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Can Franciscans Be Angry Francis of Assisi and the Trap of a Mono-Emotional Saint[1]

By Darleen Pryds

We know that Jesus got angry. He overturned tables of the money changers in the temple and exclaimed, "…You are making [this temple] a den of robbers." (Mtt.21:12-13) An easy internet search will produce dozens of images of a scowling Jesus toppling over tables and thrashing alarmed money changers. We apparently allow Jesus a range of emotions, but that range becomes sharply reduced for our favorite saints, especially Francis of Assisi.

When searching images of Francis, it quickly becomes apparent that the most common artistic depictions of the saint show him with animals, often gently stroking birds. He is also frequently shown in ecstasy, exulting in God's creation as he reveals the imprint of Christ's wounds on him. One could readily assume from these images that Francis was ever gentle, ever receptive, ever calm. And yet many passages from the early hagiography of the saint reveal that he lived with passion and expressed a wide range of emotions including anger. Rather than being persistently placid, Francis also expressed joy that was grounded in suffering, dissatisfaction that was voiced in sarcasm, and disappointment that was expressed as anger. A Francis who lived with passion and expressed a range of emotions is a complex Francis that may be difficult to embrace.

Many of us prefer to bypass that complexity in favor of birdbaths and statues of a gentle Francis (even though we may contradict that preference by protesting commercial versions of a sanitized and sentimentalized holy man from Assisi). It is easier to love a mono-emotional saint especially when that emotion is peacefulness. Clearly, that's an image we prefer to experience when we ourselves have unresolved issues and underdeveloped psychological mechanisms for working with our discomfort with a full range of emotions. We have projected our own restricted psychologies onto Francis so that we can limit the behavior of those around us by charging, "That's not being very Franciscan!" when others emote in ways that offend or challenge our own sensitive natures.

Yet we shortchange the founder of this tradition and we shortchange ourselves and each other in the tradition when we think that Francis was only a peace-loving flower child. The early hagiographers who documented his life and nurtured the early cult of believers with their narratives of him, portrayed Francis in a breadth of emotional states including anger. In these early texts we may be surprised to find instead of a mono-emotional hyper-sensitive charism, a rich and natural range of emotional expressions from grief to sadness, from nostalgia to pining regret, from uncontrolled exuberance to anger. Yes, even anger. This essay explores a brief overview of how Francis' emotional range has been depicted in modern popular film portrayals and juxtaposes those with medieval hagiographic depictions of Francis in an effort to bring forward the spiritual lessons to be gained from accepting this emotional range while also pointing out the spiritual numbness that results when this range is stultified.

One of the most commonly accepted images of Francis comes from Franco Zeffirelli's classic movie, *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*.[2] Filmed and produced at the height of the Flower Child movement in 1972, this movie shows only the young Francis high on God at the very beginning of his religious conversion. Like a young man in love for the first time, this Francis expresses a giddy joy as he marvels at the beauty of nature and is filled with innocent wonder at letting go of parental and societal expectations to live an unencumbered life embracing God's love. While dismissed as overly sentimental by some viewers, Zeffirelli captures that first ecstatic stage of youthful conversion. The film only follows Francis' life up to 1209 with Pope Innocent's approval of the order, so it remains a portrait of a young convert before the tests of life, the trials of leadership, and the physical effects of zealous austerities.

[1] This essay started as a 45-minute lecture originally given at the Franciscan School of Theology in Oceanside, California as part of its Franciscan Vision Series. It grew to a two-hour seminar offered at the Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale, Arizona and then became a five-hour day of reflection for the Spring Gathering of Affiliates of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. This is a first and brief attempt to distribute in text some of the fruits from those public talks. What is presented here is a short summary of the material that is available. I have chosen in this essay to focus only on Francis although there is abundant material especially concerning lay Franciscans and their emotional range. I am grateful to all these organizations and to the audiences who offered enthusiastic feedback and requests for more material on the topic.

[2] Brother Sun, Sister Moon, dir. Franco Zeffirelli, (1972).

In 1989 when the film industry was creating gritty portrayals of faith, such as Martin Scorsese's *Last Temptation of Christ*, Liliana Cavani offered a complicated view of Francis that presumed to be based on the companions' stories and memories of the saint's life. Her film, *Francesco*, portrays Francis over a broad arc of his life, from his early conversions to the last years of his life when he was racked with doubt, physical ailments and psychological depression.[3] She depicts a Francis who is complex even in the early stages of his conversions when both youthful giddiness and psychologically troubled public gestures are shown. The fruits of this complexity slowly reveal themselves in the film when Francis' late-life despair and grief provides the ground for Cavani's depiction of Francis' spiritual joy having taken root and grown into an intricate and multifaceted faith that was anything but one-dimensional. The film is less well known and is shown far less at Franciscan retreat centers and parishes in large part because it shows a spirituality that is complex and includes unsentimental, even puzzling and uncomfortable aspects of the saint.

A quick comparison of how Zeffirelli and Cavani depict the scene of Francis' renunciation in front of the bishop may suffice here to illustrate the different voice and tone of these directors and the respective impressions they offer of the saint. Zeffirelli depicts a somewhat dazed and humble Francis patiently and reverently answering the bishop's questions when he arrives in the town square for his public renunciation of his father's wealth. The music swells as he strips his clothes in front of a crowd that stands in awe and admiration. Cavani sets the same scene in an ecclesial court room, also with a Francis who is dazed but juxtaposed to a lawyer endeavoring to plead his case with logic and reason. The jarring music points to the psychological break that Francis is experiencing. The grand gesture of removing his clothes is met with ridicule, embarrassment, and shame by the public who is there in the courtroom witnessing the spectacle. The scene is uncomfortable to watch, but for the viewer who is willing to stay with the discomfort here and throughout the film, the reward is a new appreciation of a complex Francis. Cavani dares to portray a Francis whose faith troubled him and provoked in him a range of emotions from happiness to sadness, from resistance to acceptance, from despair to joy. There is a gravitas to the joy that Cavani portrays. It is a joy that is not giddy or lighthearted, but one that emerges over a life of trials, mistakes, a range of emotions, and, of course, faith.

These are both film interpretations adapted for modern audiences based on a mélange of medieval sources. What do the original sources reveal about Francis? Across the hagiographic tradition from the first decades after Francis died, we see confirmation of all these modern depictions which means that Francis himself was seen as a complex, multifaceted figure by his contemporaries, even those who were promoting his reputation for saintliness.

[3] Francesco, dir. Liliana Cavani, (1989).

The *Legend of the Three Companions* confirms the depiction of the young Francis as giddy and happy in the early stages of his conversion. For example, enamored by his ideas of the life of a knight, Francis set off "with great joy" on a journey to Apulia to be knighted. "He was even more cheerful than usual, prompting many people to wonder." When asked about his outlook, "he was beaming with joy, [and] answered" 'I know I will become a great prince.'" But arriving only as far as Spoleto, he became ill and when falling asleep he heard someone ask about his plans and then prod him with the question, "Who can do more good for you? The Lord or the servant?...why are you abandoning the lord for the servant?" Francis considered all this and "quickly" returned to Assisi, "buoyant and happy," and ready to follow God's call for him. (*The Legend of the Three Companions*, *FAED*, II, pp. 70-1)

A lighthearted sense of joy is also found in Thomas of Celano's depiction of Francis in *The Remembrance of the Desire of the Soul*. Here we find the bit of charming animal-whisperer tendencies of Francis that most of us like so much. In chapter 130, Francis calls to a cricket and sings to her: "My Sister Cricket, come to me!" And the cricket, as if it had reason, immediately climbed onto his hand. He said to it: "Sing, my sister cricket, and with joyful song praise the Lord your Creator!" The cricket obeying without delay, began to chirp, and did not stop singing until the man of God, mixing his own songs with its praise, told it to return to its usual place" (*FAED*, II, 357). Certainly, this Francis must be gentle in movement and peaceful in demeanor to attract a cricket to sing with him.

But Francis was not always depicted as so cheerful or even happy-go-lucky. He also experienced a sense of personal shame upon meeting someone poorer than he. In *The Assisi Compilation* (*FAED*, II, p. 220), Francis was out and about on a preaching tour when he encountered a destitute man. "This man's poverty brings great shame on us; it passes judgement on our poverty," he said to his companion. "How so, brother?" the companion replied. "I am greatly ashamed when I find someone poorer than myself. I chose holy poverty as my Lady, my delight, and my riches of spirit and body. And the whole world has heard the news, that I professed poverty before God and people. Therefore, I ought to be ashamed when I come upon someone poorer than myself." Perhaps influenced by some amount of spiritual pride, Francis felt he and his brothers should not be "shown up" by anyone in an even greater state of poverty as they. Because of his encounter with the pauper, Francis experienced personal embarrassment and humiliation. Interestingly, there is no mention of compassion or suffering with the poor man.

Perhaps nothing brought out the fullest range of emotions that revealed Francis' disapproval as his fellow friars. He experienced sadness, especially when he heard of his brothers behaving in ways that were bad examples (*FAED* II, *Assisi Compilation*, p. 219). He "detested those in the Order" who wore more clothing than necessary or who wore soft cloth for their comfort. [*FAED*, II *Assisi Compilation*, p. 137]. Around any sense of luxury or ease of the brothers, Francis' emotions became even more volatile. He wanted his brothers to live in poor dwellings, and to stay in them only as pilgrims, rather than owners. He was said to "hate" all pretense in the houses and "abhorred" any fine furnishings. He "detested" and "despised" money and expected the brothers to treat it with similar disdain [*FAED* II, *Assisi Compilation*, pp., 135-7.] Even when his emotions are not directly stated, one may surmise from his actions a level of discontent, judgement, and possible anger. For example, Francis returned from traveling and found that the brothers had built a house complete with tile roof without his consent. The only expression of emotion that is given is "he was amazed." But Francis is said to have considered the situation and the possible influence this would have on others. He climbed up to the roof and ordered the brothers to do as well, then began throwing the tiles down to the ground. It is possible, I suppose, although unlikely, to imagine Francis in this scene as placid and gentle. But even if we can imagine him in a state as something other than fuming with anger, the volatile act of throwing tiles to the ground where they crashed and broke evokes the indignation he felt and it symbolizes his own disappointment and broken heart over the actions of the brothers. (*FAED*, II, *Assisi Compilation*, p. 157)

Late in Francis' life, these emotional expressions took an even sharper focus toward his brothers. After having resigned as minister general—a step that no doubt provoked a range of emotions in itself—and during a period of illness, which of course is no one's best state for equanimity, Francis is said to have lashed out in anger over the behavior of the friars. When asked by a friar how he could resign from office, he responded, "Son, I love the brothers as I can, but if they would follow my footsteps I would surely love them more and would not make myself a stranger to them. For there are some among the prelates who draw them in a different direction, placing before them the examples of the ancients and paying little attention to my warnings. But what they are doing will be seen in the end."

Obviously stewing over this conversation, while sick in bed, 'he raised himself up in bed in an angry spirit: 'Who are these people? They have snatched out of my hands my religion and that of the brothers. If I go to the general chapter, then I'll show them what my will is!" So angry is Francis at the leaders of the order, he cries out "Who are these people?" He doesn't even recognize them as men he had received as friars. His anger bubbles up from the sheer disappointment he feels in them. His anger changes into deep sadness when he is asked if he will change the provincial ministers who have abused their power. Sobbing and feeling the defeat of someone who has lost everything he lived for and created, he said, "Let them live any way they want, for there is less harm in the damnation of a few than in the damnation of the many." [*FAED*, II, Celano, *Remembrance of the Desire of the Soul*, 366-7) Anger, disappointment, sadness, and incredulity: these emotions are tangled up together in Francis's response to friars who do not live up to his expectations.

Nothing else provoked in Francis intense emotions like his deep disappointment in the brothers when they shirked the fullness of their vows. And when Francis expressed his frustration and anger, the brothers didn't always know what to do. For example, when Francis was rewriting the *Rule,* word had circulated that Francis intended to intensify the rigors of their religious disciplines. Various ministers of the order tried to get Elias to talk to Francis about it. "We want you to go to him and tell him that we refuse to be bound to that *Rule.* Let him make it for himself and not for us." (*FAED*, II *Assisi Compilation*, pp. 131-132 at 131). Elias told them that he didn't want to do that, since he "feared the rebuke of Brother Francis." They ended up going together to plead their case.

Elias introduced the ministers to Francis, "These are the ministers…who hear that you are making a new rule. They fear that you are making it very harsh, and they say, and say publicly, that they refuse to be bound by it. Make it for yourself and not for them." In clear annoyance and frustration, Francis turned his eyes to heaven and engaged in conversation with Christ, "Lord, didn't I tell you they wouldn't believe you?" Christ responded that whatever stipulations were in the Rule had come from Him and He wanted the Rule to be followed to the letter without interpretations. "Those who refuse to observe it should leave the Order."

Almost as if taunting the ministers, Francis turned to them as said, "Did you hear? Did you hear? Do you want me to have you told again?" The ministers are said to have left the scene "confused and blaming themselves." So, we see in this incident a rather awkward response to the expression of anger and frustration. The ministers did not dare to engage further with Francis. The emotions (and the purported authority of Jesus backing Francis's claims) put an abrupt end to the scene but clearly it did not end the thoughts or feelings of the ministers.

In the very next scene, at the general chapter, known as the Chapter of the Mats, 5,000 brothers convened with the Cardinal Protector, Hugolino, who later became Pope Gregory IX. Some of the brothers tried to get the cardinal to intervene on their behalf over their concern with the harshness of Francis' *Rule.* They hoped the cardinal could successfully advocate on their behalf so that another, previously written *Rule*, that of Benedict or Augustine could be applied to them. Having listened to the cardinal make this argument, Francis escorted him to the front of the assembly and announced that God had called him to "the way of simplicity" and not to any other Rule. He warned that God would confound the learned among them for making claims for the use of another *Rule*. "…I trust in the Lord's police that through them He will publish you, and you will return to your state, to your blame, like it or not. The cardinal was shocked and said nothing, and all the brothers were afraid." (*FAED,* II, *Assisi Compilation*, pp. 132-3.)

Where is the gentle and kind Francis here? The simplicity that Francis lived by and argued for his brothers was not sentimental or syrupy. It was grounded in clarity of intention and focus of discipline. When simplicity of living—what we would call today as minimalism--was abandoned, Francis could be stern, direct, frustrated, sarcastic, and yes, even angry.

What does this list of emotions and means of communication reveal about Francis? One could flippantly say that Francis was moody. But I think his emotional range more accurately reveals the expansive capacity of love that Francis had. He loved Christ so much; he loved the Christ-given way of simplicity and poverty so much; he loved his brothers so much, that he could not bear to see any breach in any of these relationships. For Francis' spirituality was not individualistic; it was relational. We misinterpret Franciscan spirituality when we think relationships do not endure disagreements, disappointments, and the expression of anger.

