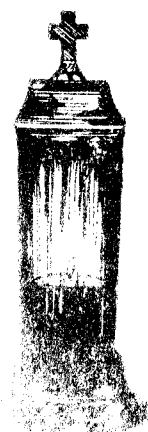




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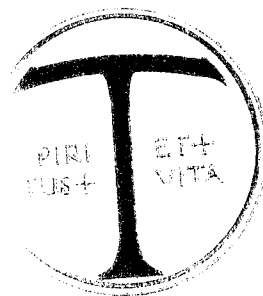
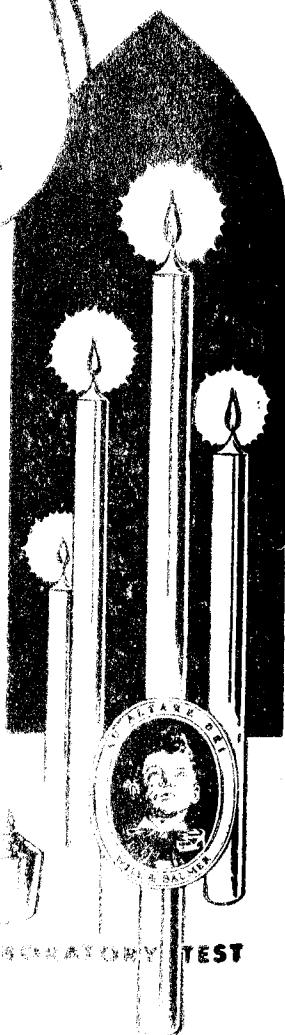
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MONTHLY CONFERENCE

The Liturgy of the Sacrament of Penance

Fr. Martin Wolter, O.F.M.

"We ought indeed to confess all our sins to a priest and receive from him the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." These words of our holy father, St. Francis of Assisi, taken from his *Letter To All The Faithful*, reveal his attitude toward frequent confession as well as toward the Eucharist. After considering the Liturgy of the Eucharist it is well for us to reflect on the Liturgy of the Sacrament of Penance, for this is a sacrament which St. Francis and his followers have done much to promote. And in *Mediator Dei*, the encyclical on the sacred liturgy, Pope Pius XII expressly says: "Do not allow... confession of devotion (to be) discouraged." And in the earlier encyclical on the Mystical Body the same Pope exclaims: "We wish the pious practice of frequent confession to be earnestly advocated. Not without the inspiration of the Holy Ghost was this practice introduced into the Church." The reason for these words of the Holy Father lies in the attempts by some extremists among liturgical enthusiasts to go back again to the ancient discipline of the Church in this matter.

Penance in Antiquity

Frequent confession or confession of devotion as we have it today seems to have been unknown in the early Christian Church. The Sacrament of Penance, of course, existed, having been instituted by Christ and passed down through the Apostles and their successors in the Church. But it seems to have been employed only for the more serious offenses and was accompanied by public penance of a humiliating and severe nature.

The severity of the ancient discipline of the Church in regard to penance is unquestioned, though modern scholars still dispute as to the details. The practice of the Catholic Church, especially at Rome, was more lenient than that of the heretics and schismatics such as the Montanists and the Novatians. Nevertheless it seems that it was not uncommon for the Church to allow reconciliation through penance to be granted only once in the case of serious sin. Tertullian's

famous phrase for the Sacrament of Penance—"a second plank after shipwreck"—was taken in the very strict sense, *second* but *not* *third*. The sins of apostasy from the faith (sometimes called idolatry), adultery and murder were especially abhorred by the early Christians, and in some periods and churches were not granted any public or ecclesiastical absolution.

This strictness of the early Church toward the public sinner seems harsh to the modern Catholic. But we must realize that it did not seem strange to the Christians of those days. During the catechumenate they had been well prepared for the obligations of the Christian code of morals. They were deeply conscious of the dignity of the Christian state of life as a child of God and brother of Christ. Moreover, those who embraced Christianity during those ages of persecution were generally of a more heroic character than the multitude of later Christians. They realized that the life of a Christian entails great sacrifice and constant struggle against temptations. By granting forgiveness only once or rarely, and then only after a long and arduous penance, the bishops in the early Church endeavored to maintain the high standard of Christian conduct. For a Christian to fall again and again into great sins seemed to men of those times a proof of lack of sincerity or earnestness of purpose. To grant them public absolution frequently or lightly appeared to them an opening of the door to laxity.

While we Catholics of today thank God that we live in an age when the Church deals more mercifully with our human weakness, we ought yet to learn lessons from the past. Sin, especially mortal sin, still remains a disgrace for a Christian who has been redeemed by the Scripture says, "not with perishable things, with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ" (I Pet. 1, 18-19). Speaking of such fallen Christians, St. Peter writes these terrible words: "If after escaping the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, their latter state has become worse for them than the former. For it were better for them not to have known the way of justice, than having known it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them" (II Pet. 2, 20-21). While we avail ourselves of the modern merciful attitude of the Church, let us fill ourselves with the ancient Christians' shame and sorrow for sin.

