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The Cord - A Spiritual Review

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Happiness and the Enjoyment of God

By David B. Couturier, OFM. Cap.

Those who have followed my writing over the years are familiar with the fact that my topics are usually serious and sober: human trafficking and child sexual abuse,[1] economic injustice,[2] racism,[3] sexual harassment,[4] global indifference,[5] theologies of extraction,[6] polarization, [7]and the plight of migrant children.[8] I am usually thinking and writing at the intersection of theology, psychology and social justice, where poverty and human tragedies often abide. Therefore, it may come as a surprise that I am writing this time about happiness and the enjoyment of God. It may seem to some that happiness is not serious enough to be of theological concern. We live in too dangerous a time in human history to get side-tricked by "happy thoughts." Some might be inclined to say that we need more of the "challenge of God" than the "enjoyment of God." Happiness just does not seem to be a serious enough theological topic. I would remind us, however, that both Aquinas[9] and Augustine[10] have written extensively about the topic. Yale University's most popular course in its 317-year history, "Psychology and the Good Life," is all about happiness and attracted more than 1200 students in the spring semester of 2018.[11]

Our Hesitancy about Happiness

Why have Christians been so hesitant about claiming happiness as a goal of the spiritual life? John's Gospel speaks about eternal life – a way of talking about happiness –that the followers of Jesus enjoy as they live and dwell with Him even now.[12] Didn't Jesus once say, "I came that you might have life and have it to the full?" (John 10:10) Even if we cannot attain a perfect or full happiness in this life, the version of the Christian life we are meant to live and to transmit to others should not be reduced to that of a "vale of tears" in the here and now to be supplanted only by joy in the afterlife in a long-delayed eschatological happiness. Whether speaking of temporal happiness now or eschatological happiness later, it's clear. We need a better theology of happiness.

According to theologian, Ellen T. Charry, happiness deserves a more central place in the formation of Christians today. Charry describes the task of theology refreshingly as "to help us know, love, and enjoy God."[13] That is, the mature Christian is meant not to endure but to enjoy God. This is in stark contrast to the definition of human purpose proposed to generations of Catholics in their Baltimore Catechisms: that God made us "to know, love and *serve* Him in this life and be happy with Him *in the next*." (Question 6) Service in this life; happiness only in the next life.

How did we arrive at such a division of happiness and goodness? Charry believes that it is modernity that drove the deep wedge that now exists in the modern practice of Christianity, whereby happiness has been reduced to pleasure and pleasure has been ripped from its moral and spiritual moorings, leaving Christians with a false choice between goodness and happiness. She writes, "Christians found themselves having to opt for either goodness or pleasure, as it seemed the two no longer dwelt in the same abode."[14]

Charry proposes a new attitude and offers some alternative theological presuppositions. First, "God created for his own pleasure and enjoyment."[15] Enjoyment is the first impulse of God *ad extra*. God did not need creation; creation is not the result of some deficit in God. Creation exists as an expression of God's abundant and selfless love. It is the result of the Trinitarian dynamic of mutuality that expresses itself in divine generosity and generativity, both within and outside the Trinitarian inner life. Second, God's hope

[1] David B. Couturier, *The Voice of Victims. The Voice of the Crucified* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2019).

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

[3] "Quei Sogni Stroncati," *Francesco il Volto Secolare* (November/December 2017): 52-56.

[4] "#MeToo and Franciscan Values," *Franciscan Connections* 68, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 30-40.

[5] "The Globalization of Indifference," *Franciscan Connections* 65:1 (March 2014), 14-19.

[6] "From an Economy of Extraction to an Economy of Inclusion: Franciscan Values in the Workplace," *Franciscan Connections* 67, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 27-36.

[7] "At Odds with Ourselves: Polarization and the Learning Cultures of Priesthood," in *A Bishop and His Priests Together: Resources for Building More Intentional Presbyterates*, ed. Rev. J. Ronald Knott (Louisville: Sophronismos Press, 2011), 75-90.

[8] "Migration, Childhood and Trump's Metaphors of Disenchantment: A Franciscan Critical Discourse," *Franciscan Connections* 68, no. 2 (Summer, 2018): 32-40.

[12] Ellen T. Charry, "God and the art of happiness," *Theology Today* 68, no. 3 (2011): 238-252.

[13] Ellen T. Charry, "On Happiness," *Anglican Theological Review* 86, no. 1, 19-33.

[14] Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness,* 239.

[15] Charry, ibid., 240.

for creation is that it flourish "so that (God) may rejoice in the beauty and strength of his creative genius."[16] Creation is patterned on the Word, so that the Father might see, love and enjoy in us what the Father sees, loves and enjoys in the Son (*Preface, Sundays in Ordinary Time, VII)*.

We stand in a world that God wants to flourish. Enjoyment is God's intention for humanity in union with the great purposes of God. Creation is not a passive backdrop for human domination and any of its concentrated forms of cruelty.

The reality is that God created the world for God's own enjoyment (Rev. 4:11) and God enjoys the world when it flourishes through its energetic patterns of generous giving and receiving. God, therefore, intends that we be happy and flourish, whatever the circumstances we face. "Happiness is a life nourished by the love and goodness of God that contributes to the flourishing of creation. Even in the face of evil, rejection and suffering, a person who has learned to love well will experience pleasure and satisfaction from being herself – a person built from the loving use of God-given creativity, power and goodness."[17]

That said, what we have experienced over many years is a "theological gap between goodness and happiness," that drives us to a dystopian risk -- to be good but miserable.[18] This gap leads us to forget who God really is (a God of generous and abundant love for all) and to lose touch with who we have been called to be: creatures destined for happiness from the One who created us in love and for delight and beauty.[19]

Salvation as Living and Being Well

Ellen T. Charry is one of many womanist theologians today who are concentrating their efforts on the area of positive theology and its engagement with the topic of

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ellen T. Charry, "Happy Pursuits: A Christian Vision of the Good Life," *Christian Century* (July 24, 2007): 31-33.

[18] E.T. Charry, *God and the art of happiness* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Ml., 2010,xii).

[19] Mary Beth Ingham, *Rejoicing in the Works of the Lord: Beauty in the Franciscan Tradition* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2010); On the relationship between public policy and a theology of beauty, cf. David B. Couturier, "DACA and the Deportation of Dreamers: A Franciscan Ethical Perspective," accessed at: https://ssj-tosf-org.pravadapc.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/20265DACAaFranciscan-EthicalPerspective.pdf

happiness, well-being and human flourishing.[20] For her, "to discount the importance of human flourishing is to misunderstand theology and its purpose," since she understands theology in two ways: (1) theology is about life in this world and (2) it is about the enjoyment of this life in this world.[21]

While happiness is the goal and the intent of Christian living, it is not yet fully or completely achieved. The fact is that the aim of the Christian story is the salvation of humankind, as Charry describes:

> No one doubts that Christianity offers salvation. The longing to be well/whole/elected/repaired/liberated/transformed/released/redeemed/shriven/for-given/restored/justified/sanctified/glorified/blessed is based on the observation that all is not well – with us, that is. We want it to be, but cannot make it so, perhaps cannot even imagine what being 'well' would look like.[22]

In her theological description, salvation has to do with imagining the psychological and moral wholeness and well-being of individuals and communities.[23] Salvation means living and being well. Moreover, salvation means imagining and living into the well-being Christ has first imagined for us.

Nadia Marais in a recent analysis of Charry's doctrine of salvation makes two points:

> Firstly, salvation is described as healing, which she calls 'a psychological vision of salvation'. Here salvation is God's mercy in the face of our sinfulness, which soothes, comforts, calms, relieves the psychological anxieties and hurt surrounding failure and the fear of divine punishment. Another version of this vision of salvation is hope in the (bodily) resurrection, which becomes the antidote to the fear of death. This is another version of Charry's psychological vision of salvation, in that it alleviates the pain of fearful unrest with hope. Within the psychological vision of salvation, salvation is God's mercy and the bodily resurrection, in response to the fear of divine wrath and the fear of death.
>
> Secondly, salvation is described as transformation, as the restoration of personal integrity and strength. In this view, salvation is not the opposite of fear or anxiety, but of illness and disorientation. This disorientation, writes Charry, is the lack of skills and resources 'needed for our transformation, and the clarity of mind even to discern what ought to be done.' This second vision makes use of an 'illness-to-health model of salvation' in which God makes a 'therapeutic alliance' with human beings in order for human beings to 'get better *[and]* genuinely stronger by having the power of God working in us and for us'. Upon this understanding, the dynamic of salvation is transformation by, through and into love: 'We become what we love'. Within the transformational vision of salvation, salvation is healing 'ensouled bodies', the strengthening or growth into the beauty and wisdom of God, and the pleasure or joy of being transformed through, by and into love. Yet:
>
> As with all articulations of Christian tradition, particular visions of salvation wax, wane, and are transformed as new circumstances call forth different perspectives, giving rise to new insights about how Christian hope may best be conveyed to one another in a particular time and place. How theology articulates salvation today will depend in part upon how one reads the culture and what restatements of the vision actually succeed in giving hope. For the vision of salvation offered must strike home. It must give us what we need. It must cure our souls.[24]

It should be clear that for Charry happiness and human flourishing are not mere emotional responses. Happiness derives from the creative logic of love and is indeed "the ability to love well." The love of God forms the healthy personality-loving-well into an "agile self" that is mature and responsive and a "functionally loving character."[25]

It is this ascetic and diligent practice of knowing, loving and enjoying God that makes an individual happy and makes her more mature. Maturity is thus an imitative art, as the mature self emulates the creative, generous and responsive God. This mutual interaction deepens the bonds of love and trust between God and us. We attend to God and God attends to us and this interaction heightens our experience of happiness, even as we go through life's difficulties and suffering:

> As it happens with human lovers, it happens between God and us. By staying together over a long period, attending to their lover's manners, needs,

[20] Others include Serene Jones, Jennifer Herndt, Nadia Marais.

[21] Charry, "On Happiness," 19.

[22] Charry, "While visions of salvation dance in our heads," *Theology Today* 61 (2004): 291.

[23] Charry, "Academic Theology in Pastoral Perspective," *Theology Today* 50, no. 1 (1993): 90-104.

[24] Nadia Marais, "Happy? A critical analysis of salvation in Ellen Charry that portrays human flourishing as healing, beauty and pleasure," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36, no. 1 (2015): accessed at www.scielo.za.php?=sci_arttext&pid=S2074-77052015000100005.

[25] Charry, "Happy Pursuits: A Christian Vision of the Good Life," *The Christian Century* (July 24, 2007): 31-33.

and gifts, and being vulnerable to the other's very presence, human lovers become one flesh.[26]

Theology of the Flourishing Life

In their latest book, *For the Life of the World: Theology that makes a Difference,* theologians Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun define the purpose of theology as "to discern, articulate and commend visions of flourishing life in the light of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ."[27] They mourn the fact that theology has preoccupied itself with dissecting doctrines for their intellectual purity and using its tools as "crowbar, jackhammer, and demolition ball" to critique one another in the academy. It is better, they suggest, that the work of theology engage its readers with the raw questions of purpose, "what is worth wanting," "what kind of life do I want," and "what kind of life is worth wanting?"

