imagined feel real."[20] Both Francis and Clare created a narrative for their followers around caring for the ill. Francis uses the language of merchants and commerce: the work of bearing illness and caring for the sick will be sold in exchange for royal coronation in paradise. Clare weaves a narrative expectation into her Rule, casting the Abbess in the role of a Mother-Counselor in whom the weak confide so as to avoid the illness of depression and despair. Both Francis and Clare create narrative stories in which their fellow sisters and brothers find themselves to be essential protagonists.

In her book, The Tenderness of God, Gillian Ahlgren explores "the impact of trauma on Francis and Clare"[21] and the ways it effected their lives. She takes time to hear their stories, the impact of Francis' imprisonment on his development as a young adult, and the lingering trauma of Clare's family's exile to Perugia and the violence she endured from male family members.[22] Ahlgren extrapolates from their trauma recoveries in "ways that their life narratives and practices can help trauma survivors."[23] At San Damiano, both Francis and Clare built an intentional community with a focus on mutual recovery (metanoia) and care for the ill. That underlying philosophy which has been practiced in the peer-support, recovery model of numerous self-help groups was in some ways pioneered at San Damiano: healing and recovery are best effected as a shared, narrative journey of mutual care and nurturance.

"Francis returned to San Damiano to continue …. the work of creating hospitable space, for God and for others…"[24] Ahlgren goes on to explain that in this early Franciscan experience:

> The sharing in a life of absolute solidarity with the sick, impoverished, and the marginalized is explicit in the norms for daily life…. For women, as well as for men, of the early Franciscan movement, attending to the suffering bodies of their contemporaries proved… extremely important…. The earliest communities at San Damiano and the Portiuncula, were experiments, then, in the daily practice of misericordia as taught by Christ. …constitutive of the emerging Franciscan model of community: active care for one another…[25]

As a pre-existing locus of healing, San Damiano proved to be an incubator for the nascent Franciscan community. Godet-Calogeras writes that San Damiano functioned as a church with a small hospice dedicated to healing.[26] Bert Roest speculates that the early San Damiano community may have continued forms of hospital work there as a type of social service to at least, partially sustain themselves.[27] Reflecting on "The Legend of St. Clare," Joan Mueller characterizes the healing taking place at San Damiano to "sometimes sound as though they are reading emergency room chartings,"[28] so numerous are the accounts of people being treated there and cured. Mueller highlights "Clare's knowledge of herbs – used to cure all sorts of medieval maladies – grown in the monastic garden,"[29] and thus underscores the reality that San Damiano functioned as a practical center of healing and healthcare. Among the relics currently showcased at the Basilica of St. Clare, is the poultice case that she used in caring for St. Francis' wounds.

---

15 Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Volume II, 184.
16 Ibid.
17 Mueller, 136.
18 Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Volume I, 115.
19 "The Rule of St. Clare" in Francis and Clare: The Complete Works, trans. Regis Armstrong &Ignatius Brady (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982), 215.
20 National Geographic, Vol. 230, No. 6, p. 48. It is worth noting that the cover art for this issue depicts another wounded stigmatic, St. Catherine of Siena.
21 Gillian Ahlgren, The Tenderness of God: Reclaiming Our Humanity (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016), xviii.
22 "The Legend of St. Clare" No. 9. in Clare of Assisi: Early Documents, Edited & Translated by Regis Armstrong (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993), pp. 260-261.
23 Ahlgren, xviii.
24 Ibid. 48.
25 Ibid. 88-89.
26 Godet-Calogeras, 118.
27 Bert Roest, Order and Disorder: The Poor Clares Between Foundation and Reform, (Boston: Brill, 2013), p. 228.
28 Mueller, 135.
29 Ibid. 136.

When St. Agnes of Prague (1221-1282) began recreating the San Damiano experience in her native Prague, one of her first actions was to have a hospital built. She first established her convent in 1232, followed by establishing a hospital for the poor. At this time, the movement was not known as the "Poor Clares" but rather the "Poor Ladies of San Damiano." And so, as to successfully transplant the San Damiano charism, five sisters from Italy joined with Agnes in 1234 to form the new community. While building the hospital also paralleled the actions of her cousin, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, we should see it too as an imitation and faithful echo of San Damiano. An early biographer of Agnes wrote about her service to the poor of the hospital, indicating that "When this wonderful sanctity reached the ears of the virgin, St. Clare, rejoicing at such noble offspring made fruitful by divine grace, she magnified the Most High."[30] This Franciscan women's community sought guidance from San Damiano on how to faithfully imitate its mother-community, as evidenced by Clare's surviving letters to Agnes. Thereafter, "Agnes continued her care for the sick at the hospital until her death in 1282."[31]

While Clare clearly supported Agnes' contemplative vocation, she also appears to have affirmed her active service. "I consider you a co-worker of God Himself and a support of the weak members of His ineffable Body."[32] Clare also advised Agnes in 1235 to "follow the counsel of our venerable father, our Brother Elias…. Prize it beyond the advice of others and cherish it…"[33] Mueller and Armstrong both connect Elias's advice specifically to the hospital, and Pope Gregory's intention to enrich Agnes' community with the hospital's endowment.[34] Agnes' desire to be fully poor is well documented. But she likely equally sought Elias' advice in balancing having no financial benefit from the hospital with still continuing to be connected to it by her service to its poor and sick. From Agnes and her community, we find a telling, early example of transplanting the San Damiano charism and being faithfully Franciscan.

One of the best testimonies to the healing activities present at San Damiano is "The Acts of the Process of Canonization" of St. Clare, as 20 witnesses describe her sanctity. Throughout their recollections are the healing cures she wrought, with an expected emphasis on the specifically miraculous. But peppered among their testimonies are glimpses of the healing arts at work too. "It was an accepted part of a noble lady's education to know how to deal with the wounds, broken or dislocated bones, and severe bruises that her menfolk might bring home…. being skilled in bandaging, ointments, and the cleaning of wounds…"[35] As noble ladies, Clare, her mother, and her sister would have brought these same skills to San Damiano. The first witness describes in a practical manner that Clare "had compassion for the sick… she served them and washed their feet and gave them water with her own hands."[36] Many of these testified healings involved Clare blessing individuals with the sign of the cross, thereby affecting the miracle.

But some of the described healings are less dramatic. As a good counselor, Clare met with her sisters individually if they were "suffering some … trial,"[37] and she consoled them. Recognizing her abilities, St. Francis sent Br. Stephen to Clare because he was "mentally ill." Meeting with him, and then sharing her prayer space with him, Stephen "departed cured."[38] A number of her cures involved her simply touching the afflicted individual, including curing a sister who was deaf in one ear. In one instance to heal a sister's illness, she placed herself "directly on the place of the pain" and then applied her own veil to the ailing spot, thereby ameliorating the pain.[39] Townspeople and children were brought to her for healing of ailments of the eyes and fevers. These accounts reveal the permeability of the monastic enclosure. In one episode, Clare dislodged a pebble stuck in a young boy's nose.[40] In another instance with a child from Perugia, Clare insisted that the boy be seen also in the monastery by her own mother, Ortulana, so that they together would share in effecting a cure of his eye disease.[41]

Despite the attention to the miraculous, hints of practical interventions are present. Clare advises eating an egg for a throat ailment[42] and a small cake for a serious cough.[43] It is worth noting that often-quoted story of Francis' request from Lady Jacopa for the almond cookie on his deathbed may not have been evidence that Francis had a sweet tooth, but rather a request that she bring him medicines. The 13th century work, Liber Exemplorum Fratrum Minorum describes the same request to Jacopa, but for "the necessary amount of flour for the food for the sick which you are accustomed to make for me."[44] Encasing medications and healing herbs in a confections and small cakes was already a commonplace practice during this period. Reflecting the same, the anonymous 13th-century Franciscan author of Meditatio Pauperis described Christ as "the apothecary who makes sweet confections and ointments of health."[45]

Joan Mueller arrives at the conclusion that caring for the sick was constitutive of the earliest Franciscan memory. "In short, the very beginnings of the Franciscan story are full of vignettes regarding the sick and their dependence upon Franciscans for their care."[46]

30 Lori Pieper, O.F.S., The Voice of a Medieval Woman: St. Elizabeth of Hungary as a Penitent in the Early Sources for Her Life (New York: Tau Cross Books & Media, 2016), 227.
31 Pieper, 229.
32 "The Third Letter to Agnes of Prague" (1238) in Clare of Assisi: Early Documents, 45.
33 "The Second Letter to Agnes of Prague" (1235) in Clare of Assisi: Early Documents, 41.
34 Mueller, 139-141. Armstrong, 39.
35 Labarge, 170.
36 Clare of Assisi: Early Documents, 139.
37 Ibid. 168.
38 Ibid. 144.
39 Ibid. 163.
40 Ibid. 145.
41 Ibid. 156.
42 Ibid. 149.
43 Ibid. 155.
44 Unpublished translation by Daniel J. Havel (1990) in the Friedsam Memorial Library, St. Bonaventure University.
45 A Meditation in Solitude of One Who is Poor, trans. Campion Murray, O.F.M., (Phoenix, AZ: Tau Publishing, 2012), 140.
46 Mueller, 136.

In his Deeds of Blessed Francis and his Companions, Ugolino describes San Damiano in this way:

> Living in this same monastery were Sr. Ortulana, St. Clare's mother, and Sr. Agnes, her sister, together with many other holy nuns and spouses of Christ, all filled with the Holy Spirit. It was to them that St. Francis sent many sick people, now to one, now to another of them…. as many as they blessed… [each] received a healthy remedy.[47]

While later in the tradition, Ugolino's portrait of San Damiano evidences the importance of the persistent Franciscan memory which intimately connected San Damiano with healing. It will serve us well to recover and emulate San Damiano and its community of healing. It falls upon us to re-tell the stories of Francis and Clare, their communal family, and the healing hospice of San Damiano.

The Franciscan movement began as a call to live out the Gospel story fully. Within this calling, the apostolic life challenges us to "Heal the sick and cleanse the lepers." Francis and Clare fully lived out this evangelical directive in their communal lives. Through shared, communal living modeled as a family of siblings engaged in healing care for each other, both Francis and Clare each found their own healings. In point of fact, this primal charism faithfully appears in the stories of all three Orders of the Franciscan family, uniting them in a common purpose and expression. Vatican II encouraged us to return to these, our founding charisms. We live in a time especially needful of healing communities. The healing mission of San Damiano is one of the earliest and most faithful flowerings of the Franciscan tradition. In the center of San Damiano there is a deep well with fresh water. Drink fully from these healing waters.

Kevin C.A. Elphick, O.F.S., is a lay associate with the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities. His graduate degree in Religious Studies was completed through a cooperative studies initiative between Mundelein College and Spertus College of Judaica in Chicago, IL. He holds a Doctorate in Ministry from Graduate Theological Foundation. He currently works as a supervisor at a national Veterans suicide prevention hotline.

47 "The Deeds of the Blessed Francis and his Companions" in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Volume III, 517.

A Letter to Clare of Assisi (1237)

By Anne Millington

The following is an imagined letter to Clare of Assisi from Agnes of Prague.

To the lady most highly esteemed in Christ and virtuous Abbess of the Enclosed Ladies of St. Damiano, Clare, faithful spouse to her Most High Heavenly King whose price is far above rubies (Prov. 31:10), Agnes, herself the most unworthy handmaid of The Lord (Lk. 1:38) and servant of the Poor Clares of Prague, wishes you faith, hope, and love, and all the blessings of the peace that passes all understanding (Phil. 4:7).

I am eternally indebted to you, my dear sister in Christ, for all your wise counsel and loving support in my desire to seek first the Kingdom of God (Mt. 6:33) and put on Christ like a garment (Gal. 3:27). The inestimable goodness of Our Lord has preserved me from marriage to earthly kings in favor of marriage to our Most Heavenly King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16) and has led me to become a student of Christ under your holy and capable tutelage. Divine providence led the lesser brothers to journey to Prague, at a time when I was able to learn from them of the Heavenly riches to be gleaned from serving God and not mammon (Mt. 6:24). And through the blessed lesser brothers I learned of you and your most virtuous pursuit of holy poverty, that pearl of great price (Mt. 13:45). which you have gained by so perfectly imitating our poor and humble Christ. How perfect is your contemplation, how perfect is your devotion. Your chaste body has borne such great fruit, as so many have been nourished by all the good you have done for them in Christ. By knowing you, many souls have experienced spiritual renewal, refreshment from all the deadly care and anxiety from worldly concerns, for not as the world giveth do I giveth (Jn. 14:27). You offer the loaves and fishes (Mt. 14:13-21) of the love of God that enables your wise students to choose to store up treasure in heaven where it will not mold or rust (Mt. 6:19).

