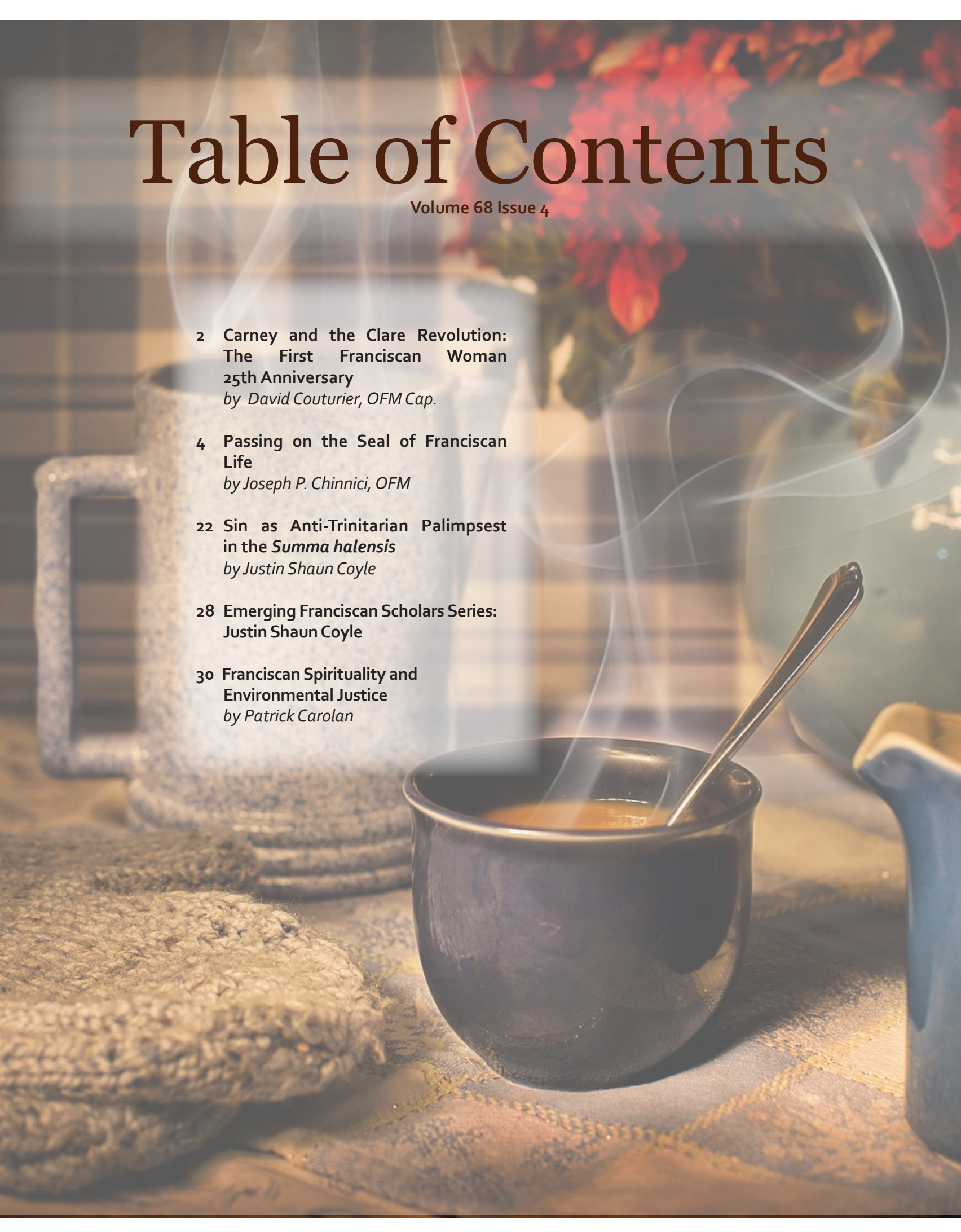


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# Carney and the Clare Revolution: *The First Franciscan Woman* 25th Anniversary

By David B. Couturier, OFM. Cap.

It's been twenty-five years since the publication of Margaret Carney's book, *The First Franciscan Woman: Clare of Assisi and her Form of Life*.<sup>1</sup> It deserves an anniversary celebration, since it revolutionized the way that the English-speaking world understood Clare as a founder in the Franciscan movement, with a mind of her own, a vision with her unique Franciscan stamp on it, and as a strong and decisive leader, inspired by but not restricted to Francis' formula.

Having completed her MA at Duquesne University and another MA in Franciscan Studies at St. Bonaventure University, Carney earned her doctorate with a specialization in Franciscan spiritual theology from the Pontifical Antonianum University in Rome. With those credentials, she joined a small band of European and American scholars pursuing a new look at Clare of Assisi, people like Marco Bartoli, Maria Pia Alberzoni, Jean-Francois Godet-Calogeras and Regis Armstrong, to name just a few. Research was showing that Clare was more than a submissive seedling planted under Francis' protective shade. She was a strong woman in her own right, who spent twenty-seven years after the death of Francis developing her Franciscan form of life against difficult clerical odds, positing a feminine form of governance that was unique for the time in which she lived. As Carney concludes:

We must establish Clare in her rightful place as a threshold figure among medieval women of spirit. She was the first woman to write a Rule sanctioned with pontifical approval. She dared to synthesize the evangelical ideals of Francis, the new forms of urban religiosity, and the best wisdom of the monastic tradition to create a new and enduring order in the Church. She testified to Francis not only by the humility of her faithfulness, but by the authority of her leadership and formative ministry. She stands before us today still serving as "instruction and a lesson to others who learned the rule of living in this book of life." (Rev. 21:27) (Bull of Canonization, 10).<sup>2</sup>

Re-reading this book now twenty-five years on, one wonders – how did we ever miss Clare's significance as a leader in her own right? How did we not gauge the radical nature of her spiritual impulses? How did we not reverence the subversive acts she used to create a hard form of absolute poverty to con-

vince the world that women were just as strong, if not stronger than men and thus must be allowed to follow Christ, not at a submissive distance, but up front and full-throated. How did we not reverence Clare sooner as the mother of intentional discipleship?

Clare is a theologian, in her own way. The way that Clare develops her incarnation of Gospel poverty and uses the language of "mutual charity" to ground her unexpected and unprecedented actuation of feminine monastic life and the governance thereof are the fruits of a deep meditation on the lowliness of a God made man, a Christ expressing himself and his passion in humility. Clare had lived in the violence of a greedy and mercenary culture. She wanted off the social grid that demanded that women be forced into marriage and became pawns to the social and economic privileges of men in her feudal world. On the night she escaped from the Door of Death to begin her life as a penitent, Clare knew exactly what she was doing. She wanted to do penance and to create a new ethical space for women to live the mutual love Clare discovered in evangelical poverty and the Eucharist. Carney traces all these themes with the delicacy of insights newly discovered and ideas freshly minted.

Other researchers have arisen since *The First Franciscan Woman* was written. They have taken up the map that Carney first sketched and gone even further than Carney could have imagined, into the deeper reaches of Clare's symbolic imagery of mystical marriage and holy food. There is new enthusiasm for Clare research and her convictions about living as a strong woman in freedom. Her freedoms include:

- a) Freedom to serve the poor, vulnerable and disabled;
- b) Freedom to find God in her voice and through her experience;
- c) Freedom to live an intentional life of compassion and feminine "mutual charity";
- d) Freedom to live a life of simplicity, outside the customs and norms expected of women;
- e) Freedom to live and express a direct feminine experience of the divine, using feminine expressions, signs and rituals;

<sup>1</sup> Published by Quincy University's Franciscan Press in 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Carney, *First Franciscan Woman* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), 19.

- f) Freedom to live a spirituality of feminine strength that challenges cultural conventions of women as “the weaker sex”;
- g) Freedom to have economic independence and construct relationships of collaboration and generosity;
- h) Freedom to develop a spirituality of the feminine body that upends the masculine definition of women’s body as “evil” and “tempting.” Focuses on women’s bodies as “holy places” and not simply the site for men’s desires.

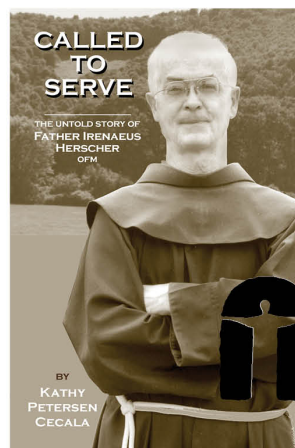
Research has expanded. One thinks of the brilliant new work by Catherine M. Mooney, *Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church: Religious Women, Rules and Resistance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

But, it was Margaret Carney who opened the gate that allowed Franciscan scholars to explore Clare’s power and potential in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. She has given us, in her words, “a paradigm of the ineluctable responsibility that each Franciscan man and woman possesses for the continuation, the preservation and the radical appropriation of the Franciscan vocation in our time.”

Margaret’s book is unfortunately out of print, but it stands behind and with so much of the Clare scholarship produced in the years since its publication by authors such as Alfani, Grau, Schlosser, Aquadro, Adenna, Delio, Knox, Kuster, Roerst and many others. These scholars have forged new paths and produced more nuanced and sometimes more troubling portraits of Clare and her early sisters in their ecclesial context. None of that could have happened without the early Clare scholars of the last century, like Margaret Carney, who had the courage to think broadly, deeply and differently about Clare in the sources. Her diligent study provided our first glimpse of Clare as the independent and prophetic “mother of mutual charity,” that she was, a truth that is coming into clearer light as time goes on.



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# Passing on the Seal of Franciscan Life<sup>1</sup>

## What Revitalization Means

By Joseph P. Chinnici, OFM

"It is not easy to know how to keep on hoping, and we must all answer this question in our own way. It seems that everything is against hope. But for me at least, where I see there has been great love, I see hope being born again. This is not a rational conclusion. Perhaps it is not even theological. It is simply true: Love produces hope, and great love produces great hope."<sup>2</sup>

In our Franciscan spiritual tradition, what does it mean to be "revitalized"? As we look forward to our witness in the twenty-first century, what "revitalized spirit" will give best witness to our Gospel way of life? Irrespective of the issues related to the how of restructuring, what type of spirit will animate the letters of our lives together? These questions and more certainly press upon us at this time in the history of the family in North America. What follows is a small attempt by one friar to present a few of his ideas on the profile of a revitalized spirit that might help us along the way. The author's hope is not so much agreement with what follows, as communal reflection on our life, and the following is presented in that spirit. I would like to try to address some elements involved in revitalization in four major steps, preceded by a very short story: (1) The foundational element in our revitalization; (2) The recovery of memory, (3) Moving from God into the world. (4) Passing on the seal. First the story.

### A Short Story

In case anyone is wondering our situation is not unusual for the history of the Friars Minor. Think initially of the status of the order on the eve of the French Revolution, and its decline from tens of thousands of members to only a few in the course of 15 years; or in our own times think of the disappearance of the friars at the time of the Kulturkampf in Germany, or during the Nazi and Soviet regimes

<sup>1</sup> Originally given to the last Chapter of Christ the King, Western Canada, August 23, 2018, this essay has been slightly modified so as to accommodate its publication.

<sup>2</sup> Jon Sobrino, *Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador* (New York: Orbis, 1990), 56, as cited in Robert Lassalle Klein, "Introduction," xii, in Kevin E. Burke, Robert Lassalle-Klein, eds., *Love That Produces Hope, The Thought of Ignacio Ellacuría* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical press, 2006).

in Eastern Europe. In all of those areas, the Order in the course of its history has seen its flourishing, its decline, and its rekindling over time. Apparently, something else is at work in our history that keeps us alive. For our purposes, I think of John Gennings (1570-1660); his story comes from seventeenth century chronicles. Not a Catholic, John was the second son of Mr. Thomas Gennings. His older brother Edmund, some twelve years his senior, was sent to live as a page with a travelling innkeeper, who happened to be Catholic. Edmund converted, and the brothers lost contact with each other. John was a committed Protestant, fearful of Catholic priests who had betrayed his country. In 1590 Edmund was ordained a diocesan priest and returned to the English mission. He sought out his younger brother in London and in a chance encounter found him on the street. Edmund and John talked as they walked, but John remained unimpressed. A year later, Edmund was captured while saying Mass. He subsequently died a martyr's death, December 10, 1591.

His brother's martyrdom so disturbed John Gennings that he vowed to go to the continent to learn about Edmund's faith. Spurned on, even haunted by his older brother's life, John converted, entered the English College, Douai, was ordained, and in 1608 returned to England. He worked there as a secular priest. After three years of work, he met the last survivor of the Franciscan Province of the Immaculate Conception, Fr. William Stanney. John asked to be admitted to the Franciscan Order, and in 1614 or 1615 made his decision. He longed to restore the luster of the Franciscans in England. The chronicle continues. "Seeing him so eager to embark on this great enterprise Fr. Stanney entrusted him with the seal of the first Province as marking the office he was to hold..." Stanney had received the seal from one of the friar martyrs.

John Gennings went to Flanders, attracted two others and received the habit with them on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1617. Eventually he received support for his enterprise from royalty and some wealthy lay Catholics in England. John established the College of St. Bonaventure, Douai, from which the second English province was re-founded. After serving as superior of a small group, then for five years as custos, he became the first provincial minister from 1630-1637, 1643-1647. He died in Douai, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1660. By 1687 there were nine new residences in England and a properly constituted friary in Lincoln's-Inn Fields. By 1708

the community in Douai had forty-two friars.<sup>3</sup> What was once declining came into a second life.

On a trip to Forest Gate, the provincial house of the Immaculate Conception Province of England, now become a custody of Ireland, I saw the original seal of the medieval province. I held it in my hand. Dating from about 1500 at the time of the Observant reform it bore the inscription: *Signillum Provinciae Angliae Fratrum Minorum Regularis Observantiae*. In the middle of the seal is the Virgin Mary with Jesus in her arms, the moon under her feet, and the “coat of arms of the kingdom.” The seal is almost cut in half by the deep incision made by the troops of Thomas Cromwell as they invaded the friary, dispersed its occupants, and the state martyred many who preached against the king’s divorce. In 1538, the year of the burning of Blessed John Forest and Father Anthony Browne, “thirty-two friars died in prison in various parts of the country.” Just sixty years later, after a brief respite under Mary Tudor, only William Stanney remained. One friar left, a seal, and a handing on of life.

As we have seen, over time, the province saw a second life. It was the memory of its first life that fueled its revival—that and the seal passed from hand to hand, until I touched it in the 1990s. The question before us is simple: What memories will we bequeath to our successors? What seal of our Franciscan life will be handed on to future generations?

## The Foundational Elements of Revitalization

For a start, I would like us to reflect on a story from 1 Kings 17. Here we find Elijah, hungry in the midst of famine, being fed by ravens who brought him bread and meat in the morning and in the evening. The water he had been drinking from a small wadi suddenly dries up; no rain had fallen. The Word of the Lord comes to him. ‘Arise, go to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow there to feed you.’ So, Elijah the prophet goes and finds the widow gathering sticks. ‘Please bring me some water and some bread,’ he begs. She replies, ‘As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of flour in my jar and a little oil in my jug. Just now I was collecting a few sticks, to go in and prepare something for myself and my son; when we have eaten it, we shall die.’ And Elijah tells her, ‘do not be afraid,’ and repeats his call for a little bread. ‘For the Lord the God of Israel, says: The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, until the day when the Lord sends rain upon the earth.’ The widow

<sup>3</sup> Background taken from Dominic Devas, O.F.M., *Franciscan Essays* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Books Co., 1924), 111-132, with citation regarding the seal from page 118; Rev. Father Thaddeus, O.F.M., *The Franciscans in England 1600-1850* (London: Art and Book Company, 1898), 12-29, with descriptions of the seal on pages 27-28.

obeys the command, and behold: “She had enough to eat for a long time—he and she and her household. The jar of flour did not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry.”

A parallel story will mark the life of the prophet Elisha, for whom Elijah had left his mantle. (2 Kg. 2) Here one of Elisha’s friends, a guild prophet and widower, has been left with her two children. People have come to collect on the debt that her husband had left; they threaten to take her children as slaves. All she has in the house is a jug of oil. Elisha tells her: “Go out, borrow vessels from all your neighbors—as many empty vessels as you can. Then come back and close the door on yourself and your children; pour the oil into all the vessels, and as each is filled, set it aside.” She collected the vessels, hid herself and her children in her home, and began to fill from her little bit of oil all the empty vessels she had collected. She turned to her neighbors, shared her oil, and it did not run out. In fact, with all the vessels now filled, she paid off her creditor, and she and her children lived on the remainder (2 Kg. 4.1-7).