While medieval companions of Francis were stunned by his expressions of these challenging emotions, modern authors offer insight into difficult emotions that are in keeping with the relational quality of Franciscan spirituality.

Beverly Harrison points to the role of anger in relationships: Anger is not the opposite of love. It is better understood as a feeling-signal that all is not well in our relation to other persons or groups or to the world around us. Anger is a mode of connectedness to others and it is always a vivid form of caring. To put the point another way: anger is—and it always is—a sign of some resistance in ourselves to the moral quality of the social relations in which we are immersed. Extreme and intense anger signals a deep reaction to the action upon us or toward others to whom we are related.[4]

To say that someone who expressed anger is not "being Franciscan" or simplistically to reject anger, frustration, or even sarcasm as "not Franciscan" is to stifle the complete range of emotional expression that Francis himself offered and that has been recorded by his contemporaries. Stifling the expression of anger or other emotions limits the depth of relationships between any two people and even risks the danger of causing psychological harm when converting one's own discomfort with someone else's expression of anger into a disciplinary step. Francis himself unapologetically experienced and expressed a wide range of human emotions. Perhaps it is time to embrace this full emotional range in the images we use to depict Francis and in the lives we lead as his followers.

Reflection Questions:

1. Do you experience anger? How do you feel when you experience anger? Do you feel you can express your anger? Or do you feel like you need to suppress and repress anger?
2. How do you respond when others around you express anger? Do you try to get away? Do you try to suppress their emotions? Do you react with anger of your own?
3. Have you ever noticed other emotions in play when anger is expressed? For example, have you ever noticed disappointment? Fear?
4. What kinds of situations evoke anger in you? Feeling disrespected? Feeling disenfranchised or not included? Feeling treated unfairly? Experiencing injustice? Notice the patterns so you can pray through them, not to suppress them, but to understand them and learn from them.

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[4] Beverly Harrison, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love," Union Seminary Quarterly Review 36 (1980-81, supplement), 49 as cited by Elizabeth Johnson, She Who Is. The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse (New York: Crossroad, 1992), p. 257.

A Clock in the Tower
Conversions in Contexts – Francis and Ours

By Teresine Glaser, OSF

My incentive for writing this paper was precipitated by two quotations regarding clocks and their respective impacts on introducing new eras.

For centuries, and perhaps even within our own experience, bell ringers climbed church towers to toll heavy bells alerting towns people to important events. Adolf Holl, in his book *The Last Christian: A Biography of Francis of Assisi*, states: "Then in the year 1188 the citizens of Tournai, in Belgium, got permission from the King to set up a clock in a suitable spot, to strike the hours, 'for their pleasure and for the city's business.' . . . and it wasn't long before every sizeable town had one. Thus people began to live in a new era. They called it 'modern times.'"[1] Holl adds, "Francis' father [Pietro Bernardone] was one of the people who witnessed the birth of modern times . . . ."[2] Reading this transported me back to an experience in Lowell, Massachusetts several years ago when I was engaged in research regarding the transition of New England families from pre-industrial to industrial time. I made an appointment with the curator of the major textile museum in Lowell. Upon arriving, and after brief introductions, he invited me to go outside with him. As we stood in front of the main entrance of the former mill, he pointed to the massive clock in the tower and stated simply, "There is the answer to your question." Mechanical time had replaced circadian or natural time—and would henceforth control people's lives.

Through this paper, I seek to deepen my understanding of ways Francesco Bernardone began to recognize the characteristics of his time, his relationship with these characteristics, and his eventual response to ways God was calling him into a new time. I use as my reference point Francis' autobiographical statement recorded in the first five verses of his *Testament of 1226*.

> 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.
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> And 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 world and we bless You because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world [*Test* 1-5]."[3]

Andre Vauchez in his book, *Francis of Assisi: the life and after life of a medieval saint*, alleges that Francis' *Testament* "has remained a primary expression of Francis' profound wisdom and vision."[4] Vauchez assures us that "Francis is tied to Assisi with every fiber of his being."[5] Franciscan friar Eloi Leclerc cautions, however, that

> to understand Francis correctly we need to keep looking at . . . two aspects of his personality: the man who exemplified the return to the Gospel; and the man who made humanity more aware of itself. These two dimensions are found intimately intertwined in him. . . . [Francis] opened up a new future before men's eyes. . . .
>
> This occurred because *he encountered the Gospel on the path followed by human history*. [Emphasis added.] . . . He read it as a man who felt within himself the seething passions of his epoch, and who was carried along by the tidal wave of a human movement welling up from the depths of society. Francis read the Gospel with new eyes, in the light of the major aspirations of his time. In return, this reading of the Gospel made

[1] Adolf Holl, *The Last Christian: A Biography of Francis of Assisi*, trans. Peter Heinegg (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1980), 1.
[2] Ibid. 2.

[3] Francis of Assisi, *Testament* 1-5, in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents,* vol. 1, *The Saint,* ed. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short (New York: New City Press, 1999), 124-125. Hereafter this volume will be referred to as *FA:ED* 1 followed by page numbers.
[4] Andre Vauchez, *Francis of Assisi: the life and afterlife of a medieval saint*, trans. Michael Cusato (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2012), 337. Copies of Francis *Testament of 1226* can be accessed through Google.
[5] Vauchez, 3.

it possible for him to liberate those aspirations from their limitations, and to make them blossom forth into a more complete vision of man and his destiny. . . . The Gospel became life and light in this man because in him it came into contact with all the vital forces he bore within himself, and which were those of his times. . .

Belgium, This illustration was made by Jean-Pol Grandmont

> . . . Francis rediscovered God's humbleness, God's humanity . . . as a new principle on which to reconstruct society. . . . a brotherhood excluding nobody.[6]

Eloi Leclerc, imprisoned during the Nazi regime, is uniquely qualified to reflect upon Francis' encounter with God on the path of human history.[7]

Assisi's History

Assisi's history dates back to about 1000 B. C. Ancient Etruscan and Roman artifacts are still being unearthed there. After the fall of Rome in 476 A.D., much of what we know as Europe today gave way to feudalism with its social classes of lords and serfs—a social structure rooted in the land for the purpose of stability and safety. While Western Europe seemed relatively complacent in this apparent somnolence, Eastern Europe and the Byzantine Empire remained comparatively awake and resourceful. A turning point came for Western Europe when Pope Urban II announced the First Crusade on November 27, 1096, calling upon Western Europeans to help Byzantines free the city of Jerusalem from Muslims and Jews. The history of the world was forever changed. For three years crusaders marched across Europe toward Jerusalem and finally took Jerusalem on July 15th, 1099.

In addition to taking Jerusalem, the eyes of Western Europeans were opened to enticing products never before seen. The age of overland commerce (transportation of goods) was born. Two centers of trade developed: the North Sea area and the Mediterranean area. The early traders, originally called the "men with dusty feet,"[8] who, by Francis' day, would become the powerful new class of merchants, journeyed from center to center. Leclerc states:

> . . . before long these merchants, while pursuing their ambulant way of living at certain seasons of the year, began to settle down at given points. They established themselves in places which were favorably situated for their mode of life: near a port or a crossroad. There they met other merchants. As commerce developed and the number of traders increased, they formed groups; they traveled together in caravans so as to defend themselves the better against marauders, and also in order to obtain more favorable toll-rates from the feudal lords whose territory they traversed. Later they began to organize more permanent associations: guilds or *hanses*;

[6] Eloi Leclerc, *Francis of Assisi: Return to the Gospel* (Quincy, Illinois: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), viii-ix.

[7] Eloi Leclerc (1921-2016) was a Franciscan friar who, prior to being imprisoned by the Nazi regime, was a professor of philosophy in Lille, France. In April, 1945, as Allied troops were invading Germany, prisoners, both Jewish and non-Jewish, were placed on trains in Buchenwald and other concentration camps possibly to be held as hostages or exterminated. In the epilogue entitled "The Language of the Soul's Night" in his book, *The Canticle of Creatures,* Leclerc recounts his experience along with four other friars on this train—one of whom died while his companions surrounded him singing the *Canticle.* See Eloi Leclerc, *The Canticle of Creatures: Symbols of Union: An Analysis of St. Francis of Assisi*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Chicago, Franciscan Herald Press, 1977) 237-236.

[8] Leclerc, 4.

> this permitted them to buy larger quantities of goods at cheaper prices, and to undertake more important contracts.
>
> This settling of merchants in certain favorable spots gave rise to a new world, the world of the towns.[9]

These towns, in turn, laid the groundwork for a variety of craftsmen who settled in them. Pietro Bernardone, a textile producer, merchant, and land investor set up shop in Assisi while he continued acquiring significant expanses of land once held by feudal lords in the countryside.

Not to be overlooked as one considers these monumental developments in people's lives during the onset of this "new era" is the introduction of vernacular language gradually replacing Latin in official documents. Agostino Gemelli, OFM, states in his book, *The Franciscan Message to the World*, "A transformation of language is such an important matter that it does not take place without a corresponding change of civilization. The vernacular Italian ushers in a new people."[10] The accessibility of scripture texts in people's spoken languages, rather than interpreted only through clerics, contributed gradually to the formation of what some have called "vernacular theologies."[11] Contributing to these already complex situations was the introduction of manageable coins as measures of exchange and profitable investment as well as symbols of one's wealth—and power.

The Assisi in which Francis Lived

Assisi in Francis' day was not the charming medieval town we visit today. War, violence and interpersonal inhumanity were commonplace. Franciscan scholar Joseph Chinnici observes: "Simply put, [Francis] was born into a world that, in some respects, had forgotten what it means to be both human and Christian. Confronted with a new awareness of the presence of the poor in its own society, medieval Italy developed rituals of exclusion to protect itself both economically and culturally from the threatening presence of the other. . . ."[12] Chinnici adds: "In the world that Francis inherited, people posed very direct questions related to *human suffering, human belonging, human peace, human integrity, human transformation* and ultimately, the *goodness of God* and the goodness of being human. Into this world, not away from it, the Lord led Francis of Assisi *to do penance, to work and to discover 'sweetness.'*"[13] Leclerc is taking these realities into consideration when he reminds us that:

> The evangelical and fraternal movement started by Francis of Assisi did not happen at just any period of time. It coincided with a historic revolution in social relationships and was marked thereby. This revolution was the result of an economic transformation going on in society. A rural economy marked by stability gave way to an urban market society which required the free circulation of goods and persons, and which by that fact, made necessary the creation of new social relationships and new political structures. The feudal regime of vassal-suzerain relationships was no longer adequate. It was beginning to be an obstacle to the new economic forces at work in the world. A more democratic political regime became a necessity as well as freer and more egalitarian social relationships. The merchants who banded together to further their business affairs had already provided a model for the new society. Thenceforth, all that was required was to break away from the power of the feudal lords. This was the meaning behind the communal movement which led to the emancipation of the cities.
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> . . . The men of the cities, the merchants especially, realizing their strength, no longer were willing to live under the rule of an overlord as his vassals. They were resolved to take their destiny into their own hands, and to further it by a common effort based on equality. In short, they wanted to live henceforth in brotherly association. To this desire for association they gave the name and structure of the "communes."
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> . . . Left to its own resources, the young commune society quickly fell under the sway of

[9] Ibid.

[10] Agostino Gemelli, *The Franciscan Message to the World*, trans. and adapted Henry Louis Hughes (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne LTD., 1935), 2.

[11] Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Man and Women in the New Mysticism (1200-1350)* Vol. III of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 19.

[12] Joseph P. Chinnici, OFM, "General Editor's Introduction" in *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition: Tracing Its Origins and Identifying Its Central Components*, vol. 1 in *The Franciscan Heritage Series*, (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2003), xi.

[13] Ibid.

money; the merchants' associations turned in upon themselves and became rival and competing blocs, ruled by self-interest. The communal liberties proved profitable mainly to the wealthiest men. Society was again split apart. A new feudalism made its appearance, the feudalism of money, bringing with it new forms of oppression.[14]

In his book, *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, Michael Crosby offers valuable insights regarding the psychological impact the demise of feudalism and the rapid transition to the use of money as a medium had on interpersonal relationships: He states:

> Where once business relationships in feudalism were defined by trust and trustworthiness between lord and vassal in patron/client relationships, money could be exchanged quickly. This had psychological as well as economic implications, fostering mental habits that would become increasingly central to the church and society.
>
> . . . According to Alexander Murray: "One was the habit of desiring more and more money, a habit which medieval theologians usually called avarice. The other was the habit of desire for that power and dignity which society concentrates in its institutions. . . . this usually went under the name of ambition."[15]

Crosby states: "The cultural changes connected to the rising market economy created strains on people's previously held meaning systems of faith and religious identity. Traditional religion was rapidly losing its force in their lives."[16] None of the foregoing was lost on Francis as he observed Pietro aggressively negotiating his own status in this new socio-economic-political milieu.

Class Structure

A fundamental characteristic of the medieval feudal mentality that the youthful Francis experienced was that "every human being [was] the virtual if not real property of another. This hierarchy was considered to be of divine origin."[17] Crosby clarifies that "class divisions [were] maintained through military might. These divisions were justified, by their beneficiaries, as God-ordained."[18] But these dynamics led to brutal competition with the urban poor suffering the greatest losses. Crosby quotes Prospero Rivi: "There was violence and injustice everywhere . . . ."[19] Crosby continues quoting Rivi:

> Assisi was a microcosm of the unequal power relationships in the wider society, with all the attending poverty, decadence, and violence. It was frequently referred to as a new Babylon. As such women were demeaned and abused; orgies of various kinds were common place. Its streets were filled with merchants trying to exploit and gangs who were willing to kill. As in all cultures highly characterized by dynamics of honor and shame, revenge was a right, vendetta was a sacred duty, and violence itself was sanctioned as God's will.
>
> This violence was expressed in a particularly vicious way in the form of persecution. This persecution was directed at specific targets: lepers, Jews, heretics, and male homosexuals.[20]

Referring to R. I. Moore's book, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250*], Crosby adds: "Moore notes that during the 950-1250 period, the last quarter constituting the entire lifespan of Francis,

> persecution became habitual. . . . That is to say not simply that individuals were subject to violence, but that deliberate and socially sanctioned violence began to be directed, *through established governmental, judicial and social institutions,* against groups of people defined by general characteristics such as race, religion or way of life; and that membership of such groups in itself came to be regarded as justifying these attacks.[21]

[14] Leclerc, 137-138.

[15] Michael Crosby, *Finding Francis, Following Christ* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 2007), 33-34. Crosby is quoting Alexander Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 60.

[16] Ibid. 34.

[17] Ibid. 38.

[18] Ibid. 44.

[19] Ibid. 38-39. Crosby is citing Rivi in "Francis of Assisi and the Laity of His Time," Trans. Heather Tolfree, *Greyfriars Review* 15 (2001): Supplement, 6.

[20] Ibid. 39.

[21] Ibid., Crosby is quoting R. I. Moore's book, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250*, 4-5.