These questions bring theologians back to the central concept in Jesus' preaching, "the kingdom of God" understood as a path of *righteousness, justice and covenant-faithfulness.* Their analysis of the Lord's preaching in this way leads to a description of the flourishing life:

> In this fullness, in the perfection of its active dimension, flourishing human life is a universal exercise of love generously given and gratefully received, a participation in the consummated divine reign spoken of in Romans 5:17, which operates in life-giving love.[28]

There are three elements to happiness and the flourishing life described by Volf and Croasmun:

1. A Life Led Well
2. A Life Going Well
3. A Life Feeling Well

A Life Led Well

For Volf and Croasmun, a "life led well" is a fundamental conversion and commitment to the life that is worth living. It is a choice to live beyond the dominating and depriving modalities of extraction and exclusion that now frame post-modern politics. It is a life committed to the "non-competitive reign of love." No longer in fear of death or in dread of the daily traumas of mortality, we lead lives in light of the Resurrection. We can live beyond the betrayal of others and the disappointments they cause us because we learn how much sin shrivels up our world and how we use our petty jealousies and mistrust of others as snuggling security/magic blankets to ward off any future attacks against our bruised and fragile egos. In the Kingdom of Jesus' Mercy, we can gratefully offer forgiveness

[26] Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness,* 169.

[27] Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun, *For the Life of the World: Theology that Makes a Difference* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2019), 57.

[28] Volf and Croasmun, 167.

and by this find ourselves returning to the land of the living, the land of connections, inter-dependency and collaboration (which we had foresworn because of our misery and the fear of breaking our bruised ego once again).

Amazingly, a life led well in the non-competitive reign of love ("the community of the beloved") often begins in nature. Standing in the beauty and energy of creation and hearing the rhythms of the earth's daily canticle of the creatures, we feel gratitude for the world, as it is, an interconnected web of mutual engagements.

A Life Going Well

Paraphrasing theologian, Serene Jones, one might suggest that flourishing is a lived disposition that accepts grace's emancipatory vision of living for both women and men.[29] Happiness is not an emotional attitude that floats above the daily assaults of injustice that assail the poor and marginalized, the dismissed and excluded from our world. Flourishing (happiness) is not so much an emotional state, as it is a graced state of being in which one begins to understand, inhabit and incorporate one's identity as Christ reveals God's gracious love to us in His life, death, and resurrection. Happiness is learning and experiencing God's intentions in and for the world: God wills the flourishing of all people and invites, entices and inspires people's awareness of the alternative reality presented to humankind in the redemption of the Christ. In a "salvation-as-flourishing" we imagine ourselves differently and well and we act our way into that narrative of liberation.

Salvation-as-flourishing sets out God's intention that we live a more abundant and more beloved life. That intention comes in images beyond the cultural scripts of agency and identity we have been living.

Marais plays out the implications:

> Grace enables women to re-imagine their lives in accordance with the alternative reality presented in Christ. When women come to understand their identity as premised in Christ, new patterns of thought are erected in their lives.[30]

To take this further, a life going well is a liberated life. It is a life set free from the culturally- normative and socially-expected patterns of domination and deprivation that

[29] Cf. Nadia Marais, "Happiness and Human Flourishing: A Continuing Conversation," accessed: http;//scholar.sun.ac.za.(2015).

[30] Marais, "Happiness and Human Flourishing."

individuals have been forced to live. Let us be clear. There can be no full and completed happiness in situations of oppression. As long as racism, extreme poverty, prejudice and bias, violence and every other sin survive, we cannot and dare not speak of a complete happiness now. Nonetheless, we can experience a "blessed assurance" thereof, that is both personal consolation and social challenge.[31] Grace provides the social space and the conditions of possibility whereby we can begin to see and live the alternative reality of God's reign where the rich are cast down and the poor are raised up. We experience a Gospel joy when we see Satan fall in these occasional and sporadic lightning strikes of social justice through time (Luke 10:8). These erratic lightning strikes are indeed signs of grace. Just as in the Old Testament where the rainbow became God's sign of a gracious promise, so too is the "sign of the lightning strike" in the New Testament. Every time we hear the thunder and see the lightning strike, it is our sign that someone has done a gesture of social justice. It can fill our hearts with joy, because our graced liberation is in process. At root, our happiness in the Christian life requires a liberating freedom (intellectual, social, and moral).

One of the most insightful theologians of this liberative process is James Alison.

One of the most brilliant, original and prophetic theological voices in the Church today, Alison studied at Oxford, got his doctorate in theology from the Jesuit Theological Faculty at Belo Horizonte Brazil, and has taught in Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico and the United States. His interests lie in a theological study of how violence operates and how salvation works in a world of increasing danger and domination. He studies the dynamics of human desire and demonstrates how inevitably and invariably we create rivalries, tribal politics and polarizations that deepen and dangerously perpetuate our feelings of vulnerability and isolation, but that also lead to tragic and often fatal forms of exclusion and scapegoating of innocent men, women and children.

Using Rene Girard's brilliant analysis of human desire, Alison describes what God was doing through the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As we normally tell this atonement version of salvation, it follows this usual script:

- God created the world and saw that it was good.
- Humanity fell because of the actions of our ancestors, Adam and Eve, in a way that was a grievous and disastrous offense against God's infinite goodness and justice.
- God had to account and deal with the terrible offense against God's infinite justice, which humanity could not redress because we are human and the offense was against the divine.
- And so, God decided to send His only Son into the world to re-balance the score. As both God and man, Jesus could represent humankind in its guilt and, at the same time, also pay to the Father the price that was equal to the infinity of God. Jesus' death on the Cross was then a satisfactory atonement for the offense humanity perpetrated against the honor of God. As Alison notes, "Thus the whole sorry saga could be brought to a convenient close. Those humans who agreed to cover over their sins by holding on to, or being covered by, the precious blood of the Savior whom the Father has sacrificed to himself would be saved from their sins and given to the Holy Spirit by which they would be able to behave according to the original order of creation."[32]

Rather than God waiting for his infinite justice and goodness and his justifiable wrath to be appeased and satisfied by humanity, a potential that history and logic recognize as impossible for humankind to accomplish, atonement theory holds that God took the initiative and sent His Son to be crucified for our offenses. This pays the price, appeases the offense, and calms the heat of God's justifiable anger, unilaterally settling the score against humanity by the bloody death of His own Son.

As the story of atonement unfurls, we notice most of all the blood lust, anger, dishonor and shame in the ordinary telling of the narrative of our salvation. There is divine revenge, retaliation and score keeping in the background of our salvation. It is this aspect of atonement that Alison addresses.

Alison offers another way of understanding justification and atonement. He takes us down a different path to help us understand the dynamics of our redemption. Alison takes us to the beginning of this whole sad saga, back to the moment when Satan, "the father of lies," cons Adam and Eve with his cunning mendacity. It is the lie that suggests to Adam and Eve that God is stingy and threatened by humanity's curiosity, infusing the couple with the belief that there is a fundamental rivalry between humanity and God. God, the devil suggests, did not want Adam and Eve to know what God knew or to have what God had. God restricted the couple's access to what was within their hope and reach and limited them in what would be the fulfillment of their rightful desire – to be like God. Satan convinced Adam and Eve that they could force God's hand, by eating the forbidden fruit, and make God come clean about

[31] Victor Anderson, "Blessed Assurance: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Consolation of the Soul," in *Revives my Soul Again: The Spirituality of Martin Luther King Jr.,* eds. Lewis V. Baldwin and Victor Anderson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018), 19-38.

[32] James Alison, *Undergoing God: Dispatches from the Scene of a Break-In* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998), 51-52.

God's dominating and depriving ways.

The primordial lie of the evil One is that there is a fundamental rivalry between God and humanity, not a gracious love. The tragedy of the fall and its original sin is that humanity actually gets what it wants: rivalry enters into time and becomes the basis of culture thereafter. The stories of Cain and Abel and the Tower of Babel demonstrate the rivalry that Adam and Eve create, not God.

According to Alison and his reading of the Scriptures (and the Fathers of the Church), Christ comes to reveal and expose the lie for what it is. God has never been our rival. God has never been over-against us. God is and always has been "for us." Jesus demonstrates the mendacity of the principle of an original rivalry by allowing himself to become its innocent victim, by allowing himself to succumb to the tyrannical nature of domination and deprivation that rules the powers of this world. Jesus thus falls victim to the mad and primitive frenzy by which society makes and then crushes its enemies, to expose the fundamental fraud of how we behave when we impose rivalry where there is none. What we know from the hindsight of the Resurrection is that we have always been loved enough; we have always been in the abundant and fecund generosity of a good and gracious God. Nevertheless, the lie of rivalry resurfaces over and over again.

The Demoniacs and the Lie

The demoniacs serve up the question to Jesus: "have you come to destroy us?" (Matt. 8:29; Mark 1:24) This is the lie: that God is a threat, not an abundant grace. This is the lie that works beneath the surface of the Passion and Death of the Lord that charges Jesus with treason and blasphemy. It is the lie that works in every imperial system. In the Gospels, Pilate, Herod and Caiaphas come to an agreement that Jesus is a threat to the nation. What is really revealed, however, is how we use Jesus to serve and substitute as the threat that *we* are and that He is not. Jesus allows himself to become our substitution and our victim, so that we can see and understand how rivalry works through a lie.

What we learn is how we create our enemies repeatedly from the depths of our own primitive anxieties that we are not good enough or worthy enough to be loved. Rivalry is at the root of much of social and organizational life.[33] It is the fear that we share with Adam and Eve that we do not have enough and that we are substantially not good enough for God, life, and creation. Something must have been withheld from us and someone else must be to blame. The mother who did not love enough, the father who did not protect enough, the friend who didn't care enough, the children who were not loyal enough, the spouse who was not there enough, and on and on. We could have been more; we would have been more, if it were not for the rivalries set against us, even by God.

That is the cunning theological and psychological lie. The truth is, however, that in thousands of ways (passive and aggressive) we are bullies who find and create victims, innocent victims, who simply ratify what propels us -- our inner anxieties and fears. We create enemies from the depths of our primitive fears and tell ourselves that if only we could outpace them, conquer and surpass, overpower and outsmart them, then and only then would we have what we so justly deserve. We want to be first in the playground and in the boardroom. We want to be loved but, as the poet WH Auden once said, we want more, to be "loved *alone*." [34]

Using a Girardian analysis, Alison goes further. We want what we think we deserve and have a right to. However, there are others in our way, getting what could be ours and should be ours. We want "them" out of the way, all our rivals, whenever and however we invent them – mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, colleagues and strangers, lovers and friends, children and co-workers, other people and other nations. We want what they want. We create and then "destroy" the victims of our youth and beyond. This is the complicated and destructive dynamic of desire that Alison learns from René Girard. We create victims to calm the fears we have created from our own emptiness.

The death of Jesus demonstrates how this evil dynamic works and shows how futile our social and political dynamics are, under the sway of principles of domination and deprivation. For Jesus is the Innocent Victim, the Passover Lamb, that we sacrificed to calm the religious rivalries we had created. Now, if Jesus had simply died, then Caiaphas' political calculation that "it is better that one man die than the whole nation," would have worked, at least temporarily. Rome would have been satisfied that treason had been revealed and rebellion had been squashed. Rome would have held onto its power through its endless cycles of crucifixions to meet every uprising and curb every rebellion with a bloody line-up of corpses at the gates of Jerusalem. Rome's doctrine is that of every tyrannical empire or narcissistic ego – blood is functional as a social and cultural analgesic.