The stories are simple enough but think they provide us with a profound comprehension of the journey we are undertaking in our contemporary world. Let us place ourselves in the footprints of Elijah and Elisha. For Elijah the bread and meat provided by the ravens have disappeared; the wadi which slaked his thirst has gone dry. Hungry and thirsty, he has been led by God’s providence to experience in an acute way the contours of his own fragile humanity; this same truth has come to us in the form of ageing, declining numbers, administrative weakness, a world largely indifferent to our Gospel mission, and a sense even in ourselves that things must change. So, we move forward with Elijah; and something happens. In a way still unbeknownst to us, a pathway provided by someone who is herself hungry, thirsty, even dying, but still open to the Word of God, will lead Elijah and ourselves to a refreshing life of new abundance: the discovery of a jar of flour that does not go empty, a jug of oil that does not run dry. “She had enough to eat for a long time---he and she and her household.” It is the story of a human death and a gracious resurrection.

We can also travel with Elisha, himself now beset by a desperate widow. The prophet tells her to go out of her own house and seek the empty jars of her neighbors. She is to take them back to her home and fill them with her own meagre supplies. She hears the word and does it (Lk. 6.27; 11.28; Mt. 7.24): and behold, through her act of generosity and piety, not only are the jars of her neighbors filled, but she herself experiences an abundance of resources: the oil does not go dry.

There are parallel passages in our own sources. Bonaventure refers to Elijah, Elisha, and the oil that does not go dry twice, always in reference to people in circumstances where they find themselves poor. The parable of Elijah’s oil is emblematic of the friars who live poorly but



trust in God to provide; the parable of Elisha comments on those confronted with a Church “poor in merits.”<sup>4</sup> The vignette from the life of Clare puts the matter most clearly. The sisters had run out of oil so much so that they could not even care for the sick. Clare took the empty jar, “washed it with her own hands” and placed it on the sill where the quaestor brother could pick it up and go beg some oil. As the story goes: “The devoted brother hurried to relieve such need and ran to get the jar.” He finds it full and grumbles because the sisters had wasted his time. The text comments glossing I Cor. 3.7: *However, it does not depend upon him who wishes or upon him who runs, but on the mercies of God. For by the bountiful God alone that jar was replenished with oil, since the prayer of the holy Clare had anticipated the concern of the brother for the welfare of the poor daughters.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Works of St. Bonaventure*, XIV, introduction and translation by Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., Robert J. Karris, O.F.M. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2008), III.14; *Defense of the Mendicants, Works of St. Bonaventure* XV, Introduction and Notes by Robert J. Karris, O.F.M., Translation by José de Vinck and Robert J. Karris, O.F.M. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2010), XII.24.

<sup>5</sup> “The Legend of Saint Clare,” in *Clare of Assisi, Early Documents*, edited and translated by Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap. (New York/ Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1988), 16; confer “The Process of Canonization,” 1.15, 2.14. Citation from the sources for Francis, identified within the

text, will be taken from Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J.A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. Conv., William J. Short, O.F.M., *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, I The Saint* (New York: New City Press, 1999); *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, II The Founder* (New York: New City Press, 2000).

What our stories indicate, what oil represents, is the vitality that comes from a revitalized sense of who we are as human beings and as friars minor. It is a “fountain within us”, an inexhaustible source, “a hope that will not leave us disappointed, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” (Rom. 5.5; see Jn. 4.14). Embarking on our journey, we experience in ourselves the passing of things: people, places, commitments, inheritances, a whole lifetime of work scuttled on the shoals of history; but we will discover in a surprising way that the good things we treasure are still there, in our memory, protected forever by the re-remembering that is God’s love for us. Good things fought for over time do not die, they simply go underground, germinate, mutate into new forms, and wait for a more propitious change in climate to reemerge in transformed but recognizable shapes. Why? Because God’s care has not diminished, his faithfulness has not failed. He who has led us along the way, blessed our undertakings, indeed provoked us into embarking on this journey as friars minor and as human beings; he who has written our identity in the palm of

text, will be taken from Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J.A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. Conv., William J. Short, O.F.M., *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, I The Saint* (New York: New City Press, 1999); *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, II The Founder* (New York: New City Press, 2000).

his hand, has only been purging us of our illusions, our pretenses about our own importance, our necessities of being right, our plans for making an impact—and he has done this only so that in His grace we might affirm ourselves as free, grateful, reconciled, and on mission. Paul notes in his greeting to the church in Philippi: “I am confident that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 1.6) As we shall see, the strength and the power of the risen Christ grasped now in a new way through a life of faith, hope, and love will continue to be our calling and mission in the world. Our journey is a process of reclaiming, purification, and new witness.

I begin in this way with a biblical and theological perspective because I have the impression, true or not, that at times we can be overcome by an awareness of our own poverties and our response to them. First, the poverties: statistical decline, release of ministerial commitments of long standing, a paucity of administrative leaders, the need to consolidate resources, a confrontation with a bleak social landscape of people alienated from or hurt by the church, people indifferent to our religious life, a weakened institutional cohesion, a younger generation who have been identified as “the injured,” “the drifters,” “the dissenters.”<sup>6</sup>

Second, our two-fold response on the level of values and on the level of reorganization. Our initial response, it seems to me, has been to seek revitalization through the enunciation of values. The list is solid enough: prayer, fraternity, simplicity, sharing, collaboration, ecclesial communion, collaboration with the laity, commitment to justice, peace, and integrity of creation, commitment to the poor. Is there anyone who can disagree with them? This is a good direction, but it might be noted that values are abstractions without the dirty feet of the human condition. Let me ask the following questions just to stimulate our thinking:

- Are these ideals capable of moving hearts; do they touch the affective wellsprings of God’s calling? Do they capture the terms of “encounter,” “exchange,” “accompaniment” so central to Pope Francis?
- Do the values take account of the vices that come from the human heart and cut through their application to real life (See *Earlier Rule* 22). Do they contain a flint-like commitment to take up the cross of our own history? Among them, is the evangelical calling to be penitents omni-present?
- In a society torn between political parties and factionalism is there any one of these values that has a single meaning or that would not

<sup>6</sup> See David B. Couturier, O.F.M.Cap., “Who Do People Say that You Are? Millennials and Your Franciscan Brand,” Presentation to the OFM Friars of Canada, Loretteville, Quebec, April, 2018.

lend itself to multiple but contradictory interpretations?<sup>7</sup>

- Is there any element in our focus on “values” that would be challenged by what Pope Francis calls “pastoral relativism?” He writes: “This practical relativism consists in acting as if God did not exist, making decisions as if the poor did not exist, setting goals as if others did not exist, working as if people who have not received the Gospel did not exist?”
- Is there an element in our concentration on values that flees from the messiness of historical embodiment and falls prey to the Pelagianism and Gnosticism so well identified in Pope Francis’ writings?<sup>8</sup>

Having enunciated abstractions, and being forced into restructuring by the weight of our own history, we often try to apply certain values to shape the second dimension of our planning: organizational restructuring and the ordering of relationships through our polity: governance, communications, formation and studies, finances, archives, and liturgy, all to be marked by diversity, simplicity, flexibility, representation, and bi-linguality. These are all good things. Will concentrating on this approach suck the air out of revitalization? Along with all of us and our leadership, I hope not. And I want to be clear that I am not arguing against these values nor against some restructuring. I am only trying to move underneath these areas into another dimension of our lives together. Something needs to be injected into values and structures to give them real life and affective charge. All of us are deeply committed to this.

Here I think we need to stop and think: Will abstract values and reorganization respond to people’s search for a new religious culture? Sociologists often point to the “bleak landscape of the millennials,” but can we honestly

<sup>7</sup> For examples see the different interpretations and politicization involved in both Canada and the United States and identified by prominent religious scholars from both countries as expressed in Ronald Rolheiser, *Secularity and the Gospel. Being Missionaries to Our Children* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), pp. 70-71, 84-86: “It is time for both the right and the left to admit that they have run out of imagination, that the categories of conservative and liberal are not useful, and that what is needed is a radicalism that takes us beyond both right and left. That radicalism can be found only in the gospel that is neither liberal or conservative but fully compassionate.” (86)

<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel, Evangelii Gaudium* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2013), 79-80, 88: “For just as some people want a purely spiritual Christ, without flesh and without the cross, they also want their interpersonal relationships provide by sophisticated equipment, by screens and systems which can be turned on and off on command. Meanwhile, the Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction.” See the even more telling remarks in *Gaudete et Exultate*, Chapter II, 35-62.

say that the disaffiliation they feel and express is not also part of our own misgivings about the church and society, even about the Order? In fact, the negative qualities we isolate in the millennials have been building from within Catholicism and religious life for over fifty years. We share in people's dissatisfaction, and that, I would argue, is a grace.<sup>9</sup> What we need to remember, I believe, is that while our present world may be marked by poverties, the very things we identify as poverties point to solidarities that are much more profound. They indicate an emerging awareness that things should be different; they position us to be with the spiritually poor; and they point to great possibilities and to the heartfelt desire for the emergence of a new religious culture. We need to reverse the negative and see the signs of life embedded in this very discomfort with institutions, dogmatic pronouncements, and sacramental migration. The focus on spirituality and authenticity; the desire that words, deeds, and institutions be coherent with themselves; the networking provided by the new technologies; the awareness of a global solidarity in suffering now made possible by contemporary media; the creativity embedded in initiatives for a socially responsible economic life; the inherently religious bearing of many peoples involved mostly in secular life; the search of the youth for community; our own desires for revitalization—all of these signs point very energetically to the task before us. This is precisely the type of dissatisfied and longing world in which our evangelical calling thrives.

I am reminded here of another story from our scriptures, this one comprising a confrontation between the Lord God, his servant David, and the prophet Nathan (2 Sm. 7). David here is only a symbol for all of us with great desires. He wants to build a sumptuous house for the Lord, a good thing. But the prophet hears the message in a dream:

Thus says the Lord: Should you build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day on which I led the Israelites out of Egypt to the

<sup>9</sup> I do not wish to disagree with the sociological interpretation so much as to reverse its perspective. Millennials are not the problem; perhaps the clarity of their indifference points to vitamin deficiencies inherited from their predecessors; their own institutional weaknesses manifest the viruses, if you like, that also infected their predecessors. For background on Canada and the United States see, for examples, Michael Gaivreau, "Without making a noise': The Dumont Commission and the Drama of Quebec's Dechristianization, 1968-19721," in Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, eds., *The Sixties and Beyond, Dechristianization in North America and Western Europe, 1945-2000* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 186-216; Michele Dillon, "Decline and Continuity: Catholicism since 1950 in the United States, Ireland, and Quebec," and Gregory Baum, "Comparing Post-World War II Catholicism in Quebec, Ireland, and the United States," in Leslie Woodcock Tentler, ed., *The Church Confronts Modernity, Catholicism since 1950 in the United States, Ireland, and Quebec* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 2007), 239-267, 268-295.

present, but I have been going about in a tent under cloth. In all my wanderings everywhere among the Israelites, did I ever utter a word to any one of the judges whom I charged to tend my people Israel, to ask: Why have you not built me a house of cedar." (2 Sm. 7.5-7)

The point is simple: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it." (Ps. 127.1) Indeed, the theme for many of our endeavors has been: "*Revitalization and Evangelization: Go rebuild my house!*", the same message Francis of Assisi heard from the cross of San Damiano (IIC VI.10) Yet in our tradition and its sources, "house" in not simply a material thing involving governance, finances, cooperative endeavors, structures and mechanisms of communication—that comes far down the line. In our sources, a "house" has occupants: creation is the "house of God" (IC XXIX.80); Jesus Christ is the "house of God" (Jn 2.19-21); Mary is the palace, tabernacle, house of God (Francis, *Sal. BVM: "ave domus eius"*); the Church is the household of God (Gal, 6.10; 1 Tm. 3.15; 5.8); Francis and Clare are "houses" where God dwells (*Earlier Rule* 22; 3 *Cl.Ag.* 20-23); even pagan writings house fragments of the Word, containing letters out of which may be written "the glorious name of the Lord God." (IC82). We ourselves and all the saints are marked by the "indwelling of God," making us individually and together "the house of God." (*Pr.OF* 2). The Lord of all these homes is a triune creative God; our brother who dwells in the house is God's Word become creature, Jesus (Heb. 2.7-18); the spouse of the inhabitants is the Holy Spirit (*Earlier Exhortation* 11-13).<sup>10</sup> Jesus Christ came in his zeal to restore this whole household, (Ps. 69.9), and Francis is to participate in that restoration (*Off.Pass.*, V.g.)<sup>11</sup> "Go, repair my house."

Revitalization depends on a continual reference to the Indwelling power of God in all that is. This is foundational; it is both the starting point and the finish line; it is the *raison d'être* of restructuring. It is the only path of mission. But the question remains: *In today's cultural and fraternal climate how might we access individually and together this inexhaustible reservoir of God's love and give witness to our experience of God in the condition of being human?* Let us embark now on our journey with Elijah, the widow, her son, Francis, Bonaventure, Clare, and God's love.

<sup>10</sup> For systematic reflections along these lines see Guillermo A. Spirito, *El Cielo en La Tierra, La Inhabitacion Trinitaria En S. Francisco A La Luz De Su Tiempo y De Sus Escritos* (Roma: Miscellanea Francescana, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> For reflection on the biblical roots of the vision, see Michael Guinan, OFM, "Where in the World are We? Old Testament Views of Creation," *Spirit and Life* 16 (2011) 109-121.



## The Recovery of Memory

I firmly believe that one of the central doors to our experience of God in today's world—the foundation of revitalization—is the recovery of the memory of who we are as human beings. Here I do not mean memory as a psychological faculty of the mind and heart, nor as a storing place of past experiences. In our spiritual tradition, memory is the personal point of contact between ourselves and God, that place in us and around us where heaven touches earth. Memory identifies our persons as “gift” and memory receives our exterior world as a “gift.” In the Augustinian and Franciscan tradition, memory is that realm where past, present, and future come together as seen from the single point of God's presence to us. We need to ask why so many of Francis' letters and writings have a Trinitarian reference.<sup>12</sup> He is not communicating a creedal content—he is communicating an experience. When he signs himself with a cross, or when Clare anoints the sick with a cross, both perform a religious practice that identifies themselves and others as belonging to a larger world. They are proclaiming themselves as dialogue partners with the Creator, the Redeemer, and Sanctifier. They are identifying themselves as missionaries of God's presence in a world that has lost its “memory”. When this is done with fellow believers, as in the eucharist or when saying the psalms together, they see themselves along with others as belonging to God's people. They are inviting others and being invited by others into a religious experience. A simple practice, a profound communication. The “sign of the cross” is a memory-performance. The whole action responds to people's deepest longings: to be accompanied, to be “human by becoming more than human.”<sup>13</sup>

To re-member in this way is to know ourselves as part of the *missio Dei*, to know ourselves as participants in a journey that has meaning for the world.<sup>14</sup> *To have “memory” is to invite others into the experience of God in the condition of being human.* This is the center of Franciscan spirituali-

<sup>12</sup> See for examples the *Earlier and Later Exhortations*, *A Letter to the Entire Order*, the *Marian Antiphon* in the *Office of the Passion*, *A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father*. For Clare administering the power of the cross see *Legend of Saint Clare* 32; *Process*, I.18, III.6, VI.9.

<sup>13</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, 8: “We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being.”

<sup>14</sup> My own reflections on “memory” try to adapt our tradition to the present situation. For background see Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, with Introduction, Translation and Commentary by Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M., Ph.D. (Saint Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1956), III.2; Bonaventure, *The Triple Way, or The Kindling of Love*, English translation, commentary and notes by Fr. Peter Damian M. Fehlner, FI (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2012), 55-58; Jacques-Guy Bougerol, O.F.M., *Lexique Saint Bonaventure* (Paris: Editions Franciscaines, 1969), “meditatio” and “memoria”, pp. 96-98.

ty and mission. But, for multiple reasons, possessing this type of “memory” in today's world is a challenge. First, the post-conciliar world in many instances was premised on the disavowal of the pre-conciliar inheritance. Forgetting the past became a way of moving forward. And to some extent the renewal of the Franciscan life after the Council was based not simply on remembering the sources but also on forgetting the patristic and monastic inheritance that fed Francis. We were not monks—and in forgetting our monastic roots, we also lost the meaning of “memory” for Francis of Assisi, Bernard, Gregory the Great, Benedict, Basil, and Augustine.<sup>15</sup> Our loss of memory has made us vulnerable to modernity's forgetfulness.