Crosby adds, "Any form of social deviation was labeled "deviancy," which justified exclusion from the community, including the church and its religious celebrations."[22]

Drawing insights from Arnoldo Fortini's *Francis of Assisi*, Crosby goes on to describe the replication of these abusive patterns in both male and female monasteries as well as among canons and secular clergy. He states,

> Probably nobody knew better how to exploit these conflicts, especially between the popes and emperors, than the bishops themselves. Indeed, by "the end of the twelfth century, the bishop of Assisi, shrewdly steering a course between popes and emperors, comes to acquire an enormous holding. By the time of St. Francis he was apparently the owner of half the property in the commune." [Fortini, 26] All this was confirmed in a papal bull by Pope Innocent III on May 12, 1198.
>
> In fine, whether in economics or politics or even the church, what Fortini wrote of Gubbio could be said of Assisi and every commune in Italy: "It was a city dedicated to warfare, trade, and government, to the building of towers and palaces, the making and unmaking of treaties with popes and emperors." The people at every level in such a situation, including religious leaders, "could not even imagine a faith that was not sustained by military skill."
>
> It could be added that, if the people could "not even imagine a faith that was not sustained by military skill," neither could they imagine human relationships not defined by structured inequality—even slavery, as well as wealth concentrated in the hands of the very few. Into this reality, not unlike our own, Francis of Assisi appeared. He came with an alternative imagination that inspired people from his day down to our own, generating in them a renewed sense of God, the holy, and faith itself.[23]

All of the above, especially Assisi's internal and external wars, had a powerful impact on Francis' story and thus on the origins of the new Franciscan movement originating in the graces of his conversion.

Exclusion vs. Inclusion: The Historical Context of Francis' Life

The new and all-important reality in Francis' day was that money in the form of transportable coins was replacing land as the measurement of a person's wealth. During the gradual demise of feudalism as the twelfth century progressed, long-accepted feudal structures which, for centuries provided a significant foundational structure for society, were gradually replaced by new groups each vying for political, economic, social power in Assisi and its countryside. The air that Francis breathed was filtered through this struggle for domination and exclusion on all levels of his experience. Leclerc states:

> No one can afford to remain ignorant of it. It is not merely the background, the framework of the Poverello's life, nor even simply the ensemble of the conditions surrounding his career. Because of the profound aspirations that were struggling for expression in his environment, and because of the ideals and values it embodied, it is one of the components of the Franciscan experience; for this latter, with its originality and its universal appeal could have come to be only through the confrontation of the Gospel with the history of mankind.[24]

Both the Holy Roman Emperor and the Papacy were struggling for control of the Umbrian region. Perugia, on Assisi's northwest border was under control of the Papacy, while the Emperor controlled Assisi from the Rocco, the imperial fortress overlooking Assisi. This relatively stable accommodation was thrown into turmoil in 1197 when Henry VI died suddenly, creating an opportunity for the freemen of Assisi to destroy the Rocco. Turbulence followed. Noble families, previously protected under imperial power, were forced to flee to Perugia. In 1198 the freemen of means created the commune of Assisi replacing the control previously in the hands of the nobles. The nobles regrouped, laying groundwork for the bloody confrontation between Perugia and Assisi known as the battle of Collestrada, 1202, in which Perugia defeated Assisi. It is in the context of this battle that we begin reading of a certain Francesco Bernardone who was taken prisoner by Pe-

[22] Crosby, 39.

[23] Ibid. 41. Crosby's references are to Arnoldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, trans. Helen Moak (New York: Crossroad, Crossroad, 1985), 45-46.

[24] Leclerc, x.

rugia and remained in prison for a year before being ransomed by his wealthy father, Pietro.

To begin to understand how this young man, Francesco/Francis, "encountered the Gospel on the path followed by human history"[25]— to achieve this consciousness, i.e. to understand how Francis applied the Gospel to his time, we need to once and for all abandon the idea that Francesco di Bernardone, by some mystical magic, became St. Francis by jumping from his fashionable stallion and kissing a mutilated leper. It took years, indeed his whole lifetime, for this to happen. God worked gradually with Francis' responsive soul.

Francis was the doted upon son of one of the richest businessman in Assisi—and he lived this position to the hilt. The episodic glances hagiographers give us into Francis' seemingly painless conversion belie his torturous years between aimlessness and gradual response to conversional grace. In all truth, spontaneously-made saints are not much of a model for us.

Francis was a son of his time participating in its quest for honor and power as he rode off affluently armored into the battle at Collestrada. He did not gallop off on his stallion as a saint—rather as filled with passion to destroy Assisi's noble class. What did it gain him? Defeat. Imprisonment. With this in mind, consider Donald Spoto's description of the prison in which Francis was confined for at least a year. He states:

> Conditions were appalling by any standard. Prisoners were confined in almost perpetual darkness in a subterranean vault and subsisted on a meager diet of stale leftovers and tainted water; there was nothing like a latrine or facilities for washing; and the place was brutally cold in winter and cruelly airless in summer. It was an ideal incubator for malaria, tuberculosis and all manner of bacterial and viral diseases; as it happened, many prisoners did not survive the ordeal.
>
> It is difficult to imagine anyone but an adept mystic finding the equanimity and patience to survive such circumstances, and Francis had neither of those qualities at this point in life—much less is there any evidence that he had the slightest religious sensibility. Conditioned to a life of luxury and caprice and unaccustomed to suffering or deprivation, this privileged young man must have been in a state of constant anxiety. . . .
>
> Some of the less sober early accounts of this episode in Francis's life present him as a buoyant and irrepressible prisoner, cheering his companions, making peace amid quarreling comrades and gamely awaiting release. But this retrojection of his mature character only serves to diminish the real misery of this year and our understanding of almost everything that followed.
>
> [Upon his release negotiated by Pietro] . . . Francis was now so frail that he could barely walk or speak. His face was drawn and sallow, his digestion was impaired, and he often shook for hours with fever. The young man had contracted ma-

[25] Leclerc, viii.

laria . . . . He was bedridden under his parents' care for an entire year, until the end of 1204.[26]

Francis remained in Assisi during his convalescence. Spoto states, however:

> If Francis looked to his commune to provide a sense of purpose and the hope for a secure life after he recovered, he was bitterly disappointed. Despite curfews, murders were commonplace at night, and gangs of thugs attacked in broad daylight. Criminals were subject to ever more barbarous punishments; liars had their tongues torn away; forgers lost their hands to the axe, and looters their feet; a minor thief had his eyes gouged out; those even suspected of betraying the commune were strangled almost to death, then cut down while alive and slowly flayed. But the more extreme the remedy, the greater number of crimes were committed. "*Sanguis exivit,*" wrote the chroniclers and judges, describing both crime and punishment—"blood flowed."[27]

Lest we think of Assisians as totally depraved, we must note that active alongside persons totally obsessed with their own welfare were members of a growing lay movement who cared for those left unfortunate by the uncontrolled greed of merchants and craftsmen struggling for control of Assisi.[28]

Understanding in a New Way

One would think that Collestrada and his imprisonment that followed would have taught Francis a lesson, but, not having learned from this, Francis once again sought knighthood and its perceived glories. Fortini writes: "The war accompanied Francis's spiritual crisis, as well as that of his first companions, who were his fellow citizens."[29] Ambition and prestige drove Francis. In the midst of his fragile health and discouraged spirits, the embers of his desire for knighthood remained alive in Francis' heart. In 1205 he decided to accompany the nobleman, Walter of Brienne, on the Fourth Crusade. The sequence of the events that followed is not entirely clear. Somewhere/sometime very shortly after leaving Assisi, Francis was visited by a dream, followed shortly by a vision. Spoto tells us: "This was the unexpected message that uprooted Francis . . . ."[30] He adds: "Francis of Assisi lacked any of the formal language necessary to describe mystical experiences."[31] Prevented by his illness to travel further, Francis returned to Assisi and had to depend again upon his father for his subsistence. Francis was now about twenty-three years old.

Crosby discusses the profound and lasting significance of these events upon Francis:

According to *The Legend of the Three Companions*, it began with "a vision" . . . . Francis found himself led into "a beautiful bride's elegant palace." Its walls were hung with glittering coats of mail, shining bucklers, and all the weapons and armor of warriors. These, he was told by the one who had led him into the room, "belonged to him [Francis] and his knights." [L3C, 2.5, FA:ED II, 70.]

However, things changed in a follow-up experience once Francis arrived at Spoleto. Half awake, half asleep,

> He heard someone asking him where he wanted to go. When Francis revealed to him his entire plan, the other said: "Who can do more good for you? The lord or the servant?" When [Francis] answered him: "The lord," he again said to him: "Then why are you abandoning the lord for the servant, the patron for the client?" And Francis said: "Lord, what do you want me to do?" "Go back to your land," he said, "and what you are to do will be told to you. You must understand in another way the vision which you saw. [L3C, 2.6, FA:ED II, 71.]"[32]

Thomas of Celano writes:

> Remaining vigilant, [Francis] warmed to [the] proposal. Unable to understand this unexpected change, he began to quietly wonder within himself. Striving, therefore, to direct his will to divine matters, he withdrew himself for a time from the commotion of the world and business, and hastened to hide Jesus Christ within his inner self. He strongly desired no one to know and consulted with God alone about his

[26] Donald Spoto, *Reluctant Saint: The Life of Francis of Assisi* (New York: Penguin Compass, 2003), 36-37.

[27] Spoto, 38.

[28] For valuable background regarding the efforts of laity to offer assistance to the victims of illness, oppression and violence, see Andre Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices* edited and introduced by Daniel E. Bornstein, trans. Margery J. Schneider (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).

[29] Fortini, 166.

[30] Spoto, 41.

[31] Ibid. 45.

[32] Crosby, 42.

> holy proposal. He did speak, nevertheless, in an enigmatic way to a friend about the treasure he had found. Calling him often to hidden places together with him, Francis entered alone into a crypt where he prayed to the Father in secret. Thus bathed in divine joy, and unable to hold back the ardor of the Spirit, he refused to go to Apulia.... [33]

Referring to this "interior voice," Leclerc states: "Francis obeyed. From now on his only concern would be to discover what God wanted of him."[34] For a time, he remained within his parental home, but before long his increased generosity with Pietro's resources led to a public confrontation with his father. Capuchin-Franciscan friar David Couturier paints a graphic verbal portrait for us.

> A young man in his twenties stands naked in the public square. Across from him is the father who once pinned his pride and dreams on this young man just home from war. The father now sees his son as nothing more than deranged, deluded and dangerous. Beside the naked figure stands a bishop uncertain as to whether this is just an ugly squabble breaking a family apart or a religious delusion beginning to fracture a young man's mind and his future. Naked in the public square, this young man begins a revolution that would critique the violence and greed of his time and pass judgment on both the civil and religious leaders of his day.[35]

Reflection upon this image suggests that, in reality, two men stood "naked in the public square" that day: Francis, physically stripped of his clothing, and Pietro, stripped of the dreams of status that he had invested in his son, Francis.

In the following instructive excerpt from his book, *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, Michael Crosby discusses Francis' "discovery of what God wanted of him" as he begins to "understand in another way"—and his "surrender" to God's direction as he moved forward into his life's journey. Crosby clarifies:

This "understanding in another way" would represent the beginning of Francis' "surrender," his liberation from the received tradition of religiously grounded knighthood. This involved a conversion from a militaristic approach to life and a faith that would justify violence in the name of God to another approach constituted by a novel way of disarmament. In this way he would experience himself becoming a knight of another kind.

Francis' dream, as Julio Mico writes, was the beginning of his transformation in faith itself:

> Behind the traditional image of God which Francis had formed was hidden the living God who utterly changed and broadened his spiritual horizons. Thomas of Celano (1C 5) describes this disconcerting experience in the well-known dream at Spoleto. In a typically feudal setting, it shows us the change in values that God wrought in Francis. Up to this point his one aim in life had been to win knighthood on the field of honor. But now all his thoughts were turned towards his Lord, who had given him life and for whom he would henceforth live.
>
> The God of Francis's conventional background, who had remained unchanged and perfectly compatible with his other values, now gave place to the living and life-giving God who conquers and takes over, who broadens and even tears apart the accustomed horizons of one's life. Francis's consent to the evidence of God's lordship would mean that from then on he would live in a kind of continual ecstasy, a permanent leaving of self-behind to go out to the God of fulfillment. After this experience, he would no longer be able to go on cultivating his own personality but would set forth along new roads as a pilgrim of the Absolute, searching for the well spring at which he could quench his thirst for God.[36]
>
> Francis' faith now moved from a cultural faith that canonized the status quo to a personal faith that critiqued not only the status quo, but also his own former participation in it. It invited him

[33] Thomas of Celano, in J. Dalarun, *The Rediscovered Life of St. Francis of Assisi by Thomas of Celano,* trans. Timothy J. Johnson (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2016), 4.

[34] Leclerc, "Franciscan Presence in the World" in *Instruments of Peace: A Franciscan Resource Book* (Australia: The Franciscan Press, 1999), 12.

[35] David Couturier, OFM Cap., "Naked in the Public Square: Millennials and the Hopes for a New Franciscan Economy." Reprint of address given at Annual Federation Conference, 2016, 1.

[36] Ibid. 42-43. Crosby is citing Julio Mico's, essay, "The Spirituality of St. Francis: Francis's Image of God," trans. Paul Barrett, O.F.M. Cap., *Greyfriars* Review 7, no. 2 (1993), 133.

to embark on an ever-deepening process that would move from a faith defined by creeds and canons to one that was personal and transformative. In fine, as Mico summarizes the Spoleto experience, it "changed his image of God from the conventional God who scarcely mattered in life's options to the living and true God who had won his heart so completely that he could never again disregard Him . . . . Hitherto, he had confused God with the idols which society held up before him, but now it was the one true God Himself who became the sole purpose and support of his life.[37]

Going among Lepers and the Byzantine Crucifix

Francis tells us that during his process of disengaging from the system that had raised him he frequented caves on Mount Subiaco and found solace in abandoned churches where he prayed for guidance. We note Francis is drawn to humble and broken-down churches in the countryside where the poor and lepers pray. Some of these he repaired with his own hands, often enlisting the help of others. In his *Testament* he states: "And the Lord gave me such faith in churches that I would pray with simplicity in this way: '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.'"[38] He learned about mercy from members of the lay movement of his day, some of whom were caring for lepers. Grace drew him to descend from upper Assisi to become attentive to the leper village in the swamp below the walls of Assisi.

Following the open confrontation with Pietro, Francis walked north to Gubbio to sort out his life with the assistance of a friend from his military days. While Gubbio became famous for the wolf story, this village is of much greater significance in Francis' conversional process because it also had a leper village. Francis ministered here to the lepers before returning to Assisi. In a conversation a few years ago with a 90-year-old friar, Father Francisco, who then cared for a little church in Gubbio that dates back to Francis' time there, I asked him why Francis decided to return to Assisi. Fr. Francisco responded that Francis felt called back to minister to Assisians suffering from "leprosy of the soul."