Alison explains the significance of Jesus' return not simply as "the Risen Lord," but, more significantly, as "the Crucified and Risen Lord." He reminds us that Jesus does not simply die. Jesus does not just die a bloody death and He is not simply sacrificed so that the mob can be released of its

[33] Katarzyna Skrzypek, Beata Maciewjewska-Sobczak and Zuzanna Stadnicka-Dmitriew, *Siblings: Envy, Rivalry, Coexistence and Concern* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Manfred F.R. Kets de Vries, *Struggling with the Demon: Perspectives on Individual and Organizational Irrationality* (Madison, CT: Psychosocial Press, 2001).

[34] The poet WH Auden expresses this sentiment in his poem, September 1, 1939: "For the error bred in the bone Of each woman and each man/Craves what it cannot have, /Not universal love/But to be loved alone."

ugly urges toward rebellion. Jesus returns in resurrection, not to get even and not to seek revenge, but to demonstrate to us how evil works on the innocent. He comes to dismantle the rivalry that caused death in the beginning and sustained history's bloody obsession with domination. The One who returns is the Crucified Jesus. The nail marks and the wounds are evident on His Resurrected body.

Jesus returns as the "forgiving victim." Jesus breaks the cycle of revenge and retribution. On Easter morning, Mary Magdalene recognizes Jesus by two things: his voice and his wounds. She recognizes Jesus as the One who forgives and as the bearer of shalom-wellbeing, even for and especially for those who abandoned and betrayed him.

The axis of our identity is changed or, maybe better put, revealed for what it has always been, though we were under the lie of the Evil One. We now recognize who we are, as Alison notes, "... we are people who are constantly undergoing I AM- that is to say, God- coming towards us – as one who is offering forgiveness as our victim." [35]

In front of the One who is our Victim forgiving us, we recognize for the first time in what we have been involved. We are the ones who have always been in God's compassionate and abundant love, although we were under the destruction fiction of the lie that disbelieved it. We are the ones who lived under the lie that led us constantly and invariably into the sequences and dynamics of disposing of one another, whenever convenient, to satisfy our anxieties and fears, sometimes fatally so throughout history.

Now, the Innocent Victim stands before us and our defenses are shot. We are cornered by our own cover stories that are revealed as useless and dangerous lies. We stand before our innocent spouses, children, neighbors and friends. Salvation means that we recognize the real world in which we stand. "The real center of the universe is an I AM coming toward us our victim forgiving us."[36] Our meditation, our prayer, and our liturgy is nothing but the displacing and disruptive experience of what it is like to be approached by our forgiving victim.

All of us, in ways subtle and subjective, have used others as props for our anxieties and insecurities. We have required that those who love us the most suffer the most from our unspoken and often unacknowledged fears of not being worthy enough or cared about enough. If we could be truthful about ourselves and most of us are too afraid to be so, we would recognize and acknowledge the long line of victims we have created from our childhood onward at home, at work, in parking lots and grocery stores, in classrooms and playgrounds. We have done so simply to stand before our mind's eye and try to say to our shaky selves that we are good, we are safe, we are secure, and we are loved. We created victims and then hurt them to create our sense of safety and stability.

Yet, our salvation prospers when we allow Christ to come as our forgiving victim and servant. If we simply revere Christ as Servant, we run the risk of a subtle Pelagianism that dictates that we must work hard to achieve our salvation. We will serve obsessively; we will do good and help others as a compulsive act to justify ourselves, to earn what we suspect is lacking and missing in our lives. This dynamic of hard service and difficult dedication will come with an inevitable side effect – we will despise and dismiss those who do not or cannot work as hard as we do. We will marginalize and exclude those not as spiritual or dedicated as we are. We will satisfy ourselves with the illusion that we are a ruddy remnant church, exemplars of a muscular Christianity.

What we need to do, instead, is sit in contemplation of the One who always approaches us as our forgiving victim, the one who requires mercy not sacrifice.

Thus, a Life Going Well is primarily a life lived "beyond the lie," a social condition that knows what life without oppression and exclusion looks like. It is the replacement of forgiveness for constant victim-making. It is living by grace and not by rivalry. It is the re-imagination of our lives in accordance with the alternative reality presented in Christ

[35] Alison, *Undergoing God,* 64.
[36] Alison, *Undergoing God,* 64.

and His non-competitive and non-rivalrous reign of love.[37] It is understanding one's identity as premised in the Christ and enacting new social scripts of agency, self-giving and communion, "learning how to work its way out of being a victimizing society, and learning to live in imitation of and solidarity with the forgiving victim who is God."[38]

A Life Feeling Well

The last ingredient of happiness within a *life led well* and a *life going well* is *a life that finally feels well*. It is the enjoyment of God in the secure embrace of the non-competitive reign of love and a stable enactment of one's graced condition as one who belongs in the beloved community of God. Now one arrives at a point where one can "absorb the aroma of God." One feels both tremendous joy and immense gratitude.

Psychologist Robert Emmons has presented scientific evidence that shows how gratitude contributes to psychological and social well-being.[39] He introduces clinical trials that show how gratitude can have positive and lasting effects by lowering blood pressure, improving immune functions and promoting happiness and well-being. Gratitude can prompt acts of helpfulness, generosity, and cooperation. More than that, gratitude can also reduce risks of depression, anxiety and substance abuse disorders.

Gratitude works because it allows us to live and focus our attention on the present, defusing and displacing a whole range of toxic emotions rooted in a disturbing past, such as envy, resentment, regret and depression. Gratitude provides us with the tools for feeling well, boosting emotional, social, spiritual and physical well-being, in the following ways:

- "Keeping a gratitude diary for two weeks produced sustained reductions in perceived stress (28 percent) and depression (16 percent) in health-care practitioners.
- Gratitude is related to 23 percent lower levels of stress hormones (cortisol).
- Practicing gratitude led to a 7-percent reduction in biomarkers of inflammation in patients with congestive heart failure.
- Two gratitude activities (counting blessings and gratitude letter writing) reduced the risk of depression in at-risk patients by 41 percent over a six month period.
- Dietary fat intake is reduced by as much as 25 percent when people are keeping a gratitude journal.
- A daily gratitude practice can decelerate the effects of neurodegeneration (as measured by a 9 percent increase in verbal fluency) that occurs with increasing age.
- Grateful people have 16 percent lower diastolic blood pressure and 10 percent lower systolic blood pressure compared to those less grateful.
- Grateful patients with Stage B asymptomatic heart failure were 16 percent less depressed, 20 percent less fatigued and 18 percent more likely to believe they could control the symptoms of their illness compared to those less grateful.
- Older adults administered the neuropeptide oxytocin showed a 12 percent increase in gratitude compared to those given a placebo
- Writing a letter of gratitude reduced feelings of hopelessness in 88 percent of suicidal inpatients and increased levels of optimism in 94 percent of them.
- Grateful people (including people grateful to God) have between 9-13 percent lower levels of Hemoglobin A1c, a key marker of glucose control that plays a significant role in the diagnosis of diabetes.
- Gratitude is related to a 10 percent improvement in sleep quality in patients with chronic pain, 76 percent of whom had insomnia, and 19 percent lower depression levels."[40]

Emmons thus summarizes gratitude's benefits in five ways:

1. Gratitude increases spiritual awareness;
2. Gratitude improves physical health;
3. Gratitude maximizes the good;
4. Gratitude protects against the negative;
5. Gratitude strengthens relationships.[41]

Franciscans and Happiness

Franciscans today are not immune from the social and cultural trends that drive the massive amounts of stress and anxiety, depression, sadness and unhappiness that plague the rest of our hyper-aroused and multi-stimulated world. In fact, Franciscans have chosen to live among our sisters and brothers in the poorest regions of the world, at the most insidious intersections of tragedy and injustice, with the fewest escapes and the most indifferent forms of

[37] James Alison speaks of the Church as the space and community of non-rivalry in these terms: "The revelation of God as forgiving victim at the base of all human exclusions was the condition that made possible the construction of a society which did not define itself over against anything at all." in *Knowing Jesus* (Springfield, IL: Templegate Publishers, 1994), 77.

[38] Alison, 77.

[39] Robert A. Emmons, "Queen of the Virtues and King of the Vices: Graced Gratitude and Disgraced Ingratitude," in *Psychology and Spiritual Formation in Dialogue,* Thomas M. Crisp, Steven L. Porter, Gregg A. Ten Elshof (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019).

[40] UC Davis, "Gratitude is good medicine," (November 25, 2015), accessed at: https://health.ucdavis.edu/medicalcenter/features/2015-2016/11/20151125_gratitude.html

[41] Robert Emmons, "Why Gratitude is Good," *Greater Good Magazine* (November 16, 2010), accessed at: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_gratitude_is_good

social exclusion imaginable.[42]

Our task is not to become discouraged or disheartened. It is to remain happy and to enjoy God's presence even there, where troubles mount and patience seems to be tested beyond endurance.

Francis of Assisi is known for his joy and his happiness in the world with "brother sun and sister moon." We misconstrue that happiness if we equate it with any kind of superficial disengagement from the world and its problems. As Joseph Chinnici reminds us so well, Francis arrived at his perfect joy after a deep struggle with his own physical pain and his crushing disillusionment with the brothers, when he goes to Mount LaVerna in deep 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 sufficiently as a mediator of faith, hope and love.[43]

It is in the vision of the Crucified Seraph on Mount LaVerna that Francis receives a final confirmation of his call and an affirmation that God is working even through his fragility and failures. Francis has passed through the three levels of happiness. His is a *life led well*, since the days as a young man when he broke with the greed, violence and rivalry of Assisi and entered into the non-competitive reign of fraternity. He practiced a *life going well* by creating a new identity of gospel brotherhood, in minority and communion with all God's creatures under a good, loving and abundant God. Then, he stood on Mount LaVerna and could finally have a *life feeling well,* the freedom he had sought through the acquisition of his liberating identity in Christ:

> Now at a time of deeper distress and more profound physical and moral suffering, Francis once again sees the crucified. It is the vision of the Seraph. Francis understands the significance of what is being revealed to him. Francis has experienced the last several years as a failure of his call and mission. He has lost control of the Order that the Lord had given him. However, what he experiences on La Verna is an affirmation filled with the personal love of Christ for him. Francis sees once again that it is the humanity of the Christ that saves, the humble Christ who redeems. It is the pierced and crucified seraph who rescues and releases the world. The "image of the invisible God" is the crucified Victim. Francis learns from this that, as it is for the Christ, so it is for him. It is his humanity, in all its weakness, that serves the cause of the Lord.[44] The seraph is not only an image of the Christ, it is also a mirror image of Francis himself. Francis is now the crucified victim who becomes the prophet of hope. What the seraph is, Francis has become.[45]

In the end, this article raises questions for personal and communal reflection:

1. Do you consider yourself/ do others see you as happy?

2. You serve God. When was the last time you enjoyed God? Describe that experience as fully as possible.

3. A life led well begins with a commitment to belong to the non-competitive, non-rivalrous reign of love. Who are you presently competing against and why? What is the main source of your rivalries and how do they express themselves?