Second, many commentators note that post-modernity, which cuts through our own hearts, is shaped by our ability not to remember but to “forget”: to forget the violence imposed on people by religious colonization; to forget the abusive activities of the clergy; to forget the harm done to the indigenous; to forget ourselves in a sea of external stimuli; to forget the misuse of power in inherited systems and institutions; to forget our own past complicity in sinful structures. To be modern is to forget the past and to embark on the quest for a new order of things.<sup>16</sup>

Third, the advent of technology and its partner consumption has profoundly affected memory's capacity. The mind craves the consumption of the new. The methodology of computers, ipads, and cellular instruments privileges the immediate, the present, the novel, the distractive. Dropping in and out of texts through scrolling, hyper-texting, multimedia displays, and constant searching, creates an “ecosystem of interrupting technologies.”<sup>17</sup> The result: A loss of attentiveness to self-awareness in memory. And this loss of memory is one of the roots of contemporary restlessness. One commentator on the whole development notes that the religious practices of reflexive self-examination, intentional self-direction, and moral attention are contemporary virtues to be cultivated.<sup>18</sup> In our Franciscan tradition, these practices would center our affections not

<sup>15</sup> See for examples John Eudes Bamberger, M.D., OCSO, “The Psychic Dynamism in the Ascetical Theology of St. Basil,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* XXXIV (1968), 233-251; John Burnaby, *Amor Dei, A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007, originally 1938), 155-158.

<sup>16</sup> For some thoughts on modernity and memory, both in the culture and in Catholicism, see David Gross, *Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), as cited in Robert Orsi, “The Infant of Prague's Nightie’: The Devotional Origins of Contemporary Catholic Memory,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 21.2 (Spring 2003), 1-18, citation on 16.

<sup>17</sup> For some significant reflections see Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows, What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> Shannon Vallor, *Technology and the Virtues, A Philosophical Guide to a Future Worth Wanting* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), Chs. 4-5.

on commodities but on God's love for us, our responsiveness to this gift, and our desire to share it with others. The practice of preserving "memory" in the present circumstances of our life is in itself a counter-cultural tool that propels evangelization. We need to appropriate our journey of memory and share it with those who have no memory.

Perhaps much of this seems overly theoretical at this point. So, let me illustrate this journey of memory that finds God in the condition of being human. I want to take one biographical example from the Canadian experience and another from our Franciscan tradition. I have been strengthened myself by these examples of how "memory" might be reclaimed.

Many of you are familiar with the life and work of **Gregory Baum** (1923-2017), the Augustinian priest turned layman and one of the most prominent social theologians in Canada. Towards the end of his life he wrote two books that I found nothing short of amazing—not so much because of their content but because of the way the books approached the experience of God through "memory."<sup>19</sup> Baum was born Jewish but raised a Protestant—and important marker of his life. He was raised in a German humanism that emphasized selfless service, just practices, loving behavior, tolerance of others—and he discovered that this secular humanism was unable to bear the freight of his experience. With Hitler coming to power, he writes, "I felt that the world had gone under. The people I knew, my family and friends, had become mute. They had nothing to say."

Baum left for Great Britain in 1939 where he was interred as a German national and then transferred to a camp in Canada in 1940. Released in 1943, he became Roman Catholic in 1946. He began to develop a new Catholic humanism based on the radical demands of Jesus oriented by a faith in Christ who became poor for our sakes. (II Cor. 8.9-10) Baum entered the Augustinians a year later, and was ordained in 1954. Educated as an undergraduate in physics and mathematics, he eventually received his doctorate in theology from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. In 1960 he was appointed *peritus* at the newly established Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. Thus, the very beginnings of his life positioned him, unbeknownst to his memory at the time, to carry in his own body a Jewish-Protestant-Catholic background. Through the actions of others who helped him he was positioned in a significant place in the expanding world of John XXIII's vision for peace and unity.

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<sup>19</sup> See *Amazing Church, A Catholic Theologian Remembers a Half-Century of Change* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005); *The Oil Has Not Run Dry, The Story of My Theological Pathway* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill University Press, 2017). The citations above are from *The Oil Has Not Run Dry, passim*.

After the Council Baum studied sociology and during the 1970s explored his homosexual feelings that had been with him since he was twelve. Another experience of marginality. Eventually, he felt at odds with himself and his commitments, left the priesthood in 1976, and married. His wife Shirley was fully aware of his orientation. Once again, he had been given the right people at the right time in the right place. Baum then went on to study sociology, critical theory, and became a hopeful and energetic commentator on the Church's ecumenical endeavors, its social teaching, and its option for the poor. He fell out of regular prayer. The 1990s brought real shadows to his social commitments: The first Gulf War, the end of economic theories supporting the social welfare programs, the rise of neo-liberal monetary policy, the dominance of a market theory of competition based on deregulation, privatization, lower wages. The era, which was to shape the next twenty-five years, saw the birth of new forms of marginalization. The Church itself, while socially progressive, turned inward, away from ecumenism towards a robust Catholic identity, an emphasis on moral norms. From his perspective—from the perspective of Fernand Dumont (1927-1997) whose study of the "Quiet Revolution" influenced Baum—and in contrast to the 1960s, the 1990s presented a "new time of mourning." He discovered, through his own experience, that "in dark times, remaining passive leads to depression." He took up Dumont's thinking on communities of *référence*, communities of symbolic identification that share their memory and have hope for the future.

Gregory Baum had plenty of reasons to "forget," plenty of reasons to victimize his own past, plenty of reasons to feel resentment towards his own calling; plenty of reasons to be overcome by his knowledge of his own sinfulness, plenty of reasons to simply move on to something new of his own creation. Yet through his own historical journey as the world changed around him, he rediscovered his own "depth experience". Faith could no longer be a "a subtle defense of our privileged circumstances." His own poverty forced upon him by events beyond his control opened up participation in divine mystery. He turned to contemplation; the story of the widow of Zarephath became a guide. The Catholic theologian took up again petitionary prayer as a form of worship and contemplative prayer as a form of resistance. What he came to appropriate in his own life, so blind in many instances, was the new eyes that saw all of life and his own role in it, from its very beginning, as the gift of God's mercy. His faith issued in a glimpse of the truth of God's enduring love; his hope produced trust in God's promises; his charity bore fruit in compassion. And as he writes in his autobiography, even while he receives dialysis, he gives thanks daily for:



- *The total gratuity of God's gifts*
- *The marvelous things that had happened in his own life*
- *The gift of faith*
- *The call to creative ministry*

I do not wish here either to canonize Baum's journey nor baptize his thinking. I simply want to call attention to the story he chooses to tell. The autobiography of his pathways concludes with this stunning narrative: "I cling to the message of Christ's resurrection whenever I think of the men, women, and children killed in genocides, armed conflicts, and famines. Rabbi Irving Greenberg proposed that a theological statement is valid only if it can be repeated in the presence of burning children—a horror that was part of the Holocaust. Looking at them I could no longer say, "God is all powerful, nor that God is good. The one utterance I could make is *resurrexit*."

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila tells the following story about Pope Francis when he came to Manila and spoke with young people, January 18, 2018:

A boy and a girl, both street kids now living in a shelter, recounted their harrowing stories. The young girl, Glyzelle, addressed the pope in Filipino

and burst into tears at the end of her speech. Pope Francis asked me what the girl had said and why she was crying. I translated her words for the pope: "Why does God allow the suffering of children?" Pope Francis departed from his prepared text and said, "Only when our hearts can ask this question and weep can we begin to understand. Let us learn to weep the way Glyzelle taught us today."<sup>20</sup>

*Resurrexit* indeed, but it is a resurrection that on our journey is simultaneously an affective recognition of our own and the world's woundedness. This cry of resurrection is our experienced share in Christ's death and resurrection. In this experience of Christ, the wounds that afflict us become openings through which life flows into the world and in which people come for mercy. And having this experience, sent on mission to share it, we as friars also depart from Baum in one particular area. As followers of Francis we see the overwhelming fidelity of God in the human Christ, and we proclaim "God is good, God is all powerful" We do this simply because we see now clearly that God is "one who restores the dead to life and calls into being those things which had not been." (Rom. 4.17)

<sup>20</sup> Joshua J. McElwee, Cindy Wooden, eds., *A Pope Francis Lexicon* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2018), 184.

I believe that our Franciscan life of the future will be valid only if it can look upon ourselves, our brother friars, our sisters, every creature, and the world the way it is and proclaim with gratitude: *resurrexit*. We can only do this, I believe, through the recovery of memory. The horizon of the wonder of God's love needs to open up for us. But how might we fight our forgetfulness and act from our memory?

The biography of my next example is more familiar to us but I use him for a good reason. After **St. Bonaventure** was elected Minister General of the Order in 1257, he took a tour of the friaries of Europe. What he sees greatly disturbs him. He had identified the problems through the reports of others, but now he sees them first hand: business transactions, idleness, scandal, persistent begging, wandering, poor leadership, etc. He attributes all of this to a lack of "lively zeal", "ardor", "fervor." His diagnosis moves at the level of the affections, not at the level of values. On his way back to Assisi, he stops at La Verna in search of peace for his soul. While there he writes the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, a treatise designed to enkindle in the forgetful friars their "slumbering affections."<sup>21</sup> What he is after is the recovery of the memory of who they truly are. This spiritual practice of the recovery of memory would challenge him throughout his life, in its failures and its successes. He would write ten years later of his continued experience while still battling with the somnolent friars:

For once, when the devil grasped me by the throat and tried to strangle me with such a tight grip of the throat, that I was unable to call out to the friars for help, I began to breathe out with unimaginable pain; suddenly overcome by the *memory* of the Lord's passion, I multiplied my gasps out of compassion for his suffering. As I surrendered, feverish groans began to replace the sound of my voice. By virtue of what took place through the passion of the Lord, I, a servant of the cross, composed this present collection of sermons to praise the name of Christ and to honor his sacred cross, and testify that I was freed from such a cruel death.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> For Bonaventure references see "First Encyclical Letter" (1257) in *Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order, Works of Saint Bonaventure V* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994), 57-63. For the search for peace and "slumbering affections" see *Itinerarium*, "Prologue." For background see Jay M. Hammond III, *An Historical Analysis of the Concept of Peace in Bonaventure's Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* (Dissertation, St. Louis University, 1998, UMI 9822867).

<sup>22</sup> Noted in *The Sunday Sermons of St. Bonaventure, Works of Saint Bonaventure XII*, Introduction, Translation and Notes by Timothy J. Johnson (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2008), 40.4, cited in Introduction, p. 26. Perhaps the experience can be coupled with the issues mentioned in "Second Encyclical Letter" (1266), *Writings*

It is important to note that the recovery of "memory" is a life-long religious practice.

The method that Bonaventure uses to enkindle his own affections and those of his friars and lay followers is spelled out in a work probably composed within a short time after the La Verna experience. One of the most popular spiritual guides of the Middle Ages, *The Triple Way* is unique in its structure and interpretation of the journey into memory. Bonaventure's focus is not simply on purging our faults nor on conforming to a way of life through obedience—both formal elements associated with discipline and structures—but on the experience of personal illumination and union that has come to us in life and is open to everyone as they try to recover who they truly are.<sup>23</sup> For Bonaventure, even meditation on our faults through the "sting of conscience" is meant to lead to "spiritual joy." (*TW* I.8-9) Let us simply follow in chapter I part 2 of *The Triple Way* some of the dimensions of his guide for the recovery of memory. This will be the starting point for revitalization, the enkindling in our hearts of the love of God. They are exercises we can all perform; they are meant to end in "grateful affection."

I.2.10: Ponder, consider, think in your experience not only of the sins that have been forgiven in your life but also how many evils "would have befallen you, had the Lord permitted it.

I.2.11: Consider how this grateful affection is even more enkindled by reflecting on the "blessings entrusted" to you: blessings of the body (the "integrity of its members, its health, nobility of your gender"); on the senses, "keen vision, acute hearing, discreet speech; on the soul, "clear insight, right judgment, a kindly heart."

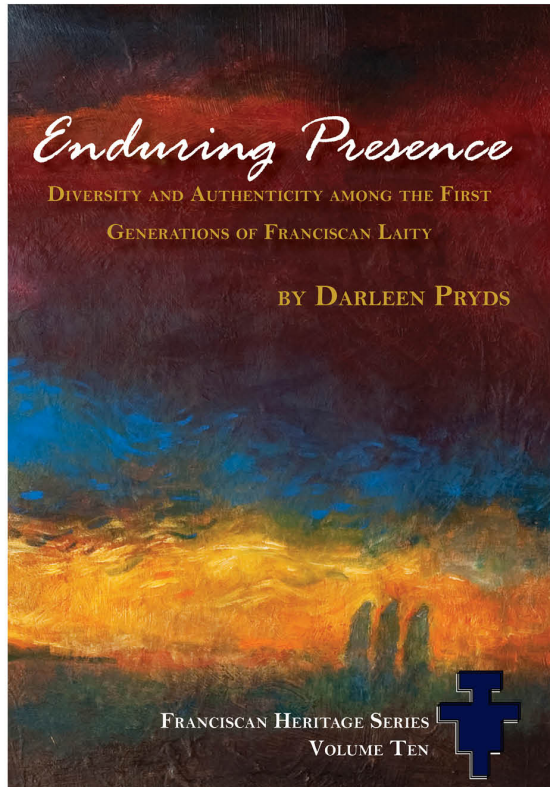
I.2.12: Consider the blessings bestowed through grace: baptismal grace; the grace of doing penance "commensurate with the opportunities of the moment, the willingness of one's soul, and the sublimity of one's religious Order"; the grace of your vocation, laic or cleric.

I.2.13: Consider the superabundant gifts given by God: "the whole universe" beneath you, around you in other people, and above you; the gift of the Son, "brother and friend," the price of redemption, the daily gift of food; the gift of the Holy Spirit, a "pledge of our acceptance," our "adoption", our "espousal". "He has made the Christian soul his friend, his daughter, and his spouse. All this is wonderful and beyond compare. While pondering these things the soul ought also to be intensely grateful to God."

*Concerning the Franciscan Order*, 225-229.

<sup>23</sup> See Jean Francois Bonnefoy, O.F.M., *The Triple Way: A Bonaventurian Summa of Mystical Theology*, *Greyfriars Review* 16 (2002), Supplement. See also the important remarks indicating that the Franciscan journey emphasizes the illuminative and unitive access to God's presence to human experience: Francis de Beer, "We Saw Brother Francis," translated by Maggi Despot and Paul Lachance, O.F.M. (Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982, 58-60. Here I will use the translation provided in Fehlner, *The Triple Way*. The text will be referenced as *TW*.

# *Enduring Presence:* Diversity and Authenticity Among the First Generations of Lay Franciscans by Darleen Pryds



Written as a companion volume to *Women of the Streets: Early Franciscan Women and their Mendicant Vocation* (Franciscan Institute Publications, 2010), *Enduring Presence* offers more gritty stories of the faith journeys of lay men and lay women who helped create the Franciscan charism in the first generations of the Franciscan movement. Their unique contributions as “somatic theologians” or people who contributed to the Franciscan intellectual tradition by how they lived out the theology and spirituality are mapped out here in this volume and include work, marriage, hospitality, and service as spiritual practice.

This is the tenth volume in the *Franciscan Heritage Series*, intended to encompass topics which will connect the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition with today’s language of our Christian Catholic Franciscan way of Gospel Life.



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1.2.14: Finally, remember the rewards promised: God has promised those who believe “deliverance from all evils, the company of all the saints, the fulfillment of every desire in himself who is both the source and goal of all goods and is so good that he surpasses every petition, every desire, every evaluation.”

It is interesting to note that in his commentary on *Ecclesiastes* Bonaventure applies the same methodology of “memory and gratitude” to the experience of old age. “The presence of harm” afflicts us in old age, he notes, as does “the absence of joy,” and the darkening of the sun. Various troubles precede death: the limbs weaken, the bones tremble, the teeth can no longer chew, the lips cannot speak nor the ears hear, the belly swells, the passions cool. Further troubles will beset the person after death, when judgment comes. All that much more important for these times is the life-long habit of turning towards God and remembering God’s gifts, God’s generosity. The Father creates us, gives us power, enables good works; God the Son becomes incarnate for us. “being a merciful and gracious Lord, he has given food to those who fear him.” Finally, God rewards us according to merit; God should be remembered as “giving more than is desired.”<sup>24</sup>

Several dimensions of the recovery of memory can be noted from these steps:

- a) The person in his or her experience is surrounded by gifts, none of which come from obligation, necessity, responsibility—but all of which are gratuitous, unexpected, surprising.
- b) These gifts proceed in an ever more progressive intensive and extensive framework: reflection on the forgiveness received and on what problems could have occurred but did not; self-reflection on one’s own body; the blessings that come from the Church; the whole universe; and finally, the promise of life everlasting from a God who is faithful to God’s Word and who will become for us “all in all.” (1 Cor 15.28)
- c) Ancient monastic religious practice—another victim of “forgetfulness”—knew that “gifts” existed in a network; they were “distributed across a system of relationships.”<sup>25</sup> John Cassian writes in his *Institutes*: “Inasmuch, therefore as there is wisdom in one, righteousness in another, holiness in another, meekness in another, chastity in another, and humility in another, Christ is now divided among each of the holy ones, member by member. But

<sup>24</sup> *Commentary on Ecclesiastes, Works of Saint Bonaventure VII*, edited by Robert J. Karris, O.F.M. and Campion Murray, O.F.M. (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2005), commenting on *Ecclesiastes* 12, pp. 399-412, with citation from 400, 403.