Even in the early Church, as Origen testifies, venial sins could be forgiven over and over again. Gradually the Church, realizing that too great severity might drive poor sinners to despair and damnation, extended forgiveness even to mortal sins as often as the sinner would

do penance. Knowing human weakness as we do, surely we all feel that such a merciful policy will in general lead more souls to God than over-strictness. Yet we might well ask ourselves whether we ourselves follow such a policy of mercy in dealing with our neighbor.

St. Francis gives us a wonderful lesson in this regard when he gives this instruction in his *Letter To A Minister*: "And by this I wish to know if thou lovest God and me his servant and thine, namely: that there be no brother in the world who has sinned, how great soever his sin may be, who after he has seen thy face shall go away without thy mercy, if he seek mercy; and if he seek not mercy, ask thou him if he desires mercy. And if he afterwards appears before thy face a *thousand times*, love him more than me, to the end that thou mayest draw him to the Lord. . ."

In this conference we do not intend to go into the much disputed historical and dogmatic question of private confession in the first ages of the Church. We merely wish to point out that the only known ritual for the Sacrament of Penance in the very earliest times was that for the public confession. There seems no doubt that in the first centuries the Church demanded at times a public confession and public penance for even secret sins. Both Irenaeus and Tertullian discuss the case of public reparation for secret sins. The latter reproves those who hesitate to manifest their sin and publicly do penance. Ironically he says: "Truly you are honorable in your modesty, bearing an open forehead for sinning, but an abashed one for deprecating. . . Is it better to be damned in secret than absolved in public?" Then encouragingly he points to our oneness in Christ: "But among friends and fellow-servants, why do you look upon them as other than yourself. . . When, therefore, you cast yourself at the brethren's knees you are handling Christ, you are entreating Christ."

This public humiliation of the sinner was practiced by the Church because of her social nature, the consciousness that we are all one Mystical Body. The Christian had in the Baptismal ceremony publicly pledged himself to observe the commandments of God. Now, having sinned, he must kneel before the assembled brethren in the church and publicly acknowledge his failure to live up to his pledge. In sinning against God, he had also sinned against the Church. Therefore he must seek forgiveness from God through the medium of the Church as Christ himself had ordained.

Although for good reasons the Church today has mitigated somewhat the public nature of the Sacrament of Penance, there still remain

some elements of public and social character. Our confession is always made to a priest, a public official of the Church. Usually it is made in the confessional in a church, situated in a public place where all can see the sinners submitting themselves to the power of the keys. Then the Church has us make a public though general confession in the Confiteor at Mass and before Communion. She has also instituted public penances for all of us in the form of Lent and other seasons of fast and abstinence. In religious Orders we have the Chapter of Faults wherein members of the community publicly confess their faults against the Rule and Constitutions.

Such things should remind us of the public character of the Sacrament of Penance. If we enter into the spirit of the Church, both ancient and modern, we shall not be ashamed to manifest our sins frankly to the priest in the privacy of the confessional, while in public we humbly acknowledge that we have sinned before God and men. Our Father St. Francis himself gives us an example of such true humility and lack of hypocrisy. He refused to wear a warm lining within his habit where it would not be seen, but insisted that it be sewn on the outside. When forced to eat meat in Lent because of ill health, he loudly proclaimed the fact. And in his *Letter To All the Friars* he writes: "I confess all my sins to God. . . and to the minister general of this our religion as to my venerable Lord, and to all the priests of our order and to all my blessed brothers. I have offended in many ways through my grievous fault, especially because I have not observed the Rule which I have promised the Lord. . ."

While we are thus humble and quick to acknowledge our sins, we should seek to hide the sins of others. St. Francis tells us in his *Letter To A Certain Minister*: "Let all the brothers who know (one) to have sinned, not cause him shame or slander him, but let them have mercy on him and keep very secret the sin of their brother. . ."

Medieval Penance

Public confession disappeared in general in the Church about the year 500 A.D. in the West (that is, in Europe). The Celtic monks in Ireland and Britain promoted the practice of frequent private confession and from them it spread into continental Europe. But outside of the monasteries confession was often neglected, so that in the year 1215 the Fourth Council of the Lateran made it obligatory on all Catholics to receive the Sacrament of Penance at least once a year. St. Francis and his sons at this time began to make frequent confession

of devotion more popular among the laity. The spread of the Third Order is itself a testimony of the growth in the reception of the sacraments.

While the penance was now more often administered in a private way by the confessor rather than publicly by the bishop it still remained severe by our standards. Thus an early Irish penitential decreed that a priest who was absent from his church on Sunday must do twenty days of penance on bread and water. The penance was also medicinal, that is, selected with a view to curing the cause of the sin, for instance almsgiving and liberality to oppose avariciousness or stealing. Thus one who uttered a falsehood deliberately but without harm, had to keep silence for three days.