4. In a life going well, we recognize the identity given to us by those who have hurt us (sometimes ly). Who are those who have hurt you most? How do you live out their view of you?

5. What would you be like if you lived your graced identity? In what ways would your responses change?

6. In a life feeling well, you live by your gratitude. Who are the ten people to whom you feel the most gratitude?

[42] For a study of Pope Francis' analysis of not just the marginalization but the systematic exclusion of the poor from modern economies, cf. Robert W. McElroy, "Pope Francis brings a new lens to poverty, peace and the planet," in *America* (April 23, 2018), accessed at: https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2018/04/23/pope-francis-brings-new-lens-poverty-peace-and-planet.

[43] Joseph Chinnici, "Passing on the Seal of Franciscan Life," *Franciscan Connections/The Cord* 68, no. 4 (Winter, 2018): 16.

[44] Chinnici, 16.

[45] David B. Couturier, *The Voice of Victims. The Voice of the Crucified* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2019), 51.

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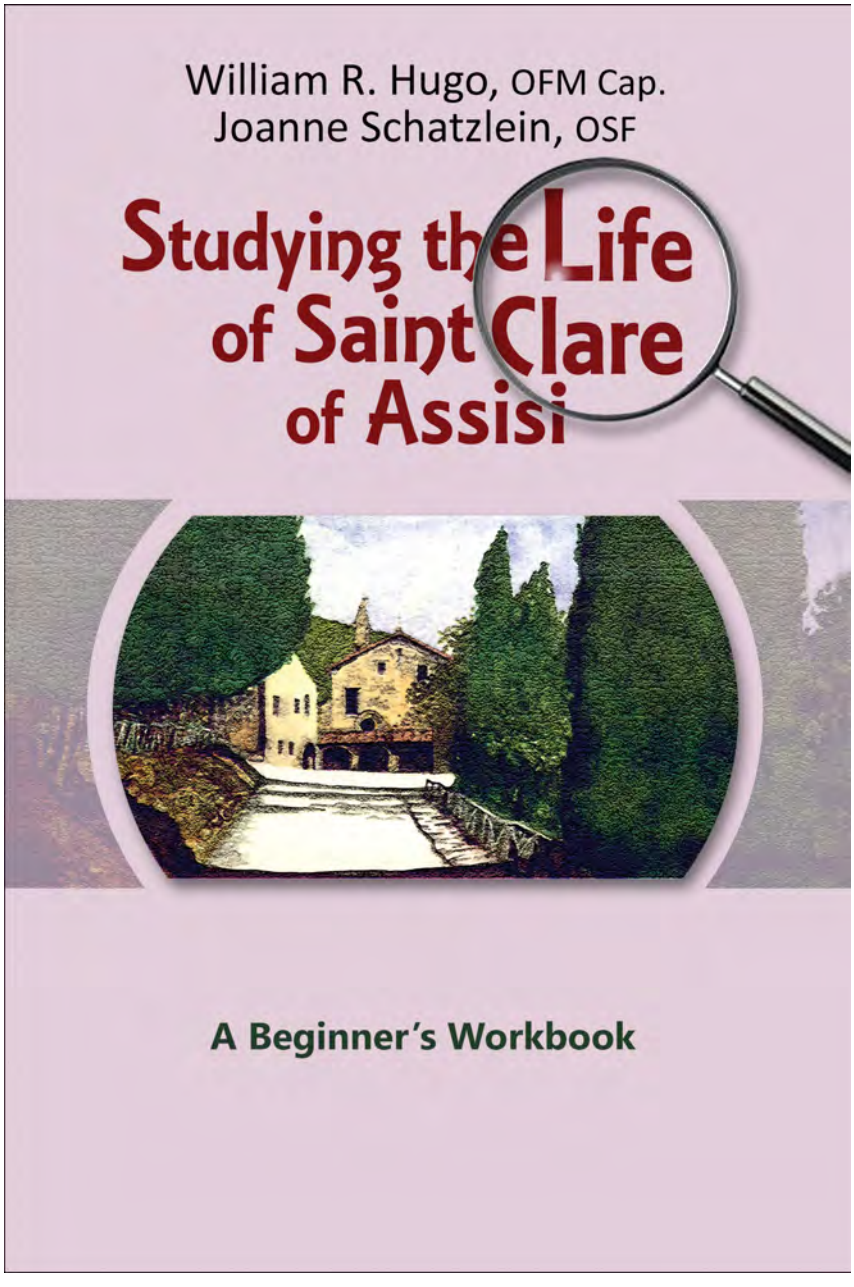
A Review
Studying the Life of Saint Clare of Assisi: A Beginner's Workbook

By Michael W. Blastic, OFM

William R. Hugo, OFM Cap., & Joanne Schatzlein, OSF. *Studying the Life of Saint Clare of Assisi: A Beginner's Workbook*. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2019. Pp. 318. $24.95.



The last thirty years of historical scholarship on Clare of Assisi, the Poor Sisters and the monastery of San Damiano, as William R. Hugo, OFM, & Joanne Schatzlein, OSF, have noted, represents nothing less than "an explosion of learning about Clare" (21). Given the complexity of Clare's own story, that of her and her sisters' at times difficult relationship with cardinals and popes as well as with the Lesser Brothers, together with the amount of publications – available primarily in European languages – it is difficult for the non-specialist to sift through and make sense of all this material. Fortunately, we now have this workbook that digests, contextualizes and presents the results of all this scholarship regarding Clare of Assisi. Following upon Hugo's successful Workbook on St. Francis,[1] Hugo has teamed with Schatzlein to co-author this "Beginner's Workbook" for the study of the life of St. Clare of Assisi.

The workbook unfolds in three major parts: "Preliminaries," "Tools" and "Work." Along the way it presents very extensive, helpful and up to date bibliographies (often annotated) attached to each of the sections and subsections of the workbook. The authors' goal is "to know the historical Clare as well as we can" (28), in order to speak meaningfully about Franciscan life today (31), the latter task being left to the readers who work through the material laid out in the workbook.

Section one provides a rich and thick background of the historical context in which Clare and the Poor Sisters were situated. The authors describe in turn the monastic, penitential, evangelical and apostolic life movements of the period noting at the outset that these movements often overlapped. In each case, the authors highlight the particular practice of poverty of the movement being presented thus allowing one to see how Clare was both similar and different from what preceded her. The section on the penitential life is especially helpful. The authors emphasize that the life of penance, as Francis and Clare embraced it, describes "a way of life founded in conversion and focused on living the Gospel over a lifetime" (46), rather than a narrow focus on doing penance for sins as it is sometimes popularly understood. In addition, the authors explain that the

[1] William R. Hugo, OFM Cap. *Studying the Life of Saint Francis of Assisi: A Beginner's Workbook*[2]. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2011.

evangelical focus on living the Gospel rather than on ministry distinguishes the Poor Sisters (and the Lesser Brothers) from the apostolic movements. This evangelical dimension "focused on the goodness of God everywhere" (56) and found expression in relationships of sisterhood and brotherhood with God, all men and women, and creation. As the authors comment, Francis and Clare's "fundamental options mediated the way they appropriated values, ideas, and behaviors from other groups and movements" (65).

The next section in part one gives an overview of the experience of medieval religious women. Opening with a treatment on nuptial spirituality, the authors note the significant impact of Bernard of Clairvaux and Cistercian spirituality, underlining that while Clare adopts this imagery in her letters to Agnes of Prague, her accent is on the poor crucified Jesus the spouse whom the sisters embraced by imitating Christ's poverty and suffering as their way of carrying on the mission of Christ. The authors treat virginity and enclosure for women as the expression of medieval concern for their integrity, safety and protection, noting that it was Pope Gregory IX who imposed strict enclosure on religious women in general, and Clare was not exempt. The authors also reflect on the challenge of financial independence for medieval women, and highlighting Clare's insistence on corporate poverty for San Damiano, which caused significant tension with the hierarchy, and was related to the need of women religious to have a connection with a male religious community. The authors point out that for Clare, poverty and being part of the Order of Lesser Brothers were her chief concerns. Medieval women's food and fasting practices are also treated and followed by a brief description of the Commune of Assisi's revolution which leads into the final section of this part of the workbook titled: "Who founded the Order of St. Clare?" (99-123). While it might seem a strange question, indeed, the "new" narrative leading to an answer which is presented here by Hugo & Schatzlein, represents a cutting edge summary of the complex history of the origins and development of Clare and her sisters at San Damiano in relation to the Lesser Brothers, to the work of Pope Gregory in establishing his own Order of San Damiano, as well as to the foundation of Agnes of Prague, the development of the *Form of Life* of Clare, and the *Rules* of Gregory, Innocent IV, Isabelle of France, and Urban IV. The annotated bibliography at the end of the section provides a rich resource for further study and represents the significant scholarship that went into the writing of this this section of the workbook!

The second part of the workbook presents "tools" that are necessary for a critical-historical approach to the texts presented in part three. A brief review of the nature of hagiography opens the section and is followed by the question of the authorship of the texts attributed to Clare. The authors deal with the question of Clare's use of secretaries because the texts themselves represent very different styles of writing – the prose of the *Form of Life* is very different from the *Letters to Agnes*. The fact that there are questions about authorship does not diminish Clare's role as author of the texts as the authors write. This section concludes with background on various texts that are used as sources for the life and history of Clare and the Poor Sisters. Among these are the *Acts of the Process of Canonization*, which records the official account of the witnesses as questioned in preparation for her canonization. The authors provide biographical information about each of the witnesses interviewed and underline the importance of this text for our fundamental knowledge about Clare's life. The two major legends of Clare are analyzed – the *Versified Legend* and the *Prose Legend*. The relationship between these two texts has been difficult to determine, but as the authors suggest, it is very likely that both legends as they exist rely on a possible earlier first draft of a text, probably written by Thomas of Celano in order to promulgate Clare's holiness to the church. The authors give a brief introduction to the *Papal Decree of Canonization*, 1255, which emphasizes Clare as a model for enclosed virgins, an image central to the papal understanding of religious life for women. Finally the inauthentic *Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges* is mentioned because it appears in older literature surrounding Clare.

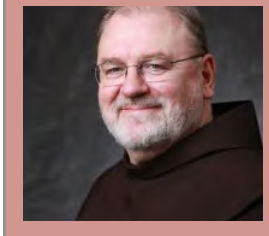
The third section of the workbook contains the worksheets that are developed to help the reader investigate the significant events in Clare's life, her conversion and life at San Damiano, and each of the writings of Clare. As the authors indicate, the work sheets provide the information and questions necessary to help the reader do critical-historical work on the sources using the background material and tools presented in the previous sections of the book. Each worksheet presents a specific text or sections of texts to work with and invites the reader to make informed judgments about the historicity, the meaning or the purpose of an incident or text being studied. Working through these worksheets not only allows the reader to discover facts about Clare and the Poor Sisters that are grounded in history, but also teaches the reader a method for approaching historical sources in general.

Two texts in particular should be mentioned here. The first is the treatment given to Clare's *Letters to Agnes of Prague*. In addition to providing the historical context of the letters, a succinct but detailed presentation of the life of Agnes of Prague, as well as information on sources for the letters, such as the *Life of The Martyr Agnes*, the authors provide an annotated listing of the Papal Bulls which the source of much of the discussion between Clare and Agnes developed in the letters (216-232). The importance of this information cannot be overstated as this papal correspondence is essential for understanding what Clare and Agnes are talking about in the letters. Worksheets for each letter follow with a summary exercise concluding this section.