<sup>25</sup> See the very illuminating essay by Catherine M. Chin, “Cassian, Cognition, and the Common Life,” in Blake Leyerle, Robin Darling Young, eds., *Ascetic Culture, Essays in Honor of Philip Rousseau* (Notre Dame, IN: 2013), 147-166, from whom I have adapted this argument.

when all are assembled together in the unity of faith and virtue, he appears as ‘the perfect man,’ completing the fullness of his body in the joining together and in the characteristics of the individual members.”<sup>26</sup> This system of distributed gifts runs throughout Francis’ vision of our life. He counsels the friars in Admonition VIII (cf. XII, XVI, XVII, XVIII):

The apostle says: *No one can say: Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit; and, there is not one who does good, not even one.*

Therefore, whoever envies his brother the good that the Lord says or does in him incurs a sin of blasphemy because he envies the Most High Himself Who says and does every good thing.

For ourselves, revitalization will begin when we start not with that which we want to create, nor with our worlds of scarcity, but with the gifts that have come to us through our own history. It is these gifts that propel us to evangelize and structure our lives in whatever way seems best. Practically speaking this means that we need self-consciously and systematically to develop networks of communication designed to publicly enunciate our own gifts, to affirm each one’s gifts, to create communicative public spaces that serve to share our experience of giftedness from God with those whom we serve. We need to develop forms of speech that recall a communal memory of giftedness. We need to identify not the deficiencies in the world around us but its possibilities. What would happen were we to describe our own personal lives in this light, the lives of others, listen to their stories, and communicate the fruits of communal living to those outside? What would happen were we not to do this through words alone but more prominently and consistently through religious practices (more on this later) that signify our gifted identity as humans and as friars being sent into the world? We need, lastly, to take up with hope the cross of our own humanity. *Resurrexit.*

## Moving from God into the World

Reading most of the materials involved in our process of revitalization and having participated in numerous meetings, we have all been on a long journey. On the surface of things, the signs fostering religious life in North America have not been encouraging. The situation in Canada is also indicative of the one in the United States. For one exam-

<sup>26</sup> John Cassian, *The Institutes*, translated and annotated by Boniface Ramsey, O.P. (New York/Mahwah, NJ, 2000), V.IV.1-4, p.119. For distributed virtue in the sources see for example ICII.VI.102.

ple, the 2013 and 2015 statements from commissions for the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops note a widespread experience of pluralism, moral challenges such as assisted suicide, assaults on the environment, and the rise of poverty, particularly among the indigenous. The “common good” has disappeared from people’s word field.<sup>27</sup> Our own institutional cohesion is fragile. Yet, as I have tried to indicate, there are also plenty of signs that something new

something new. All of this is good, but I would like to add another dimension to this picture. I wonder if our image of the older Francis might also contribute substantially to our revitalization. Many of us are older and perhaps we can feel that the young Francis has left us lonely—perhaps we have known or seen too much to join him on a great hopeful adventure of changing the world. Our horizon is shorter, our ambitions a bit more modest, and we may doubt that orga-



is emerging from deep within ourselves and our world. In our journey how do we reach within and grab this hope that lies within us?

Here I would like to turn towards the human founder of our Franciscan life, Francis himself in his experience of God. I have been struck in the last three years by our collective recalling of the young Francis as showing us the way to re-enchaining our zeal: his break from the world of the merchant, his going to the peripheries, his embrace of the leper, his reception of brothers, his evangelical enthusiasm to “go out into the world.” We are like Francis to move onto

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Episcopal Commission for Doctrine, “The Essential Elements of Evangelization Today”; Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace, “A Church Seeks Justice, the Challenge of Pope Francis to the Church in Canada.” Much of this parallels developments in the United States and was well identified in an earlier series of reflections by Mary Jo Leddy, Gilles Routhier, Reginald W. Bibby, and Ronald Wayne Young, O.M.I. in Rolheiser, ed., *Secularity and the Gospel*. (Crossroad, 2006)

nizational remedies can carry us forward. And yet moving forward spurred on by both the young and the old Francis is what needs to be done.

At any rate, it is the last years of his life that seem to me to reveal something truly significant about the depths of our religious experience as another motor for enkindling zeal and hope. After all, it is important to note that of all the writings we have of Francis of Assisi, almost all date not from the early days of his conversion but from the times of complication and distress, sickness and fragility, alienation and exile, from the times when he felt inadequate to the world that was facing him. This is the period after 1217 and particularly the period of the last five years of his life. This time of life gave birth in Francis to the truly astounding vision of a *journey not simply towards God nor doing things for God, but a faith journey from God into the world*. It is expressed clearly in the circumstances of his trip to La Verna

in 1224, the writing of the *Praises of God* (1224), and the dictation of first part of the *Testament* (1226). Here we are not even touching the *Office of the Passion, True and Perfect Joy*, and the *Cantic of Creatures*, other key writings from the same period.<sup>28</sup>

In the second book of his first life of Francis, Celano describes the last two years of Francis' journey. The story of Greccio, when God became a beautiful but frail creature, precedes the discussion (ICI.84-87), and the second book opens immediately with the journey towards death (CII.I.88). Birth as a human being—death as a human being; birth as a creature of God, death as a creature of God: the two bookends of life on this earth, and both are referred to the Incarnate One in Bethlehem and Calvary. (CII.II.90) "Both in life and in death we are the Lord's." (Rom. 14.8) Celano is pointing out the exemplarity of Jesus' life as a human being. Francis will follow the same course; his temporal existence will begin and end in frailty. Celano notes: This is an example for those of "every order, sex, and age," for those who seek the highest perfection, for those who tend towards lower levels, for those who simply seek signs and wonders. (IC.II.I, 90) Everyone is welcome on this path of *the discovery of God in the condition of being human*.

When Francis comes to pray on La Verna he takes with him a few companions and "longs to know what in him and about him was or could be most acceptable to the Eternal King." (CII.II.91) Celano is optimistic about Francis' state of mind, but he also notes that his hero "thought himself wholly imperfect." (IIC II. I.92) I believe Francis has good reason to be dissatisfied, even disappointed, to come with questions about his own life and its effectiveness. His desire for the infinite, which is beyond his control, has again pressed upon him, but things as they are have overtaken the enthusiasm of his youth; struggle has engulfed him on all sides: sickness, betrayal of his ideals by the friars themselves, the temptation to withdraw from the battle for fraternity, worries about the Rule, disappointment, even rejection by the leadership in the Church, persecution from those he loves, a feeling of marginality, the high hopes of his evangelizing efforts dashed on the rocks of his failure to convert the Sultan. It is from this period that we have

<sup>28</sup> For background on the texts being used see Jean Francois Godet-Calogeras, "The Chartula of Assisi," in Michael W. Blastic, O.F.M., Jay M. Hammond, Ph.D., J.A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M.Conv., eds. *The Writings of Francis of Assisi, Letters and Prayers, Studies in Early Franciscan Sources I* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2011), 51-80; J.A. Wayne Hellmann, "The Testament," in the same series Volume II, *The Writings of Francis of Assisi, Rules, Testament and Admonitions* (2011), 221-256.

the illuminating scene narrated in the *Assisi Compilation*, a parallel perhaps to the story of *True Joy*.<sup>29</sup>

Noticing and hearing at one time that some brothers were giving a bad example in religion and that the brothers were turning aside from the highest summit of their profession, moved inwardly with sorrow of heart, one time he said to the Lord in prayer: "Lord, I give back to you the family you gave me."

And the Lord said to him: "Tell me, why are you so upset when one of the brothers leaves religion and when others do not walk the way I showed you? Also, tell me: Who planted the religion of the brothers? Who makes a man convert and to do penance in it? Who gives the strength to persevere? Is it not I.

And it was said to him in spirit: "I did not choose you as a learned or eloquent man to be over my family, but I chose you, a simple man, so that you and the others may know that I will watch over my flock. But *I have placed you as a sign* to them, so that the works that I work in you they should see in you, emulate, and do them. Those who walk in my way have me and will have me more abundantly... (AC 112)

And Francis is not alone: We must not forget the companions who travel with him.<sup>30</sup>

We all know what happened on the mountain—and how this became so emblematic for our Franciscan identity. Here I would like to call attention not to the stigmata but to the prayer that Francis writes after the vision of a "man having the image of a crucified seraph." (CII.III.94) It is right after the vision that Francis writes his "Praises of God." Remember, he came to La Verna with the question "what in him and about him was or could be most acceptable to the Eternal King"? And the praises that issue after the vision on the mountain are a resounding affirmation, noun piled upon noun, descriptive quality piled upon descriptive quali-

<sup>29</sup> I believe the best commentaries on this time of Francis' life are Giovanni Miccoli, "Francis of Assisi's Christian Proposal," *Greyfriars Review* (GR) 3.2 (1989), 127-172; André Jansen, "The Story of True Joy: An Autobiographical Reading" *GR* (1991), 367-87.

<sup>30</sup> My understanding of the stigmata is greatly shaped by Chiara Frugoni, *Francesco e l'invenzione delle stimmate* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1993); Frugoni, *Francis of Assisi* (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1995), 119-147. For Leo see John V. Fleming, "The Iconographic Unity of the Blessing for Brother Leo," *Franciscan Studies* 63 (1981), 203-220. The stigmata as emblematic of Franciscan theology is well expressed in Etienne Gilson, "La Philosophie Franciscaine," in *Saint Francois D'Assisi, Son-Oeuvre—Son Influence 1226-1926* (Paris: Éditions E. Droz, 1927), 148-175.



ty, of his relationship with the “most highness” of God. The focus is on God, three in one, “who does wonderful things”: “you are the good all good the highest good, Lord god living and true, you are...love, charity, humility, security, joy, happiness, hope, justice, temperance...all our riches to sufficiency.” The spiritual trajectory of Francis of Assisi is transcendence through the *via affirmativa into a mysterious fire of union with God*.<sup>32</sup>

Towards the end of this prayer Francis clearly turns not simply to the transcendence of the triune God’s qualities but to the immanence of God’s care for him in the incarnation, passion, and resurrection. Jesus is “goodness, love, charity, humility, security, joy, happiness, hope, justice, temperance” become human for us, become human for Francis. He cites the psalms: “*You are protector you are custodian and defender, you are strength you are refuge...*” Particularly significant, it seems to me, are the lines “you are our hope, you are our faith, you are our charity...you are all our sweetness.” The sweetness of God, in our spiritual tradition is code for Jesus Christ, who chose to become poor so that we might become rich (II Cor.8.9): “You nourished your people with the food of angels and furnished them bread from heaven, ready to hand, untoiled for, endowed with all delights and conforming to every taste. For this substance of yours revealed your sweetness toward your children...” (*Wis.* 16.20-21; *Ps.* 34.9). The sweetness of God is presence in weakness, the child in the crib, the man on the cross. (II Cor. 12.9, 4.7-15), the food in the little piece of bread.<sup>32</sup> It is in the bookends of life that Francis will find his wisdom in difficult circumstances.

What I would like to say is this: Francis ascends the mountain in distress. His experience has taught him that coming to God through creatures is good but not sufficient. In times of difficulty the eye of the mind can be blind and the affections can grow cold. The world no longer shines with “glory” (*Is.* 6.3) and “sweetness.” The Church, whose sacramentality has been so evident in the past and now whose authorities have caused him harm, no longer reveals the Gospel with sufficient luster to light his way. His brothers, except for a few friends, have clouded the horizon of God’s call and what up to that time had been his own zealous project. The world around him no longer serves suffi-

<sup>32</sup> For illuminating remarks on the experience of transcendence through the *via affirmativa* see Denys Turner, *The darkness of God: negativity in Christian mysticism* (Cambridge University Press, 1995). Note that in *The Triple Way* Bonaventure argues that “raising oneself up by the abnegation of all things involves a super-eminent affirmation...” (*TW* III.13). Bonaventure will try to integrate this experience into the tradition of Western mysticism. Cf. Commentary in Zachary Hayes, OFM, *Bonaventure, Mystical Writings* (Phoenix, AZ: Tau Publishing, 1999), 125-140.

<sup>33</sup> See Jean Chatillon, “Dulcedo, Dulcedo Dei,” *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1957), 3.1778-1795. Note the repetitive use of the term “sweetness” as cited by Hayes, *Bonaventure, Mystical Writings*, from the *Sentences*, III, d. 35, a.un., resp [3.774].

ciently as a mediator of faith, hope, and love. The question arises, does it all mean anything? From whence then comes hope? In whom does he place his faith? How can he love what appears unlovable? It is the recurring question posed at the beginning of his conversion before he embraced the leper. He is being trained into his own mortality and, paradoxically, through this penitential way, into Wisdom.

A seraph of love clothed in the humanity of a man affixed to a cross appears to him. It is a crucified but transfigured human being who has practiced a righteous life of faith, hope, and love in how God is for us.<sup>33</sup>

During his life on earth, he offered up prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears, to the one who had the power to save him out of death, and he submitted so humbly that his prayer was heard. Although he was Son, he learnt to obey through suffering, but having been made perfect, he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation... (*Heb.* 5.7-9)<sup>34</sup>

And the Father raised him from the dead. (*Rom.* 1.4; *AA* 2.32, 3.15). This is what God does to human beings who live in Christ. “We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain to the fullest truth of our being.” (*EG* 8) At the beginning of his conversion Francis prayed:

Most High, glorious God  
Enlighten the darkness of my heart,  
And give me  
True faith  
Certain hope  
Perfect charity  
Sense and knowledge,  
Lord  
That I may carry out  
Your holy and true command. (*PrCr*)

Now, towards the end, as his weak faith, his fragile hope, his imperfect love has seemingly played themselves out, Francis prays through the Son to the Creator and Sanctifier of all things: “You are our hope, you are our faith, you

<sup>33</sup> Contemporary scripture scholarship has argued with some consensus that many passages refer to the “faith of Jesus,” the righteous one who perseveres. See for summaries, Frank J. Matera, *Galatians, Sacra Pagina Series IX* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), with commentary on Gal. 2.15-16, pp. 93-94, 97-104; Luke Timothy Johnson, “Human & Divine, Did Jesus Have Faith?” *Commonweal* CXXV (January 31, 2008), 10-16.

<sup>34</sup> It should be noted here that this passage is connected in the early Church to the scene of the agony in the garden motif that clearly influences Celano’s presentation of the experience of La Verna. Cf. Frugoni, *Francesco e l’invenzione delle stimmate*.

# CLARE OF ASSISI AND THE 13<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY CHURCH: WOMEN, RULES AND RESISTANCE

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are charity..." Francis' own history has brought him to the reception of a completely gratuitous gift, unmerited and undeserved. It is something he had not anticipated. On La Verna he looks into a mirror image and sees himself suffused with God's love for his human condition; it is a revelation at a new depth of the humanity of Christ as carrying the love of God from birth through the journey into death and beyond death into life. This fragile man has now not his own faith, hope, and love, but the true faith, certain hope, and perfect charity of God in him. "I have been crucified with Christ, and the life I live now is not my own: Christ in living in me." (Gal. 2.19-20) He can now trust again because the One who is most high has trust in him; he can now hope because the One who is most powerful has hope for him; he can now love because the One who is all good invites him into loving. He has discovered once again *the presence of a God who comes to him in the condition of being human*. And in this experience, he can accept his own diminishment as a pathway through which he comes to belong to God. This gift will transform the way he relates to the world before him in three ways.

(1) Through God's faith in him he sees now more clearly what he had seen only inchoately in the leper, in the brothers, in Clare, in the Sultan, in creation. He sees in God and participates in God's seeing of the world (Gen. 1.31); he sees beauty and possibility in that which is limited.

(2) Through God's hope for him, Francis is anchored in the intentionality of God for all of fragile creation—the promise that God will be "all in all." (1 Cor.15.28)

(3) Through God's love enkindling him, Francis is led to embody compassionate mercy towards all things. Being loved, he turns to love again.