For you, our dear Abbess and Spiritual Mother
are a lamp taken out from under a bushel (Mt. 5:15)
For all to bask in its light.

You are Chiara, light of light
ever radiant with the light of our Most Heavenly King
spotless bride of our Most Heavenly King
Truly your cup runneth over (Ps. 23:5) with holiness and virtue
Loving and healing all you encounter.

Daily you grow in your likeness to Christ
Beautiful mirror of Christ who has become perfect as our father in Heaven is perfect (Mt. 5:48).

You have taught us the ways of Christ's poverty
that have brought us such inestimable love and joy
Great is our love for you
Our esteemed teacher and loving sister in Christ.

An illustration of St. Clare of Assisi and St. Agnes of Prague (Creative Commons)

The sisters and I continue to rejoice in The Lord always (Phil. 4:4) and our joy increases as we journey along the path our Most Heavenly King has made for us, for He has so graciously made our paths straight (Prov. 3:6) as we continue to contemplate His Crucified Son in prayer. It is our deep desire to grow more and more like the Blessed Virgin, who so graciously pondered all things in her heart (Lk. 2:19). Our utmost respect for you, dear Abbess, grows as we see the truth and goodness of your counsel and your words to us, as you have encouraged us in emulating the poor and crucified Christ who possesses everything and, yet, chose to come into the world as a poor and humble servant who suffered many persecutions and deprivations. We can never hope to achieve the perfection in Christ that you have as a holy lady of glorious virtue, and we can only seek to learn from you the ways of holiness and accept your guidance and wisdom with most humble and grateful hearts. We have continued to adhere with gladness of heart (Eccl. 5:20) and with our whole hearts to all the instruction of Br. Elias as you have in your virtue have asked of us.

Day by day, we seek to love God with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind (Mt. 22:37) by choosing lives of holy simplicity, humility, and poverty in the image of Christ and by emulating your immense spiritual strength and beautiful powers. What joy we have in living a life of holy poverty and what freedom we have in Christ! We are free of the deadly shackles of filthy lucre (1 Tim. 3:3) that enslave so many we see.

Day by day, they dirty their hands in the market place trading coins and trusting in riches (Prov. 11:28) to satisfy the greedy longings of their greedy hearts. More and more of them move to the city seeking earthly treasure (Mt. 6:19) with insatiable desperation. How foolish they are! How ignorant they are, for only the friendship of our poor and humble Christ can satisfy their souls. At the end of their wasted lives they will perish with nothing and will never set foot in the many mansions (Jn. 14:2) in the eternal house of our Most Glorious King. There will be much weeping and gnashing of teeth (Lk. 13:28) as they learn it is too late to change their evil ways as they now live in hell and are damned forever.

Our Heavenly King suffered many tribulations in the world and, as his followers, we have also faced challenges and threat to our desire to live in his poverty. The Holy See in its concern for our survival sought to provide material support for us by providing us revenue from our hospice. We pray without ceasing (1 Thes. 5:17) for our Pope and we are grateful for his loving concern for us, and yet, we see that acquiring any income or resources would be for us taking our eyes of Blessed Jesus who guides us into lives of utter poverty and dependence. Our Lord who, as a newborn, was placed in a manger (Lk. 2:7), had no possessions of his own, and chose to trust unfailingly in God's goodness. We ardently desire to emulate him by ourselves eschewing all possessions and in doing so coming to possess Christ and coming to ever deeper awareness of his loving provision for us.

With great joy, we received the news that our most honorable Holy Pope Gregory IX has acknowledged and esteemed our desire for radical poverty by turning over all direction of the hospice to the most virtuous Confraternity of the Crosiers of the Red Star, who will care for this enterprise with utmost care, and thus free we poor and faulty sisters to continue to improve ourselves by devoting ourselves all the more to poverty and contemplation. It is my deep hope that our Blessed Pope Gregory IX Vicar of Christ, who holds the keys to the kingdom (Mt. 16:19), will see fit to accept our total renunciation from the hospice. Our minds are at ease that those entrusted with its care with do so in Christ as befits their unique call to his service. My dear brother King Wencelas, who is truly salt of the earth (Mt. 5:13), has been so graciously and steadfastly supportive of my desire to preserve the privilege of poverty for our Poor Ladies, and he assures me of his continued support as I continue to converse with our most esteemed and virtuous Pope Gregory IX on this most important topic.

You have set an exquisite example for us of how to fast, to abstain from all that is carnal, and we can never dream to achieve the sublime heights you have in your perfect discipline. So great is your self-mortification and so rigorous your discipline that Francis himself feared for your well-being and admonished you to temper your practices. We look to you, most pure Lady Clare, our role model of restraint and self-control, for advice on how we should proceed to fast given Pope Gregory's interest in having us forgo all meat at all times for ourselves and for all we serve. How shall we proceed to fulfill the Pope's desire for us and also stay true to our fasting practices already established by our dear Seraphic Father Francis? I wait for your wise counsel on this issue of great importance, your word fitly spoken like apples of gold in settings of silver (Prov. 25:11).

Farewell, dear queen of our Heavenly King. May your heart be continually filled with the fragrance of Christ (2 Cor 2:15), and may you be assured of our endless prayers for you, our dear Abbess, and all the Poor Ladies of St. Damiano. I beseech you also, holy lady and priceless spouse of Jesus Christ, to keep my sisters and me in your prayers as well.

Anne Millington is a Secular Franciscan and has an M.Div. from the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. She currently serves as a hospital chaplain at two Boston hospitals.

Blessing from St. Clare's second letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague

What you hold may you always hold.
What you do, may you always do
and never abandon.
But with swift pace, light step
and unswerving feet,
so that even your steps stir up no dust,
Go forward, the spirit of our
God has called you.

(Creative Commons)

Commemorating the Irish Capuchins: History, Heritage, and Memory

By Brian Kirby, Ph.D (Irish Capuchin Archives)

The last two years have been marked by two significant milestones for the Capuchin Franciscan Order in Ireland. In 2015, the Friars celebrated the 400th anniversary of their arrival in Ireland. In 2016, they commemorated the centenary of the Easter Rising, a week-long insurrection launched by Irish nationalists against British rule with the aim of establishing an independent Irish Republic. Several Capuchin Friars played a very significant role in the Rising, most notably in providing practical assistance and spiritual solace to those caught up in this most turbulent week in Irish history. They gave spiritual assistance to combatants, civilians, rebels and military alike, and heard the confessions and offered spiritual solace to all of the rebel leaders who were subsequently executed for their role in the Rising.

The focus of this article is not on expounding this history. The commemorations of the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the Order in Ireland and the Easter Rising centenary celebrations offered a genuine opportunity to publicise the wider connections between the Capuchin Franciscan Friars and key events in Irish history. This paper will examine how the Capuchins approached commemorating these events in ways which were both accurate in their content and appropriate and reflective in tone. It will also assess the challenges faced by the religious archivist in creating a programme of events designed to celebrate these milestone anniversaries of the Friars' ministry in Ireland.

Commemoration and Archives

It is perhaps ironic that interest in religious archives in Ireland is thriving at a time when religious faith and interest in scholarly religious studies is declining. This has ensured that religious archives must work harder to justify themselves as necessary institutions. A question frequently asked of a religious archivist is who will look at these records if Church attendance and religious scholarship is in decline?

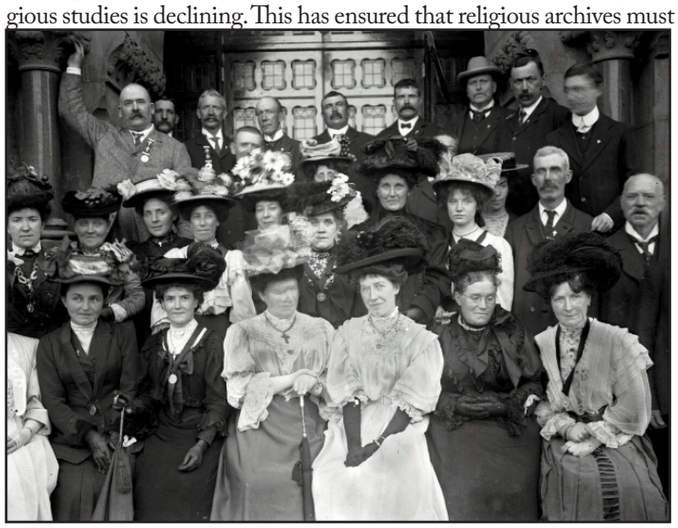


Fig. 1: A group of members of the Confraternity of the Third Order of St Francis at the door to St Mary of the Angels, Church Street, Dublin, c.1910. (Irish Capuchin Archives).

It must be recalled that religious archives have as part of their mission the documentation of the intangible. In this instance, the records of the Irish Capuchin Archives document the faithfulness of a group of men to the Church—a context which is no less real for being wholly spiritual. Without these records, we can only guess at this degree of faithfulness. This presents a challenge for documentation and archives. It is a challenge not faced to the same degree, if at all, by secular archives.

Institutionally, archives are conceived as public and impartial places where all of history may be found rather than only some of it. In religious archives, no such impartial perspective can be found. They hold collections which, for the most part, self-identify with a particular faith. This self-identification could be viewed as problematic in a post-confessional society in which religion is sometimes viewed as an unwelcome interjection in public discourse. This documentation of the privacy of faith is therefore set against the tradition of the secular, public, and pluralistic archives.

This poses a serious challenge for the archivist seeking to promote a scholarly appreciation of an archival collection associated with a particular religious congregation. Conceptually, a key way of overcoming this difficulty is to illustrate how many records in religious archives have both an evidential value and a symbolic value. Records of lay confraternities and associations of the devout in Ireland can be used as an example. (Fig. 1). These institutions were deeply rooted in Irish life for generations, reaching their peak in the late 19th and early 20th centuries before being almost completely swept away in a few short years from the late 1960s onwards. It can be stated that these records have three types of value:

Informationally: They attest to the names, dates of birth, and addresses of people in a parish or locality.

Evidentially: They attest to the general popularity of the practices and social functions associated with lay societies, sodalities, and religious fraternities at a particular time.

Symbolically: They attest to the faithfulness and devotion of the local populace to a particular charism of a society and confraternity.

Religious archives are crucial to the historical process as they document intangible and symbolic values highlighting, in this instance, popularity of piety and ceremonial culture among the populace whilst providing evidential proof of the Catholic devotional upsurge in the 19th century and the contribution of religious orders to this growth. Church archives, therefore, should not gloss over the religious or spiritual aspect of its mission. For religious archives to ignore the importance of religious belief and the practices those beliefs engendered would seem to ignore a significant portion of what makes a church different from any other organised social group. The use of these kinds

of records does however force the archivist to find a particular narrative to interpret a source or record which acknowledges both its evidential and symbolic value.

It is recognised that the records of religious congregations form a major part of the archival inheritance of Ireland. Alongside the records held in diocesan archives, manuscript, and library collections of the major male and female congregations of the religious are of significance in a wider, national context. This is particularly true of religious archives in the 19th and 20th centuries which document a period of unprecedented expansion and latterly contraction for religious orders and which record their unique contribution to Irish society.

The Irish urban landscape was transformed by the building of monasteries, friaries, convents, seminaries, schools, hospitals, orphanages, and asylums. Religious orders also played a significant role in many key areas of Irish life: education, the care of the sick, political and cultural life, and the promotion of the role of women in society. Original material comprises foundation records, annals, rules and constitutions, correspondence, records of mission work, profession books, account books, school registers, hospital and orphanage records, diaries, photographs, film, liturgical books, artifacts, and church plate. These records represent a major source for historians seeking to understand much of our recent history.