A second text that receives extensive treatment is *The Forms of Life Given to Clare*. The development of Clare's own *Form of Life* accompanies most of Clare's life at San

Damiano. The authors provide a rich presentation of the various sources Clare utilized to write her *Form of Life* as well as the historical markers in Clare's life that marked the path of its composition and the ultimate papal approval received on her deathbed. The various texts treated in this section include: Francis of Assisi's "Form of living" found only in the sixth chapter of Clare's *Form of Life*; the inauthentic *Privilege of Poverty* of Innocent III (1216); Hugolino's *Form of Life* (1219); Gregory IX's *Privilege of Poverty* (1228); Innocent IV's *Form of Life* (1247); and finally, Clare's *Form of Life* (1253). This section ends with worksheets on the *Testament* (including an overview and discussion of the recent arguments concerning its authenticity) and the *Blessing* of Clare.

As this overview of the contents of the Workbook suggests, the authors provide an extensive and detailed introduction to the study of Clare of Assisi and the Poor Sisters. The authors have done an immense amount of research and, first in gathering all this information, then in analyzing the debates and diverse positions taken by scholars, and finally in the judicious manner in which they present this research to the reader. Where questions remain open, the authors leave it to the readers to reach their own informed conclusions, which they are prepared to do by working through the workbook. While one might quibble with a point or two along the way (for example, when treating of the fasting practices of Clare the authors understand this primarily as Clare's way of imitating the suffering of Christ (202-204) -which it certainly is- but give little emphasis to how fasting served as a means for identifying and living like the poor which for Clare was experienced as her way to espouse her poor crucified spouse). In short, if one wants to understand the historical Clare, you need this book. It is written in an accessible style, presents the current state of scholarship on the issues, and is written by two Franciscans whose love and admiration for Clare of Assisi is evident on each page!



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Bonaventure

John Martone

Bonaventure knew
the ghostly life –

all there is
between
two languages

flailing – angelic
stillness

From Homelands - a collection of poems by John Martone (Tufo, 2019)

St. Francis to Viktor Frankl: Rules to Schools

By Carl J. Dister

During the Middle Ages, Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone (St. Francis of Assisi) would create a new spiritual "Rule" that would help remedy the run-away quest for power and wealth prevalent during the feudal age. Centuries later, at the advent of Post- Modernity, Dr. Viktor Frankl would create a new scientific "School" of psychotherapy that would help remedy a similar existential vacuum that still plagues society today. This paper attempts to compare these two applied philosophies and look for future synergies between them.

Introduction

The fall of the Roman Empire in Europe set the stage for the chaos and conflict experienced during the Middle Ages. During the transition, an interesting new trend emerged in the Church: the creation of "Rules." For example, the Rule of St. Benedict and the Dominican Rule of St. Augustine were well known at the time (and are still in practice today). Although Biblical texts were helpful in understanding the religious ontology of the world, people wanted more personal guidance on how to discover a meaningful life (not unlike the self-help movement of recent times). Rules provided this lacking for many followers.

During this time, land wars and greed plagued Europe, including villages in Italy. After one such massacre, a young prisoner surveyed the bodies of his fallen friends, strewn across the battlefield below his prison window perched above. Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone was spared from death because his family was one of the wealthiest in the town, and he would bring a handsome ransom to his captors. Modern scholars believe that the trauma he endured caused him to suffer severe Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder throughout the rest of his life (Moses, 2009). In his captivity, Giovanni (more commonly known today as St. Francis of Assisi) would begin his journey to produce a new radical "Rule" that unlike other Rules at the time, embraced poverty, and faced suffering and death head-on. His companions embraced "Lady Poverty" and their lifelong quest for penance and conversion would soon challenge the lust for wealth and power in the western world.

Centuries later, after the fall of the western ruling class, the stage would again be set for chaos and conflict as Post-Modernity emerged. Another prisoner would experience severe hardship and watch his friends and neighbors face death on an epic scale. In his captivity, Dr. Viktor Frankl would test his theory of a new scientific "School" of psychotherapy (Frankl, 2017) that would eclipse the reductionist schools of the western world. Fusing advanced science of mind, and deep philosophical insights from the growing school of phenomenology, Dr. Frankl would create Logotherapy. It too has swept the western world, challenging the popular nihilist philosophy. After comparing transcendental thought underpinning concepts of penance and conversion in the Rule of St. Francis during the Middle Ages to some of the concepts of Viktor Frankl and his School during the Modern Era of the 20th century, a future synergy between Logotherapy and Franciscan Spirituality is considered.

Middle Ages: Five Transcendentals

The religious worldview during medieval times centered on the concept of the "Five Transcendentals." These five were initially proposed by pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in his classic work, *De Divinis Nominibus* (Areopagita, 1990). Pseudo-Dionysius popularized the idea that the "name" of God was fivefold, for example: Being, the One, the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. This frame was reinforced by the rediscovery of the works of Aristotle during the same period that supported the role of transcendentals in philosophy. John O'Donohue recently summarized the worldview of the Middle Ages in his work on Beauty:

> *The poignancy of thought is that it can never bridge the distance between the self and the world. The medieval mind filled in that interim distance with the interesting presence of the five Transcendentals: Being, the One, the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. Being is the deepest reality, the substance of our world and all things in it; the opposite would be Nothingness, the things that are not. The One claims that all things are somehow bound tougher in an all-embracing unity: despite all the differences in us, around us and between us, everything ultimately holds together as one; chaos does not have the final word. The True claims that reality is true and our experience is real and our actions endeavor to come into alignment with the truth. The Good suggests that in*

practicing goodness, we participate in the soul of the world. The fifth is the beautiful. Every act of thinking, mostly without our realizing it, is secretly grounded in these presences (O'Donohue, 2004, p. 45).

The influence of this world view on St. Francis is unmistakable. Consider this excerpt from his famous song *The Canticle of Brother Sun and Sister Moon:*

...Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, Who is the day through whom You give us light. And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor, Of You Most High, he bears the likeness. Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, In the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair... (Marovich, 2013).

Fabry's Five Circumstances

As Francis was influenced by the medieval Transcendentals, Frankl's contemporary worldview was influenced by the philosophy of Phenomenology. Fabry's *Guideposts to Sources of Meaning* nicely summarize some tenets of logotherapy in five "circumstances" in which Logotherapy can help individuals searching for meaning in their lives (Fabry, 1988, p. 10):

- **Self-Discovery** – The more you find out about your real self behind all the masks you put on for self protection, the more meaning you will discover.
- **Choice** – The more choices you see in your situation, the more meaning will become available.
- **Uniqueness** – You are most likely to find meaning in situations where you are not easily replaced by someone else.
- **Responsibility** – Your life will be meaningful if you learn to take responsibility where you have freedom of choice, and if you learn not to feel responsible where you face an unalterable fate.
- **Self-Transcendence** – Meaning comes to you when you reach beyond your egocentricity toward others.

At first glance, the words of these circumstances may seem very different from the set of Five Transcendentals. However, the essences have striking similarities to be described later. Both sets provide a set of lenses centered around meaning, enabling a connection between the Unknown and the Known, the Immanent and the Transcendent, or the Meaning in the Moment and Ultimate Meaning.

Frankl's Five Spheres

In the treatment of mental disorders, Frankl proposes five "spheres" (Frankl, 2004, p.237) where the approach of Logotherapy could apply:

- As a specific treatment for noogenic neuroses, particularly to address problems related to meaning.
- As a nonspecific treatment of a variety of psychogenic, neurotic reaction patterns using paradoxical intention and dereflection. Here it may serve as a primary treatment, because it may address the root cause of the problem.
- As a "medical ministry" aimed at assisting patients with incurable somatogenic disorders to find meaning in their suffering even up to the end.
- As a nonmedical, preventive response to sociogenic phenomena that may become pathological.
- As a corrective response to reductionistic or subhuman models of medical practice in an effort to prevent iatrogenic neuroses.

These spheres are interesting complements to the five circumstances listed by Fabry.

The Five Conversions

Secular Franciscans have always participated in a process of formation before being accepted into a community. A critical aspect of formation is understanding what Franciscans have known as "Conversion" and the role "Penance" plays in the process. Together, Conversion and Penance describe the classic process of "Metanoia," a gradual transformation towards the Ultimate Meaning. In the Middle Ages, "Penance" was often viewed as harsh, self-inflicted punishment for "sins," and Conversion might be thought of only as an initiation rite. But today, and perhaps even back then, these over-simplified interpretations do not capture the true essence of the Franciscan search for meaning. (Although even today, some misguided secular Franciscan groups gravitate this way!)

The Rule of St. Francis has been updated several times since the 1200's. The recent 1978 update brought back in some of the original primitive language from the original members. Secular Franciscans are now taught a more modern interpretation of Conversion as a result:

In the Rule conversion *means more than moving from one religious tradition to embrace another religious tradition. We commonly call such people "converts". The use of the word* conversion *in the Rule has a much wider meaning. It does not happen all at once. It is not some special religious experience, though that is possible. Rather, it is a free choice by*

which an individual embraces a fresh way of perceiving reality. We move in a new direction; embrace a new way of interpreting reality; accept new values or revive good old ones" (Bach, 2010, p. 104).