There is a direct link between this experience on La Verna and Francis' *Testament*. Perhaps a look at that will clarify what I am trying to communicate. **The Testament** could not have been put together the way it is written in 1216, nor in 1221, nor even in 1223. Something has happened to Francis that enables him to dictate this *exemplum* to his companions. He is not simply trying to describe his own journey from penance to fraternity; he is not simply narrating the early experience to stand as a critique of where the friars have taken things; he is not presenting simply a program of life or calling the friars to obedience. After all, the Lord had already told him that he was not the planter of the Order nor was he its protector. He was instead a sign. So, the text Francis dictates is a "remembrance, admonition, exhortation, and my [spiritual] testament." He is try-

ing to describe what has happened to him and Who God is for the world: "You are our hope, you are our faith, you are our charity." And what Francis communicates to the friars who are in similar circumstances as his own is that through God's faith, hope, and love in him, Francis has become reconciled to his own life; his own history has been wrapped up in the unity of God's mercy for him. So too is their life. The *Testament* is an act of "memory", a *recordatio*, exemplifying for the friars how they are to re-member their own lives, how they are to collect all of their experiences, those of enthusiasm and those prodding them towards penance, into the unity of God's love for them. The text bristles with the blessing of being human on a human journey. Francis repeats, "the Lord gave me," "the Lord himself led me," "the Lord gave me such faith in churches," "afterwards the Lord gave me, and gives me still," "and after the Lord gave me some brothers," "the Lord revealed a greeting to me...", and, finally, "the Lord has given me to speak and write the Rule and these words simply and purely..." This perspective of God's mercy could only fully emerge after La Verna.<sup>35</sup>

This great turn in Francis of Assisi's life is directly correlated with his experience of a world that is suffering and a personal journey that has seemingly hit a dead end. Through such an experience what is revealed to him is the depth and meaning of the salvific words, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me" (Adm. I citing Jn. 14.6-9) Jesus alone is the seraph of God's faith, hope, and love appearing as a human being attached to the cross of his own humanity. Being loved in the human Christ, Francis can once again pick up his mission in the world with hope and faith.<sup>36</sup> His journey now is not *from himself* towards God or towards the world but *from God* towards himself and the suffering world.

We would do well to take note. What is happening to us as we experience our own fragility, the indifference of the world, and diminishing resources is God positioning us through our own history so that we can give to the world a testament to *the presence of God in the condition of being human*. This is the type of wisdom we discover when we are older. It is this type of contemplative gift that the world will need as it goes forward. The humanistic values now ap-

<sup>35</sup> I have been helped considerably in this interpretation by Pietro Maranese, *L'Eredità di Frate Francesco, Lettura storico-critica del Testamento* (Assisi: Porziuncula, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> I can be noted here that this turn in Francis' religious experience, directly connected with the experience of human poverty, will form the heart of Bonaventure's approach to the theological virtues: They are all centered in God and participation in God's life. See for example the comparison between Thomas and Bonaventure in Servais Pinckaers, O.P., "La nature vertueuse de l'espérance," *Revue Thomiste* LVIII (Octobre-Décembre 1958), 405-442; Jean-Pierre Rézette, ofm, "L'Espérance, Vertu Du Pauvre Selon S. Bonaventure," in *La speranza, 2. Studi biblico-teologici e apporti del pensiero francescano* (Roma: Ed. Antonianum, La Scuola Editrice-Brescia, 1984), 357-380.

pealed to by so many, as good, valuable, and foundational as they are, will not be able to carry the entire freight of the contagion of global human suffering, post-modern fragmentation, violence, and human fragility. Something greater is needed; some more powerful testament is calling us forward and holding out a greater possibility for human beings. This is the direction in which Pope Francis points: "We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being." (EG 8) We as friars minor, being backed into our own identity as Christians by God's calling within history, are privileged to carry a human religious experience of transcendent beauty. Our mission has not ended. In fact, for the twenty-first century it is only beginning. The *Testament* accompanies our *Rule*, and some of the fruits of the testament we have received are the following:

- The active engagement with our own history in all of its dimensions;
- The advent through God's mercy of the consequences of God's faith working in us, God's hope calling us forward, God's charity moving us outwards: clarity in the mind, stability in the affections, and compassion for all.
- The humility of self-acceptance and reconciliation with the size of our own life;
- Seeing God's giftedness in all things, creatures, and experiences
- Hope for the future not only for us but all creatures in the entire universe;
- Energy to offer what we have as collective building blocks for the future, and let God give the increase.
- All accomplished through the active mirroring for others of the seraph of charity in the form of a crucified man.

## Passing on the Seal

Most of us will not ascend to the heights of La Verna as did Francis; most of us will not be graced to such an extent. Yet, contained in Francis' experience is something that will enable us to negotiate this post-modern world in which we find ourselves. Gone is the time when we can come to God only through the beauty of the world; gone is the time when the Church is publicly influential and numerically successful; gone is the time when dogmatic teaching will guide the morals of society; gone is the time when the Franciscan friars grow out of all proportion to their origins; gone is the time when the world opens its doors to a transcendent vision, a Christian civilization; gone is the time

when our own life is ratified by either the Church or the society. Gone is the time when we are naturally aware of our own effectiveness. Now is the time however when we are called to a new style of *revitalization and mission* based on the simple prayer: "You are our faith, you are you are our hope, you are our charity." This is the seal that we must pass on to the world. And as we pass it on, let us be aware of the following.

We are entering into a world whose networks of communication, ways of thinking, and the construction of society will be shaped from within by the dominant triangular social arrangements of post-modernity:

- On one side, a neo-liberal market philosophy placing a premium on efficiency, productivity, self-interest, competition, and profit making;
- On a second side, a consumerism stressing novelty, ease of access, self-comfort;
- On a third side, a technology that is systematically designed to be unproblematic, to conquer the constraints of time and space.

On the one hand, here is a world that prizes those who can produce and therefore merit inclusion; a world that makes available greater sophistication in class segmentation and advertising manipulation; a world that is shaped by the infinite variety of commodities, including religion; a world of loose affiliations and a substantial suspicion of institutions.

On the other hand, this same world with its tremendous advantages and developments will also engender its own counter-weights: the search for some transcendent spiritual place of belonging, the need for an enfleshed community, the gravitational pull towards religious or secular places of authenticity, ones charged with a "surplus value" of human and divine relationships.

This double-sided world is both our own world and the world of the millennials.<sup>37</sup>

(1) In such a world, the seal of our Franciscan identity will best flourish when it engages the people, places, and times marked by fragility; when it carries within itself the suffering of people from a position of God's faith, hope, and love in the condition of being human. The umbrella of social, political, and economic "imaginaries" tends to "forget" this world of the poor, the inefficient, the non-productive human being. It privileges the gifted and the powerful. It enters into the affective landscape of

<sup>37</sup> Spelled out most recently by Malcolm Harris, *Kids These Days, Human Capital and the Making of Millennials* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2018).

people's inner lives and can issue in an "advanced poverty" of its own, the isolating "incapacity to be moved by the misery of another."<sup>38</sup> Yet there is a search and longing within society, and not only within the millennial generation, for something true to the Gospel. The preconditions for revitalization are all around us. As Pope Francis notes many times: "Jesus Christ did not save us with an idea, or an intellectual program. He saved us with his flesh, with the concreteness of his flesh." "*The flesh, rather, is revealed as the means by which we can experience the infinite love of God who, in his mercy, comes to meet us, to remind us of our lost dignity, and to make us participants in the love of the Trinity.*"<sup>39</sup>

(2) Within this world we cannot expect the Gospel message to succeed or to suddenly influence and shape the realm of the public square. What it can contribute, however, and do so with a quality of transcendent freedom, is a *prick of conscience*. Our Franciscan life of the future will be shaped by small actions and compassionate encounters, accompaniments filled with excessive spiritual gifts and proportionate to our human capacities. It will work to establish "parallel institutional cultures" that inject a healthy virus of religious truth into the body's economic politic.<sup>40</sup> People adhering to this truth will communicate to others the Gospel's guiding and stabilizing hope that the reward of God's love is out of all proportion to the actions we undertake: "I was hungry and you gave me food...Come, you have my Father's blessing." (Mt. 24.31 ff; cf. 20/16) "It is well said," Scotus notes, "that God always rewards beyond our worth, and universally beyond any particular value which an act might have."<sup>41</sup> These encounters and actions will be networked with others, both believers and unbelievers, who are engaged in similar projects.

(3) In this world, it will be important for us as friars minor gathered with others in the community of the Church to form ourselves and the world according to the shape of the Eucharistic action. As one astute philosopher of technology argues, we need

to develop "focal practices", performances that express our "memory," bring our commitments to clarity, communicate a vision, provide a source of strength, and move us to engage the world as it is. We need to develop practices that subvert the dominant presuppositions of the market, consumerism, and technology.<sup>42</sup> The eucharist, a culture of Word and Sacrament, is one such practice. It also provides us with the paradigm for moving forward in a culture that is hungry for authentic food. In conclusion, let me indicate four ways we might interpret this central sign of our revitalized Franciscan mission.

a) Pope Francis notes in his message for the first World Day of the Poor: "If we truly wish to encounter Christ, we have to touch his body in the suffering bodies of the poor, as a response to the sacramental communion bestowed in the Eucharist. The Body of Christ, broken in the sacred liturgy, can be seen through charity and sharing, in the faces and persons of the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters."<sup>43</sup> The eucharist in our Franciscan tradition is not so much a story of "real presence" as a narrative of *how* "real presence" is publicly performed. The eucharist is more than a sign of substantial ontological change—a narrow position shaped in an ideology of polemics. It is also an *exemplum*, a story, a narrative drama, of how Christ initiates contact with our world, the small places he chooses to be, the sinful people at who's in whose hands he chooses to become available to us. This is well expressed in Francis' Letter to the Entire Order:

O sublime humility!  
O humble sublimity!  
The Lord of the universe,  
God and the Son of God  
So humbles himself,  
That for our salvation,  
He hides Himself under an ordinary piece  
of bread. (vs. 27)

Here is an action of choosing to be poor with those who are poor. And as Francis says in the first Admonition: "in this way the Lord is always with His faithful." (vs.22)

<sup>42</sup> Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life, A Philosophical Inquiry* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984) discusses what he calls "focal practices" pp. 196-210.

<sup>43</sup> Pope Francis, "First World Day of the Poor," 19 November 2017, # 3.

<sup>38</sup> See Alfred Borgmann, *Power Failure, Christianity in the Culture of Technology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2003), 105.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Dario E. Viganó, "Flesh", in *A Pope Francis Lexicon*, 75-76. .

<sup>40</sup> I believe much can be gained here from a rereading for North America of Václav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," in *Open Letters, Selected Writings 1965-1990* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 125-214.

<sup>41</sup> As cited in Mary Beth Ingham, SCJ, *The Harmony of Goodness, Mutuality and Moral Living According to John Duns Scotus* ((Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1996), 134, from *Ord. I, 17, n.149* (5:210).

(b) Embedded in the Eucharistic action is an economic ethic governed by self-giving, labor, generosity, sacrifice so that others may be richly nourished (II Cor. 8.9-10). Here is an ethic of performance in the public square; it is work for others, designed to create reciprocal relationships between members of the same body.<sup>44</sup> As Francis notes, again using words of action in imitation of the Eucharistic performance, "Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that He who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally!" (Ltr.Ord., 29). Diminished physical capacities do not prevent this type of work as it is intentionally oriented to nourish others through "morsels" of bread.

(c) The eucharistic action communicates the friars' posture towards secularity. It clarifies how God in Christ is present in the world not only in the ordinary bread but in all things. Seeing the bread placed in their hands, the believer's dilated eyes receive the light of Christ's action in ordinary food. Christ, hidden in plain sight and perceived with faith, so appears wherever the friar minor finds himself attentive. Francis used to "gather up any piece of writing, whether divine or human, wherever he found it: on the road, in the house, on the floor." When asked why he even gathered up the writings of pagans, "where the name of the Lord does not appear," he replied: "...I do this because they have the letters which make the glorious name of the Lord God." (ICl.82). Bonaventure will argue with more philosophical subtlety: "Patet enim, quam ampla sit via illuminativa, et quomodo in omni re, quae sentitur sive quae cognoscitur, interius lateat ipse Deus. [It is likewise clear how wide the illuminative way may be, and how the divine reality itself lies hidden within everything which is perceived or known.]"<sup>45</sup> The affirmation of God's hidden presence in the world the way it is will be a significant component of our witness for the twenty-first century.

(d) The performance of Christ in the eucharist forms his very body on earth. We are used to identifying the small morsel of bread as the body of Christ. It will be important going forward to recognize that this is only one dimension of the mystery of the sign of God's presence. Francis and our theological tradition pick up very clearly the tradition enunciated so well by Augustine. When the great teacher of Western Christendom realizes he is far from God, he hears "a voice calling from on high saying, 'I am the food of full-grown men. Grow and you shall feed on me. But you

shall not change me into your own substance, as you do with the food of your body. Instead you shall be changed into me.'"<sup>46</sup> The truth of the eucharist is: "We become what we eat." This transformation happens on both the person and communal levels. Let me say a word about each.

1. Celano describes the scene in the city immediately after Francis' death:

*The whole city of Assisi* rushed down as a group and the entire region hurried to see *the wonderful works of God* which *the Lord of majesty* gloriously displayed in his holy servant...They looked at his skin which was black before but now shining white in its beauty, promising the rewards of the blessed resurrection...All his limbs had become as soft and moveable as in childhood innocence...*All the people* saw him glowing with remarkable beauty and his flesh became even whiter than before. It was even more wonderful for them to see in the middle of his hands and feet not just the holes of the nails, but the nails themselves formed by his own flesh, retaining the dark color of iron, and his right side red with blood. These signs of martyrdom did not provoke horror, but added great beauty and grace, like little black stones in a white pavement. (IC II.IX.112)

On La Verna, the image of Christ impressed on Francis in Baptism, and which manifested itself in his faith, hope, and charity throughout his life, comes to full expression. The qualities of his body: "white, shining, glowing, supple, innocent, full of beauty and grace" now mirror the resurrected body of Christ.<sup>47</sup> He has become transformed into what he has eaten. His final witness is to the resurrection, the victory over death. The power of that Christ event gathers *the whole city, all the people* into a single body of praise and joy. This is very close to the words with which Pope Francis opens *Evangelii Gaudium*: "Let us not flee from the resurrection of Jesus, let us never give up, come what will. May nothing inspire more than his life, which impels us onwards." (#3) Here is the event to which the friar minor is to give witness; while a *viator*, he anchors himself and others in God's hope for the world. This is the capstone of the

<sup>44</sup> For background see Patricia Ranft, "Franciscan Work Theology in Historical Perspective," *Franciscan Studies* 67 (2009), 41-70. Cf. also David Flood, *Work for everyone: Francis of Assisi and the ethic of service* (Quezon City, Philippines: CCFMC Office for Asia/Oceania, 1997).

<sup>45</sup> *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology, Works of Saint Bonaventure*, prepared by Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., I (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1996), #26, pp. 60-61.

<sup>46</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, translated with an introduction by R. S. Pine-Coffin (New York: Penguin Books, 1961), VII.10.

<sup>47</sup> For deeper reflection on this experience in the light of the Franciscan tradition see Ann W. Astel, *Eating Beauty, The Eucharist and the Spiritual Arts of the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

Christian's willingness to "let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being." (EG 8)

2. Yet there is a second dimension to the Eucharistic performance of Christ. Here Christ feeds the people and through the power of his passionate love they together become the Body of Christ. Many members, one body. (I Cor. 12.12 ff). At the heart of the Eucharistic action is the creation of fraternitas. This is the tradition of the ancient Church, and it centers the life of the believer not simply on the presence in the "transubstantiated bread" but on the real transformation of his or her reciprocal relationships to believers (and unbelievers) who belong to the same human family.<sup>48</sup> This transformation is a creative work of God's Word through the Holy Spirit; it again places God's initiative at the center of our quest for revitalization. Francis notes in his letter to the clergy: "*Scimus, quia non potest esse corpus, nisi prius sanctificetur a verbo.*" ["We know that it is not able to be body unless first sanctified by the word."] (vs. 2) When Bonaventure looks at the eucharist he sees a diversity of members drawn into oneness, many grains of wheat now fired into one bread by the power of the Word.