Francis having been "led among the lepers," as he unmistakably states in his *Testament*, rather than a spontaneous mystical experience of a voice from the crucifix while praying in the little ramshackle church of San Damiano, appears to be the antecedent to Francis' experience of receiving direction from the Christ on the crucifix. 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.[39]

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.[40]

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,

> . . . 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 heard literally,

[37] Crosby, 43, continuing to quote Mico, 139.
[38] Francis, *Testament*, 4-5.
[39] Vauchez, 24
[40] Ibid. 25

Francis immediately began to work on the restoration of this ruined structure.[41]

The image of lepers and the Byzantine Christ remained vibrant in Francis' heart for the remainder of his life. Leclerc states: at San Damiano for long hours Francis "prayed contemplating the Byzantine Christ. This crucified Christ who radiated peace brought him the living and overwhelming revelation of the love of God for men and women. And Francis let himself be completely captivated by the depth and splendor of this love. Through the humanity of Christ and his life given fully, Francis discovered the merciful manner in which God views men and women. And he too looked at them differently. His universe was opened to human misery."[42]

Chinnici reflects upon Francis' engagement with the Christ of the San Damiano crucifix in a similar manner. He states:

> Francis encountered God in the condition of being human, in a condition that was most disfigured, in a condition of exclusion and poverty, in the condition of God-with-us, Emmanuel, in the condition of a disfigured but grace-filled Church, in the human condition of the "infidel." He began to work with his hands, as did his Master, to become "simple and subject to all" (Francis, *Testament* 19), to imitate as a coworker a Creator who made all things, redeemed all things to their transformation (cf. Francis, *Earlier Rule* 23). He began to take up the cross of his own body, which came with a human condition embedded in a disfigured world. In doing this, Francis was called to follow the path of the Incarnate Lord, who did not disdain to be born, labor along the way and die.[43]

Michael Crosby reflects:

> Francis was convinced that the Spoleto experience which began his calling—as well as his response to that calling—was totally the work of God. He called this being led by "divine inspiration." He was convinced that it was God who had spoken to him in his dream; it was God who invited him to "withdraw" from the might and militarism around him; it was God who would lead him where he would go. This conviction of God's power-at-work in him via the life of grace would continue for the rest of his life. Toward the end of his life it would be summarized in his *Testament*, wherein he gave total credit to God alone for anything of good that had occurred in him and led him to do what he did. . . . He called this the "Lord's inspiration." Convinced that everything had begun in God, he spent his life trying to remain grounded in that same inspiration of Spirit-source. Nothing, he said, should get in the way of this Spirit of the Lord and its "holy operation." Nothing should extinguish this Spirit of Prayer and devotedness or groundedness. . . . This form of faith, which led him to be consciously connected to everyone in the universe . . . . In my [Crosby's] mind, Francis' willingness to recognize how far his traditional religion had kept him from authentic faith can be found in the prayer he offered before the cross in San Damiano . . . .
>
> Most High, glorious God,
> enlighten the darkness of my heart
> and give me true faith, certain hope, and perfect charity,
> sense and knowledge, Lord,
> that I may carry out Your holy and true command. [PrCr, FA:ED I,40.][44]

Concluding Comments

It was my stated intention in this paper to address the progressive interior conversional change Francis experienced in the context of a new era rather than focusing on Francis as an agent of change. However a few closing remarks are in place.

Crosby states: ". . . Francis never seems to have consciously considered himself a change agent, nor did he ever declare his goal was consciously to change unjust structures in the Roman Church and wider political economy, [nevertheless]there is no doubt that he did have a great impact on history. . . . as Stanislaus da Campagnola writes, by 'inserting himself into the very heart of his own society, Francis helped to accelerate the progress of society.'"[45] Crosby states, however:

[41] Ibid. 25.

[42] Leclerc, "Franciscan Presence", 12-13.

[43] Chinnici, xi-xii.

[44] Crosby, 42-44.

[45] Crosby, 48. Crosby is citing Stanislaus da Campagnola, "Francis of Assisi and the Social Problems of His Time," trans. Edward Hagman, O.F.M. Cap, *Greyfriars Review* 2, no. 1 (1988), 133.

> I believe it is time for another St. Francis. The "revolution" need not be over. We need to find in Francis' story that heroic or mythic pattern that speaks to the deepest part of our dissatisfactions and disillusions with the world in which we live, and so rekindles our capacity for joy and hope. We need also to find in his story a way that invites those of us of the Western spiritual tradition as Fenton Johnson suggests, to "return to its authentic, egalitarian, faith-based roots as articulated in all the Gospels, stripped of the institutionalized Church's obsession with temporal power and prestige." [Fenton Johnson, "Beyond Belief: A Skeptic Searches for an American Faith, "Harper's, September 1998: 52.] If we can move in this direction, perhaps we will have found a way that will invite courageous youth, eight hundred years after the founding of Francis' Order, wanting to explore contemporary ways of probing the heart of his vision, nuancing the core of his message, and embracing the Gospel again in a way that will make the reign of God revealed in Jesus Christ as compelling for our age as it was in Francis' time.[46]

Reflecting upon Johnson's question in the current context of our political situation regarding the uncertain status of young people in the United States under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, sometimes referred to as the Dreamers, raises the further question: will this situation provide the impetus for U.S. millennials to become successfully involved in effecting change? Many of the young people at risk for deportation are their friends and classmates. The trauma of their endangered friends tears at the hearts of young people who take their own citizenship for granted. Will this move them to challenge, in an organized manner, the very system which these millennials are beginning to recognize has betrayed them as well?[47]

In David Couturier's address, "Naked in the Public Square" referenced earlier, he states:

> This provocative display of nudity, with its incarnate wisdom centered on minority, simplicity and a cosmic fraternity, created a new ethical space in the medieval world and it can do so again today for a generation of Millennials, disillusioned by the greed and violence of our times and increasingly working without a God to guide them. Our task today is to introduce the young man in the public square to a generation of young women and men increasingly disillusioned by political, corporate and even religious systems they believe are rigged against them. To do so, we have to focus our attention on that which disenchanted the young man in the 13th century and that which dissatisfies the young men and women of the 21st: economics. We need to see the young man's ritual in the public square not simply as a profoundly religious gesture, which indeed it was, but also one that stands as a provocatively revolutionary repudiation of the economics of his time.[48]

In his essay "Franciscan Presence to the World" Eloi Leclerc reflects on the following passage: "The Lord granted me, Brother Francis, to begin to do penance in this way: While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them, that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body." [*Testament* 3] Leclerc continues, for Francis, "Everything grew from this. Francis did not hesitate to present his conversion as a new openness towards people and towards the world. His universe had exploded."[49]

If reflecting upon the conversional movement Francis experienced in his life challenges us to conversion, we must correctly identify the components of our human, economic, social and political environment as Francis did in his time, and identify in what manner and with what level of commitment we live the Gospel in our historical context. That is what living Francis' evangelical experience in our day demands of us. To achieve this, we are called to live with an acute consciousness of our time as Francis was called to live within an acute consciousness of his time.

Some questions for consideration:

1. As you walked with Francesco/Francis during the early days of his conversion, did you recall a personal "clock in the tower" experience that urged you to "understanding in a new way?"

[46] Ibid. 48-49.

[47] See David Couturier, OFM, Cap., "From an Economy of Extraction to an Economy of Inclusion: Franciscan Values in the Workplace, *Franciscan Connections: The Cord—A Spiritual Review* 67.4 (Winter, 2017), 27-36.

[48] Couturier, "Naked in the Public Square," 1

[49] Eloi Leclerc, "Franciscan Presence in the World" in *Instruments of Peace: A Franciscan Resource Book* (Australia: The Franciscan Press, 1999. 13.

2. What form might "encountering God on the path of human history" take today?
3. How do the realities of our time challenge us to interrupt/understand/live Francis' evangelical experience in the light of our history?
4. In "Francis of Assisi: A Saint for Our Times" Thaddee Matura states: ". . . if the memory of Francis remains alive in men and women of today it is because, in spite of everything, and in the midst of generalized mediocrity, there are always men and women who have been awakened by the voice which arises from this man of the thirteenth century and they attempt to relive his gospel adventure."[50] Am I one of these persons?

In his essay "From an Economy of Extraction to an Economy of Inclusion: Franciscan Values in the Workplace," David Couturier provides a summary of "Franciscan Values for a More Social Economy." Reflection upon the Franciscan values he identifies will be helpful in responding to the questions suggested here.[51]

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[50] Thaddee Matura, "Francis of Assisi: A Saint for Our Times." *The Cord* 54.1 (January/February 2004, 37.

[51] Couturier, "From an Economy of Extraction to an Economy of Inclusion," 34-36.

A Franciscan Perspective on Violence in the Bible Divine Condescension to Sinful Humanity

By Earl Meyer, OFM Cap.

Saint Francis had a profound respect for Sacred Scripture. "Wherever I come across His most holy written words in an unbecoming place I desire to gather them up and I beg that they be gathered up and placed in a suitable place."[1] Francis also dedicated his life to fostering peace. His standard greeting was, "The Lord give you peace."[2] For his blessing to Brother Leo he chose the biblical verse, "May the Lord turn his countenance to you and give you peace." (Num 6:26) These two hallmarks of St. Francis, reverence for scripture and a commitment to peace, raise a perplexing question: how did St. Francis deal with the violent passages of the Bible? Or more practically, how is the Franciscan heritage to understand the problem of violence in scripture?

And there is a problem. Christians look to the Bible for comfort and guidance but some of the brutal passages leave them dismayed. Violence in literature should expose the senseless destruction of such behavior to foster peace. But much of the violence in the Bible fails to convey that message clearly. Too often it appears that God condones vindictive and cruel behavior. The Pontifical Biblical Commission has recognized this: "The discomfort of contemporary readers should not be minimized. These texts can scandalize and disorient Christians."[3]

The Problem

In his book *The God Delusion* the militant atheist Richard Dawkins delights in listing many violent passages of the Bible. He concludes, "The God of the Old Testament has got to be the most unpleasant character in all of fiction: jealous, petty, vindictive, unjust, unforgiving, and racist."[4] The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that the opposite is true: the violent text in scripture are not evidence of God's arrogance or cruelty but his patience, tolerance and humility.

Atheists are not alone in their dismay over the violence in scripture. The religious philosopher Martin Buber said that the word *God* has blood all over it.[5] He finds this especially true in the brutal biblical wars: the war mandated against the Canaanites in the book of Deuteronomy, the war of revenge against the Midianites in the book of Numbers, the bloody revenge against the Amalekites in the book of Samuel. There is also personal senseless violence, apparently endorsed by divine authority, such as the command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, the law in Deuteronomy to put to death a rebellious son, and Jephthah sacrificing his daughter in the book of Judges.

There are approximately one thousand verses in the Old Testament in which Yahweh himself exacts violent punishment and over one hundred verses in which he commands others to kill.[6] Such behavior is contrary to the goodness of God, Christian morality, and basic human values. This is not a problem that can be ignored.

While this brutal violence is obvious in the Old Testament, the New Testament has difficult verses of its own: "I have come to bring not peace, but the sword." Mt 10:34 "They shall be cast into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Mt 13:50; "He will put those tenants to death and give the vineyard to others." (Mk 12:9)

Addressing the Problem

There have been varying responses to such violence in scripture. One approach is to ignore it, to airbrush salvation history. Our liturgy includes very few difficult violent texts in the lectionary. The Liturgy of the Hours omits the imprecatory Psalms 58, 83, and 109 and other difficult psalms are selectively abbreviated.[7] The liturgical setting of worship may justify such editing, but this problem of violence in scripture must be addressed not only in formal biblical studies but also in catechetical instruction.

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[1] *Testament of St. Francis*, 12.

[2] Thomas of Celano, *First Life,* Chapter 10, No. 23

[3] *The Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture,* PBC, Liturgical Press, p. 143

[4] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, Houghton Mufflin, 2006 p. 31

[5] Martin Buber, quoted by E. Johnson, *Quest for the Living God,* Continuum, 2007, p. 9.

[6] Raymond Schwager, *Violence and Redemption in the Bible*, Harper Collins, 1987, pp.47,60

[7] Psalm 137 (EP Tue IV); Psalm 63 (MP Sun I)

The Franciscan Institute co-sponsors a study session of Francsican Scholars with Boston College at St. Isidore's in Rome (June 2018)

Back Row Left to Right: Florian Mair, Boyd Taylor Coolman, Aaron Gies, Andrew Belfield, Justin Coyle, Robin Landrith, Christopher Cullen. Front Row Left to Right: William Short, Katherine Wrisley Shelby, Stephen Brown, Timothy Johnson, Uri Leoni

Scholars are pouring over manuscripts of Alexander of Hales found in the St. Isidore Archives.
Alexander was the teacher of St. Bonavneture.

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Another approach is to read such texts as non-historical parables. Old Testament history differs from modern critical history, but the core of many biblical stories cannot be denied without voiding salvation history. Too readily we forget or sanitize the violence of ancient biblical cultures. The details may be questioned, such as Samson slaying a thousand with a jaw bone, but some violent events in the Old Testament have a basis in historical reality related to the Judeo-Christian heritage.

The fathers of the church often avoided the difficulty of such texts by interpreting them allegorically. St. Bonaventure focused on the spiritual meaning of scriptural passages which is certainly valid, even necessary. But in our age biblical historical criticism has sharpened the apparent contradiction in certain scriptural texts where violence is attributed to a benevolent God.

This violence in scripture is a challenge but it is also an opportunity. We gain nothing by avoiding it; we can profit from an honest effort to understand it. Since violence is also a persistent problem in modern society, and often related to religious faith, this issue is not simply an academic exercise but a very relevant challenge.

Guiding Principles

The conciliar document *Dei Verbum* states that "imperfect and temporary things" are found in the Old Testament. The document, citing St. John Chrysostom, says further, "In Sacred Scripture, while the truth and holiness of God always remains intact, the marvelous 'condescension' of eternal wisdom is clearly shown . . . in how far He has gone in adapting His language with thoughtful concern for our weak human nature."[8] Our interpretation of the violent texts, as all biblical passages, must be consistent with this benevolent nature of God, his providential care of his people, and his enduring message of peace.

To analyze violent texts we must first clarify our anthropomorphic expressions for God. When scripture speaks about God in relation to himself it states clearly that God is not human. But when God is acting within the human sphere scripture often presents God as expressing himself in a human manner. Divinity cannot communicate divine knowledge directly to humans since it would be incomprehensible to us. God's message to us must be revealed in human terms and in a human manner. In scripture God is condescending to our human level as a father would speak to a child in terms the child can comprehend. And only a child would read such texts literally. *Therefore, texts that are not in accord with the authentic nature of God must be understood in this context of divine condescension to our sinful human condition.*

The Anger of God

The analysis of violence in scripture begins with a proper understanding of the biblical reference to the anger of God. The Bible speaks plainly of the anger of God and the wrath of God, e.g. Deut 9:8, Num 32:13, 2 Kings 13:3, Ps 6, Ps 89. In fact, the image of God as angry is the most common anthropomorphism in the Old Testament.[9]

God cannot be angry. God does not have human passions. Scriptural expressions of the anger of God must be interpreted in a sense befitting the proper nature of God, much as when it speaks of God swearing or repenting. When scripture speaks of the anger of God it is using a human emotion to convey a divine disposition, not fully comprehensible to us, by which God reprimands his people.