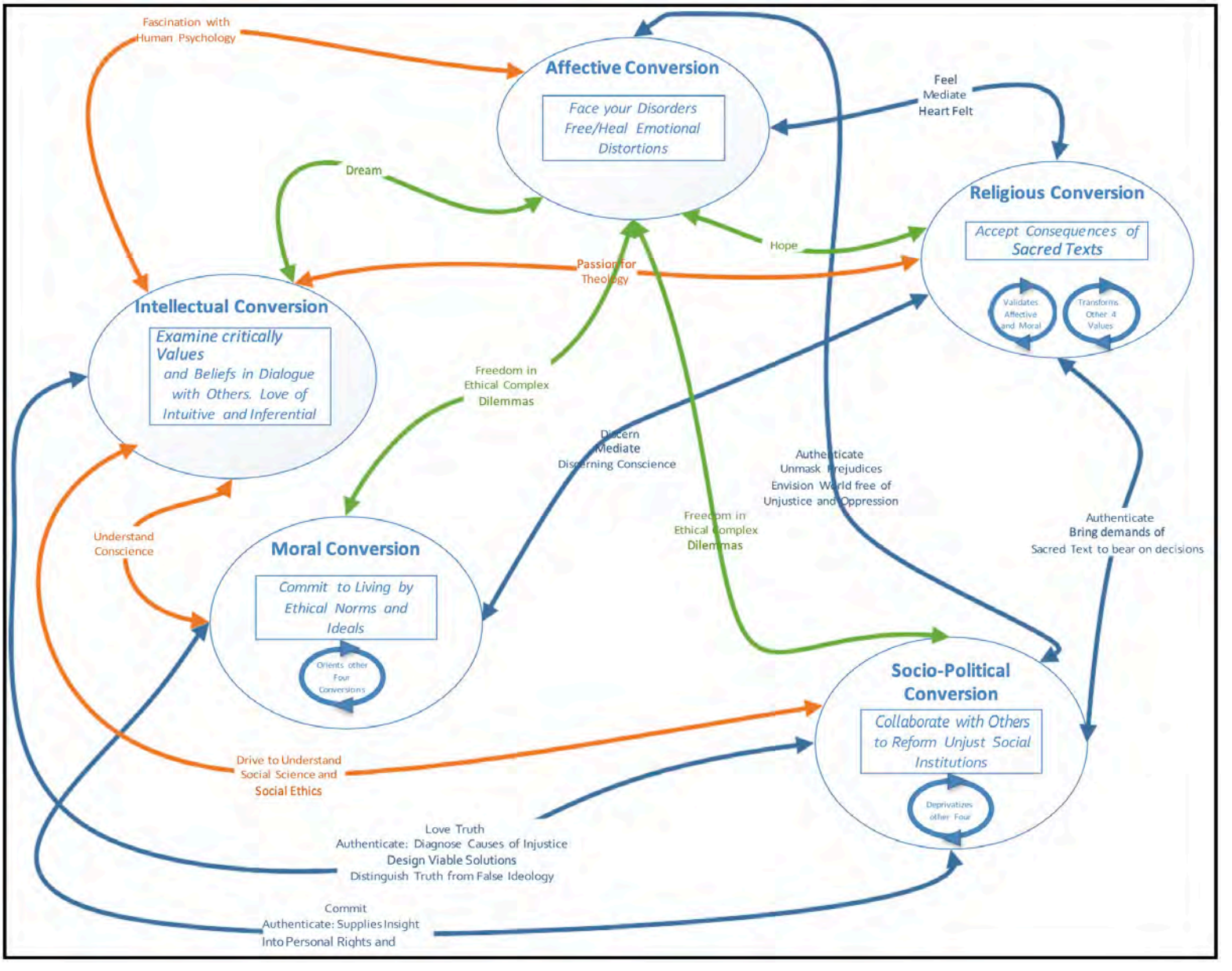
Immediately, this guidance on conversion draws parallels to Frankl's guidance on finding Meaning in the Moment.

In the 1990's, Franciscan scholar, Robert Stewart carefully traced the evolution of the Rule of Francis from early times through several revisions, helping modern secular Franciscans better understand what Francis meant by Conversion. The enabling technology used by Stewart for the revitalization was hermeneutical methods developed by 20th Century French philosopher Paul Ricoeur:

An unspoken presupposition is that what the text means is given in what the text meant. Seldom do they give attention to the process of appropriation, that is, the way in which the contemporary hearer translates the meaning of the text into his or her own life…Thus we will use Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach to texts and then proceed to a specific application of that approach: the interpretation of the primitive Rule for Secular Franciscans today (Stewart, 1990, pp. 322-323).

Using the Ricouer's methodology, Stewart discovered that the concept of Conversion in the original Rule of Francis aligns most closely with that of modern theologian Donald Gelpi's view:

Gelpi, who derives his approach to conversion from an analysis of responsibility, defines conversion more concretely as "the decision to pass from irresponsible to responsible behavior in some distinguishable



Graphical Representation of Gelpi's Five Conversions with Seven Dynamics

realm of human experience". As Gelpi points out, conversion is not simply a once-and-for-all decision. Conversion involves both an initial and an ongoing decision. That is, beyond the initial decision to change there is continuing affirmation of the initial decision and acceptance of the consequences of that decision (Stewart, 1990, p. 342).

Similarities between Logotherapy's dependence on Responsibility and Franciscan Conversion become apparent. Finally, Stewart concludes that the interpretation of Penance in the modern era is quite straightforward: a commitment to lifelong conversion:

> *Through a long process of explanation, which included the study of some other writings of Francis, we have seen that doing penance meant choosing a life of conversion* (Stewart, 1990, p. 336).

The Conversions of Gelpi, mentioned by Stewart are listed as follows (not surprisingly, there are five):

- **Affective Conversion** - Face your disorders.
- **Religious Conversion -** Accept the consequences of your belief system.

Five Transcendentals	Five Conversions	Five Circumstances	Five Spheres
Being We uniquely exist	**Affective Conversion** Face your unique disorders	**Uniqueness** Experience our unique gifts and our irreplaceable-ness	**Medical Ministry** Finding unique meaning in suffering and dying
Essence: We are all unique since we exist. When we lose our sense of being (e.g. as we near death) Medical Ministry can help us rediscover uniqueness.			
The One We are a unity of the somatic, psychic, and noetic	**Religious Conversion** Accept the consequences of your belief system	**Self-Transcendence** Reach beyond to serve other than yourself	**Noogenic Neuroses** Treat noetic problems
Essence: Our noetic dimension helps us understand the unity of each person. If we lose sight of this unity, Logotherapy can help us rediscover our belief in wholeness.			
The Good We have a choice to act responsibly	**Sociopolitical Conversion** Collaborate with others to reform unjust social institutions	**Responsibility** Do what we "ought" to do	**Sociogenic Phenomena** Treat pathological social problems
Essence: Our health can depend on being part of a good society. This requires us to work with others for better a neighborly life.			
The True We can discover truth	**Intellectual Conversion** Examine critically your values and beliefs in dialogue with others	**Self-Discovery** Find truth about ourselves perhaps using Socratic method	**Nonspecific Treatment** Address the root cause of problems
Essence: Using our rational mind, we can investigate the root cause of problems we face by using critical methods in Logotherapy, and getting objective input from others.			
The Beautiful We can forge a beautiful life even with pain and suffering	**Moral Conversion** Commit to living by ethical norms and ideals	**Choice** Change the situation or the attitude towards the past	**Corrective for Reductionism or Subhuman** Prevent iatrogenic neuroses
Essence: Beauty is not easily reduced to its parts. When we commit to attitudes that oversimplify beautiful complex systems, we can cause harm to ourselves and others.			

- **Sociopolitical Conversion - C**ollaborate with others to reform unjust social institutions.
- **Moral Conversion** - Commit to living by ethical norms and ideals.
- **Intellectual Conversion -** Examine critically values and beliefs in dialogue with others.

In Stewart's review of Conversion, seven dynamics are also suggested by Gelpi. These dynamics describe the movements occurring in and between the five conversions throughout a lifetime. These seven dynamics could be considered as situations that cause a search for the Meaning in the Moment, as described in Logotherapy. The following chart summarizes the five conversions with the seven dynamics shown as arrows:

Comparison Chart

Do these seemingly disparate sets of five outlined in the preceding sections (transcendentals, circumstances, spheres, and conversions) align? The following chart attempts to summarize and reorder them in hopes of revealing a unifying essence:

It appears that in essence, these four sets of five concepts, across time, have striking parallels. In some ways, they demonstrate an underlying schema that may have been tempered with an unintended use of Occam's razor over history. If they align, perhaps this could open new dialogues between the scientific world of the Logotherapeutic School and the Spiritual world of the Franciscan Rule.

The Future

In a recent publication by contemporary Franciscan scholar, David Couturier, the idea of Franciscan Conversion is expanded out beyond the personal to the societal level. Couturier uses the analogy of the historical surroundings of Assisi, Italy (Couturier, 2017). The buildings that make up Sacro Convento and the Basilica of St Francis correspond to the movement of the soul towards God in the modern world. Personal Conversions is represented by the Friary, where values, attitudes, and needs intersect. Interpersonal Conversion is represented by the town of Assisi, a place of mutuality and interdependence. Structural Conversion is represented by the neighboring towns of Perugia and Assisi, representing social sin, solidarity and communion. Finally, Ecclesial Conversion is represented by the Papal Apartments, representing the renewal of communities. Couturier urges contemporary Franciscans to go beyond a personal conversion and participate in the larger world:

> ...conversion is limited to a personal change of mind and heart, as if metanoia were simply the mostly interiorized exchanges of an individual alone with the Alone. In this highly privatized interpretation, the world and the human community are somehow left out (Couturier, 2017).
>
> Moving beyond self will require embracing others, perhaps finding ways to help heal our world today through common ground between Franciscan Rule and the Frankl School.

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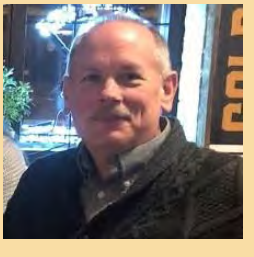

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The Prayed Francis: Liturgical Vitae and Franciscan Identity in the Thirteenth Century

By Timothy J. Johnson

This paper briefly details the results of a multi-year, transatlantic project on the role of liturgical legends or choir legends in the construction of the identity of Franciscan friars between the canonization of Francis of Assisi in 1228 and the promulgation of the *Minor Life of Saint Francis* by Saint Bonaventure in 1266.

The authors of this study, Jacques Dalarun, Marco Bartoli, Filippo Sedda and I, argue for a "liturgical turn" that focuses on liturgical legends in order to enter into the diversity of religious beliefs and practices in the Medieval and Early Modern periods. Why is this important? Well as the famous Ernst Kantorowicz stated, historians should no longer "deal cheerfully with the history of mediaeval thought and culture without ever opening a missal."

We believe our research has produced four specific claims. The first is that liturgical or choir legends represent a typology of sources decidedly different from other hagiographical legends. A text that is read in the refectory or the library is written, received, and performed much differently than a text that is meditated, celebrated, and performed throughout the night in a ritual context. The second claim is that liturgical legends "construct" history as do their historical protagonists. The Francis of the hagiographers is no less important than the Francis of the historians. This study argues that after having worked for decades to move from hagiography to history in Franciscan studies, the time has come to move beyond the subordination of hagiography to historiography. Those choir or liturgical *legendae*, which the Quaracchi fathers had called *minores*, represent the model that inspired and formed Franciscans over the centuries. The third claim is that since choir legends are multimedia (their performance includes specific rubrics for music, gestures, lights, etc.), thus they should be understood in the liturgical context for which they were conceived. To judge them as simply an echo of the historical events of Francis of Assisi is reductive. As Marco Bartoli notes, this would be like judging a lyric opera by reading the libretto alone. The fourth claim is that liturgical codices containing choir legends transmit texts with variations that are significant for the communities that used them every day in their practice of prayer.

Two Claims

Let me comment on our first two claims:

First Claim: Liturgical legends represent a typology of sources decidedly different from other hagiographical legends.

The famous collection of hagiographical legends of Francis of Assisi by the Quaracchi fathers in the first half of the twentieth century referred to liturgical legends as *minores*. Obviously, they received this appellation due to their perceived significance – or lack thereof – and not because they may have been authored by the *fratres minores*. These texts in the *Analecta Franciscana* were almost invisible throughout the twentieth century in Franciscan scholarship and often ignored or downplayed, as evidenced by the *Fontes Franciscani*. This collection of critical sources by Italian scholars, which appeared in 1995, only contained *The Legend for Use in the Choir*, the *Office of Julian of Speyer*, and Bonaventure's *Minor Life.*

The amnesia of historians began to dissipate with the publication of the groundbreaking English language translation of Franciscans sources in the three volume *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* from 1999 to 2001. A decidedly innovative approach to liturgical legends emerged in Jacques Dalarun's magnificent *François d'Assise—Écrits, Vies, témoignages*, published in 2010. This two-volume collection took a radical step – among Franciscanists at least - by proposing that the *Minor Life of Francis* by Bonaventure may have chronologically preceded the *Major Life*. It also included two essays grounded in the latest research, one on the *Office of Julian of Speyer* by Jean-Baptiste Lebigue and the other by me on the *Minor Life of Francis*. The shift in perspective is clear when Jacques recalls the work of earlier French scholars,

> *[they] were above all caught up in the quest for the 'true Francis', [and] had little interest in two types of sources for which we resolutely wished to make room: liturgical texts and collections of miracles. We find, in the French volume, the first French translation of the Legend for the Choir usually attributed to Thomas of Celano and the Office of Saint Francis composed by Julian of Speyer. Certainly, these texts*

convey nothing new regarding the facts and actions of Francis; however, for the generations of brothers who solemnly celebrated the feast of their holy founder during his vigil on the evening of October 3rd, they carved out his image and imprinted it, with all the strength that song and collective recitation conferred on these sonorous relics.