Telling the Story of the Irish Capuchins

So how can an archival patrimony shape a commemorative programme designed to tell the 400-year-old story of the Irish Capuchins? It was decided to produce an extensive exhibition to commemorate the quadricentenary of the arrival of the Capuchins in Ireland. Thirty-four large format (1000mm x 1800mm) panels were produced for the exhibition. (Fig. 2). Making extensive use of the Order's archival collection, the exhibition told the story of friars who opposed the persecution of faith, worked for the poor, and who supported the independence struggle in the early 20th century. It also explored the contribution made by the Capuchin Friars to culture and education and describes how many Friars journeyed from Ireland to far-flung missionary fields in America, Africa, and Asia. Given the importance of creating a narrative using both evidential and symbolic source material, some thought clearly had to be given to what exactly what we wanted to say and how we would say it. The exhibition text was governed by the need to be:

Evocative: That is to celebrate and commemorate the friars and their ministry in Ireland over the past four centuries.

Didactic: That is to teach and educate the public about Capuchin history in Ireland.

By adopting this approach we hoped to ensure that the commemorative exhibition was showing for a distinct purpose. We framed the exhibition narrative under some principal headings:

Subject Areas: The early Franciscans; the Capuchin Reform; the arrival of the friars in Ireland; the continental colleges and foundations of the exiled Irish Capuchins in the 17th and 18th centuries; 19th-century struggles; Fr. Theobald Mathew OFM Cap. and his temperance campaign; local foundation histories; World War I chaplains; 1916 Rising; the thematic areas of culture; education; overseas missions; modern apostolates.

Chronological: The narrative is for the most part chronological.

Geographical: A particular focus on the history of Capuchins in the localities where they have foundations and houses.

Thematic: Early Franciscan history; early modern history; mission history; architectural history; print and culture; Irish Revolution.

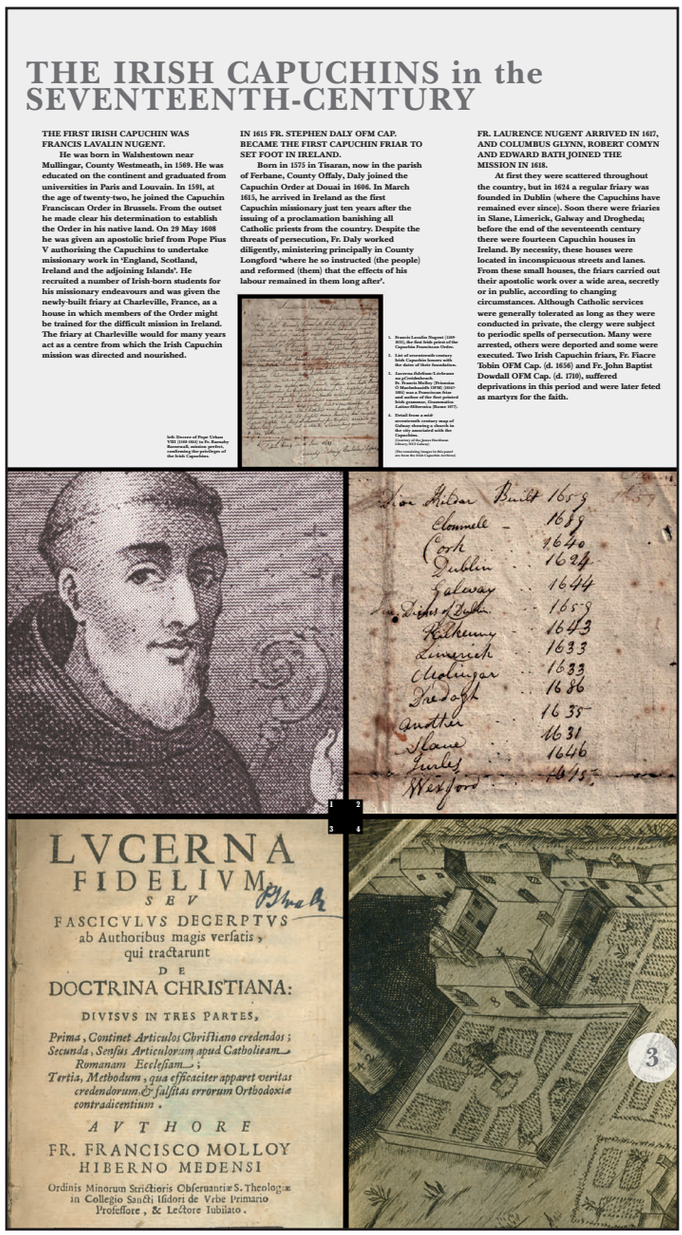


Fig. 2: A panel from the 400th Anniversary Exhibition exploring the experiences of the Irish Capuchin Friars in the Seventeenth Century. (Irish Capuchin Archives).

The immediate commemorative context of the 1916 Rising and the struggle for Irish independence remained a notable topic as there was a prominent public awareness of the role played by the Capuchins in 1916, but our goal was to place the events of the Rising in their proper historical context.

Particular consideration was given to how this story was to be conveyed. A balance had to be struck between a distinctly academic and a public history tone. A way to address this challenge was to prioritize personal narratives in the story. Photographs of individual friars along with their own testimonies and accounts provided this personal dimension and reinforced the idea that the history being told was very much reflective of individual experiences and the vowed life of a Capuchin Franciscan Friar (Fig. 3). The unchanging nature of some religious customs such as the wearing of the habit (which became widespread in Capuchin communities in Ireland in the 1860s), and the distinctive beard worn by the Friars also reinforced this sense of continuity with the past.

Fig. 3: A group of Capuchin Friars with musical instruments in Kilkenny in c.1905. (Irish Capuchin Archives).

It can be difficult to consistently expand upon this personal dimension in an exhibition narrative. So much of the archival record of the religious consists of names without any form of context. In many instances, and particularly for the period before 1800, the only surviving records of Irish Capuchin activity are administrative and statistical in nature. Extracts from profession books give lists of Irishmen who joined the Capuchins in continental houses from the late 16th onwards but provide precious little detail about how these men ministered in fraternity in the service of the Church. Imaginative use was therefore made of the surviving material, such as an 18th-century account book, recording the activities of questing friars in Dublin (Fig. 4). An annotation left by an Irish friar on a late 18th-century theological text offered a tantalizing glimpse into lives formed by devotional practice, contemplation, and observance. (Fig. 5).

Visual Sources and Artifacts

An overriding issue in the exhibition was the need to include highly visual sources to support and enhance the narrative. Artistic representations of houses and churches of the Capuchins on the continent, such as the famous painting of the choir of the Capuchin Friary near the Piazza Barberini in Rome by François Marius Granet (Fig. 6) or images of former Irish Capuchin foundations in France, offer some insight into the physical footprint left by the friars. (Fig. 7).

In the later modern period, the greater confidence of the Catholic Church in 19th-century Ireland manifested itself in its physical arrangements. It told of the relaxation and eventual lifting (in 1829) of the legal disabilities (Penal Laws) which were enacted against Catholics in an attempt to force conformity to the Anglican Church. From the 1830s, new Catholic Churches replaced the humbler makeshifts. Underscoring this was a more assertive and prosperous Catholic laity. The Capuchins benefited from these developments. They replaced their ruinous 18th-century chapel in Dublin with the present-day St. Mary of the Angels on Church Street in the heart of the city (Fig. 8). A similar embellishment in terms of the architectural footprint of the friars took place in Cork where the Capuchins swapped the modest chapel built by Fr. Arthur O'Leary OFM Cap. (1729-1802) for the soaring neo-Gothic Holy Trinity Church, conceived by the temperance campaigner, Fr. Theobald Mathew OFM Cap. (1790-1856) and

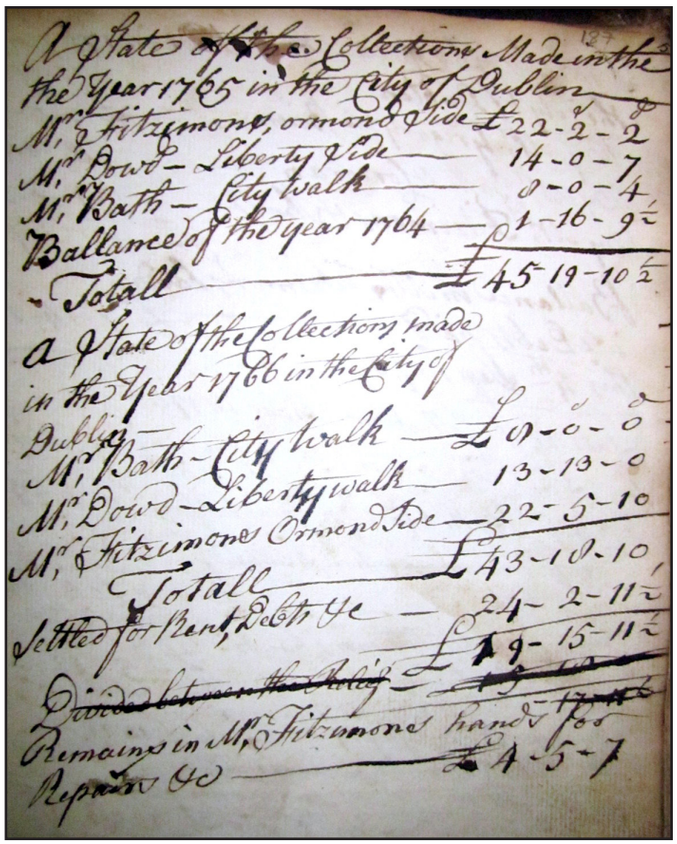


Fig. 4: Questing accounts of the Capuchin Friars in Dublin, 1765-6. (Irish Capuchin Archives).

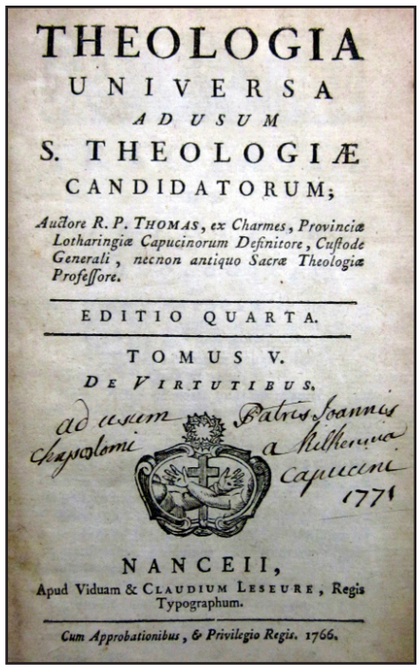


Fig. 5: The title page of Theologia Universa ad usum S. Theologiæ (1765) by Thomas de Charmes (1703-65) annotated by Fr. John Chrysostom Murphy OFM Cap. in 1777. Fr. Murphy (d. 13 June 1817) was an Irish Capuchin Friar who ministered in his native county of Kilkenny. (Irish Capuchin Archives).

built over a protracted period in the latter-half of the 19thcentury. (Fig. 9). This transition to grandiose church buildings exemplifies how images of physical space can be used to tell a larger story.