John Chrysostom in his commentary on Psalm 6:1 ("Lord in your anger do not censure me, nor in your rage correct me.") states: "When you hear of anger in God's case, do not get the idea of human activity. The divine nature is free of all these passions. God speaks to us through scripture in this way to make an impression on materialistic people as when we converse with foreigners we use their language."[10] Origen wrote that when scripture speaks of the anger of God it is using a human experience to convey a spiritual operation beyond our comprehension by which God corrects sinners.[11]

As God cannot be angry, God cannot act violently. When scripture ascribes violent actions or their endorsement to God it does so to convey by a human

[8] *Dei Verbum*, no. 13

[9] In her treatise, *Divine Anger in the Hebrew Bible* (The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 52), Deena

Grant analyzes the biblical concept of human anger which serves as a model for the anthropomorphic expression of divine anger in the Old Testament. Human anger in the Bible is limited to anger caused by a disregard for the authority of those who have the power to punish the offenders. Such anger is directed to abolishing foreigner offenders, but is mitigated toward family members and directed to their correction. Yet this Biblical human anger toward kinship tends to alienate the offender and weaken the authority of the angered human, whereas God's anger moves the remnant of his beloved to a renewed bond of covenant. While human anger burns the angry, divine anger burns the offender. In the historical books God's anger is invoked to expresses his sovereignty over all nations, but in the prophetic works it is employed to preserve the covenant with his people.

[10] John Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. Robert Hill 1:95

[11] Origen, *On First Principles*, Christian Classics 2013, p.18

activity a process in God for which we have no adequate human expression. Violence is absent in God but scripture uses it to relate God's message of conversion during early human history where violent warfare was prevalent. Without denying the violence of the Old Testament wars, it should be noted that such violence was never presented as a way of life. The goal was always the peace proclaimed by the prophets.

Accommodation and Incarnation

The use of violence to send a divine message might well have been a time conditioned accommodation to a phase of human development. A similarity may be found in the question of divorce, of which Christ noted, "Because of the hardness of your hearts, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives, but it was not so from the beginning." (Mt 19:8) Moses permitted divorce not as God's plan but only as an accommodation to an undeveloped sense of commitment. The use of war and brutal force to convey God's message might be understood as a similar accommodation to a violent period in human development but it was not to be the heritage of God's people.

The violence in scripture might also be related to the incarnation. For St. Francis the incarnation and especially the Passion of Christ were expressions of God's humility. Christ humbly descending to our sinful human nature offers a parallel with God condescending to biblical violence. Christ shared in and suffered within our fallen human state without himself sinning that he might lead us out of that condition to a life with the risen Christ. In salvation history God somehow entered into the violent mentality and activity of his people, without himself being part of their immoral conduct. He did so not to condone violence but to be with the people who suffered and inflicted such cruelty to reveal patiently its evil and to lead them to a better moral life.

A Culture of Violence

These considerations are only partially helpful. The fundamental difficulty is not fully resolved. God cannot commit nor countenance violence. Historical criticism, as opposed to allegorical interpretation, finds God endorsing and even commanding violence. Is there a further way to reconcile this apparent contradiction?

A scholastic principle reminds us that God's word is received by us according to our limited human perspective: *Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur* (what is received is received according to the mode of the receiver). Thomas Aquinas wrote: *Cogitum est in cognoscente secundum modum cognoscentis.*[12] (A thing known exists in a knower according to the mode of the knower.) While God cannot be angry or violent, God's message to us about sin and conversion is known by the violent in terms of violence.

When God speaks in scripture, when he commands a specific behavior, it is not to be understood as a verbal human communication such as a phone call. "God told Saul to . . . " means that Saul had an internal sense that he was inspired by God to act on a certain matter. He understood this according to the mentality of his culture and time which unfortunately was inured of violence. God was inspiring Saul to cleansing pagan idolatry, not specifically to acts of plunder and murder to achieve it.

But Saul received and acted on the inspiration according to his cultural disposition. *Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur.* God did not command violence, but Saul received God's inspiration with a mentality of war as a necessary means of survival as well as bringing a higher culture to other people. Did God endorse or permit the violence? Only in the sense of allowing evil that may result from free will, limited knowledge, or cultural development as he permitted Moses to allow divorce at one stage of Israel's history. But divorce is not God's design, nor is war.

A Reflection

This reflection is offered not as a comprehensive solution to violence in the Bible, but only as a perspective often neglected. God is involved in the scriptures

[12] Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I, Q.xii, art 4

not only with violence but also with other morally questionable behavior such as polygamy, deception, and slavery. The Bible as sacred does not mean that everything therein is laudable. Our insight into such difficult texts will always be limited but not without benefit.

In summary, consider this perspective on the violence found in scripture. Since human beings receive a message with their limited cultural mentality, God has allowed his word to be understood by his people according to their stage of human development. A brutal violence was endemic to pastoral tribes and chiefdoms in the era of the Old Testament.[13] Their language is disturbing, but it was the vernacular of that age. Had the people been less militant God's message might have been expressed in a more irenic manner.

Violent passages in the Bible do not reveal a cruel and vindictive God as some critics suggest. On the contrary, they are evidence of God's patient tolerance of human weakness and humble patience with human development. Rather than bemoan that God is associated with the violence in scripture, we should be humbled that God had to condescend to our sinful human nature that his message of peace might gradually transform such brutal people. With violence so prevalent in our own culture, this realization should move us to embracing peace more radically and renew the hope of St. Francis, "May God grant you peace."

[13] Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, Viking Press, 2011, p.41

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A Prayer of Franciscan Solitude by André Cirino OFM and Josef Raischl OFS: A Review

By David B. Couturier, OFM. Cap.

According to a recent study by psychologists at the University of Virginia, many people would prefer to give themselves a mild electric shock than to sit down in a room alone with their own thoughts.[1] The fear of loneliness, the dread of isolation and the lack of companionship are so intense in our fast-paced, quick-clipped and complicated society that it is no wonder that Wikipedia can define solitude only in the darkest of terms: "Solitude is a state of seclusion or isolation, i.e., lack of contact with people. It may stem from bad relationships, loss of loved ones, deliberate choice, infectious disease, mental disorders, neurological disorders or circumstances of employment or situation (see castaway)."

It is a strange juxtaposition. We are bombarded with communication at all hours and in almost every place. Texts, tweets, instant messages, social media, and cell-phones push us out of ourselves night and day, exhausting our attention, draining our social and psychic energy. Yet, it is solitude that we fear and being alone that frightens us. It can be otherwise. Cirino and Raischl offer a prescription in their new book on solitude.

They remind us how Francis of Assisi found the *joy of solitude* and taught it to his sisters and brothers eight hundred years ago. He gave a few simple directions to his brothers who were spending time in prayer in places of solitude and silence. That one page document has been called "The Rules for Hermitages" by Kajetan Esser but it is notably rechristened in this work by Cirino and Raischl as "*The Document on Solitude*." As Cirino explains well in his introduction,"hermitage" suggests a structure rather than an experience and "rule" proposes "limits" rather than "adaptations" that may be needed from time to time and place to place.

What Cirino and Raischl offer in this work is an engaging pathway to the experience of Franciscan solitude, a series of reflections by various authors on the experience of a *solitude in fraternity* that allows the mind and heart to deepen their connection to all that is good. Far from being the terrifying isolation that people fear today, Cirino and Raischl demonstrate how Franciscan solitude provides clarity, awareness, insight and connection to oneself, creation, and God. Frances Teresa Downing relates what a contemporary said of Clare of Assisi's return from private prayer – "When she returned from prayer, her face appeared clearer and more beautiful than the sun. Her words sent forth an indescribable sweetness so her life seemed totally heavenly."

Cirino and Raischl have collected the experiences of a diverse group of women and men and allowed them to share their stories of solitude. Each rooted in the directions that Francis gave long ago, these articles are testimonies and teachings on how to develop an "attentive silence" in order to experience a "deliberate life."The authors demonstrate a fine ability to reveal the roots of their experience in the Franciscan intellectual tradition by deftly showing the initial genius of Francis' *Document on Solitude*, Clare's use and adaptation of it, and the means that Franciscans today, lay and religious, use to discover their roots and strength in relational goodness.

Nietzche once described his need for solitude:

> *I go into solitude so as not to drink out of everybody's cistern. When I am among the many I live as the many do, and I do not think I really think. After a time it always seems as if they want to banish my self from myself and rob me of my soul.*[2]

Cirino and Raischl have provided a primer on Franciscan contemplative mindfulness, by making the experience of Franciscan solitude understandable and achievable even in the midst of busy lives and complicated obligations. By allowing authors to befriend us with stories of how they have adapted Francis' simple directions on finding spaces for an attentive silence, Cirino and Raischl take the fear out of the prospect of solitude. And they demonstrate how the anxiety of *doing* can be transformed into the elegant allure of *being* for "those who wish to *be* in a religious manner in solitude." (Document on Solitude, 1). This is a must-read for anyone wishing to reconnect to their relational goodness in God!

André Cirino and Josef Raischl, *Prayer of Franciscan Solitude* (Phoenix, AZ: Tau Publishing, 2018).

[1] Timothy D. Wilson et al., "Just Think: The Challenge of a Disengaged Mind," *Science* 345 (2014), 75-77.

[2] F. Nietzche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 491.

Clare of Assisi and Franciscan Prayer as *Visio Divina*

By Timothy Flynn, Ph.D.

In her seminal study, *Franciscan Prayer*, Ilia Delio, O.S.F., addresses the ideals of prayer as identified by Clare of Assisi in a letter to Agnes of Prague as a means to help characterize the Franciscan tradition of praying. In this letter, Clare tells Agnes, "Look upon Him Who became contemptible for you and follow Him…O most noble Queen, gaze upon [Him], consider [Him], contemplate [Him], as you desire to imitate [Him]."[1] These four steps – gazing, considering, contemplating, and imitating – Delio points out, parallel those identified by the Carthusian monk, Guigo II in his discussion of *Lectio Divina*. Guigo's four steps of praying with scripture are: reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation.[2] According to Delio, "Clare does not begin prayer by reading the Scriptures but with gazing on the 'book' of the crucified Christ."[3] I would suggest that in essence, Clare of Assisi, and those in the early Franciscan tradition who followed this idea, were practicing what has become known as *Visio Divina*. The technique of praying with images has long been a part of orthodox Christianity, but a more systematized manner such as this one identified by Clare has arguably been lost over the centuries.[4]

The final step in Clare's prayer process – *imitation* – takes the monastic tradition of *Lectio Divina* and its visual counterpart still further, and it challenges us to *become* what we pray. Therefore, prayer is not merely a cerebral or intellectual activity, but an *active* and *transformative* one. Delio suggests that "Prayer is to forge us into the likeness of the beloved, and thus it is bringing Christ to life in the believer. This is evangelical life – bringing Christ to life by participating in the Christ mystery."[5] Through this practice, I believe, we not only transform ourselves, but consequently we have the potential to help transform others.

Visio Divina is a method of praying with and through artworks. While Clare was praying before a crucifix and inviting Agnes to imitate the crucified Jesus, I would suggest that Clare's insightful Franciscan method of praying could be just as appropriate to other sacred artworks as well. Let us briefly consider the painting by Hendrik Martenzsoon Sorgh (c. 1610-70) entitled *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* from 1645 (see Figure 1 below).[6] Applying the steps suggested by Clare, we first *gaze* upon the work. This verb implies more than simply "looking at" something, rather it specifically means "to fix the eyes in a steady intent" or "to look often with eagerness or studious attention."[7] By doing this, the viewer is able to notice elements about the artwork which a casual observer might miss. Details come to life, the use of colors becomes important, postures and body positions take on value, and perhaps the viewer places him/herself directly in the scene as part of the action. For example, when divided down the middle into two, the image of Martha on the left side resembles a typical Dutch genre painting of kitchen maid; nothing really out of the ordinary. Typical genre paintings of this time were simply domestic scenes, though they often included some symbolism which the insightful observer could read into the subject.

Considering, which is the second step of Clare's method of praying, requires critical and more careful thinking on the part of the viewer. At this point, questions might be asked about the scene of the artwork and the details which the viewer observed while *gazing* upon the image. For instance, in the painting in Figure 1, the viewer might wonder why Jesus is dressed in more traditional first century attire, while Martha and Mary are both dressed in clothing contemporary to Sorgh's own day. This, I would suggest, brings Jesus into the *present* time. It reminds us that Jesus transcends all time and place. He is present *now*, just as easily as he was in first century Jerusalem and in the Netherlands in 1645. Perhaps we could also infer that as we study scripture – which Mary seems to be doing rather intently – Jesus is al-

[1] Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M, CAP. and Ignatius C. Brady, O.F.M. *Francis and Clare. The Complete Works*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 197.

[2] Ilia Delio, *Franciscan Prayer.* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2004), 67.

[3] Delio, 67.

[4] For contemporary ideas on this subject, see also Henri Nouwen, *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons*. (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2007).

[5] Delio, 9-10.

[6] This work is in the Wilson Art Gallery in Cheltenham, U.K.

[7] Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

ways with us, guiding us and inspiring us through the Holy Spirit. Other questions the viewer might raise could concern the setting and its architecture, as well as the book Mary is reading, and the artist's use of a bright light on Martha and not on Jesus and Mary. Also, why is there such a gap separating Martha from the other two characters? These questions can also inform our prayer.

Now the viewer is asked to *contemplate* the artwork, which implies more prayerful attention, recalling the scripture from which the story is taken, and the direct words and attitudes of both Martha and Jesus. We must open our hearts and minds to the message of the image. As John August Swanson suggests, "Explore more fully the meanings that come to you, and the feelings associated with the image and its colors and forms."[8] Dig deeper to pray with the artwork. In the story portrayed in Sorgh's painting, Martha and Mary are often interpreted as the symbols of the "active" Christian life and the "contemplative" Christian life. Jesus recognizes that Martha's work "was good and profitable for her soul's salvation," but it is not the *best*.[9] What is best is that which Mary does: she loves and praises God above all other business, bodily or spiritual.[10] Perhaps, this scene – like the story upon which it is based – is telling us that Jesus, the Word of God (represented by the book in Mary's lap), wants our full attention. We should not become overburdened and completely occupied by the things of this world, but we must look to Jesus who is our model for living and for *serving* others. Martha was worried about how she would attend to the needs of her guests, how she would *serve* them, and while this is a very admirable pursuit, Jesus is reminding her that the higher and nobler goal is attending to her own *spiritual* needs and those of others.