The liturgical emphasis of *François d'Assise* caught the eye of the Italian historian, Marco Bartoli, who proposed a volume dedicated to thirteenth century liturgical sources. He feared that the crucial hermeneutical shift – the "liturgical turn" so to speak – in Jacques' volume ran the risk of being lost amidst the three thousand, four hundred, and eighteen pages of his *François d'Assise*. The approach we developed was keyed to the concept of, "The Prayed Francis" or "Il Francesco Pregato."

How important was the "Prayed Francis" in the process of identity construction? We find the beginning of an answer – at least on the institutional level in 1266 – when the production of liturgical hagiography came to a halt with the introduction of the *Minor Life* and suppression of all other legends by the General Chapter of 1266. Numerous extant breviaries bear the scars of this decision. Many a medieval folio was scrapped to bring earlier legends into conformity with the *Minor Life*. Indeed, Filippo Sedda suggests that the mandate of 1266 targeted only liturgical legends, not other legends.

By including liturgical legends in portable breviaries, the friars fostered their utilization within a broad range of malleable ritual activities. Our study argues that the primary context of these narratives is liturgical. In particular, the meditation, celebration, and performance of these legends during Matins fostered a dialogical exchange with the divine, grounded in the paradox of the Paschal mystery, and mediated by the fêted saint.

In this study, I argue that choir legends foster identity formation in conformity with a particular communal image of a saint, whose life of virtue and miraculous deeds is recounted within the dynamics of prayer. Given their status within worship, the liturgical legends assume a level of iconicity not shared by non-liturgical documents. Intended for participative contemplation in the liminal period of Matins, rather than the promulgation of a universal cult, these legends are like opaque windows opening inward on a secluded courtyard of those gathered to recount their family story or, in the case of the brothers, their stories. While the narrative of the stories is accessible to those who gaze through the aperture, the locus of meaning and transformation is within a specific emotional community of believers. When community members—or at least influential leaders—no longer promote this "prayed" likeness of their founder or foundress, a new image may be fashioned, and

the previous legend is supplanted or even suppressed by another legend that reflects the revised cultural-theological identity of the community. This dynamic should foreground the study of liturgical hagiography.

Second Claim: Hagiographical images in liturgical legends "construct" history as do their historical protagonists.

The well-known scholar, Luigi Pellegrini has argued that it is almost impossible to separate the "real Francis" from his historical memory in hagiography. The quest for the "historical Francis" lies in the uncovering of the mechanisms of projection that led hagiographers to recount the story of Francis through the suspicious lens of institutional concerns. This is the only way the incrustations of the Order's history can be removed and the "real Francis" is revealed.

The editors of "The Prayed Francis" appreciate this approach; nevertheless, we see these mechanisms of projection as invitations. In fact, liturgical legends betray the biases of their authors and offer us a glimpse into the embodied identities of those who meditated, celebrated, and performed these texts.

Identity construction through liturgical legends is evident among Franciscans and their mendicant counterparts, the Dominicans. Humbert of Romans wrote a new liturgical *vita* of Saint Dominic at the request of the 1254 chapter of Preachers, and the Minorites or Franciscans called for a new legend of Saint Francis as early as the chapter of 1257. Both requests reflect the shifting mendicant understanding of their respective founders and the perceived need of a "prayed" image of their founders in harmony with their communal identity. The composition of Julian's *Legend for Use in the Choir* and other choir legends such as the *Legenda liturgica vaticana* from the 1230s to the 1260s illustrates a fluidity of identity as authors constructed various and even conflicting versions of the "Prayed Francis." Julian's work highlighted the miracles of the canonized saint with an emphasis on the tomb in the basilica bearing his name in Assisi. This claim of identity fluidity is born out in a comparison with Bonaventure's *Minor Life* where miracles in general, and the locality of Assisi in particular, are subsumed by the stigmatized saint who himself is the central miracle.

Not surprisingly, the *Legenda liturgica vaticana* reflects the emerging pastoral position of the Franciscans in the 1240s by constructing a "Prayed Francis" whose ministry revolves around preaching. This legend draws on the *Brief Life of Saint Francis* dating from the 1230s. Authors well into the sixteenth century selected stories of Francis from this source to create their own specific "Prayed Francis" is accord with their particular cultural-religious context.

These attempts to cultivate various images of Francis took place within the fertile soil of liturgical celebration. As Jacques Dalarun has noted, the following prayer is most likely the most frequent reference to Francis among those who followed him; yet, it is more or less invisible in historical studies.

> *God, by the merits of blessed Francis you enlarge your Church with the birth of new offspring. Grant, that by imitating him we may look away from everything on earth, in order to enjoy forever sharing the gifts of heaven*.

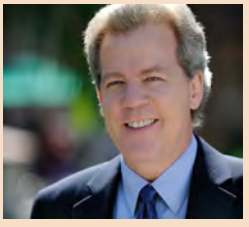
Jacques points out that the friars, together with the Sisters of Clare and the Hermits of Saint Augustine, recited the prayer eight times within the twenty-four-hour period of the Feast of Saint Francis. When the saint's *dies natalis* was extended in 1244 by the introduction of the octave, this prayer was recited seven more times for seven more days for a total of fifty-two times in eight days. The total reaches sixty times when we consider the Feast of the Transferal on the 25th of May. The number reached sixth-eight when Feast of the Stigmata was added in the fourteenth century.

Following these calculations, we realize that before completing seventeen years of profession, a friar repeated this invocation, "God, who by the merits of blessed Francis you enlarge your Church…" over a thousand times, two thousand in a little over thirty-three years, and three thousand if he reached fifty years of religious life. This appeal to the "Prayed Francis" and the meditation, celebration, and performance of the accompanying liturgical legend is found in the *Office of Francis* by Julian of Speyer, which was in continual use in the universal Church until the Tridentine reform of the sixteenth century. It was in continual use in the Order of the Friars Minor until the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council in the twentieth century

Conclusion

The editors of this study argue that it is within and through the liturgy that Franciscans most frequently encountered their version of the saint. Liturgical legends stood at the center of this experience, and helped shaped identities in response to the maxim, "Do this in memory of me." The historical impact of the "Prayed Francis" reached far beyond the confines of Europe. While working on the canonization process for Antonio Cuipa – who was killed in the British suppression of the Spanish Mission system in Florida in 1704 – I came across a Spanish document testifying how the Apalache chief participated in the liturgical office of the friars in what is today Tallahassee, Florida. The source tells of his commitment to worship and notes how he played guitar very well in "the Spanish style" at liturgy. I could not help to pause to remember that his own identity was shaped, in part, by the image of Francis that he would

have encountered in prayer in colonial Franciscan churches in seventeenth-century Florida and continues to impact many – even today.



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Laity as the Co-creators of the Franciscan Movement Known or Anonymous

By Joseph Yamada, OSF

This past summer, Dr. Darleen Pryds of the Franciscan School of Theology in Oceanside, CA, presented a workshop for Secular Franciscans on the first generation of laity in the Franciscan movement. This seminar examined the unique roles that lay women and lay men played in the early generations of the Franciscan journey and teased out their relevance for lay practitioners today. Joseph Yamada OFS, formator of the St. Leo Ibaragi Fraternity in Tokyo, Japan, took extensive notes. Here is a portion of those notes.

Why are lay Franciscans unknown?

Lay Franciscan men and women, vowed or not vowed, have lived according to Franciscan values and tenets. However, they have been largely overlooked and ignored in both academic and church settings. These lay people do not fit into a "mold" in the same way as Franciscan religious. Their lives went unrecorded. Without historical documentation that records the details of their lives, their thoughts, and their beliefs, we are left without much to say about their unique contributions to the Church and the Franciscan tradition.

Franciscan laity choose to "adopt" characteristic Franciscan attitudes and practices but, at the same time, they have to "adapt" them to the particular circumstances of their own lives: the realities of family relationships, social systems, and economic support. Dr. Pryds calls them "somatic theologians," who lived the Gospel in an embodied theology and an embodied spirituality. Lay Franciscans participate in the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition by how they live more than what they write.

Seven characteristics of lay Franciscan women, including Rose of Viterbo, Angela of Foligno, Margaret of Cortona, and Sancia, Queen of Naples ("Women of the Streets: Early Franciscan Women and their Mendicant Vocation,",18-19)

1. Each woman discussed in this volume participated in and contributed to the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition primarily through their embodied spirituality. None of these women were formally educated in the friars' Intellectual Tradition like their male counterparts. Instead, these women learned FraFranciscan theology and spirituality informally from confessors and preachers; they cultivated their understanding of Franciscan believes by adopting the precepts within the contexts of their respective lives; and they viscerally experienced the fundamental precepts of the tradition, especially with regard to poverty, humility, and devotion to the passion of Christ. From living out these precepts, the women studied here went on to share their understanding of the Franciscan tradition through their words and deeds. Their participation in the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition is different from their male counterparts and deserves to be recognized in its rightful place within this tradition on its own terms.

Figure 1 Participants in the 2019 Secular Franciscan Conference at St. Bonaventure University with Dr. Darleen Pryds

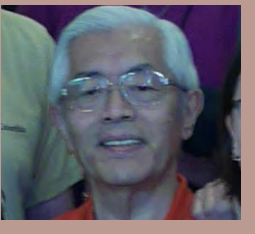
2. These women all modeled their spiritual lives on Francis rather than Clare. Clare may figure in some of their lives as an inspiration and some of them may try to become Poor Clare sisters, however, their initial and fundamental call to religious life was influenced by Francis and the desire to follow in his footsteps. None of these women knew Fran-

cis personally, so they cultivated their vocation based on images they had of him from stories told by friars, artistic representations, or preaching.

3. They all exhibited a performative piety, that is, a religious devotion that was physically expressive. This performative piety was very much in keeping with their urban and public call as mendicants. Theirs was not a private religious devotion, cultivated alone in in a cell. Although each was drawn to solitary contemplation, just as Francis had, their call to religious life – their call to the Franciscan life – compelled each of them to perform their faith in public.
4. As a result of their performative piety, they often suffered detractors and experienced public (and private) ridicule because of how they expressed their faith. The public performances of their religious devotion were especially considered shocking to their peers, so that their very religious call as Franciscan women became a public scandal.
5. Each one persevered in their call to be a mendicant woman despite the local criticism which, at times, came from the friars themselves. Each of these lay Franciscan women cultivated inner resources that allowed them to overcome conflict and to resolve differences of opinion.
6. Each one had to adapt to challenges and constantly reform and craft their lives in response to changes and challenges. In this regard, they each showed a flexibility in their vocation and more generally in their lives.
7. Each woman experienced a profound piety that was grounded in identifying with the suffering Christ. This identification with the passion of Christ was not an end in and of itself. Instead, it led to the cultivation of compassion for others, and thus lay at the heart of Franciscan theology.