Narratives based upon archival collections can also be used to explain how ritualistic iconography and artistic style impacted upon the devotional lives of the laity. Personal piety required accessories, and images of these simple tokens of faith can enhance accounts of

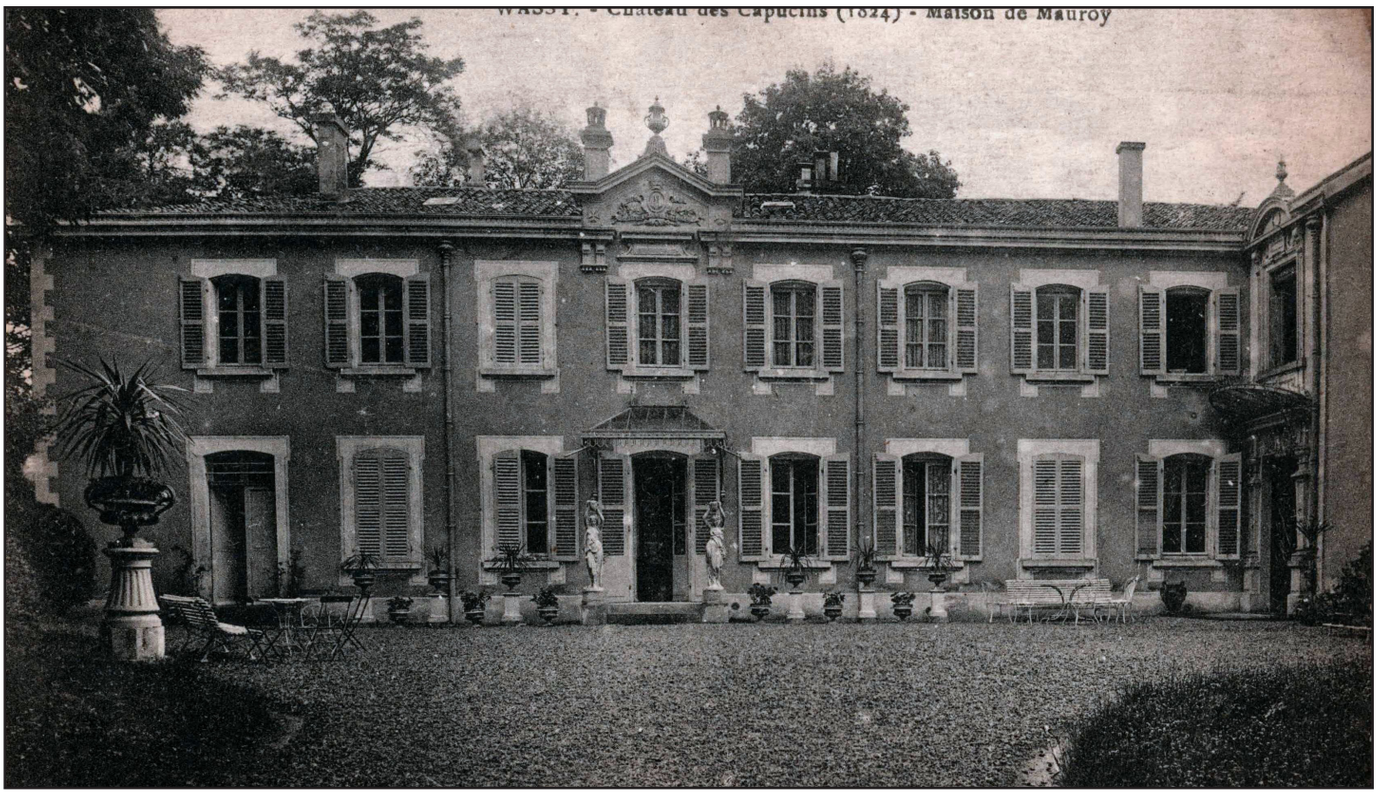


Fig. 6: Le Choeur de la Chapelle des Capucins, Rome (c.1808) by François Marius Granet (1775-1849). This image of the choir, a long hall with friars standing at pews, would have been very typical of many Capuchin houses in Europe in the eighteenth century. (By permission of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

Fig. 7: The exterior of the former Irish Capuchin Friary in Wassy, France. This building was occupied by the Irish Capuchins from 1685 until the 1790s when it was closed by the revolutionary government. (Irish Capuchin Archives).

the history of Irish Catholicism. These accessories included missals and catechisms, rosaries, religious medals, temperance badges, relics, souvenirs from pilgrimages, mission and retreat cards, amulets, and tokens. Lay members of the Third Order of St. Francis wore a cord around their waist and a scapular around their shoulders. All these artifacts can assist the archivist and historian in documenting the intangible and the symbolic which lay at the heart of lay devotional practices.

Print Culture

The religious orders were instrumental in cementing Irish Catholic identity through print culture. Legitimate criticism may well be levelled at a literary output which tended to fuse Gaelic, Catholic, and nationalist in a uniform historic identity, but such works must be viewed in the context of the time. The Capuchin Annual, published by the Irish Capuchins from 1930-77, reflected this paradigm as one of the most celebrated Catholic journals of 20th-century Ireland. (Fig. 10). It is certainly the publication for which the Irish friars are most remembered. As part of the wider commemorative programme celebrating the quadricentenary, it was decided to digitise and make available online (for the first time) the complete set of The Capuchin Annual. The Annuals are now freely available for scholarly research. The online files form a component part of the Irish Capuchin Franciscan website thereby creating a live link between the heritage of the Order and their present-day work and ministries in Ireland.

The commemorative narrative on The Capuchin Annual focuses on its role as a distinctly Catholic organ but also assesses how it mirrored many facets of 20th-century Irish life, ranging from social, political, and cultural matters to its promotion of a wide-reaching spirituality. Here, too, the analysis blended the evidential and didactic with the symbolic. The Annual may well have expounded instruction

Fig. 8: St Mary of the Angels, Dublin (built from 1865-81). The photograph shows the building from an elevated position on the opposite side of Church Street in c.1900. (Irish Capuchin Archives).

in the Franciscan way of life, but it did so with an astute and broadly attractive choice of contributors who were well known in religious, literary, intellectual, and artistic circles. What distinguished it from other periodicals that became politicised was the sheer professionalism of the publication. The Annual may have displayed a distinct editorial bias in favour of a Catholic and nationalist view of Ireland, but there was a distinctiveness to the religious artistry employed to illustrate this message which was complemented by a sound editorial instinct for spotting new talent. It was an Irish institution, popular at home and abroad, and more importantly it faithfully reflected Catholic thinking and culture in 20th-century Ireland.

Perhaps the principle challenge in compiling a narrative on the Irish Capuchins is the widespread sense of indifference now displayed by many Irish people, particularly young adults, towards traditional Catholic practices. The pervading sense is that Irish Catholicism in the 20th century fashioned a world which was surrounded by boundaries of negativity and a fear of sin. When one looks at the photographs of the laity at Croagh Patrick, a historic site of pilgrimage situated on Ireland's western seaboard, there is a sense that such devotions were undertaken partly to purge oneself of sin. (Fig. 11). Negative connotations also arise when one reads in numerous historic Capuchin publications exaggerated claims about the dangers of Freemasonry, Protestantism, Communism, and other so-called "world conspiracies." Any narrative on this subject will have to concede that religious culture in Ireland in this period did not place a very high value on individual freedom or personal choice. The laity had to be protected from evil literature and other forms of impropriety. A reflective piece will have to include the negative facets of a Catholicism built in part on devotionalism, anti-intellectualism, and clericalism. The discerning modern reader will be all too aware of these traits.

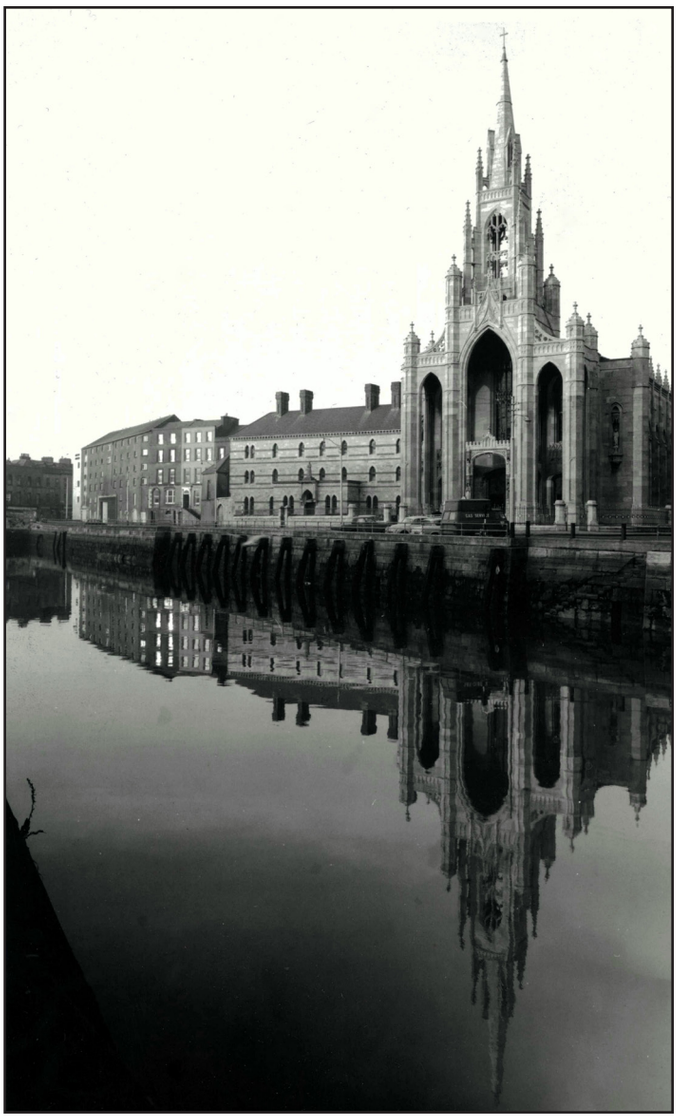


Fig. 9: Holy Trinity Church and the adjoining Capuchin Friary, Cork. Construction on the Church started in 1825 but was not completed until 1890. (Irish Capuchin Archives).

The Capuchin Annual may well have done a public service in promoting a greater appreciation of the arts but among the numerous advertisements carried by the publication were regular appeals for funds for Catholic-run orphanages, residential institutions, industrial schools, and Magdalene Laundries. The uncovering of the endemic abuse suffered by some individuals in these institutions cannot be overlooked and it is important that these stories remain part of the narrative. The narrative explicitly accepts that the Church involved itself in matters which stretched far beyond the purely spiritual and pastoral. It also acknowledges that in its attempts to enrich people's lives with its rituals, practices, and sacraments it too often slipped into a damaging clerical invasiveness frequently leading to hurt, suffering, and alienation.

Conclusion

There is little doubt that the commemorations of the past two years have encouraged a more reflective assessment of the Capuchins'

role in the complex and sometimes troubled history of Ireland. The primary focus during the year of the quadricentenary was to commemorate all the Capuchin friars who have served the church and society, and not just those who received acclaim for their ministrations during the 1916 Rising. One of the long-term benefits of the commemorative work is the conscientising of the Capuchins themselves in terms of making the friars more aware of their own history and heritage. Also, positive was the linking of the historical ministries performed by the Capuchins, most notably during the 1916 Rising, to the modern apostolates of the friars in Ireland. This was a recurring theme of many of the liturgical events marking the heritage commemorations. The exhibition and the many other commemorative projects reinforced this linkage between archives, historical memory, past ministries, and current evangelisation.

Particular attention was also given to heritage stories which exemplified living contributions to Franciscan life. The long tradition of the Capuchins working with the marginalized in Irish society was emphasized. The ministry of social activists like the late Fr. Donal O'Mahony OFM Cap. (1936-2010), the founder of Threshold, Ireland's principal not-for-profit national housing agency, was referred to. In a similar vein, the ongoing work of Br. Kevin Crowley OFM Cap. in combating homelessness, social exclusion, and chronic addiction in Dublin follows on in this tradition. Another feature of evangelisation is the Irish Capuchin contribution to the missionary movement in Africa in the 20thcentury. Over 100 Irish Friars have ministered in South Africa and Zambia since the start of the Order's work on the continent in the late 1920s. The idea of an "Irish spiritual empire," discourses about the nationality and religious identities of the missionary friars, social activism, healthcare provision, and post-colonial interpretations of the Christian mission would benefit from a study of the Irish Capuchins' archival collection.

The exhibition and the commemorative work on the history of the Capuchins in Ireland presupposes that the reader will not judge the past by the standards of the present and project contemporary ways of thought backward in time. The Order's past actions, and indeed those of the Irish Catholic Church as a whole, can only be fairly judged on the basis of its own norms and the erstwhile culture of the times. The commemorative programme offered a balanced and contextual view of the Capuchin Order's presence in Ireland both in terms of its contribution to culture and to people's lives in the public, private, and spiritual domains.

Fig. 11: Pilgrims ascending Croagh Patrick, County Mayo in c.1905. (Irish Capuchin Archives).