Finally, Clare indicates that the previous steps – gazing, considering, and contemplating – are predicated upon the viewer's "desire to imitate." Though in her letter to Agnes she speaks of Christ's suffering on the cross, the desire to imitate Christ in other aspects as well, or even to imitate others who encounter Christ in specific situations, is also applicable, I believe. From this painting, we may be called to recognize which of the two spiritual types *we* are: active or contemplative. Are we a bit of both? How can we imitate Mary – the one who has chosen the *best* part at that moment, as the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* describes it?[11] When Jesus becomes present to us in our busy life, through the presence of a suffering family member, a confused and distraught student, or a friend at the crossroads in her life, how do *we* stop and be with that person? How do we give ourselves over to that person as Mary did to Jesus in this painting? Do we choose the better part? We can imitate Mary, who is present to Jesus, who gives

[8] John August Swanson, "Praying with Art – Visio Divina," *Patheos*, July 13, 2009, http://www.patheos.com/resources/additional-resources/2009/07/praying-with-art-visio-divina , accessed April 4, 2018.

[9] Emilie Griffin, editor, *The Cloud of Unknowing*. (New York: Harper One, 1981), 52.

[10] Griffin, 52.

[11] Griffin, 52.

herself and her undivided attention to Jesus to learn from him and show him hospitality. How do we show our love for Jesus to others?

As Delio suggests, this type of prayer is evangelical. Applying Clare's technique of prayer to *Visio Divina* opens for us a profound and enlightening way to pray with artworks which is uniquely rooted in Franciscan spirituality. Gaze, consider, contemplate, imitate.

O God of love, who comes to us in varied ways and in many people,

Open our eyes and our hearts, and make us attentive.

Help us to recognize your face in others
and your holy presence in all situations;
Let us serve you by serving our sisters and brothers,
and may we show forth your love in all that we do. Amen.

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***Oracle* November 2016**
Samuel Fuller, OFM Cap.

A newborn babe embraced by a mother's arms,
a Touchstone in times of grave affliction
as a dagger is thrust into the body politic,
becomes a rock anointed at Bethel
from which new life awakens.
Touching the Face of Humanity and Mercy,
Hearing the Cry of the Poor
and the Cry of Mother Earth,
We wipe the tears of lamentation as the very rocks cry out,
this rock upon which one's hand
reaches out
to touch.

Fr. Samuel Fuller joined the Capuchin Franciscans, Province of St Mary, in 2000. He served for seven years as the Associate Pastor of St Pius X Church in Middletown, CT and currently resides at St Anne-St Augustin Friary in Manchester, NH ministering with the Secular Franciscans while continuing his work in the environment. Fr Sam will have an exhibition of his sculpture in September thru October at Rivier University in Nashua, NH.

The Eucharist: At the Heart of St. Francis

By Domenic Scotto, TOR

The high Middle Ages have been described as a watershed in the history of the Western Roman liturgy.(footnote needed) It was a time in which the chasm was widening between the clergy and the laity with communion in the hand beginning to be excluded, the chalice beginning to be withheld from the people and unleavened bread coming into use. The Eucharistic debates of the 9th to the 11th century played a prominent part in preparing the ground for this chasm, as well as for the later Eucharistic controversies.

The earliest Eucharistic debates come from the Carolingian era. Despite the great endeavors made by the Church of Rome in the establishment and development of the Frankish Church in the 8th and 9th centuries, by the 12th century, it was to a great extent still a missionary or frontier church. Masses of uneducated peasants continued to be involved in pagan and superstitious practices despite their conversion to Christianity. Under these conditions, the Church was faced with a herculean task of better pastoral care and instruction. To the uneducated, the priest's act of consecration of bread and wine and transformation into the Body and Blood of Christ was easily interpreted an act of magic. This misinterpretation was easily adopted when the priest recited the words of consecration in a very low tone of voice, in a language, i.e. Latin, that very few understood.

What seemed to originally be a simple question (the simple question is never stated – this sentence has to be rephrased) would soon evolve into a complex disputation over the nature of the sacrament of the Eucharist itself. Further complicating matters, to an intellectual mind , the priest's act of consecration in which such ordinary objects such as bread and wine are transformed into the Body and blood of Christ, could very easily be interpreted as an act of magic especially since the priest recited the words of consecration in a very low tone of voice , in a language, namely Latin, that very few understood.

Under these conditions, the missionary church felt the need to properly train its monastic clergy and effectively evangelize its illiterate worshippers. This led to the very first treatises on Eucharistic Theology. Around the year 831 AD Paschesius Radbertus, the abbot of the Benedictine monastery at Corbie in France, wrote what is considered to be the first monograph of Eucharistic doctrine, "De Corpore et Sanguine Domini" (On the Body and Blood of the Lord). [1] While the work was a comprehensive study of early Eucharistic doctrine, what stands out prominently is the fact that the work makes no distinction between the historical and the sacramental presence of Christ in the Eucharistic species. Pachesius' reasoning follows a medieval preoccupation with philosophical realism, which is not so much erroneous as not amply developed for lack of proper theological vocabulary.

Soon after the publication of Paschesius' work, another monk, named Ratramnus (d. 868), who was from the very same monastery, wrote his own treatise on the Eucharisti under the same title, "De Corpore et Sanguine Domini".[2] In his work Ratramnus refutes what he considers the overly carnal view of the Eucharist developed by Paschesius and posits that the Divine presence in the Eucharist was one that was "figuratively and mysteriously symbolic." Whereas Paschesius presents Christ's presence in the Eucharist in physical terms, Ratramnus offers Christ's presence in symbolic or figurative terms.

These two opinions ushered in an era of much speculation and confusion concerning the divine presence in the Eucharist, which lasts from the ninth to the eleventh century. It was in the 11th century that the difficulties inherent in these diverse opinions came to the forefront of theological discussions, as in the writings of the Archdeacon of Angers. Berengarius of Tours (1000-88) (footnote needed here). While Paschesius represented the consummate representation of literalism in Eucharistic theology, the theologian Berengarius became the model of the non-literalist opinion. Berengarius held that there was nothing of the historical Christ present in the Eucharist.[3] Pope Nicholas II (d. 1061) summond Berengarius to a Synod of Rome in 1059, and required

[1] Radbertus, Paschesius,12,*Patrologia Latina*,Migne,t.120, Col.1310 C.
[2] Ratramanus, *Patrologia Latina*, Migne, 1, 121, 11-346
[3]Maloney, Raymond, S.J.*The Eucharist*,The Liturgical Press, 1995,pp. 116-118.

him to take an oath in which he would affirm that:

> …"The bread and wine, which are placed on the altar, are after the consecration not only a sacramental sign but also the true body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and not only in a sacramental sign but in all truth are empirically (sensualitier) handled and broken by the hands of the priest and crushed by the teeth of the faithful." (DS 690) [4]

The twelfth century represents a difficult moment in Eucharistic theology, a dilemma between the exaggerated realism of Paschesius on the one hand and the exaggerated symbolism of Berengarius on the other. A position between these two extremes needed to be established.

The pontificate of Pope Innovent III (1198-1216) provided a solution. The key event for Eucharistic theology during Innocent's pontificate was the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which Innocent had convened. It was during this Council that we have the first use of the language of "Transubstantiation" (DS802).[5]

By the use of the word, "transubstantiation," the Church attempted to say that the substance of bread and wine were changed by the power of God into the substance of Christ's Body and Blood, making Christ actually present while the empirical realities (phenomena or species) of bread and wine remain.[6]

The Council's statement on transubstantiation is the culmination of the Eucharistic struggles that raged in the Church throughout the 9th to the 11th centuries. It is the condemnation of the Albingentian denial of Christ's real presence as body and blood in the Eucharist.

While this definition would be open to further development, its significance lays in adding the weight of conciliar authority to the general teaching of the Church on this matter.

Since this was a time of reform, the Pope also requested all those present at the Council and all Christians in their ministry to mark themselves with the sign of the Tau, the last letter of the Greek alphabet and a symbol of penance and of the cross. The Pope affirmed that the shape of the Tau indicated a cross and as such should be symbolically borne upon the heads of all those to manifest its radiance in their own lives.

The Pope exhorted those present at the Council to be champions of the Tau and of the Cross. Concluding with the affirmation that God does not will the death of a sinner but their conversion, the Pope admonished all the participants to go forth and preach penance and forgiveness everywhere.

While there is no absolute proof that St. Francis of Assisi was a participant in this Council, the Council's affirmation is clearly reflected in his life.

The Pope's request to embrace the Tau appears as the perfect message for St. Francis. It is most likely at this time that Francis chooses the Tau as the symbol of his penitential life and as the resume of all his preaching. It becomes the concrete sign and symbol of the participation of his Order in the reform of the Church and the conversion of souls called for so forcefully by the Pope. From this point onward, the Tau serves as a personal signature for Francis' life and work. [7]

Today, there are only three short personal writings of St. Francis in existence. They are found on two small pieces of parchment. One of these is preserved in a reliquary in the Sacro Convento in Assisi, which bears on one side a blessing called the Chartula. Along with this blessing that Francis wrote for Brother Leo, there is a large thickly drawn T, the sign of the Tau, which extends downward and across the center of the parchment. [8]

While this alone could be a strong affirmation of the presence of St. Francis at the Lateran Council, it is the Eucharistic writings of Francis that reflect even more conclusively the strong influence of the Church's official stance on the Eucharist upon his spirit.

Francis realizes the power of the paschal mystery made present sacramentally and made available to us under the signs of bread and wine.

As the Eucharistic debates indicated before the Council, many saw this in theory but scarcely in practice- for they did not see the Eucharist as the real commemoration of the death of our Savoir or the re-presentation of the actual death for Christ. (this paragraph is unclear and imprecise)

On the other hand, for St. Francis to receive the body and blood of our Lord under the signs of bread and wine meant clearly to renew the actual remembrance of the Passion sacramentally.

From all the writings of St. Francis that have been preserved for us, the major portion deal with his reflections on the Blessed Eucharist. Such reflections are

[4] Enchirdion Symbolorum,ed.H.Dewziger and Schönmetzer, 690.

[5] Enchidron, 802.

[6] Theological Dictionary, Karl Rahner, H. Vorgrimler, Herder And Herder 1963,p.466.

[7] Vorreax Damien, O.F.M., *The Tau,* Franciscan Herald Press1977, pp.11-12.

[8] Vorreax, pp.2-3.

that there is really the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Most High himself who has told us, This is my Body and Blood of the new covenant (Mk 14:22-24), and He who eats my flesh and drinks my Blood has life everlasting. (John 6:55) And so it is really the Spirit of God who dwells in his faithful who receive the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord. Anyone who does not have this spirit and presumes to receive him eats and drinks judgment to himself. (1Cor 11:29)

So Francis continues….

prominent in his letter to all the Friars , to the General Chapter in his Testament, to the letter to the custodes and in all the Rules as well as in other of his writings.

In all of these reflections- Francis saw in the Eucharist the very real presence of Christ under the signs of bread and wine.

In his Testament Francis wrote:

> I am determined to reverence, love and honor priests. I refuse to consider their sins because I can see the Son of God in them and they are better than I. I do this because in this world I cannot see the most High Son of God. With my own eyes, except for His most holy Body and Blood which they receive and they alone administer to others. [9] Again in his Admonitions Francis wrote:

> Because God is a spirit he can be seen only in spirit; it is the spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing (John 6:64). But God the Son is equal to the Father and so he too can be seen only in the same way as the Father and the Holy Spirit. That is why all those were condemned who saw our Lord Jesus Christ in his humanity but did not see or believe in spirit in his divinity, that he was the True Son of God. In the same way now all those are damned who see the sacrament of the Body of Christ which is consecrated on the altar in the form of bread and wine by the words of our Lord in the hands of the priest, and do not see or believe in spirit and in God …everyday he comes to us and lets us see him in abjection, when he descends from the bosom of the Father into the hands of the priest at the altar. He shows himself to us in this sacred bread just as he appeared to his apostles in real flesh. With their open eyes they saw only his flesh, but they believed that he was God, because they contemplated him with the eyes of the spirit. We too, with our own eyes see only bread and wine, but we must see further and firmly believe that this is his most holy Body and Blood, living and true. In this way our Lord remains continually with his followers, as he promised. "Behold, I am with you all days , even unto the consummation of the world. (Mt. 28:20) (The Admonitions).

In another reference Francis states this very same point:

> …it is the glorified Christ who is present and operative in the mystery of the Eucharist. He is not present in his suffering humanity (historically), as when he came as man to die for us, but as he who is to live forever and is glorified, on whom the angels desire to look (sacramentally). (Letter to a general chapter).

The presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament was crystal clear to Francis. The fact of Christ's presence was more important than the explanation of the manner. Christ had revealed his presence. That was proof enough. Francis could ask for nothing more.

[9] Omnibus of Sources, ed. Marion A. Habig, Franciscan Herald Press, 1972, p. 67.

Consequently, he was completely open to the Council pronouncement of Transubstantiation.

While there are many other instances within the writings of Francis that testify to this fact, I believe the above references should clearly demonstrate that Francis, although, technically not a very learned man as far as theological teaching is concerned, nevertheless showed an astute and faithfilled view of the Eucharist. Francis was able to penetrate to the very core of the mystery of the Eucharist, one which was , at the very same time, completely consonant with the official view of the Church.

For Francis what God's love had accomplished through the the passion, death and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ was continually made present in us and for us in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Therefore, it is not surprising then that the sacrament of the Eucharist occupied such an essential place in the life, piety and spirituality of Francis.

Francis' obvious great love and reverence for the Holy Eucharist was not confined only to his belief in the devotion to Christ present in the Eucharist. His great love of the Eucharist grew out of his acknowledgement that in this sacrament of the altar the entire redemptive work of God is made visible and present for all. Therefore, all of us are able to actually and actively share in its work of salvation.

> We too, with our own eyes, see only bread and wine but we must see further and firmly believe that this is His most holy body and blood, living and true. In this way our Lord remains continually with His followers, as He promised, "Behold, I am with you all days even unto the consummation of the world. (The Admonitions).

Domenic Scotto, TO, BIO

Migration, Childhood and Trump's Metaphors of Disenchantment: A Franciscan Critical Discourse Analysis

By David B. Couturier, OFM Cap.

In his classic work on children and fairy tales, the psychologist Bruno Bettelheim describes the developmental challenges of childhood and the power that stories, fables and fairy tales have on the ability of children to navigate the existential worries they experience. He writes:

> As soon as a child begins to move about and explore, he (sic) begins to ponder the problem of his identity.… The child asks himself: "Who am I? Where did I come from? How did the world come into being? Who created man and all the animals? What is the purpose of life?" True, he ponders these vital questions not in the abstract, but mainly as they pertain to him. He worries not whether there is justice for individual man, but whether *he* will be treated justly. He wonders who or what projects him into adversity, and what can prevent this from happening to him. Are there benevolent powers in addition to his parents? Are his parents benevolent powers? How should he form himself, and why? Is there hope for him, though he may have done wrong? Why has all this happened to him? What will it mean for his future?[2]

We like to think of childhood as a long period of effortless play and mindless distractions, an extended season of spiders and snakes, bugs and teddy bears, pirates and princesses. All of which is designed to preoccupy childhood with enjoyable diversions and digressions until puberty finally strikes with a fierce adult determination. However, psychologists remind us that childhood is not so carefree. In fact, it is an active and anxious time in which kids are always wondering about themselves – who they are, what they are to do with problems and how the world actually works. Childhood is a prolonged learning laboratory where children store every word their parents say about them. This is how children navigate their anxieties. Children learn about themselves from the stories adults tell about them. They discover truths, sometimes difficult ones, in the tales that adults tell about the world and the place of children in it.