This focus on the horizontal affective bonds within the Church is particularly vital in a world of unbelief.<sup>49</sup> Graced to eat the "bread of angels" friars minor adopt a common *Rule* which is compared to the unifying and nourishing action of the eucharist. Bonaventure tells a story in which Francis "gathers tiny bread crumbs from the ground." As with ourselves, they appeared to him too little to feed so many. A voice tells him: "Francis, make some host out of all the crumbs, and give it to those who want to eat." The voice interprets his vision the next day: "Francis, the crumbs of last night are the words of the Gospel; the host is the rule."<sup>50</sup> *Fra-*

*ternitas* in this way is meant to be a sacrament of faith, hope, and charity. This is the Franciscan version of Benedict XVI's call for a "sacramental mysticism, grounded in God's condescension towards us," one that "operates at a radically different level and lifts us to far greater heights than anything that any human mystical elevation could ever accomplish."<sup>51</sup>; it can be fully embraced only when we pray with Francis, "You are our hope, you are our faith, you are our charity."

We come then to the end of this long reflection. What is the seal of Franciscan life that we want to pass on to future generations? I believe it is both simple and subversive. I have argued here that the situation in which we find ourselves is sometimes identified as a decline. But look again. Seen from another point of view it is a profound repositioning so that we can become a witness to the Gospel in the new era before us. There is a profound connection between the ethical critique we undertake of a dominant social paradigm, the recovery of memory, the acceptance of our own fragility and solidarity with suffering human beings, the way we are content with small actions commensurate with our size, our vision of God as overwhelming generosity, and the food that transforms us into the Body of Christ for the world. Such a vision repositions us for the new Catholic culture that is emerging in our very midst. We may not see its completion; we are however its creators. It is a good time to be a follower of St. Francis. May this be the seal of our province as we go forward into the future; may we become what we eat as we pray with Francis of Assisi: "You are our hope, you are our faith, you are our charity."

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<sup>48</sup> See Yves Congar, "The *Ecclesia* or Christian community as a Whole Celebrates the Liturgy," in Paul Philibert, ed., *At the Heart of Christian Worship, Liturgical Essays of Yves Congar* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 15-68.

<sup>49</sup> For perceptive comments see Gabriel Flynn, O.P., *Yves Congar's Vision of the Church in A World of Unbelief* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004) which provides valuable background for the Franciscan emphasis founded on Mt. 12.50 ff.

<sup>50</sup> *The Major Legend of Saint Francis*, IV.11. Bonaventure will later argue: "the sacrament makes those who partake of it more in union." See the perceptive comments in *Commentary on the Sentences: Sacraments*, Translation, Introductions, Notes, J.A. Wayne Hellmann, OFMConv., Timothy R. LeCroy, Luke Davis Townsend (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2016), 165-174, with citation from page 208, IV. Sent. D 8, Resp. 5-6.

<sup>51</sup> *God Is Love, Deus Caritas Est* (Washington D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2007), first published December 25, 2005, # 13.

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# Sin as Anti-Trinitarian Palimpsest in the *Summa halensis*

By Justin Shaun Coyle

In manuscript studies, a palimpsest names a vellum or parchment whose original text has suffered erasure, concealment, or other distortion to render space for newer text. Damaging a parchment's original inscription for another use—this offers a decent image for how the *Summa halensis* depicts sin.<sup>1</sup> In honor and imitation of Brother Alexander's *Summa*,<sup>2</sup> I arrange this essay as a triptych: (1) beauty is trinitarian in the *Summa halensis*; (2) the soul is beautiful because it is trinitarian; (3) sin damages the soul's beauty, so it is anti-trinitarian. Hold that sequence in your mind's eye; it doubles as both my argument and the structure I adopt to make it.

## I.

To the first point straightaway, then: beauty is trinitarian in the *Summa halensis*. This claim is, to my taste anyway, at once Brother Alexander's most delicious and most neglected. Why his readers often ignore it I do not know and

so cannot say.<sup>3</sup> Whatever the case, the trinitarian grammar of beauty is right there in the text:

For just as [Augustine says that] "the beauty of bodies is from a harmony of the composition of its parts", so also is the beauty of souls from a harmony of powers and the ordering of faculties. And beauty in the divine is from the sacred order of the divine persons, in such a manner that one person is not from another—[a person] from whom another is by generation, [and] from [these two persons] a third is by procession.<sup>4</sup>

There is much in this highly compressed passage. Too much, in fact, to treat it here with any degree of precision. So I note now only two among its features.

The first is that Alexander's canon for beauty is not the divine essence or its selfsame attributes—truth and goodness and justice and so on. That is how Thomas Aquinas conceives beauty,<sup>5</sup> though the line bears Neoplatonic vintage. Plotinus and Proclus and Dionysius talk like this too.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *Summa halensis*—also called the *Summa fratris Alexandri*, *Summa minorum*, or simply *Summa theologiae*—was written under Alexander of Hales's supervision, but likely not by his own pen. For more on the authorship problem, see Victorin Doucet, OFM, "The History of the Problem of the Authenticity of the *Summa*," *Franciscan Studies* 7 (1947), pp. 26-41; 274-312. For a shorter study, see "Introductory Remarks" in Meldon C. Mass, OFM's *The Infinite God and the Summa fratris Alexandri* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1964), 1-13. All Latin taken from Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologiae (Summa halensis)*, vols. 1-4, edited by the Quaracchi brothers (Florence: Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1924-1948). All translations are mine.

<sup>2</sup> I here call its author "Brother Alexander" not to vindicate the uncritical assumption of Book I's Quaracchi editors that Alexander of Hales penned the entire *Summa* alone. I mean rather but to respect that the *Summa*'s authors (whoever they were) preferred to write scenes under a single name: that of "Brother Alexander." In this way, the business of composing a *summa* follows what Lesley Smith calls "common mending pattern of working." Cf. "Hugh of St. Cher and Medieval Collaboration" in *Transforming Relations: Essays on Jews and Christians throughout History in Honor of Michael A. Signer*, ed. Franklin T. Harkins (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 258. Whatever the case, by the time Roger Bacon submits his now-famous *dubium* over Alexander's authorship, he confessed that *tamen propter reverentiam adscripta fuit et vocatur Summa fratris Alexandri*, "still it is reckoned and called the *Summa* of Brother Alexander out of reverence." Cf. J.S. Brewer, *Fr. Rogeri Bacon Opera hactenus inedita* I (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1859), 326. And anyhow, the Christians among us ought to honor requests for and attempts at pseudepigraphic anonymity, even—perhaps especially—by the dead.

<sup>3</sup> I hazard a few guesses in my "Is Beauty a Transcendental in the *Summa halensis*," forthcoming in *Nova et Vetera*.

<sup>4</sup> *SH* I, n. 103 (1: 163): "Ad secundum dicendum quod illud Augustini definit pulcritudinem visibilem sive corporalem; tamen dicitur de pulcritudine corporali sensibili, in quantum ducit ad intelligibilem sive spiritualem. Sicut enim « pulchritudo corporum est ex congruentia compositionis partium », ita pulchritudo animarum ex convenientia virium et ordinatione potentiarum, et pulchritudo in divinis ex ordine sacro divinarum personarum, qua una persona non ab alia, a qua alia per generationem, a quibus tertia per processionem."

<sup>5</sup> The best recent studies on beauty in Thomas Aquinas are Michael J. Rubin's "The Meaning of 'Beauty' and Its Transcendental Status in the Metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas" (PhD dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 2016) and Christopher Scott Sevier, *Aquinas on Beauty* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015). Rubin's work bears the dual virtues of summarizing and analyzing the long debate—he is expert at both tasks.

<sup>6</sup> On this point, recall Plotinus's arguments against Stoic grammars of beauty at *Enn.* I.6. Proclus later underlines the unity of beauty by naming it the "form of form" at *Pl. Theo.* 3.18. Neither Plotinus nor Proclus obviously identify beauty with the One, since the One exceeds all description. But even if it is Intellect (not the One) that is beautiful properly speaking, Intellect is still such because of its relative unity. Dionysius tightens the connection between God and Beauty at *Divine Names* 4.7, trans. John Parker in *Dionysius the Areopagite, Works* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1879), 33: "But, the superessential Beautiful is called Beauty, on account of the beauty communicated from Itself to all beautiful things, in a manner appropriate to each, and as Cause of the good harmony and brightness of all things which flashes like light to all



With Thomas, that's to say, they all agree that God is beautiful or Beauty Itself precisely as divine essence. Not Alexander: he shifts focus from the divine essence to trinitarian taxis, to the "sacred order" that obtains among the trinitarian persons. For Alexander, then, God is beautiful not as divine essence but as Trinity—as divine essence shared in common among three hypostases.

This first feature introduces a second, which is to do with *how* Alexander has managed to think beauty within trinitarian grammar. Alexander's genius here, I think, lies in his sublation of Stoic aesthetics with those Neoplatonic. Alexander learns the or a Stoic definition of beauty from Augustine, who somehow cribbed it from Chrysippus.<sup>7</sup> Anyhow, it's there in the passage reproduced above: beau-

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the beautifying distributions of its fontal ray, and as calling all things to Itself (whence also it is called Beauty), and as collecting all in all to Itself."

<sup>7</sup> Though Hagendahl does not cite any classical source for Augustine's definition of beauty at *civ.* 22.19—well known also to Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Ulrich of Strasburg—he cites Cicero's *Tusc. disp.* 4.13.30–4.13.31 as the source for a near identical passage in Augustine's *ep.* 3.4. See Harald Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967), 319. Oleg V. Bychkov shows that Cicero's own definition owes to the Stoics, particularly Chrysippus. Galen reports Chrysippus as holding that "beauty arises from the symmetry of parts." For more, see Bychkov's "The Reflection of Some Traditional Stoic Ideas in the Thirteenth-Century Scholastic Theories of Beauty" in *Vivarium* 34.2 (1996): 141–160.

ty names a "harmony of the composition of parts." But the Stoic definition cannot content Alexander, not if God—as Alexander says with the Neoplatonists—is totally simple. Unlike other medievals, Alexander divines a way to combine both. The God of the Christians is, after all, both one and many—one in his nature, many in his persons. Alexander reminds his readers that in trinitarian theology, perfect unity does not rule out difference—it rather demands it.

So much altogether too briefly on the first point: beauty is trinitarian.

## II.

The second point—that the soul is beautiful because it too is trinitarian—also hides within the passage reproduced above. "The beauty of souls," Alexander says, "is from a harmony of powers and the ordering of faculties." Again, this sentence too conceals more than I can here detail. I will say, however, that Alexander writes and thinks in a high pitch and with precision about the harmony of the soul's powers. When he does, he writes and thinks it trinitarianly. He makes of the soul, we could say but Alexander does not, a trinitarian icon.

The *Summa halensis*'s delicate trinitarian psychology refines an argument already there in Alexander's *Glossa*. There, Alexander adjudicates among the then-standard opinions about how the soul relates to its powers. Call these two opinions the identity thesis and the difference thesis.<sup>8</sup> The identity thesis advocates, well, the soul's essential *identity* with its powers. Philip the Chancellor, the loudest of its advocates, argues that the Augustinian powers of remembering, understanding, and willing are coextensive with the soul's essence. They are not related accidentally or concomitantly, but rather identically.<sup>9</sup> Otherwise the soul fails to cut a close icon of the Trinity. But Philip's identity thesis is *contra philosophiam*, William of Auxerre hisses in

its powers. Remembering, understanding, willing—these stand to the soul as accidents only.

So rise the hammer and anvil of early thirteenth century psychology. But instead of choosing among them, Alexander contrives a third way. I shall pass over his technical arguments. Important now is that he finds sanctuary for the soul's powers in its *substance*, where powers are concomitant but not essential or accidental.<sup>11</sup>

Alexander's metaphysical finesse secures the trinity of the soul's powers. Showing *that* the soul is trinity allows later Franciscans like John of Rochelle and the author of the *Summa halensis* to wonder *how*.<sup>12</sup> They find in their respective cycles of questions on the soul not merely the Trinity's



his *Golden Summa*—even *contra Deum*.<sup>10</sup> Against it William wields his difference thesis. Best to set his arguments to one side—they are not very strong, after all; his rhetoric runs too hot and his logic too slack. His conclusion, anyhow, alleges that Philip's identity thesis accords the soul a degree of simplicity proper to God alone. By sharp contrast, William advocates the soul's essential *difference* from

trace, but also its logic. The soul too, Brother Alexander claims, thrums with perichoretic movement. Remembering, understanding, and willing "circumincess" or "indwell" one another—the word is a trinitarian term of art—in a single soul like Father, Son, and Spirit in one nature.<sup>13</sup> To that extent, the soul imitates the Trinity's beauty. It's to that extent too that the soul is beautiful.

<sup>8</sup> For more complete accounts of this puzzle, see Pius Künzle, *OP, Das Verhältnis der Seele zu ihren Potenzen; problemgeschichtliche Untersuchungen von Augustin bis und mit Thomas von Aquin* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1956); and Magdalena Bieniak's *The Soul-Body Problem at Paris, ca. 1200–1250: Hugh of St-Cher and His Contemporaries* (Leuven: De Wulf-Mansion Centre, 2010), 91–118.

<sup>9</sup> Philip the Chancellor, *Summa de bono* I (ed. Wicki 250). All reference to the *Summa de bono* taken from the edition by Niklaus Wicki (Bern: Francke, 1985).

<sup>10</sup> William of Auxerre, *Summa Aurea* II, tr. 9, c. 1, q. 6. All reference to the SA taken from the edition by J. Ribailier (Roma: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas Grottaferata, 1982).

<sup>11</sup> Alexander of Hales, *Glossa* I, d. 3, 46c (12: 65): "Istae ergo tres potentiae distinguuntur secundum essentiam, sed conveniunt in substantia: quia anima non est completa substantia sine suis potentiis... Subiectum dicitur anima respectu accidentem, substantia respectu proprietatum, essentia respectu essentialium." All references to the *Glossa* taken from the Quaracchi edition: *Magistri Alexandri de Hales Glossa in quatuor libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi*, Bibliotheca Franciscana Scholastica Medii Aevi, volumes 12–15 (Florence: Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1951).

<sup>12</sup> See John of Rochelle's *Summa de anima* c. 60 (ed. Bougerol 184) and *SH* I-II, n. 349 (424–425).

<sup>13</sup> *SH* I-II, n. 342, II (2: 415).

Some, Brother Alexander reports, deny this. They deny, that is, that “the acts of remembering, understanding, and willing indwell one another as a likeness of the powers to the divine persons.”<sup>14</sup> Their best objection, Alexander thinks, asks why we remember and understand evil without willing it—or the inverse. Fair enough—conceded: this case indeed threatens perichoretic relations among the soul’s powers. Only this imbalance hardly belongs to the soul as such. No: it enters only with sin’s bite.

### III.

For Alexander, the beauty of the soul follows from the harmony of its powers. Disorder that harmony, it follows, threatens its beauty. This is the third point: because and to the extent that sin damages the soul’s beauty, it is anti-trinitarian. Sin damages the images our souls are, or it forms a palimpsest over them. No surprise, then, that Alexander conceives sin as “disorder.” Its corruption of the will subverts the harmony of the soul’s powers, and so defaces its beauty. How exactly?

Alexander intimates the anti-trinitarian structure of sin already where he defines it.<sup>15</sup> He knows four definitions, each indexed to and subversive of one of Aristotle’s causes.<sup>16</sup> The first associates sin with “an evil of the will” (*peccatum est malum voluntarium*). That, Alexander learns from Augustine, curiously accounts for sin’s efficient cause.<sup>17</sup> As privation, that is, sin lacks a *ratio*. Its efficient cause owes instead to a confused act of the will.<sup>18</sup> A similar inversion works beneath the second definition. It conceives sin as “a lack of justice’s debt” (*peccatum est carentia debitae iustitiae*).<sup>19</sup> But lacking justice means lacking the will’s formal perfection—love. Lacking justice, then, defines sin against its formal cause: “a defect of form” (*defectum formae*).<sup>20</sup> Alexander learns his third definition from the long Platonic tradition: “sin is the privation of the good” (*peccatum est privatio boni*).<sup>21</sup> This definition simply ornaments the tight

connection he’s already drawn between the good and final causality (and both with Spirit). To lack the good is just to lack an end.<sup>22</sup> A fourth definition recycles an Augustinian idiom. “Sin,” the old saw goes, “is an excess of concupiscence” (*peccatum est superfluitas concupiscentiae*).<sup>23</sup> This excess issues from the flesh, which St. Paul says “lusts against the spirit.” The flesh overwritten by illicit and garish desire for ephemera—this is the material cause of sin.