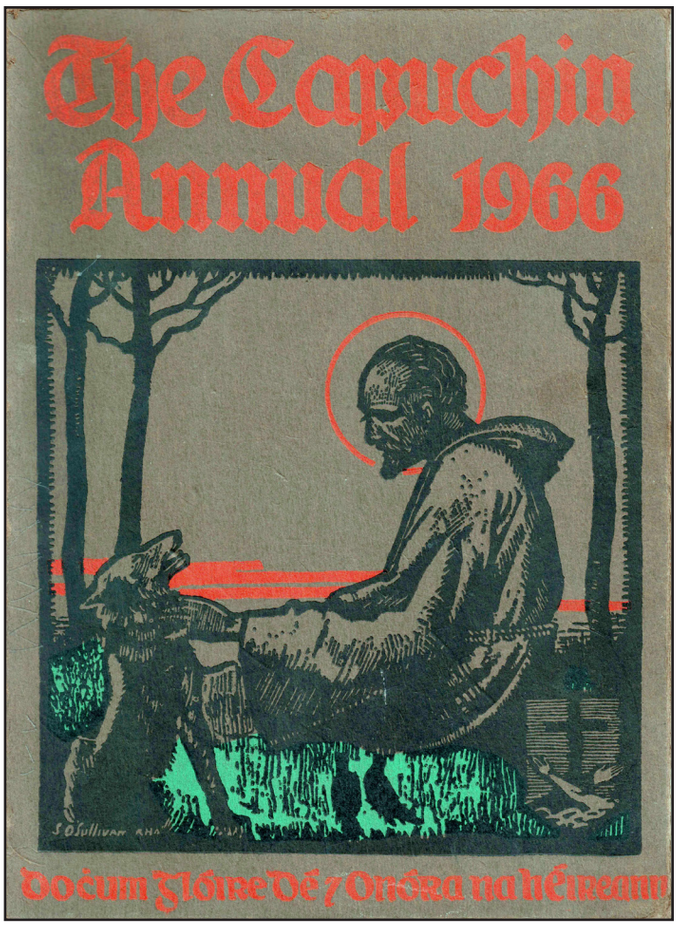


Fig. 10: The cover of the 1966 edition of The Capuchin Annual. The complete run of The Capuchin Annual (1930-77) is now available to view online at www.capuchinfranciscans.ie/capuchin-annual-1930-1977

Brian Kirby holds a PhD in history from Maynooth University, and a Masters in Archives and Records Management from University College Dublin. As a postdoctoral studentship holder, he worked for four years in the manuscripts' department of the National Library of Ireland cataloguing the papers of Éamonn Ceannt, one of the signatories to the 1916 Proclamation, the correspondence of John Redmond, the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and the extensive Inchiquin Estate Paper collection. He has also worked for the Irish Department of Education in creating documentary and archives' resources for the senior secondary school syllabus. He has lectured on the MA in Archives and Records Management course in University College Dublin examining access and advocacy issues particularly in relation to the use of archives in exhibitions, websites and education projects. As a professional archivist, he has worked almost exclusively on the historical collections of the religious in Ireland including those held by the Congregation of Irish Dominican Sisters. For the past six years he has worked as the archivist for the Capuchin Franciscan Order in Ireland.

Hear the Cry of the Earth Through the Heart of Francis

By Teresine Glaser, OSF

As Pope Francis composed his recent encyclical letter calling all people to take responsibility for caring for our common home, he chose for its introductory words, "Laudato Si, me Signore"[1]—that precious phrase embedded in the very soul of Franciscan spirituality: "Praise be to you, my Lord." Acknowledging that no human is worthy even to mention the Most High's name, Francis, the poet, enlists all creatures to help him praise our common Creator.[2] Francis, the pope, in his encyclical, enlists human participation to protect our common home provided for us by the Most High for the wellbeing of all its inhabitants.

While Pope Francis calls all persons to their common responsibility for protecting this home, it seems only logical that persons who publically profess walking in the footsteps of Francis, as he walked in the footsteps of Christ, bear not only a greater responsibility to act upon Pope Francis' invitation, but also a responsibility to review the life decisions of Francis that formed the Canticle of Creatures in his heart. An analogy may be helpful. In 2007, when Pope Benedict XVI beatified Franz Jagerstatter, an Austrian farmer who was beheaded in 1943 subsequent to his refusal, on religious grounds, to enlist in Nazi combat, his widow, Franziska, and his four daughters were present for his beatification. I remember being deeply touched by imagining the memories these women held in their hearts as they recalled the shaping of Franz' commitment that led eventually to this moment. In a somewhat analogous manner, Franciscans, holding the memory of Francis, their founder, must be moved more deeply than others, as they recall his life decisions which, near the end of his life, burst forth from the very depth of his being in the Canticle of Creatures. Some have called this composition Francis' Summa. In this paper, using Francis' autobiographical description of his conversion, I review his formative journey from intense self-absorption to participation in the "universal fraternity of all creation under the same God" from which emerged his Canticle of Creatures.[3] It is my hope that by listening to Francis of Assisi, we may discover a compelling model for personal conversions required to respond to Pope Francis' exhortation to protect our common home.

Francis' Journey into Conversion

Francis, in the early 1180s, was born into a profoundly restless socio-economic-political-ecclesial society. The causes of this restlessness were numerous and interconnected. The feudal system that had developed in the wake of the interrelated disintegration of the Roman empire and the migration of warring groups into the geographic area we now call Europe began crumbling in the wake of long-distance trade, the advent of a coinage system replacing the barter system, the embryonic development of cities and the emergence of a class system that excluded the poor from participation in or benefiting from these changes. Very simply stated, in the context of Francis' time, we speak of the minores (the excluded landless) and the majores (those benefiting from the transition from the feudal land-holding system to a mercantile system). In his 2015 course entitled "Assisi in the Time of Francis" given at St. Bonaventure, Jean-Francois Godet-Calogeras advised his students that without understanding the Assisi of Francis' youth, they would not understand the essence of the Franciscan movement. Francis was born into the majores but, in the process his conversion, left it in order to live as and among the excluded, i.e. the minores. In one of his few autobiographical statements, Francis states the reason for this choice.

> 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 (Test 1-3).[4]

How do penance, sin, lepers, and mercy relate with each other in Francis' experience? And how does the interrelationship of these four experiences in Francis' life relate with Pope Francis' encyclical, Laudato Si—and uniquely with Franciscans? Since it was through his going among lepers that, according to Francis, he experienced the nature of his sin, we turn first to consider how God utilized lepers as the instrument of grace to enlighten Francis, thereby initiating his conversion. Before doing this, let us pause briefly to consider who Francis was at the onset of this encounter. That Francis, as a youth, dreamed of knighthood and actively pursued this is commonly known to those interested in his life. In 1204, he set out to join Walter of Brienne's army to achieve his goal through participation in the Fourth Crusade for reasons explained only as a response to a dream, he abandoned this goal and returned to Assisi.

Andre Vauchez describes Francis' life, after his return to Assisi, as one characterized by "torpor and melancholy, interspersed now and then with new feelings and revelations, ever more specific, about what meaning to give to his life, even as he maintained his previous aspirations."[5] He suggests that Francis was experiencing "a difficult period during which interludes of physical weakness and confusion alternated with moments of intense exhilaration. He often withdrew at

1 Pope Francis, Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home (Frederick, Maryland: The Word Among Us Press, 2015).

2 Francis of Assisi, The Canticle of The Creatures, in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. 1, The Saint, trans. and ed. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short (New York: New City Press, 1999), 113. Hereafter this volume is referred to as FA:ED 1 followed by page numbers.

3 Michael F. Cusato, "Hermitage or Marketplace? The Search for an Authentic Francis Locus in the World," in Spirit and Life: A Journal of Contemporary Franciscanism 10 (2000), 11.

4 Francis of Assisi, Testament 1-3, in FA: ED 1, 124.

5 Andre Vauchez, Francis of Assisi: the life and afterlife of a medieval saint, trans. Michael F. Cusato (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 22.

***Legend of St Francis, Sermon to the Birds* by Giotto (Creative Commons)**

a distance to pray, especially into a grotto, but he never found any real serenity there."[6] Francis continued to work for a time in Pietro's business, until both found this unbearable. Francis left his parental home. We recall Giotto's graphic portrayal of Francis returning his clothing to his angry father. Vauchez states, "Francis was not an outlaw nor would he ever be. He was simply detaching himself from institutions which had become oppressive—the family and the commune—and was going to find a status with the institutional church as a penitent, thus guaranteeing his spiritual freedom."[7]

Vauchez suggests: "Rather than the word 'conversion,' which in our vocabulary evokes a brutal rupture with previous beliefs and practices, the term "turnaround" [understood as a day-by-day process] is probably more appropriate to describe this period of searching, marked by the progressive passage from knightly values to a program of life founded on the Gospel."[8] In the midst of this experience of alienation from and dissatisfaction with his early dreams and estrangement from previous companions, Francis tells us, "The Lord gave me such faith in churches that I would pray with simplicity in this way and say: 'We adore You, Lord Jesus Christ, in all Your churches throughout the whole world and we bless you because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world,'" (Testament 4-5).[9] Vauchez draws our attention to Francis' use of the term "churches" rather than "the Church." He states:

> One would understand if he had written that he had great faith in the Church. But the use of the plural precludes this interpretation. We must recognize that he wanted to signify by this that churches as buildings had played an essential role in his conversion, for it was there while mediating and praying in front of the crucifix and the altar, that he had encountered God and understood the meaning of the mysteries of salvation, especially the Incarnation and Passion of Christ.[10]

"And the Lord Himself led me among lepers . . ."

It was at some point during this period that Francis responded to profound grace allowing God to lead him among lepers. But how did Francis' going among lepers help him understand that he had been living "in sin" and therefore needed to do penance? Lepers in Francis' day were among the excluded dregs of Assisi. The sight and smell of lepers instilled horror in the eyes and stomachs of people. Yet this was the very group of humanity through whom God planned to work in Francis' soul. Early hagiographers place this encounter towards the end of Francis' conversion experience. However, recent scholars place it at the origin of his conversion giving it prime significance. Vauchez, for example, states:

> By emphasizing in his Testament that his encounter with lepers had been at the origin of his process of conversion, Francis clearly indicates that it was neither his praying nor his earlier dreams that changed his life, but rather this particular event. His generous attitude toward the disadvantaged had not been the fruit of his religious evolution; on the contrary, it had preceded his discovery of the Gospel and was the cause of that discovery.[11]

Noting that hagiographers and artists miss this point, Vauchez continues:

> . . . In fact, the testimony which Francis left us in his Testament ("the Lord led me among the lepers and I did mercy to them") helps us to understand that it is precisely because he had encountered the lepers and because he had been overwhelmed by this event that he was, consequently, moved by the depicted representation of the God-man, poor and suffering, which he was contemplating at San Damiano. In other words, Francis' conscience needed the mediation of his neighbor in order to encounter God.[12]

Emphasizing that it was Francis' encounter with lepers that prepared his soul for his experience with Christ on the crucifix at San Damiano, Vauchez continues:

6 Ibid.
7 Ibid. 26.
8 Vauchez, 22.
9 Francis of Assisi, The Testament 4-5, in FA: ED 1, 124-5.
10 Vauchez, 30. See Vauchez 23-30 for further discussion of this period.
11 Vauchez, 24.
12 Vauchez, 25.