In addition to the above, as the 8th feature found in Darleen Pryds' book, *Enduring Presence* (2018, 11-13), Pryds speaks about Lady Jacoba de Settesoli, Luchesio Modestini, Peter the Combmaker, Prassede, Veridiana and Margaret of Città di Castello.

8. Hospitality is a quality that is traditionally associated with Benedictine spirituality, but there are elements of it in the Franciscan charism as well. How members of the different branches of the Franciscan family practiced hospitality varied. The most obvious displays of it came from the Franciscan laity with their possessions, homes, and livelihoods, which many of them used as an integral part of their spiritual practice by offering lodging and material sustenance to those in need. Lay Franciscans – whether they took official vows with the Third Order or not – owned property in ways that members of the first two orders did not. They were generous in sharing what they owned with others, especially with Friars, the Poor Clare Sisters, and with several lesser known lay faithful .... Hospitality, then, is very much part of the Franciscan tradition, but it was practiced most fully among lay Franciscans since they had property to share unlike the members of the First or Second Order.



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Hope against Darkness: Migration in America

By Sr. Marie Lucey

When we first saw the photo of Earth from the Moon 50 years ago, in July, 1969, we gasped in awe at the beauty and fragility of blue planet Earth spinning in vast space. The photo was a great gift to us earthlings. Upon reflection, some also marveled at what the photo did NOT show—lines, borders, or fences dividing the visible continents into countries. We could see only land masses that are continents. As human history unfolded, more lines of demarcation were drawn on maps when nation states were declared. On the plus side, countries with their borders allowed for development of diversity of cultures, languages, and traditions. But they also enabled conflicts, wars, and erection of barriers.

From earliest times, human population growth was accompanied by migration. While researchers do not all agree on number of years, many now believe that multiple migrations out of Africa began about 120,000 years ago, with some failing, but spreading first across Asia. The primary reason for migration was search for climate and land that provided better sources of food. Whatever the reason, people have always been on the move, mingling cultures and enriching the human race. Until recently, the United Nations HCR (High Commission on Refugees) estimated that the largest migration in recorded history was the displacement of 20 million Hindus, Siks and Muslims during the partition of India. The largest voluntary migration was the Italian diaspora between 1861 and 1970, with the emigration of 13 million Italians to escape desperate poverty and then a fascist government. In June, 2018, UNHCR reported 68.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, including 25.4 million refugees, and 3.1 million asylum seekers. The report also states that 57% of refugees worldwide came from three countries, Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan and only 102,800 have been resettled in 138 countries. UNHCR's June, 2019, report cited more than 70 million displaced persons, half of whom are children, with 13.6 million people newly displaced. Clearly, migration is at an historic high due to violent conflicts, repression, hunger, and climate changes in African countries, the Middle East, and Central America.

In biblical history, there are many stories of migration. Abraham followed God's instruction to set out to a land overflowing with milk and honey. (Genesis chapters 12-25) Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt where they wandered in the desert for 40 years. (Book of Exodus) Even the Holy Family was directed to flee their home and migrate into Egypt to escape the death threats against the child Jesus. (Matthew 2: 13-23) Francis of Assisi and the earliest friars, though not migrants, were itinerants, moving freely from Italy into other countries. The Franciscan phenomenon began as a movement, rather than an Order. Thus, human history, including biblical history, and Franciscan history, is a story of people on the move, both forced and voluntary.

Today, immigrants and refugees do not move freely from one country to another but face obstacles, resistance and closed borders. In the United States and across Europe, governments win support and even elections for strong anti-immigrant, anti-refugee enforcement measures. While some of this resistance is understandable, given huge numbers of migrants seeking to escape violence and poverty in their home countries, enforcement can be draconian and cruel, causing suffering and even death for many children, women and men desperately seeking safety and hope for a better life.

How must Christians respond to today's migration situations? We desire to follow Jesus' command to love and care for the stranger: "For I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (Mt. 25:35). But in current political, social, and economic complicated nation-state realities, response is not always clear and simple. One helpful guide is Catholic Social Teaching which provides Three Basic Principles on Immigration. First Principle: People have the right to migrate to sustain their lives and lives of their families. After World War II, Europe faced an unprecedented migration of millions of people seeking safety, food and freedom. Pope Pius XII wrote the encyclical "Exsul Familia (The Émigré Family)" which placed the Church clearly on the side of those fleeing their homes to find a better life. Second Principle: A country has the right to regulate its borders and control immigration. People migrate because they are desperate; they endure many hardships, and often long for the homes they left behind. As Americans, we should celebrate the contributions of immigrants, but should also work to make it unnecessary for people to leave their homelands; moreover, no country has the duty to receive so many immigrants that its economic and social life is jeopardized. Third Principle: A country must regulate its borders with justice and mercy. The first and second principles must be understood in the context of the third principle, and all Catholic social teaching must be understood in the light of equality of all people and commitment to the common good. A developed nation's right to limit immigration must be based on justice, mercy and the common good, not on self-interest, and the right of families to live togeth-

er must be recognized. (www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/catholic-teaching-on-immigration-and-the-movement-of-peoples.cfm.)

A few years ago, several European nations welcomed migrants out of compassion and/or a need for workers as birthrates declined. In 2019, faced with an unanticipated flow of migrants, these same countries have moved to much stricter enforcement measures and elections can depend on where candidates stand on migration enforcement.

In the United States, a failure to enact comprehensive immigration reform has led to increasingly anti-immigrant, anti-refugee policies that have become complicated and cruel, with the focus primarily on the southern border and refugees from predominantly Muslim countries. Immigrant rights groups, including faith organizations, wrestle with multiple issues: separation of children from parents, crowded and unhealthy detention facilities, deportations without hearings and legal representation, a Remain in Mexico policy, continued call for a border wall, drastic reduction in numbers of refugees resettled, threats to people with Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and appropriation funding proposals impacting many of these issues.

Rather than give serious attention to root causes of migration, rather than create a humanitarian response to the overwhelmed southern border, many government officials distort facts and play to people's fears. They label immigrants and refugees as terrorists, rapists, and criminals who are threat to U.S. citizens. In reality, most migrants are families fleeing from desperate situations of repression, violence, and unlivable conditions in their home countries. Many have family members in the United States and they look to this country to offer safety, the opportunity to work to feed their children, and freedom from persecution and fear. Another factor which is hard to ignore is that racism plays a role in U.S. policies and practices. Most migrants are people of color, brown and black, whether they are immigrants, refugees, or have TPS status.

How do Franciscans respond to this extremely troubling situation? Some Franciscan communities have established places of shelter on both sides of the U.S. southern border. Quite a few individuals volunteer to spend weeks or months serving in border facilities operated by Catholic Charities or other service providers. Many Franciscans who are unable to offer direct service give generously to shelter and feed migrants. Some Franciscan communities collaborate with other organizations to offer welcome to refugees or hold prayer vigils outside detention centers. Many Franciscans engage in advocacy-- visiting congressional offices in their home districts or on Capitol Hill, making calls to their elected officials, writing or signing on to letters to their representatives, writing op-eds in local newspapers, placing announcements in church bulletins and holding meetings in their parishes where immigrants and refugees

can share their stories. Some Franciscans join other faith partners in engaging in non-violent protests outside congressional offices or the White House. Some have risked arrest and been fined or jailed. Franciscans join others in prayer and action in solidarity with migrants who are sisters and brothers.

In accord with its mission to be "a collective Franciscan voice seeking to transform United States public policy related to peace making, care for creation, poverty and human rights," Franciscan Action Network (FAN) gives high priority to working for just and humane immigration policies. In 2013, hope was high when FAN joined SEIU (Service Employees International Union) in holding a month-long Fast for Families in tents on the National Mall. Many people of faith, both citizens and immigrants aspiring to citizenship, fasted for several days, or some for weeks, as they gathered to pray and share personal stories. Several congressional representatives, and even the President and First Lady visited the fasters. All were very disappointed when Congress failed to fix our broken immigration system by passing a comprehensive immigration bill. In 2017, FAN was asked by one of the tent-fasters, Dae Jeong (DJ) Yoon, to support NAKASEC (National Korean American Service & Education Consortium) Dreamers who spent a month in summer heat, in a 24-hour, 7 day a week, vigil in front of the White House, calling for passage of the Dream Act. Members of FAN and other people of faith joined the young Korean Dreamers, taking turns to be with them for morning or evening prayer, and standing with them in the summer heat. In both the Fast for Families and the NAKASEC Dreamers vigil, FAN invited Franciscans around the country to join the efforts by calling and visiting their representatives in Congress, and setting aside a day to fast and pray with those in the nation's capital. In February, 2018, FAN joined other Catholics in praying the Rosary outside Senate offices, and then walking into the Senate Rotunda to be blessed by Franciscan Bishop Stowe of Kentucky before submitting to arrest.

Most recently, as a member of DC based Catholic organizations, FAN played an active role in participating in a Catholic Day of Action for Immigrant Children on July 18, 2019, when over 200 Catholics gathered to pray, listen to witness statements, and walk to the Rotunda in the Russell Senate office building where they continued to pray until 71 women and men were arrested by Capitol Police for refusing to vacate the building. Three FAN staff members, one friar, and two Secular Franciscans were among those arrested. That day was the beginning of an ongoing campaign to call for an end to detention of immigrant children and families.

It is tempting to become discouraged when all these efforts seem to have been in vain. The US immigration system is in greater disarray than ever, while an anti-immigrant administration has created deplorable detention centers and has extremely limited access to asylum seekers. Advocacy efforts are like those of Sisyphus, inching forward and rolling backward. But Christians would betray the life and teachings of Jesus if we were to give in to despair and become paralyzed. We must remind ourselves that we are Easter people, that neither Jesus nor Francis of Assisi, even in their darkest moments of struggle and suffering, yielded to despair. As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of our first picture of our earthly home from space, we can place this photo next to our San Damiano crucifixes as we pray, continue to labor with migrant brothers and sisters, and light candles of hope against the darkness.

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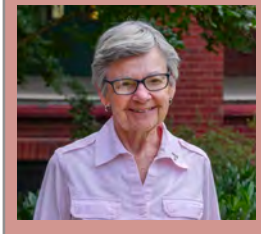

Sister Marie Lucey, OSF (of FAN Institutional Member Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia) has been with FAN since 2011, advocating for immigrant rights, gun violence prevention, human trafficking and other social justice and peacemaking issues. She also coordinates and communicates with FAN's institutional members.

From 2003-2011, Sr. Marie served as Associate Director for Social Mission of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). Prior to working with LCWR, Sister Marie served for six years as her community's Congregational Minister (President), following many years as Director of Corporate Social Responsibility, Justice and Peace Coordinator, and educator. She has participated in delegations to Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico, and a CRS delegation of women religious to Syria and Lebanon to learn first-hand about the Iraqi refugee crisis in order to promote awareness, advocacy and assistance on their return.