The anti-trinitarian grammar here is so subtle it’s nearly imperceptible. Perhaps only ears trained by Brother Alexander hear it. Still, his readers will know that invoking Aristotelian causes already means speaking Trinity. Book I already shows how immaterial causes work as trinitarian appropriations: efficient to Father, exemplar to Son, final to Spirit.<sup>24</sup> Appropriating causality also invests creation with a trinitarian shape. Sin distorts this shape by inversion. It inverts the efficient cause by *failing* to cause according to any *ratio*. Like the Father sin too is unbegotten; unlike him, sin’s *innascibilitas* proves barren. Sin inverts the formal cause by lacking form. This lack follows from a failure to issue love—the Son breathes Spirit, sin breathes nothing. Sin inverts the final cause by lacking the good. And this means lacking any end whatever, since the good is that toward which all things bend. Absent an end, sin lacks the *completio* the Spirit is. Last, sin inverts the material cause by overestimating matter. Sin reroutes desire proper to God alone toward what is lowest. When excessive concupiscence usurps reason, body rules soul. Or the *imago Trinitatis* now serves what *it* should by rights lord over. On Alexander’s account, then, sin not only counters appropriated causes; it also apes their logic. In so doing, sin attempts a palimpsest, obscuring the trinitarian icon written into creation.

Sin’s anti-trinitarian icon glows brighter where Alexander considers sin as the *privatio modi, speciei, and ordinis*—a privation of the trace. Here again, Alexander insists that sin cannot damage or delete without remainder the trinity’s trace—not ontologically, anyway. Then he adds something puzzling: mode, species, and order *can* be diminished “insofar as they indwell wills ordered to the good.”<sup>25</sup> What does this proviso mean? The passage introduces a fresh distinction—or recycles it. Alexander, you may know, conceives

<sup>14</sup> SH I-II, n. 342, II (2: 415): “Item, dubitabit aliquis de hoc quod dicit Augustinus, in libro *De trinitate*, quod actus isti sese sunt circumcedentes, meminisse, intelligere, velle, ut sit similitudo potentiarum ad personas divinas, sicut dicit Damascenus: verbi gratia quod memini, intelligo, volo, et quod intelligo, memini et volo, et quod volo, memini et intelligo.” Cf. SDA c. 35, 31–39 (Bougerol 112).

<sup>15</sup> SH II-II, nn. 63–67 (3: 80–82).

<sup>16</sup> SH II-II, n. 63 (3: 80): “Ad primum dicendum est quod hae quatuor definitionis assignantur in comparatione ad quatuor causas.”

<sup>17</sup> SH II-II, n. 63 (3: 80). Cf. *civ.* 12.9.1 (PL 41: 356).

<sup>18</sup> SH II-II, n. 63 (3: 80). Cf. n. 64 (3: 80–81).

<sup>19</sup> SH II-II, n. 65 (3: 81). Cf. Anselm, *De conc. virg. et orig. pecc.* 3.27 (PL 158: 436).

<sup>20</sup> SH II-II, n. 63 (3: 80): “Restat ergo quod ex parte causae formalis sumitur haec definitio, non quia peccatum habeat causam formalem, sed defectum formae.”

<sup>21</sup> SH II-II, n. 66 (3: 81).

<sup>22</sup> SH II-II, n. 63 (3: 80): “Tertia vero definitio data est ex defectu finis sive finalis causae. Bonum enim et finis idem; privatio ergo boni privationem dicit finis.”

<sup>23</sup> SH II-II, n. 67 (3: 82).

<sup>24</sup> SH I, n. 73 (1: 114): “Item, secundum quod esse rerum comparatur in relatione ad causam divinam, simili modo triplicatur determinatio. Causa enim divina est causa in triplici genere causae: efficiens, formalis ut exemplar, finalis. Quae quidem causalitas, cum sit communis toti Trinitati, appropriatur ut causa efficiens Patri, exemplaris Filio, finalis Spiritui Sancto.”

<sup>25</sup> SH I, n. 33, ad 2 (1: 50): “Dicendum quod malum culpae non aufert vel minuit modum, speciem, et ordinem, secundum quod insunt naturae ipsius animae vel essentiae, sed secundum quod insunt voluntati ordinabili ad bonum.”



the trinitarian processions as either natural (the Son's) or volitional (the Spirit's). Now, he considers the trinitarian trace's relation to the soul along the same division. At the level of nature, the trace is fixed. But at the level of will?

First he explains how the triplet "indwells" a rational will. *Modus* calculates the extent to which the will "conforms its will to the will of the divine."<sup>26</sup> *Species* describes the will's natural (though not original) rectitude, which, fol-

<sup>26</sup> SH II-II, n. 33 (3: 50): "Est enim modus ipsius voluntatis, in quantum habet habitudinem ad summam bonitatem boni effectivam: modus enim dicit mensuram, mensuram autem dicitur esse voluntatis in eo quod conformat voluntatem suam voluntati divinae; haec autem est mensura voluntatis ut non praeferat voluntatem suam voluntati divinae, sed sequitur eam."

lowing evil done (*malum culpae*), suffers lingering trauma.<sup>27</sup> And *ordo* belongs to the will as its end, that to which it orders its collective efforts.<sup>28</sup> Alexander then associates the three elements of the trace with sin's causal distortions—efficient, formal, and final.<sup>29</sup> So though by nature the trace subsists indomitably, by will "it is able to be diminished but not totally destroyed."<sup>30</sup>

Evil done (*malum culpae*), Alexander writes, mangles each element of the trace simultaneously and equally. And it must, if indeed mode, species, and order "represent the highest Trinity"<sup>31</sup> whose persons also live simultaneously and equally. Sin damages simultaneously because the act of loving a creature as or more than the Trinity is itself (anti-)trinitarian. That act of the will inverts its *mode* by miscalculating, its *species* by sundering rectitude and preferring extremes to "the middle," and its *order* by inclining to extremes.<sup>32</sup> And sin damages equally because of the trace's peculiar perichoretic relation. A confused (and imagined) objector grouses: Virtue—fortitude, say—may and often does "indwell" the soul absent other virtues.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> SH II-II, n. 33 (3: 50–51): "Similiter species dicitur esse ipsius voluntatis, secundum quod voluntas habet suam rectitudinem naturalem: et haec rectitudo naturalis dicitur species eius. Non autem loquor modo de illa rectitudine naturali, cuius carentia dicitur peccatum originale, quam habuit homo a principio, sed de rectitudine naturali, quae sequitur ipsam voluntatem, licet deformetur per malum culpae; non enim omnino tollitur species rectitudinis, sed minuitur."

<sup>28</sup> SH II-II, n. 33 (3: 51): "Ordo vero attenditur in ipsa voluntate secundum quod refertur ad finem."

<sup>29</sup> SH II-II, n. 33 (3: 51): "Nec oportet dicere quod, licet haec habitudo sit voluntatis ordinabilis in finem, quod omnes istae tres condiciones accipiantur penes rationem ordinabilis in finem, sed in comparatione ad tres causas secundum genus illud. Voluntas enim Dei bona dicitur efficiens, dicitur etiam forma et dicitur finis; voluntas autem rationalis potest habere habitudinem debitam ad voluntatem sic vel sic dictam et secundum hoc in ea dicuntur esse modus, species, et ordo."

<sup>30</sup> SH II-II, n. 35, ad 1–2, a–b (52): "Si vero accipiantur secundum quod disponunt habitudinem naturalem ad bonum, per malum culpae potest uno modo fieri privatio horum: possunt enim minui, sed non usquequaque tolli."

<sup>31</sup> SH II-II, n. 35, ad 1 (3: 53): "Sed non sic accipiuntur hic, sed secundum hoc quod modus, species et ordo in qualibet creatura repraesentant quodam modo summam Trinitatem."

<sup>32</sup> SH II-II, n. 35, ad 1 (3: 53): "In anima vero rationali, prout malum culpae dicitur privatio modi, speciei et ordinis, secundum quod intelligit Augustinus, simul est privatio omnium. Cum enim amatur creatura ut Deus vel plus Deo, est defectus modi sive mensurae; existente autem defectu isto, exit voluntas ab extremis, extrema autem dico Deum, u test principium et ut est finis; ergo est defectus rectitudinis, et ita per consequens speciei: rectitudo enim est forma sive species ipsius extensione mediae. Cum autem exit voluntas ab extremis, non amat Deum propter se et super omnia, propter quod est defectus ordinis. Simul ergo est privatio modi, speciei et ordinis per malum culpae mortalis." Later in ad 2 Brother Alexander indexes these to the immaterial causes: "Simul tamen minuuntur propter supra dictam rationem, eo quod diminutio, quae est ipsius habitudinis ad efficiendam, point diminutionem habitudinis ad causam formalem et similiter ad finale et e converso."

<sup>33</sup> Here I depict a combination of obj. 1 and 2 of SH II-II, n. 36 (3: 53). I should note, however, that objection 1 contains something curious. There, an objector seems to introduce an entirely new triad. He indexes

Alexander responds that it is otherwise for the elements of the trace. "One is not able to indwell without the others or vice versa," he explains. "And for this reason, when one is intended, the other two are also; when one is diminished, the other two are also."<sup>34</sup> Damage to one power, that is, given the logic of perichoresis, spells damage to all.

Not only does sin simultaneously and equally damage the trace's elements in perichoretic relation. Here again, sin also parodies that relation. Sometimes, that is, Alexander imagines sin too to play on the logic of perichoresis. How? As evil, sin remains vampiric upon the good. And this axiom, of course, necessitates the confession that "evil is good *secundum quid*."<sup>35</sup> So as almost-not-but-somehow-still good, sin bears an *ordo*. Only sin attempts (and fails) a total inversion, explaining its classical definition as "disorder."<sup>36</sup> Even as disorder, sin mimicks trinitarian order.

So Brother Alexander will say, for instance, that negligence is not one sin among many. No, it "circulates through (*circueat*) all sin," or it features across the triple vice of *invidia*, *superbia*, and *avaritia*.<sup>37</sup> It names ignorance of "the elements circulating sin itself."<sup>38</sup> In another place Alexander calls vainglory the "mother of all sin [that] circulates (*circuit*) all evil."<sup>39</sup> Now *circueo* is not *circumincēdere*, the latter of which Alexander uses to describe the trinitarian relations and their image in the soul. But then it cannot be: sin cannot attain a perfect photo-negative of trinitarian perichoresis. (If it could, sin or evil would emerge as another principle opposite good—and Brother Alexander's no Manichaeism.) If sin parodies Trinity, sin also remains parasitic upon it.

*modus* to *potentia* or *virtus*, *species* to *pulchritudo*, and *ordo* to *bonitas*. We saw *verum-pulchrum-bonum* at *SH* I-II, n. 75 (2: 99) and *potentia-sapientia-bonitas/voluntas* nearly everywhere across *SH* I. This triplet of *potentia/virtus-pulchritudo-bonitas* appears to perform a remix of some kind. It is also absent (to my mind) from the remainder of the *SH*. Here again it is tempting to let the multiple author thesis do the explanatory work, though the question of this triplet's provenance remains live.

<sup>34</sup> *SH* II-II, n. 36, ad 2 (3: 54): "Unum non potest inesse sine aliis nec e converso, eo quod sunt unius conditionis; et propter hoc, cum unum intenditur, alia duo intenduntur, cum unum minuitur, alia duo minuuntur."

<sup>35</sup> *SH* II-II, n. 28, ad 3 (3: 28): "Cum dicitur malum inordinatum, hoc est quia privat quemdam ordinem, ordinem scilicet adhaerentem ei quod causatur a summo bono. Et cum dicitur quod malum ordinatur ad bonum, ordo iste potius est in illo bono quam etiam in isto malo; nihilominus tamen sicut malum est secundum quid bonum, ita quoad hoc habet ordinem."

<sup>36</sup> *SH* II-II, n. 28, ad 1 and 2 (3: 28): "Malum non est ordinatum... cum sit privatio ordinis," and "Dicendum quod malum dicitur « inordinatio » ratione malitiae."

<sup>37</sup> *SH* II-II, n. 340 (3: 346): "Videtur quod [negligentia] non reducat ad aliquod peccatum, sed circueat omnia peccata." And later: "[Negligentia accipitur] secundum circumstantias etiam illorum actuum, a quibus deficiunt invidia, superbia, avaritia, et sic de aliis vitiis."

<sup>38</sup> *SH* II-II, n. 340 (3: 346): "Dicendum quod negligentia, generaliter considerata, concomitatur diversa genera peccatorum, et sic accipitur in praedicta auctoritate Augustini; unde negligentia, sic generaliter sumpta, est de circueventibus ipsa peccata."

<sup>39</sup> *SH* II-II, n. 523 (3: 517): "Et hoc modo ipsa est peccatum generale et dicitur mater omnium peccatorum et circuit omnia mala."

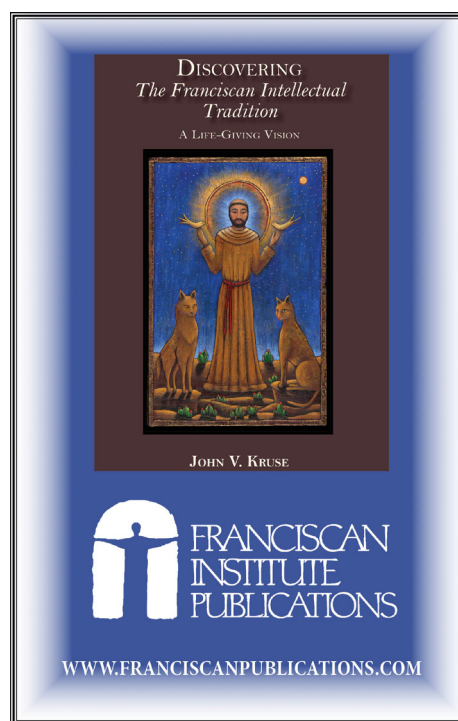
But if sin deals in anti-trinitarian corrosion, if it writes a palimpsest over the trinity the soul is, restoring the *imago Trinitatis* demands trinitarian therapy. Restoring the soul's trinitarian icon, that is, belongs to grace's work.<sup>40</sup> But I'd best leave off here, however, before roving the labyrinths of high scholastic accounts of grace.

This essay does not aim at a comprehensive account of sin and grace in the *Summa halensis* anyhow. It worries only at the anti-trinitarian shape of sin as Alexander conceives it, to regard and hold it up to thought's light as jewelers hold gemstones up to their loupes. It is a lovely pattern of thought, I think, but one that is only visible when you have much else in Brother Alexander's *Summa* in view. You cannot, that is, discern sin's anti-trinitarian palimpsest or grace's work of restoration without seeing beauty's trinitarian structure first and the soul's next. And that is what this essay has tried to render visible. Still, this is scarcely the only delicate pattern woven across the *Summa halensis* and other early Franciscan texts. There are very many more, if only we would lend them our careful attention.

<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the *Summa halensis* depicts grace as a "making trinitarian." See especially *SH* III, n. 613–615 (4: 967–1001).



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# Emerging Franciscan Scholars Series

## Justin Shaun Coyle, Ph.D.

### How did you become interested in Franciscan theology?

Initially I wanted to be a systematic theologian. But some mentors at Duke Divinity School told me I needed first to learn to read well. The best way to do that, they counseled, was to sit patiently with old texts. So I went to Boston College to do just that. I arrived with hazy interest in Thomas Aquinas, which Boyd Taylor Coolman quickly exorcised. He pointed up the deep debts Thomas and Bonaventure and Scotus owed the first generation of Franciscan theologians, the group surrounding Alexander of Hales (d. 1245) at the University of Paris. Years of reading and writing about Alexander and his school taught me that early Franciscan theology was no less systematic than the material I'd hoped to read when I began. The systematic rigors of early Franciscan thought aren't typically what attracts folks to the Franciscan charism, I realize. But it's what attracted me.



Justin with Alexander of Hales in Rome

### What is it about Franciscan theology today that excites and inspires you? What is distinctive about it?

Most, I think, encounter a Franciscan tradition heavily mediated by devotional literature on Francis himself. And that's all well and good—who doesn't like birds and Birkenstocks? More exciting to me, though, was the deeply intellectual strain of Franciscan theology. It's only ten years, remember, between Francis's death and the day Alexander of Hales, a master at Paris, takes the habit. So the little friars cut an intellectual figure early and quickly. Attention to that intellectual tradition shows some continuity between the early life of the order and its more *recherché* expressions in Scotus or Ockham or d'Ailly.

And what's distinctive about Franciscan theology, I suppose, is its enormous sweep. It comprises popular pieties, liturgical movements, prayer forms, hagiographies, and stratospheric levels of theological abstraction—all and each somehow bearing the style-signature of Francis. None of it's more or less Franciscan; it's just differently Franciscan. We see that enormous sweep too, I think, in the broad work the Franciscan Institute supports. And that's deeply exciting.