In this article I want to explore with you what our society is now telling children about themselves, what we are communicating to our young people about their place in the world. I want to engage our migration policies and the metaphors the administration employs, which tell our children what we think about them. My premise is that we are changing our migration myths and re-describing the meaning and purpose of childhood through these new narratives. We are creating a novel discourse not just about geographical borders and national boundaries, but, even more substantively, we are involving ourselves in a developmental experiment that uses children to argue for a more hostile and dangerous world.

Then, having described this emerging migration tale, I will introduce a counter-narrative, the religious tale of Francis of Assisi. I will describe how the Franciscan story of relational goodness challenges our migration policies and, by doing so, provides a way of saving childhood for the next generation.

National and International Migration: Key Findings

National and international migration is a blessing and a concern today. For many, it is a pathway to freedom and opportunity, the release from tyranny, oppression, religious conflicts and civil war. For others, it is a return to fear and a re-entry into poverty, bias, discrimination and prejudice. Let's look at some of the numbers globally and here in the United States.

The number of international migrants is staggering. Pew Research estimates the total number of migrants in the world at 244 million people.[3] If all migrants displaced, on the run and in transit, were located in one place, they would be the fifth largest country in the world. However, they are not in one place. They are

[1] This article is based on a presentation given to the Franciscan Common Ground meeting on Migration, May 19, 2018 at St. Francis Church in New York City.

[2] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 47.

[3] Phillip Connor, "International Migration: Key Findings from the US, Europe and the World," (Pew Research Center: FactTanks, December 15, 2016), accessed May 5, 2018 at:

scattered across various parts of the globe, young and old, male and female, highly educated and barely literate. The top countries of *origin* are India (15.6 million), Mexico (12.3 million), Russia (10.6 million), China (9.5 million) and Bangladesh (7.2 million). The top countries of *destination* in order of size are: the United States (46.6 million), Germany (10.2 million), Russia (11.6 million), Saudi Arabia (10.2 million) and the United Kingdom (8.5 million).[4]

The fastest growing migrant population is in the Middle East. The reasons for migration are many. Obviously, economic opportunity, safety, security and political asylum are among the top reasons. According to the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees, there are 16 million people today who are crossing international borders to seek protection from persecution, violence and war,[5] which is up from 1.7 million people in 1960.

Beyond this, 60 million people (1 in every 100 persons) are forcibly displaced from their homes, because of civil war and internal religious persecution, the highest number and share of the world's population since World War II.[6] Nearly 1/5 of the world's displaced persons (12.5 million) were born in Syria. Research from the United Nations shows that Colombia has more displaced persons than any other country in the world, with a staggering 7 million people run out of their homes because of political, economic and religious violence.[7] A year and a half after an historic peace accord in Colombia, the number of displaced persons continues to rise as does the violence, especially in the northwest corridor of Colombia.

Up until now, the United States has been the most desired nation of migrant destinations. Today there are approximately 43.7 million immigrants living in the US, nearly 13.5% of the total US population of 323.1 million people. Immigration is slowing, however. Between 2015 and 2016, the foreign-born population increased to 449,000 or by just 1 percent, which is a rate slower than the 2.1% experienced in 2014-2015.

[4] Data found in Connor, op. cit.

[5] Data found at the UNHCR website, accessed May 5, 2018 at: .

[6] Phillip Connor, "Nearly 1 in 100 Worldwide are now displaced from their homes," (Pew Research Center: Fact Tanks, August 3, 2016), accessed May 5, 2018, at:

[7] Nick Miroff, " Colombia's War has displaced 7 million. With peace, will they go home?" *Washington Post* (September 5, 2016), accessed May 5, 2018 at:

The leading countries of migration to the United States are:

India (175,000)
China (160,000)
Mexico (150,400)
Cuba (54,7000)
Philippines (46,600)

In the 1960s, the largest immigrant origin groups in the United States in order were Italians (13%), Germans (10%), and Canadians (10%). Canadian arrivals into the US have actually decreased by 19% in the last several years. The predominance of immigrants now come from Latin America and Asia, with a median age of 44.4 years old.

Children make up a good percentage of our immigrant population and of our entire child population in the US. In 2016, approximately 18 million children under the age of 18 lived with at least one immigrant parent. That accounts for twenty-six percent (26%) of the 70 million children under the age of 18 in our country. An astounding 28.4 million children in the US live in poverty. A little more than nine million of these (9.1 million or 32%) were children of immigrants.

We could crunch the numbers all day for a more precise look and understanding of the complexities of migration both nationally and internationally. The reasons for migration are complicated; the experience of migration are complex. It is becoming clear, however, that our politics in America is trying to over-simplify and, in some cases, distract from that complexity with sound bytes that polarize, agonize and oftentimes distort what is going on when it comes to migration and what is happening in the experience of those forced to leave their homelands.

I want to turn next to the language we use to describe the experience of migrants in our country. Political language, how we speak about our social world in our civic discourse, can be (and should be) an important tool to explore and explain important trends in our national experience. However, political rhetoric can also become a dangerous weapon of discrimination and distortion used to disadvantage some groups over another and discriminate for one power center against another.

I want to share what scientists call a *critical discourse analysis (CDA)* to analyze emerging statements in our migration policy to investigate what we are saying about immigrant children and their childhoods.[8] When we are developing political policies and national strategies, we use words, images and metaphors to convey *what* we intend to do and *why* we intend to do it. The way we bring concepts and images together not only clarifies intentions but it also provokes emotions and passions. We use imagery, metaphors and other rhetorical devises to argue and find support for one direction over another. I want to study the imagery being employed in the speeches and rallies of the Trump administration on the question of immigration to see what else is being said, what else is being meant, what else is being suggested besides border crossing. What are we now saying about children and their childhood?

Trump's Metaphors of Danger, Disease and Terror

Cognitive science demonstrates that human beings make sense of their social world through the use of everyday metaphors, rhetorical devices that make one word stand in for another, and by so doing create a linguistic space to convey one's worldview.[9] One of the most often cited of literature's metaphors is Shakespeare's famous description of Juliet by Romeo when he says, "But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?/ It is the East and Juliet is the sun." Romeo is using a metaphor, "the sun," to stand in for and to pose as an equivalent for Juliet. From a literal point of view, the sentence is clearly false. Obviously, Juliet is not a cosmic hunk of rock and fiery gasses. What Romeo is doing is comparing Juliet's qualities to properties belonging to the sun (warmth, light, etc), allowing us to understand the depth of Romeo's feelings towards Juliet.[10]

What metaphors allow us to do is to understand people's social worldviews, their picture of the world and the way it works. Romeo, for example, uses the metaphor of the sun to demonstrate a new consciousness of his world, away from the conflict-ridden paradigm (he had grown up with) of the battle between Montagues versus the Capulets, toward his now new-found experience of a world suffused with love and beauty. Metaphors take a perceptually complex set of facts and experiences and capture them in a succinct descriptive word or phrase. In a recent paper, Merv Dickinson classified

[8] We will be using the work of 15 scholars at UCLA's Cesar Chavez Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, *The President's Intent: Preliminary Findings of a Critical Discourse Analysis of Trump's Speeches and Tweets.* See, footnote number 9.

[9] We are referencing the work of 15 scholars at UCLA's César E. Chavez Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, *The President's Intent: Preliminary Findings of a Critical Discourse Analysis of Trump's Speeches and Tweets from the date of his candidacy to mid-September 2017, accessed:* May 4, 2018, at https://www.thepresidentsintent.com/full-report/.

[10] This example and explanation of Shakespeare's metaphor is found in "The President's Intent," ibid., 1-2.

the constellation of core metaphors that have carried worldviews since the beginning of time.[11] He names six major core metaphors that express how we view our social worlds: regeneration, hierarchy, ideal forms, process, machine and evolving organisms. What is the worldview behind Trump's migration policies; what does it say about children and their childhood; how does it square with a Franciscan worldview?

When one undertakes an analysis of more than 300 speeches and 5000 of Trump's tweets that refer to immigration, delivered when he was a candidate and now as President, one uncovers one leading or controlling paradigm and several other major metaphors that articulate how he sees the world and children in it.[12]

Trump's discourse reveals that to him "the nation is imperiled by the presence of immigrants." His leading metaphor to describe the state of affairs in the United States is that of a *nation as a fortress that is under attack*. The United States, it is held, has a "broken border" or an "open border." The country is a castle or a fort with American homes, cities and towns being "overrun" and "ravaged" by a murderous criminal enemy force. That criminal and enemy force comes from Mexico and it is the Mexican government itself and its leaders who are behind this attack because they have sent or pushed their worst people to attack America and its people. There is an invading force coming from south of the border that is perpetrating rapes, inciting chaos and all kinds of inhumane violence all across America. Trump uses the rhetorical device called "metonymy" to lump the 98% of otherwise law-abiding unauthorized immigrants with the 2% of unauthorized immigrants who commit felonies. In Trump's metaphors, they all become "criminal aliens" who are acting as an attacking force on "countless Americans" who are the innocent victims of the criminals and drugs that are pouring through our broken borders.[13]

This controlling image of a *fortress nation in peril* is connected to another triple metaphorical characterization of immigrants as "danger," "disease" and "criminals." Rally speeches and White House tweets express that all unauthorized immigrants are criminals and by coming into our country illegally, they pose an immediate and unparalleled threat to the whole fabric of American life and its rule of law. The American people are victims of these southern enemies. The survival of America and its way of life depends upon one thing, the building of the "Great Wall" that will protect innocence and help Americans regain control of their country from foreign invasion.

Researchers who developed this discourse analysis at UCLA summarize the tone, direction, content and contextual meaning of Trump's immigration metaphors both as candidate and as President:

> In summary, the metaphors that Trump, as candidate and as president, uses for both immigrants and Mexico are the same; both immigrant and Mexico are criminal, killers, and dangerous… "Criminal aliens" are the invading force destroying the country... The continued presence of illegals and criminal immigrants is a national existential crisis. Brave Trump vows to save the country by directing law enforcement officers to forcefully rid our nation of this invading force, and to build a Great Wall. Only Trump can "make America great again."[14]

Metaphors of Childhood Disenchantment

In his speeches and in his policy statements, Trump rarely distinguishes between children who are US citizens by birth (i.e. children born in the United States of immigrant parents who are thereby constitutionally protected) and those who are unauthorized because they were brought here as children. Trump conflates these children in his broad-based attacks on immigrants as "criminal aliens" but also by a disdain for the Birthright Citizenship clause articulated in the 14th amendment, as when he posed the following tweet and speech:

91. How crazy – 7.5% of all births in U.S. are to illegal immigrants over 300000 babies per year. This must stop. Unaffordable and not right! (21/08/15)

Speeches:

92. So, we have 300,000 babies a year that you will have to take care of, we all have to take care of your [it] in the case of other countries, including Mexico, they do not do that. It does not work that way. You do not walk up the border one day and all the sudden we have another American citizen. Mexico does not do not do it. Very few places do it. We are the only place just about that is stupid enough to do it. (210815––Presidential Candidate Trump Rally in Mobile, Alabama)

[11] Merv Dickinson, "Worldviews and their Core Metaphors," (October, 2014) accessed May 5, 2018 at: https://www.academia.edu/8992259/Worldviews_and_their_Core_Metaphors

[12] *The President's Intent, op. cit.*

[13] This passage summarizes the findings of "The President's Intent," pp. 5-6., cf. above.

[14] "The President's Intent," op. cit., 6-7.

Trump strangely posits that America would have to pay for these children for the next "eighty-five years," defying all statistics of immigrant productivity and contribution to American life. He has said:

97. *We have a situation a mother is pregnant. She goes to the border. She walks across the border in front of our border patrol. They are great people. They are not allowed to do their job. She lies down they have a baby they call anchor baby. She has a baby. Now we're responsible for the baby for 85 years. Okay? I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't think so. we can't do it. We owe $19 trillion. We owe a number that's almost inconceivable when you think about it. So, we owe $19 trillion. We can't be in a position where we're doing what we're doing anymore. (141015, Presidential Candidate Trump Rally in Richmond, Virginia)*

Nowhere are these negative and, one might say, racially and ethnically-abhorrent views more on display than in the decision of the Trump administration to rescind DACA, the "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals" act initiated by the previous administration to protect young people brought to this country as minors by their parents. Several months ago, I published an article on the *Franciscan Action Network's* website entitled, "DACA and the Deportation of Dreamers: A Franciscan Ethical Perspective."[15] In that paper, I tried to articulate the moral condemnation and ethical outrage of the American bishops at the turn in American policy that would jeopardize upwards of 700,000 or more young people to immediate separation from their families and deportation to countries virtually unknown and foreign to them. I applied a Franciscan lens on the situation to highlight what a Franciscan ethical analysis would suggest as a more reasonable, temperate and moral alternative.

At the beginning of this presentation, I mentioned that myths, fables and metaphors are meant to describe the social world in which we live. They provide children with a view of the world and with answers to their identity questions. They help young people make sense of how they should act in the world. As Bettelheim suggested, the tales we tell our children help them answer questions about the benevolence of the world and its powers. Indeed, they answer the question as to whether their parents are benevolent figures who can be trusted. Our tales tell children whether they have any reason to hope.

So, how do Trump's immigration tales stand up to the necessities of childhood development? How does Trump suggest that we see our world and our nation suffused as it is with immigration concerns? What kind of world is he seeing and proposing?

The sad fact is that the metaphors of the present administration, when it comes to immigration, are troubling and de-humanizing. They emphasize that the world is a dark and dangerous place. Because Trump's rhetoric often lacks distinction and nuances, children are to be considered co-conspirators in this economic and social invasion. Their parents are, perforce of their legal status as unauthorized immigrants, nothing better than a pack of dangerous and diseased criminals. If need be, it is morally justified and legally correct to separate minor children from their diseased parents.

Administration spokespersons have told us not to take Trump's language literally. We should take him symbolically and figuratively. Cognitive discourse analysis (CDA) does just that. It reviews and analyzes political discourse in its figurative and symbolic function, in the way it presents a social worldview through its leading and controlling metaphors.