***St Francis 1898* by Albert Chevallier Tayler**
(Creative Commons)

> . . . Thus, to bring this experience back to its primary meaning, we can say that, probably for the first time in the history of Christianity, a person had been so overwhelmed at the sight of an image of Christ on the cross that a new type of relationship was being established between God and Francis—and that his life was changed as a result. Taking the words that he had heard literally, Francis immediately began to work on the restoration of this ruined structure.[13]

In the interest of historical accuracy it is important to note that Francis does not tell us that he encountered a leper, dismounted his horse and embraced her/him. Cusato states:

> While the hagiographers tend to cast this experience as a one-on-one encounter, Francis himself writes about it as an encounter among lepers (plural). It is quite customary for a hagiographer to heighten the importance and intensity of such events by interfacing the saint with another individual figure. What is crucial, however, is not so much how such an encounter might have actually occurred but rather how that encounter ultimately affected and shaped Francis and his spirituality in the aftermath.[14]

Placing great importance upon his interaction with lepers Francis states clearly: "the Lord Himself led me among them [lepers] and I showed mercy to them." Andre Vauchez, in his study of St. Francis, states:

> The sight of lepers seems to have acted on Francis like a mirror of his own condition of sin. In not turning away from these repulsive people who, in the medieval mind, incarnated not only a horrible malady but also the suspicion of a hereditary defect or some abnormal sexual behavior which would have caused it, Francis overcame the obstacle and humbly recognized that he, too, shared an analogous condition.
>
> . . . Instead of the feeling of horror . . . Francis felt a kind of happiness. For him, the disadvantaged were no longer

13 Ibid.
14 Michael F. Cusato, "TO DO PENANCE / Facere poenitentiam, The Cord, 57.1 (2007), 9-10n12.

lepers but brothers, since he had experienced in himself a radical change.[15]

Cusato queries the meaning, for Francis, of his encounter with lepers and how this experience, by extension, would be absorbed into the Franciscan movement. He notes that early hagiographers suggest some miraculous personal encounter with Christ. However, he states:

> If we could draw back the veil of piety through which we tend to read this seminal experience of the founder, we might be able to appreciate it for the profoundly human encounter which it was. Francis, repelled by the sight of lepers, found himself one day in their midst. This time, however, through the power of grace, he was able to see the leper no longer as a repulsive object but rather as a human person, indeed a suffering human being. He had been socialized by Assisi to avoid and ignore lepers, to account them as nothing; but suddenly, his eyes were opened to see them as truly human beings like himself, worthy of dignity and value. Moreover, through the very people whom he had previously been taught to account as having no significance whatsoever, Francis began to see the face of Christ, the suffering Christ. Therefore, contrary to what he had been taught by Assisi, Francis came to recognize that all men and women, even the seemingly most insignificant and repulsive among them, were bearers of the presence of Christ—all are brothers and sisters, one to another fratres et sorores of the same creator God.[16]

". . . and I showed mercy to them."

What moved Francis from repulsion to mercy? Surely Francis was responding to profound grace. However, it is important to intuit that God's grace was not bestowed solely upon Francis, but that God's grace was active also in the hearts of the lepers who, though they may have remembered Francis with some bitterness as the wealthy son of Pietro Bernardone, now opened their hearts to his embrace. Andre Vauchez, who specializes in studying the history of the laity in the Middle Ages, provides background related to the awakening of mercy in the hearts of the laity during the late 12th and early 13th centuries. He states, "It is during this period, following the exhortation of Christ in his Beatitudes . . . that this notion began to be applied not only to sinners but also to the poor, to pilgrims, to the sick and prisoners, and that the aid that one might bring to these unfortunates—the works of mercy—could be a privileged means for entering the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt 25:34-37)."[17] To what extent Francis may have developed some awareness of this attitude as he matured is unclear; however, we gather from reading about Clare di Favarone's mother, Ortolana, that women of Assisi were mindful of the poor and offered them assistance. Francis may have imbibed some of this concern from his mother, Lady Pica. Whatever the case, Vauchez states, "Penance, peace, and mercy were to become the watchwords of Franciscan preaching and to inspire concrete actions through which people could make amends for their faults."[18]

In the day-by-day process of his conversion, or "turnabout," Francis gradually found ways to utilize his native talents and ideals in a merciful manner to assist and live among persons excluded from Assisi's social fabric. For example, Vauchez states:

> In the last analysis, it was a question of giving up the logic of exclusion which predominates in this world in order to live according to "mercy," which, on the contrary, puts the excluded and the poor at the center of the feast. For Francis, this fundamental reversal was translated into an overturning of the logic of his reactions: "And going away from them [the lepers], all that had seemed bitter to me was changed for me into sweetness of soul and body," as he writes in his Testament. A similar reversal also occurs with respect to food: this rich young man, who was used to choice and refined cuisine and had never touched food that was not to his liking, took a bowl and went begging from door to door. But the mélange of wretched foods in his bowl threatened to make him nauseous. However, overcoming his repugnance, he began to eat, and "it seemed to him that he had never tasted foods of such deliciousness." These remarks on taste are no hagiographical or literary clichés. There is, in Francis, a knowledge of people and things according to taste, smell, and flavor which places him miles apart from any purely intellectual knowledge of the divine mystery.[19]

Is it possible, even helpful, to imagine Francis remaining "the life of the party," but now among the socially excluded of Assisi?

". . . for when I was in sin . . ."

What was it about Francis' experience "among lepers" that revealed to him that prior to this experience he had been "in sin," i.e. what is his new understanding of sin and his complicity in it?

Michael Cusato insists that regardless of the way this encounter actually occurred, "it is important to state at the outset that this moment represents the experience of grace par excellence in the life of Francis. For, from a Christian perspective, nothing other than grace can have the life-changing effect—the complete reversal of values which this experience worked within Francis—that this encounter had upon him. Indeed, to such an extent that, for him, bitter distaste and revulsion was suddenly transformed into mercy and sweetness."[20] Cusato continues,

> . . . what is critical for us to grasp is that in this moment Francis encountered, perhaps for the very first time in his life, truly suffering human beings: men and women, not unlike himself, whom the Assisi of his youth had taught him were of no account, people to be avoided, shunned, and despised. These were part of that mass of people who constituted the invisible of Assisi, who added nothing to the "honor and glory and increase" of this city-on-the-move and who had no voice in the affairs and actions of the town. In short, in the lepers Francis had come face-

15 Vauchez, 23.
16 Cusato, "Hermitage or Marketplace?" 10-11.
17 Vauchez, 23-24.
18 Vauchez, 24. See Vauchez for further insights regarding this topic.
19 Vauchez, 31-32
20 Cusato, "To Do Penance," 10.

to-face with the poor: those nameless, faceless, voiceless of every time and generation who are deemed the minores; those who do not count. The lepers were no empty ciphers, no mere vehicles, through whom Francis encountered what really mattered: Christ. No, he or she was the privileged and sacred place where the human reality created by God was to be encountered first and foremost—because always dismissed and therefore missed.

In that encounter, therefore, Francis came to the cardinal insight of his life: namely that all men and women without exception are creatures created by the same Creator God; that all men and women without exception have been endowed with the same grace of salvation offered to all; that all men and women without exception have been endowed with the same inestimable dignity and worth; and that all men and women, without exception, are fratres et soreres—brothers and sisters—one to another sprung from the hand of the same life-giving God. This is what I have called elsewhere Francis' insight of the universal fraternity of all creatures. This is the natural condition of human beings on this earth; this is how God intends that we live with and for each other. And it all starts with Francis' graced encounter with that most difficult of all creatures: the human person. From this insight flows everything else that will be a part of his spirituality.

For everything that ruptures this universal fraternity of all creatures is what constitutes, for Francis, sin. Sin for him is not really about private and personal foibles. Rather, it is primarily about all these attitudes, behaviors, and actions that threaten to fracture the human fraternity, by setting oneself over or against another, dividing the human family and frustrating the designs of God for their intended purposes. It is, in other words, all these things which blind us to this divinely-inspired reality. This is what Francis means when he tells us that, before he was given this graced insight, he had been "in sin" (in peccatis): unable to realize and act upon God's vision for the human race. But after this encounter, he describes himself as having embarked upon a life of "doing penance." For to understand what Francis meant by sin is to understand what he meant by "doing penance" for that sin.[21]

"The Lord gave me . . . thus to begin doing penance in this way . . ."

Now, grasping for the first time a true understanding of his sinful state, Francis committed himself to a life of penance which meant for him "to begin to consciously distance [himself] from and reject all those attitudes, values, behaviors, and actions that further fragment the human fraternity of creatures, setting oneself over and against another. This is authentic conversion; this is the root of a penitential spirituality . . . ."[22] Conversion was a process for Francis that "extended from the moment of the awareness of [his] sin into the sacramental moment and then beyond it into the flow of [his] daily life thereafter. In short, to do penance, for Francis, was quite simply a renewed way of life or, in his term, a forma vitae that was meant to be the way that [he] lived the entirety of [his] life."[23] This was Francis' turnabout. Assisi, according to Cusato, "had taught [Francis] to spurn and despise those marginal people who were of no account to the growing wealth and power of the new commune. Brought face-to-face with such a contradiction he tells us: "It was not long before I left the world."[24]

"I delayed a little and left the world."

Certainly grace was working powerfully in Francis' soul, and Francis wasted no time following its promptings. Still his was not an instantaneous conversion but a consistently faithful response to the progressive working of grace in his life. Having unequivocally realized that the socio-economic atmosphere of Assisi contradicted the Gospel and was toxic to his efforts to act upon these promptings, Francis acted. He left his family, left Assisi, worked and/or begged for his food, spent time in Gubbio working among lepers. His searching eventually brought him back to Assisi and to the little church of Mary of the Angels. Vauchez elaborates:

> In spite of everything . . . [Francis] was looking for something else. It is then that an inspiration occurred, in the course of which his real vocation was revealed. According to Thomas of Celano, after having heard in the church of the Portiuncula the passage of the Gospel about the sending of disciples on mission for Christ, Francis cried out: "This is what I want, this is what I seek, this is what I long to do with all my heart!" From that time on, he wore only a poor and course habit, girding his waist with a cord and going out to preach penance and peace.[25]

Vauchez refers to the discrepancies among hagiographers regarding Francis' course of acting upon this new inspiration; then continues:

> In any case, at the conclusion of a profound and intimate conversation with God in prayer, Francis finally understood what was expected of him. From then on, neither his profound humility nor his obedience to the Church and its hierarchy would ever interfere with his certitude of having been called to do great things, as he had predicted and announced from a very early age, in becoming "the herald of the Great King" in this world.[26]

Spiritually energized by this new revelation, Francis realized he could no longer live partially in the world of his youth and at the same time be "the herald of the Great King" in this King's world. Thus his "leaving the world" of separateness—of exclusion of the powerless by the powerful—was a response consistent with conversional grace in his life. Regarding Francis' "leaving the world," Cusato tells us:

> Francis "left the world" in two ways. First, and more generally, he abandoned those values which were in conflict with the truths of the Gospel. Second, and more pointedly, he and his early followers also left the city of Assisi

21 Ibid. 10-12. Cusato's reference is to "Hermitage or Marketplace," p. 11.
22 Ibid. 12.
23 Ibid., 8-9
24 Cusato, "Hermitage or Marketplace?" 11-12.
25 Vauchez, 30.
26 Vauchez, 31.

physically, never to return again as residents, in order to live apart from its system in an environment where they could construct for themselves an evangelical, truth-filled world of their own—a religious community. . . .