### What was it like studying Franciscan theology at Boston College?

At first blush, Boston College seems a curious place to work on Franciscan theology. It lacks the usual pillars of a Franciscan studium: a Bonaventure or Scotus scholar, say, or a historian of the order. But there's another sense in which Boston College is an ideal place to do Franciscan work. Boyd Taylor Coolman and Franklin Harkins are expert on the twelfth-century Victorine tradition so fundamental for Alexander of Hales and Bonaventure. And then the magnificent Stephen F. Brown knows fourteenth-century Franciscan thought better than anyone. (He's edited more of that material than most of us even read.) So to work between these centuries at Boston College as I do is constantly to feel heat and pressure from both sides. Ideal-typically such heat and pressure yields precious gemstones, which the dissertations of my colleagues undoubtedly are. And that's largely because the kind of blinkered approach to individual scholastics sometimes common among Thomists or Bonaventureans simply cannot suffer the heat of constant interrogation from scholars of twelfth- and fourteenth-century theology.



Justin, Megan, and Saoirse Coyle

Ignoring historical antecedents and descendants is a structural impossibility at Boston College. All of which limns the dialogical character of high scholasticism in general—and of Franciscan theology in particular—in bright shades.

### Who are the scholars who have motivated you?

Among the living, on matters scholastic, and for different reasons: Bruce Marshall, Marcia Colish, Trent Pomplun, Justus Hunter, Mark Jordan, Willie Jennings, Philipp W. Rosemann, Boyd Taylor Coolman, and Stephen F. Brown. Among the dead, especially on the question of historical theology's relation to theology proper: Hans Urs von Balthasar, Étienne Gilson, and the Catholic Tübingen school.

### What can you tell us about your family and their role in your academic career?

For reasons now obscure to me, God has entrusted me with care of a lovely wife, Megan, and three children: Finnegan (6), Townes (4), and Saoirse (we expect her any day now). Each of their very many intrusions are of course dearer to me than the academic work they interrupt. Parenting small children isn't easily harmonized with the claims the academe makes on one's time—teaching and thinking and writing, &c. (My wife's career makes similar demands.) But we don't know any other way, I suppose. One of my favorite writers, George MacDonald, often writes of God's childlikeness. Singular in purpose, resolute in love, disruptive of ambition—these, MacDonald says, name the divine qualities we learn from children. If Alexander of Hales is right that theology's *sapientia magis quam scientia*—more a lived wisdom than a science—then my children have taught me very much about God. Rather more than I've taught them, I expect.

### What special research interests do you have?

My dissertation assays the theological aesthetics of the massive *Summa halensis* attributed to (but probably not penned entirely by) Alexander of Hales. The position that *Summa* takes on beauty is, so far as I'm aware, unique to it. To put it crudely: the *Summa* indexes divine beauty not to the divine essence, but rather to the "sacred order" of the trinitarian persons. So beauty's fundamentally trinitarian in the *Summa halensis*. This pattern of thought lingers among later Franciscans too—its traces crop up in Bonaventure and Scotus, for instance. My next task, then, is to discover what ends up happening to Alexander's idea.

I'm also interested in Franciscan apocalyptic and its relation to Joachim of Fiore. So I'm reading troublemakers like Peter John Olivi and attempting to find precedent in earlier Franciscans like Bonaventure and Matthew of Aquasparta. But I'm interested in the afterlife of Franciscan apocalyptic too. I'm presently translating a work by the nineteenth-century German Idealist F.W.J. Schelling, for instance. It's striking how he regularly divides salvation history into three epochs



# Franciscan Spirituality and Environmental Justice

By Patrick Carolan

A little over 50 years ago a man gave a lecture at the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The man was named Lynn White and his lecture was titled “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis.”<sup>1</sup> White was neither a theologian nor a scientist. He was a historian and a professor of Medieval History. He specialized in the history of medieval technology. Shortly after his lecture, White’s article appeared in *Science* magazine. His talk was written a few years after Rachel Carson’s book *Silent Spring* was published. While Carson’s book became a rallying cry for the fledgling social movement on protecting the environment, White’s lecture and follow-up article ignited a firestorm of controversy. White argued that because our Christian theology is based on the idea of dominion over creation it is essentially exploitative of the natural world. He wrote that “what people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny – that is, by religion.” White theorized that Christianity established the dualism of humans and nature, and by doing so also insisted that God permitted humans to exploit nature for their needs. Theologians have often suggested that the Bible asserts man’s dominion over nature and establishes a trend of anthropocentrism.

In his 1967 lecture, White argued that the environmental crisis was not just a result of technological advances. It is not as simple as having more cars or more factories that leads to increasingly dangerous amounts of carbon released into the atmosphere. Rather, our environmental crisis is first and foremost the product of our Western worldview. Our ecological problem is fundamentally a theological or ideological problem. It is a question of how we see ourselves in relation to all of God’s beautiful and wondrous creation. We view creation through the perspective of how creation can serve us. How can creation make my life simpler, easier, better? Creation is a product of our ideas, we are not a product of creation. These ideas center on what humans are, what the Earth and creation is, and what role each plays. White described it as: “what people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them.” Until we “think about fundamentals,” “clarify our thinking,” “rethink our axioms,” White said, we will not adequately address our environmental crisis.

This overemphasis on anthropocentrism allows us to exploit nature without the least concern for creation. The thought becomes ‘We, people are all that is important in God’s eyes.’ White argued that within Christian theology, “nature has no reason for existence save to serve humans.” Thus, for White, Christian arrogance towards nature “bears a huge burden of guilt” for the contemporary environmental crisis. White challenged us to rethink both environmentalism and Christianity. He suggested that Christianity makes a distinction between man and the rest of creation. Humans were created in the image of God while the rest of creation has no “soul” or “reason” and is thus inferior. According to White these beliefs have led to an indifference by Christians towards nature. He also challenged the concept that applying more science and technology to the problem is enough to solve the environmental crisis. White concluded that humanity’s fundamental ideas about nature must change. We must abandon our anthropocentrism, our idea that the Earth was created and should be viewed solely from the human perspective. A belief that allows us to interpret the world in terms of human values and experiences and grants us the right to use Earth for our slightest whim. White then goes on to recommend that we adopt St. Francis of Assisi as a model. He calls St. Francis of Assisi “the greatest radical in Christian history since Christ.” He proposed that St. Francis be the “patron saint for ecologists.” Something that Pope John Paul II officially did in 1979.

Many years before White gave his lecture, John Muir contested the Christian concept of human dominion over natural resources.<sup>2</sup> While being known as an environmentalist and the founder of the Sierra club, Muir was a very religious and spiritual person. He was raised in a very Christian household that was very strict in faith and practice. Initially his family was Presbyterian, but Muir’s father did not find the Presbyterians strict enough so the family converted to Disciples of Christ. Muir grew up reading and memorizing the Bible. While most Christian thought in Muir’s time was centered on anthropocentrism and the belief that Genesis taught that God gave man dominion over all creatures, Muir developed a different theology. He saw the spirit in everything natural. Muir wrote: “most people are on the world, not in it — have no conscious sympathy or relationship to anything about them — undiffused, separate, and rigidly alone like marbles of pol-

<sup>1</sup> Lynn White, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis.” *Science*, New Series 155: 3767 (March 10, 1976), 1203–1207.

<sup>2</sup> John Muir and Linnie M. Wolfe. *John of the Mountains*, The Unpublished Journals of John Muir. Repr. Services Corp., 1991.



ished stone, touching but separate." He believed that in order to address the environmental crisis we first have to examine our own attitudes toward nature. Muir believed that we had to experience the "presence of the divine in nature".

In his 1985 book *The Travail of Nature*, H. Paul Santmire, an eco-theologian in the Evangelical Lutheran tradition suggested that the current spiritual philosophy expresses a religious view that is unconcerned with the natural world.<sup>3</sup> Santmire describes this as the belief that God is a being separate from the world. This philosophy expresses a bias towards those considered rational, spiritual, or moral beings. According to Santmire, this bias excludes nonhuman life and the material world from its "purview of concern." Santmire quotes a well-known phrase from Augustine's *Soliloquies* as an expression of this belief: "I desire to have knowledge of God and the soul. Of nothing else? No, of nothing else whatsoever." Santmire proposed an approach to ecology that moves us away from the place of domination. A place where we act as though animals and plants exist to serve us.

While the dominant social paradigm reflects the theory of human domination over nature, St. Francis proposed a different paradigm, a paradigm that seeks total ecological integrity. St. Francis did not separate the spiritual world from the material world. He viewed the Earth and all nature as God's creation, a place of continual incarnation. He considered all of creation to be his brothers and sisters. His spirituality is so beautifully expressed in the poem "Canticle of Creatures," which he wrote towards the end of his life. St. Francis taught

that we had to live in relations of solidarity with all creation. Br. Keith Warner OFM, Director of Education and Action Research at Santa Clara University, describes it this way: "Francis is the patron of those who cultivate ecological consciousness, but that means a lot more than being the patron of environmental educators. His example really points to a mystical or a spiritual vision for all of the creative world as brother and sister, as he describes in his *Canticle of the Creatures*."<sup>4</sup> When St. Francis would go out and preach to the birds and trees it was not some crazy Dr. Dolittle talk to the animals idea. The idea of caring for all creation was not some paternalistic concept of having dominion over creation. God told St. Francis to preach the Gospel to all his brothers and sisters and St. Francis believed all creatures were his brothers and sisters. In his poetry when St. Francis talked about brother sun and sister moon it was not just some flowery language but a belief in the connectedness of all creation, a wholeness of being.

Francis looked at life through the lens of all creation. He had a relational connection from which blossomed a perspective of deep empathy. He looked for ways to defend the environment according to the needs of each living being. Rather than viewing creation from 'anthropocentrism,' which literally means human-centered, Francis saw creation as 'biocentrism' which means life-centered. It is from this vision that Pope Francis talked about integral ecology in his encyclical *Laudato Si*. We are not separate from the environment in which we live; rather we are connected and part of the natural environment are all part of and one with creation. Pope

<sup>3</sup> Paul H. Santmire. *The Travail of Nature: the Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> Keith Warner, "Discern the Call." *Discern the Call*, 1 Jan. 1970, [sbvocations.blogspot.com/](http://sbvocations.blogspot.com/).

Francis coined the term care for our common home. With both St. Francis and Pope Francis, we see a concern not just for humans but for all creatures and for the place where they live as well. Their theologies offer an invitation to care for all of the habitat, thereby protecting the integrity of the ecosystem.

In her book *A Franciscan View of Creation*, Dr. Ilia Delio OSF talks about the link between creation and incarnation.<sup>5</sup> She says: "Francis' respect for creation was not a duty or obligation but arose out of an inner love by which creation and the source of creation were intimately united..." Francis saw himself as part of creation, as being in relationship with creation, and not having dominion over creation or even stewardship of creation.

Shortly after St. Francis died, two theologians considered to be among the greatest thinkers and leading Christian theologians entered the scene, St. Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican, and St. Bonaventure, a Franciscan. While they were contemporaries and even attend-



ed the University of Paris together, their theologies, especially around creation, were at opposite ends of the spectrum. St. Thomas Aquinas taught that non-rational creatures do not have moral value. He believed that human destiny involves an escape from the world of material change. Aquinas believed that the world was created by God as an ordered and unique whole displaying its beauty as well as the beauty of the Creator, and which was bequeathed to man that he may have dominion over it. While Aquinas wrote that it is morally wrong to be cruel to animals, his rationale was that such cruelty would make it easier for a person to develop a moral character in which they would be more inclined to express cruelty to human beings. According to Aquinas, created things are made by God for the sole purpose of leading us to God.

St. Bonaventure developed a theology of creation. For Bonaventure, creation is relationship. He was never much interested in the 'how' of creation. His theology was not a type of anthropocentrism where God created to serve humans. Bonaventure understood and believed that there was and is, as Delio described: "A deep intimate relationship between creation and the triune God." Bonaventure understood the

purpose and meaning of 'all of creation is relationship:' a relationship between God and humans, a relationship between God and all creation and a relationship between humans and all creation. The Noahic covenant as described in the book of Genesis is not between God and Man but between God all humanity and all living creatures. St. Bonaventure described the created universe as the fountain fullness of God's expressed being. As God is expressed in creation, creation in turn expresses the creator. The 11th century mystic Hildegard of Bingen said, "the Spirit of the Lord fills the earth. This means that no creature whether visible or invisible lacks a spiritual life." If all creatures have a spirituality and reflect God, perhaps our paradigm should be

as St. Francis taught- one of humanity in service to creation not creation in service to humanity.

This question of integral ecology and environmental justice goes much deeper than anthropocentrism vs biocentrism. Aquinas and

Bonaventure had an ongoing debate around the idea that if man had not committed original sin, would Jesus have come? Part of the argument centered on the question: 'was Mary conceived without sin?' Aquinas argued, if Mary were conceived without sin, then she would not need a redeemer. He went on to argue that Jesus came as a healer and a redeemer. Without original sin, there would be no need for a healer. Bonaventure argued that Jesus' arrival can't be limited to his role in saving creation from sin because God's decision to become incarnate precedes creation itself. Another Franciscan theologian Blessed John Don Scotus said "The Incarnation of the Son of God is the *very reason for the whole Creation*. To think that God would have given up such a task had Adam not sinned would be quite unreasonable! I say, therefore, that the fall was not the cause of Christ's predestination and that if no one had fallen, neither the angel nor man in this hypothesis Christ would still have been predestined in the same way."<sup>6</sup>

When you think about these two perspectives they present completely different visions of Christianity. In the Aquinas view, saving the soul is what is critical and important. It is all that matters. We are here to live, die, and maybe if we follow

<sup>5</sup> Ilia Delio, *A Franciscan View of Creation: Learning to Live in a Sacramental World*, (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Press, 2003, 14.

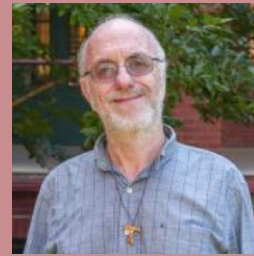
<sup>6</sup> Benedict XVI, "Holy Men and Women from the Middle Ages and Beyond." *Holy Men and Women from the Middle Ages and Beyond*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 88.

of God's love into the universe. Creation reveals to us God's love for us and God's beauty (which is why Franciscans call creation the mirror of God and that God has two books of creation—Sacred Scripture and creation). And the faith in a good God has implications for the Incarnation and salvation history. The Word of God became incarnate not because the world is full of sin, but in order to transform the world into a communion of love centered in Christ.

In *Laudato Si* Pope Francis tells us “many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change.”<sup>12</sup> St. Bonaventure tells us that how we choose and what we choose makes a difference – first in what we become by our choices and second what the world becomes by our choices.<sup>13</sup> Almost 50 years after Lynn White, Pope Francis calls us to move forward in a bold cultural revolution. He calls for us to rise up not in a revolution of guns but a revolution of Spirit. To stop living in a world where we are all separate and come

together in a world of interbeing, a world where we are part of God's creation not separate from creation.

Peace and All Good



**Patrick Carolan** has been executive director of the Franciscan Action Network since 2010. He is also a co-founder of the Global Catholic Climate Movement, an organization working on global climate justice issues as well as Faithful Democracy, a faith coalition focused on the issue of Money in Politics, working to educate on the corruptive influence of big money on our democracy. He is a recipient of the 2015 White House Champion for Change Award for his work in the Climate Change arena, a Senior Fellow at the Center for Earth Ethics and is personally dedicated to social justice to bring about individual and societal transformation.

<sup>12</sup> Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* of the Pope Francis, On Care for Our Common Home. Ante-Matiere, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Ilia Delio, "Simply Bonaventure: an Introduction to His Life, Thought, and Writings." *Simply Bonaventure: an Introduction to His Life, Thought, and Writings*, (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2013), 125–125.

## Alexander of Hales

On the Significations  
and Exposition of the Holy Scriptures



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Alexander of Hales, called “the irrefutable doctor and prince of theologians” by Pope Alexander IV, taught theology at Paris from ca. 1220-21 until his death in 1245. Upon his conversion to the Order of Friars Minor in 1236, he became the first Franciscan to hold a theology chair at the University of Paris, teaching influential friars such as Odo Rigaldus, William of Middleton, John of Parma, and probably Bonaventure, who called him “my master and father.”

*On the Significations* is known to survive in only two manuscripts, and was only authenticated and edited in 2009, by Aleksander Horowski. Yet its influence in the medieval period may have been broader than its survival suggests. Denis the Carthusian, writing about 1434, quotes extensively from it. Now that it has been re-discovered by specialists, Aaron Gies's introduction and extensive notes aim to make the text accessible to any reader interested in medieval ways of reading and interpreting Scripture.

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