Therefore, whether we take Trump literally or symbolically, we are still left with a toxic mix of metaphors that posits the world in which we live as under siege, where children are part of the conspiracy to invade and overturn our country's original innocence. They may have come to our country as minors. They may know no other nation and pledge no other allegiance than to the United States. However, they are inherently corrupted and part of a national threat. Notwithstanding the fact that they are going to school, have no criminal record, and have worked hard and effectively, that is of no concern to this administration. As the attempt to rescind DACA indicates, they are part of an enemy conspiracy to defraud and destroy American civilization. According to Trump's tale, we live in a threatened world. The migration metaphors of this administration admit of only one savior and one solution: Trump and his "Great Wall."

The Tale of Francis of Assisi: A New Enchantment

Our current migration myths are set within a Hobbesian world, in which men, women and children are hopelessly locked in a "war of all against all." However, the question obtains: is there another way of seeing our world and its problems? Is there another myth that

[15] David B. Couturier, "DACA and the Deportation of Dreamers: A Franciscan Ethical Perspective," accessed at: https://franciscanaction.org/article/daca-and-deportation-dreamers-franciscan-ethical-perspective. .

can make sense of how the world works? Is there another social worldview, another horizon of expectations that can describe our complexities with realism and hope, one that can encourage peace instead of conflict, collaboration instead of condemnation, and inclusion instead of extraction?

I firmly believe that the story of St. Francis is just such a saving myth. When Francis stood naked in the public square and handed back his clothes to his father, he was declaring that he wanted off the social grid. He wanted out of a system constructed by an economics of extraction, one that puts the vulnerable at the service of the privileged, and damns society to endless spasms of violence in the service of greed.

Francis abided by three myths of danger, disease and criminality throughout his childhood and early adolescence. The Assisi of his youth was convulsed by immense violence and amazing greed. Despite his privileged life as an entitled son of a wealthy cloth merchant, Francis' social context was one of constant war and a determined attempt by the *minores* of his day to create a new *entrepreneurial nobility* that would allow Francis and his family access to the power and privileges denied them because they were workers not nobles.

The cost of Assisi's greed was not insignificant. We find Assisi roiled by the endless spasms of war that erupted throughout Francis' formative years. Danger was part of the embedded social imagination that controlled the culture of Assisi. Francis accepted its dictum that violence in the service of justice was simply the price that must be paid for economic advancement. Francis offered to pay it willingly and gladly. We remember Francis' passion for glory and his youthful enthusiasm for war.

We also know Francis' adolescent myths of *disease*. He tells us of his deep disgust of lepers, revealing perhaps his earliest and deepest spiritual wound. Francis' myth of disease required revulsion and distance. It had an emotional, social and spiritual component. The myth demanded that Francis express his revulsion in social terms, by keeping lepers isolated and excluded from society and church. His social myths of danger and disease came together in the person of the leper from whom the young adult Francis stayed far, far away. Distance was geographical but it was also religious. Even the church released itself from all obligations of charity and compassion toward lepers. The medieval myth of disease allowed even for the creation of liturgical rituals that religiously banished lepers from civilization and removed them from all contact with family, friends and church. Lepers were forced into hovels and hospices deep in the Umbrian forests below the towns of Assisi and Spoleto. These myths of disease absolved citizens and churchmen of their obligations of charity and solidarity with the most vulnerable in their society.

Francis' conversion can be seen as a deconstruction and reinvention of his initial myths of danger, disease and criminality. His experiences of war and illness had fractured these myths and revealed to him just how shallow and ugly his original worldview was. The original social, cultural and liturgical myths of danger, disease and criminality had to be reconstructed. Francis began this reconstruction by the side of the road.

The Transformative Franciscan Myths of Inclusion, Goodness and Beauty

When Francis embraced the leper on the road, Francis began the long reconstruction of his mythic world through the metaphors of inclusion, goodness and beauty. To this point, he had been taught to see danger in terms of economic and class inferiority. He had been educated to see an all-encompassing disease in lepers and to experience a thorough disgust in their presence. Criminals were those who robbed working

entrepreneurs like his family of their rightful place among the privileged and entitled.

These myths broke apart when he stood on the blood-soaked fields of the Umbrian Valley after the Battle of Collestrada. He saw the butchered bodies of his friends, sacrificed for the greed and violent obsessions of their parents. Francis was shaken and upended. He could no longer live by those myths.

He no longer wanted to participate in a society that divided itself between the *majores*, the privileged few, over the *minores* and *contadini*, the destitute many. He no longer wanted to protect this brutal and dangerous arrangement of economic and spiritual exclusion with weapons and the force of law. He retreated from the social boundaries of his culture, and he cast his lot and his future with the rejected, serving lepers in the crude hospices deep within the forests of the Umbrian Valley. Francis' growing disillusionment required the development of a new overarching myth, beyond the terrible insecurity caused by the triple threats of danger, disease and criminality that defined Assisi culture. Francis tells us how he found this new myth. It was in the moment "when the Lord gave me brothers." (Testament, 14)

The new myth is "fraternity." Young men (and eventually young women) came to embrace his radical life form off the social grid, away from the normative greed and violence of the day. Because of this, Francis realized that God was calling him to create a new form of life, a new social experiment, which we understand as "fraternity."

Perhaps we have domesticated the concept of "fraternity" over the centuries, reducing it to conventions of common life and customs of common prayer. We miss the radical experiment that the brothers first introduced into society and its confrontation with medieval notions and expectations of superiority and dominant control. The social myths of the day, what we might call the "embedded social imagination" of Assisi, required the hierarchy of the few over the many for the sake of social security.

Francis' new myth of fraternity rejected the strategy that security can only come by way of those armed with clubs and swords. The old myth maintained that social conflict is inevitable and its resolution required the chronic convulsions of violence that the young must take up on behalf of the social good.

The new myth's egalitarian form of life, in contrast, would have no inherent competition, no superiors, but only servants of all. There would be no divisions whatsoever, no traces of *majores, minores* and *contadini*, those who have and those who don't, those who are privileged and those who are impoverished. This radical lifestyle would be characterized by an attitude of radical humility, hospitality and a determination to stop scratching mindlessly and unethically for position and power and an intention to take the last place in everything. Free from a fatal possessiveness, one could be appreciative of all that God gives freely and abundantly.

Francis' myth of fraternity required the construction of an economy and a society of inclusion. The myth of fraternity was rooted in the metaphor of abundance. St. Bonaventure would later describe God as a "fountain-fullness" of generative love. Security in this abundant world was protected best and most effectively by self-sacrificing care and by the dynamics of mercy.

Another way of saying this is that the way to protect the experience of shared divine abundance in fraternity was through an attitude of dispossession. In Latin, it is called "*sine proprio*," living without owning anything of one's own. *Sine proprio* is a radical disposition against possessing anything or anyone. Francis' logic was simple and direct. In the myth of danger, disease and criminality, if we own, we must protect. If we protect, we will resort to violence. It was this brutal protective violence, which undergirded Assisi's social and cultural arrangement, that Francis rejected most of all.

The Transformative Franciscan Myths and Migration Today

The core metaphors of life address the most basic questions of human security. The metaphors of danger, disease and criminality insure security by means of exclusion, violence, and division. The transformative myths of Franciscan life provide a new foundation and framework for security by means of inclusion, beauty and dignity.

The Transformative Myth of Franciscan Inclusion

The Franciscan myth is radically inclusive. It seeks a social and ethical space for every man, woman and child to reach their highest potential. God's privileges are not for the few. God's gifts are "for the many." The Franciscan ethos with its "fraternal economy" is not based on limits and deficiencies.[16] Francis' God is an abundant God, a self-diffusive God of generosity, that calls humankind to a similar attitude of dispossession and generosity. The God of Adam Smith, by contrast, is

[16] David B. Couturier, *The Fraternal Economy: A Pastoral Economy of Franciscan Economics* (South Bend, IN: Cloverdale Books, 2007).

a quite stingy God and the world elaborated by the Enlightenment is a creation bounded by limits, a zero-sum game of inevitable winners and losers.[17] Not so for the Franciscan movement. The abundant and loving God is creative and generous and God's world is lush with possibility and ingenuity. God's creation is a vast and interdependent network, a communion of social beings with an inestimable potential for service and goodness.

What does this mean for our stance with regard to migration? Simply put, our present migration policies put before us the most challenging and searing cultural questions we must face as Americans: do we or do we not want to be an inclusive society? Do we want to be a society of multiple complexions and skin tones, various religions and cultural expressions? Do we respect diversity and unity, simultaneously and with equal vigor? It is no accident that we are seeing a resurgence of hate groups and white supremacy movements at this time. We have returned to a highly racialized discourse once again. We seem to be debating on the backs of migrants the creed as to whether America is indeed the land of the free and the home of the brave, one that has open arms for anyone who "yearns to breathe free."

The debate about immigrants and "the Great Wall" is fundamentally about something greater than borders and boundaries. It is a choice between two economies: an economy of inclusion that invites everyone into a common good and a social bond that benefits the many and not just the few or an economy of extraction that systematically extracts wealth from the vulnerable to support the desires of the protected and privileged. It is an historic choice.

The Transformative Myth of Franciscan Dignity

The second value of our Franciscan myth is dignity. Do we believe in the dignity of immigrants and their families? Do we respect it as an a priori gift to the American enterprise?

I have been thinking a lot lately about the encounter of Francis with the leper. Early on I had learned that, in this story, Francis is the generous one; Francis is the merciful and compassionate one. And, in one way, he is. However, there is a more profound truth when one understands that it is the leper, the marginalized one, the one cast out, the one more like the Christ-figure who is the instigator and liberator of grace in this situation.

We know that Francis remained ever grateful for this encounter. Francis realized that the leper gave more and offered greater compassion in this exchange. Francis also accepted the truth that the leper allowed himself to be embraced, while he (Francis) was still steeped in his sins. It was the leper who accepted Francis fully and completely. After all, the leper's wounds were only *skin-deep*, while Francis' wounds, his vulnerabilities and profound disgust, were deeply embedded in his soul.

Francis had finally come to grips with his disgust against "the other," "the different" and the "disabled." His embrace with the leper was pivotal. Francis was grateful that the leper saw a dignity in him that Francis could not see in himself at the time. Francis came to understand that a sacred mutuality is the product of shared or complemented vulnerability. What Francis learned in this encounter was the inestimable dignity of every human person, no matter his or her physical challenges, emotional problems or social inheritance. Every human being has a rightful place and an inalienable dignity that are neither earned nor worked for.

We live in a time where careers calibrate a person's worth. Social standing is determined by the ability to produce and serve the insatiable needs of a consumerist society. Increasingly, one must earn one's health care. One has to afford one's education and the chance to succeed. Tragically, one has to have the right skin tone to be a true American in our still highly racialized economy.

We cannot be naïve here. There is a subtle racism beneath the structures of our present migration myths. We cannot ignore the depth of the passions and inflamed emotions that rage as the complexion of our migrants and entire American population becomes darker. Is it an accident that the language of danger, disease and criminality becomes more pronounced (and, frankly, more irrational) the darker the skin tones of those trying to find a new life in our country become? I do not think so.

The Franciscan myth promotes rights that are still only partially recognized or highly limited in our competitive and aggressive social compact. A Franciscan fraternal economy recognizes the right to life, health care, work, education, a living wage, as a well as the right to contribute from the wellsprings of one's talents, creativity, vision and hopes without the obstacles artificially imposed by cultural conventions or social bias.[18]

Our immigrants, especially those who are youngest among them, confront us with their inherent dignity of

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

[18] Cf. the Human Rights of Franciscans at *Franciscans International* at fileadmin/media/2017/Global/Strategy_2017_2020/

language, culture, experience and dreams that can enrich and lift all of us to become an even greater society and a more empathetic people. They challenge us to withdraw from the "division" that has characterized our politics of polarization for far too long. We, like Francis in his time, need to let go of the disgust we have for diversity and difference. It is time to let go of our ideals for a monochromatic America. We do this by respecting the inviolable dignity and the human rights of immigrants and finding reasonable solutions to a problem created, tolerated and advanced for generations. Scapegoating immigrants and criminalizing them to maintain and further an economy of extraction ignores their human dignity and the rights that come with it. Immigrants cannot be legally deemed invisible, replaceable and just the collateral damage that accrues from a failed politics of polarization.

The Transformative Myth of Franciscan Beauty

The third value of our Franciscan myth I would like to emphasize is beauty. Our consumer society is eminently practical but it is constraining us to produce only those things that can be bought and sold, consumed, destroyed and recast for further profit. The Franciscan movement, on the other hand, re-establishes the biblical insight that God made humanity and all of creation for the way of beauty. In the Franciscan tradition, God is Beautiful and creates a world, which is immensely diverse and gloriously beautiful. Mary Beth Ingham reminds us,

Beauty is the foundational human experience that unites mind and heart, spirit and body, activity and passivity, embracing and transcending time, culture, and point of view. Creation of beauty in art, literature, poetry and music is a distinguishing characteristic of the human person and every human culture.[19]

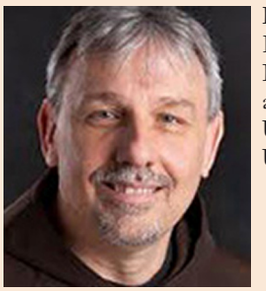
Our prevailing myths of migration produce a frankly ugly world. The description of immigrants as *poisonous animals, ravenous hordes* of corruption and the cruel rescinding of such things as DACA signal that we are depriving immigrants and ourselves of the Beauty that is essential to our humanity by sending immigrants and their families back into the shadows, where creativity is limited, hopes are darkened, and fears and anxieties are increased. We are removing a generation of young people from the sciences they can study, the arts they can perform, the music they can sing, and the beautiful they can express in multiple languages and across various cultures that can enrich and lift us all. We are constricting our own country, making it less diverse and less beautiful.[20]

We must change the equation of our social compact from a logic of limit and reduction to an ethic of abundance and addition. Immigrants are here with experience and potential to create, to build, to express, to dance, to sing and to lift the human spirit with all its lush diversity. To see them otherwise is to abide by an anthropology of deficiency and to live by a myth of danger and deficit that is foreign to the Franciscan imagination.

Conclusion

There are times in history when powerful myths collide and this is one of them. We have an administration that is trying to peddle an ancient and, I would argue, a pagan myth of danger, disease and criminality so pervasive and so powerful that it reduces human beings to predatory animals ready to pounce and ravage an innocent nation.

The Franciscan tradition has its own transformative myths that revolve around a vision, not of scarcity and insecurity, but of goodness, inclusion, dignity and beauty. They coalesce and find expression in an overarching myth of fraternity and its relational goodness and radical hospitality that invites any and all, wherever they live and from wherever they come, to live as sisters and brothers in the abundant love and great freedom of a good and gracious God.



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[19] Mary Beth Ingham, "Framing a Transformative Franciscan Ethos: The Challenge of Excellence at St. Bonaventure University," *Franciscan Connections* 67:3 (2017), 25.

[20] David B. Couturier, "From an Economy of Extraction to an Economy of Inclusion: Franciscan Values in the Workplace," *Franciscan Connections* 67:4 (Winter 2017), 27-36.