> . . . this relocation of the friars outside Assisi had not only a geographical and spiritual component but also a social component. For belief in the universal fraternity of all creatures also led Francis and his followers to separate themselves consciously from everything that was a source of division between human beings, every form of power which tended to rupture the human community by placing one over against the other. And in medieval society, one of the things which gave a person power over others—besides the brute force of the sword—was the ownership of property and possessions. Thus, in surrendering their possessions, the friars were also surrendering their social rank, value, and power within medieval society. As a result, the friars were deliberately placing themselves among those who had no status, voice, or power in society. They decided to live as the poor, among the poor. Henceforth, they would be not only a community of fratres but also a fraternity of minores. They would be, therefore, fratres minores. [27]

Leonardo Boff summarizes Francis' spiritual journey:

> [Francis] has become converted to the poor. He switches his social location; he gives up his class by birth and opts for the poorest of the poor, lepers. He has not set up a leper hospital or work of charity, but he goes to live in their midst, takes care of them, caresses them, and eats out of the same cup as they (cf. 1 Celano, 17; 2 Celano 9). It is out of this option for the poor that he discovers the pure gospel as good news, and the Poor Man par excellence, Jesus Crucified."[28]

The impact of this experience remained active in Francis throughout the rest of his life. We see it reflected in chapter nine of the Regula non bullata: "Let all the brothers strive to follow the humility and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . They 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 (ER 9: 1-2)."[29] In Vauchez's words:

> At the end of this evolution, Francis is thus both the same person and yet another person. To the end of his life, he was to maintain (using the vocabulary of courtoisie), the lyrical sense of happiness and the taste for conquering heroism. But the encounter with the lepers changed his perspective by leading him to reestablish a communion with the most wretched of human beings via the free gift of love, and to "leave the world" in order to devote himself to this task. We would be on the wrong track, however, if we gave to this expression the meaning that if often had in monastic spirituality: of a flight from or a despising of earthly realities. Francis does not flee the world. On the contrary, he rushes to plunge himself into it in order, like his Lord, to conquer it and to reintegrate back into society the poor and all those whom power and money have excluded from it.[30]

Francis' Kinship with Creation

Eight centuries ago, the pre-conversion Francis Bernardone entered his young adulthood shielding himself from lepers who Assisi taught him were worthless to this progressive commune and who repulsed the fastidious Francis. God intervened. Francis responded. Today, another Francis, the pope, introduces his encyclical Laudato Si: On the Care of Our Common Home with a heartfelt tribute to Francis of Assisi. Pope Francis states:

> I do not want to write this Encyclical without turning to that attractive and compelling figure, whose name I took as guide and inspiration when I was elected Bishop of Rome. I believe that St. Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians. He was particularly concerned for God's creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.[31]

In the first part of this paper, we considered the progressive "conversioning" of Francis' heart—the heart of this person who experienced in the very depth of his being that all that ever was or ever could be originated in the heart of God, whom Francis experienced as completely and eternally relational. Through the grace of deep contemplation, Francis experienced all that ever existed—rather animate or inanimate, tangible or intangible—as brother and sister. He lived within the experience of what John Duns Scotus later verbalized as the "conceptual univocity of being," that is, "the manner of mutual presence between all that exists and our ability to know it. It is the link between our knowledge of the world, ourselves, and God."[32] Therefore, all being is sacred—all must be treated with reverence and dignity because all bears the imprint of its Divine Creator. Those who lived with him passed on to us stories that illustrate his reverence. Thirteenth century, and subsequent, scholars wove Francis' intuitive mystical insights into formal theoretical language preserving it to our day. Perhaps even more important, through the centuries and in all corners of the world, common people have held Francis' heart in theirs. The challenge now for all who claim Francis of Assisi as their patron and Francis of Rome as their pastor is to reverence all living beings as sacred, as eight centuries ago Francis reverenced as profoundly sacred not only lepers but all beings flowing from the heart of their Creator.

27 Cusato, "Hermitage or Marketplace?" 12-13.
28 Leonardo Boff, Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor, trans. Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 207.
29 Francis of Assisi, The Earlier Rule 9: 1-2 in The Saint, FA:ED 1, 70.
30 Vauchez, 32.
31 Pope Francis, Laudato Si #10.
32 Mary Beth Ingham, Scotus for Dunces: An Introduction to the Subtle Doctor (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2003), 57.

Franciscan Richard Rohr in his recent book, Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi, notes:

> . . . for more and more people, union with the divine is first experienced through the Christ: in nature, in the moments of pure love, silence, inner or outer music, with animals, a sense of awe, or some kind of "Brother Sun and Sister Moon" experience. Why? Because creation itself is the first incarnation of Christ, the primacy and foundational "Bible" that revealed the path to God. The eternal Christ Mystery started about 14.6 billion years ago in the event many now call "The Big Bang". . . . But God was already overflowing into visible Reality and revealing the God-self in trilobites in North America, giant flightless birds in New Zealand, jellyfish in the oceans, pterodactyls in Asia, and thousands of species that humans have never once seen. But God did.[33]

Less than 50 years after Francis' death—and almost eight centuries before Rohr, Bonaventure described Creation as God's first book of revelation. He states:

> From all we have said, we may gather that the created world is a kind of book reflecting, representing, and describing its Maker, the Trinity, at three different levels of expression: as a vestige, as an image, and as a likeness. The aspect of vestige ('footprint') is found in every creature; the aspect of image, only in intelligent creatures or rational spirits; the aspect of likeness, only in those spirits that are God-conformed. Through these successive levels, comparable to steps, the human intellect is designed to ascend gradually to the supreme Principle, which is God.[34]

Pope Francis also refers to creation as a book when he states: "St. Francis, faithful to scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. 'Through the greatness and the beauty of creatures one comes to know by analogy their maker' (Wis 13:5); indeed, 'his eternal power and divinity have been made known through his works since the creation of the world'" (Rom 1:20).[35]

Timothy Johnson relates an interesting account regarding the dissimilar responses Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure gave to a question, in Peter Lombard's Book of Sentences, related to the obligation of rational creatures to love irrational creatures. According to Johnson, while Aquinas "spent precious little time on this issue and emphasized why these creatures are not to be loved, Bonaventure appealed to the experience of Francis in nature as the entry point into consideration of love and the nature of human interactions with animals."[36] Addressing Bonaventure's theological reflections on the restoration of all creation in Christ as found in Rom. 8:18-27, Johnson states: "The burden of responsibility for creation's restoration falls squarely on the shoulders of sentient beings; they play a singular role in the salvation of other creatures, and, as Francis demonstrates, conversion is essential to this ministry of reconciliation. To the degree that sentient beings are reformed by that influence of grace, other creatures are restored to their original nature as witnesses to the Most High. . . ."[37] Johnson continues:

> In the richly textured symbolic language of Bonaventure, every creature is then a syllable in a song, or a vestige of God, a word in the Book of Creation, a rivulet flowing from the fontal Goodness, or a seed sown into the fecund fabric of the world. . . . Since creation is the free operation of the Trinity, all beings display a vestige of the threefold essence, power and presence of God. . . . The most intimate expressions of the Triune God are the similitudes, that is, the children of God, who are transformed by the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. To these individuals belong the stewardship of creation and the burden of restoring all their fellow creatures, which have been subjected to futility by sin through no fault of their own, to their original, pristine nature as intended. . . .[38]

Students of the social-economic, political, and ecclesial times in which Francis lived are astounded when they recognize the parallels between his time and our time. Brazilian ecologist, Leonardo Boff, steeped in Franciscan spiritual tradition, tells us that anthropocentrism, i.e. the gut-level belief that nature exists merely "to serve human beings reigning as monarchs over the universe,"[39] was already taking hold in Francis' day. He states, "Such a posture certainly aided the development of science and Western technology, because it desacralized the world and delivered it up for human creativity and interests, which almost never serve to bring about a just relationship with nature."[40] Boff, however, states in his book, Cry of the Earth; Cry of the Poor, that an "antidote" to this ideology exists, i.e. "a new alternative attitude, one of deep reverence and kinship toward the universe and of compassion and affection toward all members of the cosmic and planetary community. We have in mind the figure of St. Francis of Assisi."[41] Boff adds that in radical contrast to the

> spirit of domination over nature in the Amazon megaprojects, we are going to observe in St. Francis the living embodiment of another paradigm, one of a spirit that acts in kinship, one that is filled with compassion and respect before each representative of the cosmic and planetary community. We will delve into St. Francis's spirituality in some detail because it will serve as a counterpoint to the spirit that is wreaking havoc in the Amazon and on our planet.[42]

Boff proclaims Francis "lived a new relationship with nature in

33 Richard Rohr, Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi (Cincinnati, Ohio: Franciscan Media, 2014), 223-224.
34 Bonaventure, Breviloquium, 2:12 Ed. and Trans. Dominic V. Monti in Works of Saint Bonaventure, vol. IX, (ST. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2005), 96.
35 Pope Francis, Laudato Si #12.
36 Timothy Johnson, "Francis and Creation" in Cambridge Companion to Francis of Assisi, ed. Michael Robson (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 150.
37 Ibid. 151.
38 Ibid. 152-153.
39 Boff, 203.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid. 203-204.

a way that was so moving that he became an archetype of ecological concern for the collective unconscious of humankind."[43] The limits of this paper do not allow more than a brief reference to Boff's lengthy discussion concerning the significant relationship pre-Christian peoples experienced with their natural surroundings as contrasted with the relationship people of Francis' time experienced with their natural surroundings. To understand the ramifications of Francis' reverence for the natural world, one has to develop an appreciation for ways pre-Christian people related with their natural environment. This interaction was experienced primarily through the agency of their various deities. The monotheism of the Christian world clashed with this polytheistic world. In addition to this, the dualistic distortions of medieval Christianity contributed to conceptual disunity between material and spiritual entities, flesh and spirit. Boff states, "Christianity, with its proper and sharp distinction between Creator and creature, had descended, for reasons that are not always discernible, into an unhappy separation between God and nature. . . . Nature was deprived of its symbolic and sacramental character. It was viewed as a place of testing and temptation or as a purely natural place, and its magic and enchantment vanished."[44] In contrast to this tragic situation, according to Boff,

> St. Francis brought this whole age of purgation to an end. Eyes recovered their innocence. Now one could contemplate God and the splendor of God's grace and glory in the extensive wealth of creation, which is the great sacrament of God and Christ. Intuitively, and without any previous theological training, Francis reclaimed the truth of paganism: this world is not mute, not lifeless, not empty; it speaks and is full of movement, love, purpose, and beckonings from the Divinity. It can be the place for encountering God and God's spirit, through the world itself, its energies, its profusion of sound, color, and movement. The sacred dwells in it; it is God's extended Body. Paganism gave expression to

43 Ibid. 204.
44 Ibid.

***Saint Francis in the Desert* by Giovanni Bellini**
(Creative Commons)

> this experience in polytheistic frameworks, but that does not invalidate the psychological and spiritual wealth that make it possible to fill human attitudes with the sacred and prevent life from being smothered in immanence or delivered to lonely despair. The world is always enveloped in a kind of divine milieu, in which one breathes, feels, thinks, and experiences the Divine and its power.[45]

Jacques Dalarun in his very recent analysis, The Canticle of Brother Sun: Francis of Assisi Reconciled, calls our attention to realities that challenged Francis. He longed for peace, but he realized that in the midst of some progress, conflict between disparate groups in Assisi too often remained unresolved. The harmony for which Francis longed, both within himself and within his beloved Assisi, "was never assured, but was an unstable equilibrium that needed to be continually rebuilt."[46] Dalarun invites us to gaze into Francis' heart. He states:

> Francis was always preoccupied with this harmony, so fragile. So precious. In the Canticle of Brother Sun, expanding the horizon, raising the viewing point, he wrote of the question of social peace in the context of worldly harmony. And it is on the strength of this unprecedented opening that he returns from the macrocosm to the microcosm: the root of evil, which imperils not only the sinner, not only human society, but the functioning equilibrium of the universe, is in the heart of man, when he refuses the fraternity of living things, when he forgets that remedy to all bitterness that his Lord had not haggled over: mercy. Francis places man at the center of a system created for him. But he does not succumb to the temptation of presenting a universe dominated by human enterprise: he invites us to contemplate a tamed world, open to a simple and reciprocal use that banished all form of appropriation. The Canticle is born of an anguish that its own music exorcises. It is nevertheless not a lullaby. With an acute lucidity, it asks the decisive question: are we able to demonstrate our worthiness of the gift given to us, of this fraternal world ready to surround us with it cares, so long as we renounce doing violence to it?[47]

As we, Franciscans, ponder the recesses of Francis' converted heart—the heart of this person who experienced in the very depth of his being that all that ever was, or ever could be, originated in the heart of the God whom Francis experienced as completely and eternally relational—can we help but hear him exhort us, "I have done what is mine; may Christ teach your what is yours!"[48] Through the grace of deeply contemplative intuition Francis experienced "the universal fraternity of all creation under the same God" which Cusato identified as he pursued his study of Francis.[49] Francis lived within the experience of what John Duns Scotus later verbalized as the univocity of being, recognizing that all being is uniquely sacred. Therefore, all being must be treated with reverence and dignity because all bears the imprint of its Divine Creator. Those who lived with him passed on to us stories that illustrate his reverence.

Embracing Our Leprous Earth as Francis Embraced the Lepers of His Day

How did Francis come to transfigure the universe and discover cosmic kinship? What was his path toward the sacred heart of matter?[50]

After posing this question, Boff offers the following insights. "The life story of Francis helps us understand how he was able to bring together outer and inner ecology, the Most High in heaven and God's presence on Earth in all creatures."[51] Loved and doted upon by his parents, naturally talented in multiple ways, with a naturally engaging personality, Francis could have written almost any script for his life. Boff summarizes: "Restless and very sensitive, [Francis] was a sounding board for the ambitions in the minds of young people at that time. Francis tried each of them: the bourgeois endeavor of becoming wealthy, the feudal endeavor of being a noble gentleman, the religious endeavor of being a monk. . . . Francis tried them all."[52] As related in the earlier part of this paper, God had other plans for Francis. Again, Boff summarizes, Francis "has become converted to the poor. He switches his social location; he gives up his class by birth and opts for the poorest of the poor, lepers. . . . It is out of this option for the poor that he discovers the pure gospel as good news, and the Poor Man par excellence, Jesus Crucified."[53] Having discovered the "pure gospel," according to Boff, Francis "created a synthesis that Christianity had lost: the encounter with God, with Christ and with the Spirit in nature, and accordingly the discovery of the vast cosmic kinship and the preservation of innocence—childlike clear-sightedness [sic.] at an adult age—that brings freshness, purity, and enchantment back to the afflictions of life on this Earth."[54] Boff quotes Franciscan philosopher Louis Lavelle's observation that "'perhaps there has not been any mind so open, any sensitivity more spontaneous and more brightly touched by nature, other beings, and God, any soul more constantly inspired than that of St. Francis of Assisi.'"[55] What we find at the core of Francis' spirituality is literal and uncompromising inclusivity in a world where the sin of exclusion had become endemic in the political, social, and ecclesial life of his time.

Francis' heart echoes in our hearts: "I have done my part. May you do yours." A deep and prayerful study of Leonardo Boff's masterful treatise, Cry of the Poor, Cry of the Earth, particularly his chapter entitled "All the Cardinal Ecological Virtues: St. Francis of Assisi,"[56] is an excellent place to start. Franciscan Sr. Dawn Nothwehr's compilation, Ecological Footprints: An Essential Franciscan Guide for

45 Ibid. 205-206.
46 Jacques Dalarum, The Canticle of Brother Sun: Francis of Assisi Reconciled. Trans. Philippe Yates (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2016), 99.
47 Ibid. 99-100.
48 Francis of Assisi in Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol.2, The Founder, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, J. S. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short (New York: New City Press, 2000, 386.
49 Cusato, "Hermitage or Marketplace?" 11.
50 Ibid. 206.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid. 207.
54 Ibid. 208.
55 Ibid. Boff is referring to Louis Lavelle, Quatre Saints (Paris: Seuil, 1951), 89.
56 See Boff, 203-238.

Faith and Sustainable Living[57] provides a resourceful companion to Boff's work. Multiple readings of Dalarun's, The Canticle of Brother Sun: Francis of Assisi Reconciled, discloses substantial new insights into Francis' conversion journey from which he breathes forth his ultimate Canticle.[58]

After graphically describing the current plight of "our Mother, Sister Earth," to use Francis' term for our common home, Nothwehr takes issue with the report from the 1987 UN-sponsored World Commission on Environment and Development, often referred to as the Brundtland Commission. She states:

> The commission presumed that "sustainable development" meant raising productivity, accumulation of goods, and technological innovations. But that kind of thinking caused them to fail to address key sources of poverty: the exploitation of workers and the pillaging of nature. [The commission's] notion of "sustainable development" is an oxymoron because its real focus was economic growth for its own sake, and the primary goal was profit making.[59]

Nothwehr then provides a definition of sustainability clearly in keeping with Francis' spirituality of universal kinship. She states:

> By contrast, "sustainability" as it is defined in biology and ecology is "the trend of ecosystems toward equilibrium, sustained in the web of interdependencies and complementarities flourishing in ecosystems."[60] Genuine sustainability requires social and economic structures that support social justice—the right relationship between persons, roles, and institutions—and ecological justice, which is the right relationship with nature, sufficient access to resources, and assurance of quality of life.
>
> A renewed vision of community is essential for interdependent sustainability. . . . The habitability of the earth is the central reality that links economy, ecology, and ecumenicity. . . . The contrast between this Christian understanding of sustainability and that of the Brundtland Commission is remarkable. This contrast is but one indication of how deeply a consumer mentality has permeated all of life in the highly industrialized world. . . .[61]

Nothwehr draws upon insights incorporated in ecophilosopher Joanna Macy's essay, "The Greatest Danger: Apatheia, the Deadening of Mind and Heart," regarding the numbing power of apathy, to relate pre-conversion Francis' excluding lepers with the apathy of earth's citizens toward our leprous earth. The word "apathy" stems from the Greek word apatheia "meaning 'the refusal to experience pain.'"[62] Citing Macy's work Nothwehr states:

> Macy has shown that when Westerners face the fact of global warming, they tend to become paralyzed or move to denial and inaction. Macy asserts that people of the developed world have lost many of the values, attitudes, and skills required to resolve global warning. Westerners repress the overwhelming pain of ecocide and gaiacide because, culturally, expressing pain is thought dysfunctional! . . . We in the United States live in opulence, disproportionately consuming the world's goods. And we don't know how to cope with the guilt, whether personal or collective.
>
> Macy contends that the way out of our paralysis is to realize that the guilt and pain are not only real but healthy. Because we are sufficiently aware of global warming, there is renewed hope within our experience of pain. By acknowledging pain, facing fears, and choosing to live within limits, we break the isolation and begin the healing, restoration and renewal for ourselves and the earth. This awakening provides opportunities to live out humility, poverty, obedience, and love through a life of Christian simplicity.[63]

Reminding her readers that Joanna Macy subtitles her book "the Deadening of Mind and Heart," Nothwehr invites her readers to recall Francis' pre-conversion behavior and recall the way he held his nose at the approach of a leper. Before his conversion, the sight of lepers nauseated him. Can we, as pampered Westerns, embrace and kiss our putrefying earth? Nothwehr invites us to look to Francis as Francis looked to Christ for guidance. She states:

> Embracing the leper was a life-changing move for St. Francis. In the moment of that embrace, many things shifted in his life and person. In a small but vitally healthy way, at that moment, a part of him died. It was that part that clung to the status quo of his former life as a rather spoiled, upwardly mobile son of one of the newly wealthy mercantile class of his day. There, in his embrace of the leper, he began to see what the source of wealth in life truly is, namely, the mercy of God and the healing that love of God and neighbor can bring into the world. . . . St. Francis was able to care deeply for creation because he saw in each creature the one common source of life. His care for the poor was motivated by his deep desire to follow in the footprints of the Poor Christ, who had lived and died for the love of the poor—those overcome by sin, personal weaknesses, or economic destitution.
>
> Today we are called to a similar kind of dying and conversion. We must admit to devastation that results from our drive to

57 Dawn Nothwehr, Ecological Footprints: An Essential Franciscan Guide for Faith and Sustainable Living (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2012).

58 Jacques Dalarun, The depth of this work is aptly described by Franciscan Margaret Carney's statement in her Introduction to this text: "Abandoning all pretense at scholarly detachment, I urge: Choose the time and place of your reading with care. Jacques Dalarun, master of the sacred and secular pages of long ago, offers you what Gerard Manley Hopkins described as 'the dearest freshness deep down things' of the genius of Francesco Bernardone." (vi-vii)

59 Nothwehr, Ecological Footprints, 171.

60 Nothwehr is quoting Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor (*Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 66.

61 Ibid. 171-172. Nothwehr is citing Leonardo Boff" Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor and Second World Council of Churches, Accelerated Climate Change: Sign of Peril, Test of Faith (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994).

62 Nothwehr, 173 citing Joanna Macy, "The Greatest Danger: *Apatheia*, the Deadening of Mind and Heart," in *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World,* Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society, 1998), 26.

63 Ibid. 173. Nothwehr is citing the work of Joanna Macy, "The Greatest Danger: Apatheia, the Deadening of Mind and Heart," in Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World, Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society, 1998), 26.

material wealth and that continues to inflict disproportionate suffering on the poor. Particularly, the "American Dream" has become the "Global Nightmare." The toxins spewing from our cars, homes, and industries and our raping of ecosystems, destroying their capacity to function to absorb and filter greenhouse gases, have all caused atmospheric changes that bring destruction and death far from our shores. We must acknowledge that . . . the denial of our complicity often drives us into deeper delusional negation of our responsibility and to inflicting even more destruction. Now is the time to let go of our false securities and allow God's mercy to touch and heal us! Quantum theologian O'Murchu says it well: "We are compelled to assert what seems initially to be an outrageous claim: a radically new future demands the destruction and death of the old reality. It is from dying seeds that new life sprouts forth. Destruction becomes a precondition for resurrection: denigration undergirds regeneration."[64]

Nothwehr states, "In the light of all of this [reference to Pope John Paul II's 2001 call to 'ecological conversion'], first, we must admit our limitations and that—wittingly or not—we are complicit in ecological destruction. Then, when we pray for forgiveness—"for what I have done and what I have failed to do"—we need to consciously confess our 'ecological offenses.' . . . How much do we have to change? . . . In a word, we need to stop making carbon footprints and start following in the footprints of Jesus."[65] (Emphasis added.)

Conclusion

I conclude with thoughts Nothwehr incorporated into the introduction of her chapter entitled "Human-Caused Global Warming: A Leper Awaiting Our Embrace" in her book Ecological Footprints: An Essential Franciscan Guide for Faith and Sustainable Living.

> In St. Francis's day, lepers and leprosy presented complex and daunting public health issues that were not properly understood, even by experts. Therefore, lepers were feared, outcast, and denied their full dignity as human persons. Such anxiety-based, hostile behavior insulted God's gift of the divine image that is found in each person and that is at the root of our human dignity. It was through St. Francis's actual encounter and embrace of a leper that he found his salvation and his true Christian identity. I believe that we are being called to make a similar embrace today. Just as through embracing the leper Francis learned the truth about that person, which enabled him to reverence the dignity of lepers and love them into life, we need to embrace the truth concerning our suffering planet Earth so that we can radically change our treatment of God's creation. We must stop abusing the delicate atmosphere and all the complex earth systems that are damaged when we continue to pour greenhouse gases (GHGs) into them with impunity. Just as Francis's entire life was changed by his embrace of the leper, so too must our lives be converted. Our conversion needs to be internal and spiritual, shifting our dispositions and attitudes, as well as external and moral, changing our behaviors and practices in daily life. We already know what needs to change. The question is, when will you and I make this embrace?
>
> . . . Many would argue that "a gloom and doom approach" to the moral challenges of human-caused global warming is merely disempowering. But to this I reply that to see global climate change through "rose-colored glasses" is not only delusional—it is spiritually dangerous! It is to toy with sacrilege, to insult God and blaspheme God's gift of creation.[66]

In closing, we take to heart this prompting from our Franciscan brother, Michael Cusato:

> *Francis' attestation that God had led him to begin to do penance is the foundation of the Franciscan vocation for all members of the family. To promise to do penance is to promise to live in a manner respectful of the integrity of the universal fraternity of all creatures, starting with one's own neighbor and embracing the larger world, Christian and non-Christian alike, indeed virtually the whole cosmos. Precisely how one decides to distance oneself from those things which threaten to fragment and rupture the bonds of the human fraternity differ, to some extend according to time, place, and culture. But if the experience of Francis' encounter with the lepers is to mean something more for us than Francis' own personal encounter with Christ; if it is to have something definitive to say about God's intentions for the human race which every follower of Francis recognizes and professes to live out for the rest of his/her life: then authentic conversion of life—the doing of penance as a vocation of life—means taking on the attitudes, values, and behavior of Jesus of Nazareth, exemplified in the Gospel, which compelled Francis to embrace not only the leper, but the whole manner of evangelical living which honors the sacrality of the universal fraternity of all creatures.*[67]

Teresine Glaser, O. S. F. is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis, Dubuque, Iowa. Sister earned an MA in history from the University of Iowa, an MSW in Clinical Social Work from Boston College, a Graduate Certificate in Franciscan Theology and Spirituality from Washington Theological Union and advanced certification in Formative Spirituality from the Epiphany Association. Now retired from active ministry in education and psychotherapy, she continues her independent study of Franciscan history and its heritage. She has contributed to recent publications of The Cord.

64 Ibid. 176-177. Nothwehr's reference to O'Murchu, is found in Quantum Theology, (New York: The Crossword Publishing Company, 1997), 190-193.
65 Ibid. 160-161.
66 Ibid. 155-156.
67 Cusato, "To Do Penance,"24.