From these older and more strict forms of penance we moderns can learn the seriousness of sin and the necessity of doing real penance for them. In his *Letter To All The Faithful* St. Francis pictures the horrible plight of the man who went to confession on his deathbed "without satisfaction—when he could satisfy and did not satisfy—the devil snatches his soul from his body with such violence and anguish as no one can know except him who suffers it." Warned by these words of St. Francis let us not make frequent confession an occasion for a light estimate of sin, but rather let it lead us to greater amendment of life and genuine works of penance and reparation for sin.

Modern Ritual of Confession

The prayers and ceremonies of our modern Sacrament of Penance sum up, as it were, all the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church in this regard. The penitent kneels before the priest in humble supplication and begs for pardon as he frankly confesses his fault. Then the priest assigns the work of penance just as the bishop did in ancient times. However, now the priest does not wait until the time and work of penance is completed, but is satisfied with the promise of the penitent to fulfill his penance. Then the priest prays the "Misereatur. . .", and the "Indulgentiam. . ." just as in ancient times the whole Church joined in prayer that God might forgive the sinner.

Now follows the formal absolution. "May the Lord Jesus Christ absolve thee," says the priest, reminding us again that we are really confessing to Christ and receiving pardon from him. "You are entreating Christ," Tertullian had said. Now the confessor continues: "And I by the authority of the same (Jesus Christ) absolve thee from all the chain of excommunication and interdict, in so far as I am able and you have need of it." These words remind us again that sinners even

Today may be cut off from the sacraments and even from membership in the Church, and there are still some very great sins which the Church will not absolve without recourse to the bishop or even the Holy See. Then the priest continues with the essential formula for the sacrament: "I absolve thee from thy sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Just as we were baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity at which time we first received grace and membership in the Church, so now we again are pardoned and receive grace in the name of that same Trinity.

There follows now a beautiful prayer which is at the same time an admonition, which unfortunately Catholics do not usually understand since it is spoken in Latin. It runs: "May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the Saints, whatsoever thou shalt do good or suffer of evil, be unto thee for a remission of sins, the increase of grace, and the reward of eternal life. Amen." Here again we are reminded that it is only by the saving blood of Jesus that our sins can be forgiven, that the good works of Mary and the Saints are applied to us by the Church, especially by indulgences, and finally that we ourselves must perform good works and accept penance and life's suffering in a spirit of reparation for sins.

Let us conclude our monthly conference with the words of St. Francis in his First Rule: "Let my blessed brothers, both clerics and laics, let them confess their sins to priests of our Order. And if they cannot do this, let them confess to other discreet and Catholic priests, knowing firmly and hoping that from whatever Catholic priests they may receive penance and absolution, they will undoubtedly be absolved from their sins if they take care to observe humbly and faithfully the penance enjoined them."



KNIGHT OF THE CROSS

(Crucis arma fulgentia*)

Refulgent armor of the Cross
 To Francis in a dream is shown;
 He hears the Lord assuring him:
 This panoply shall be your own.
 On him these weapons of the Cross
 The power of the Lord bestow;
 Arrayed in them as Knight of Christ,
 He need not fear the fearsome foe.
 The summons to embrace the Cross
 Show him the way to win the fray;
 The Holy Book he opens thrice—
 Its words his rule of life portray.
 He learns the lessons of the Cross,
 Reflects on them with heart and mind;
 In converse with the Crucified
 His soul's desires fulfillment find.
 The Saviour, burdened with the Cross,
 He follows up to Calvary;
 And hears again His urgent words:
 Deny yourself, come after Me!
 This ardent lover of the Cross
 Is, through its fruits, to Christ conformed;
 And, by the wounds which pierce his flesh,
 Into another Christ transformed.
 The merits, blessings of the Cross,
 As, with this sign, ourselves we bless,
 Be our protection in this life,
 And lead to Heaven's happiness!

From the Latin, by Fr. Marion A. Habig, O.F.M.

*Hymn for Matins on the feast of the Stigmata
 of St. Francis of Assisi. September 17.

Mary's Troubador

Fr. Mark Sheehan, O.F.M.C.

Our beloved Father St. Francis was the closest follower of Christ that this world has ever seen. Realizing the great love that Christ had for His Mother Mary, St. Francis pursued this love with all the power of his poetic heart and chivalrous soul. "With Christ and because of Christ, he was devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary."¹

Francis, ever trusting in the loving care of his Heavenly Father, could not help but love with a tender devotion the pure and most holy Virgin Mary who was chosen by the most holy Father to be the mother of His divine Son.² Francis, the Herald of the King of Kings, loved Mary with such ineffable love because she "gave us the Lord of Majesty as our Brother³," and writing to all the priests of the Order, Francis pointed out, "The Blessed Virgin Mary is rightly honored so greatly because she bore the Lord in her most holy womb⁴". Francis, the temple of the Holy Ghost and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, showed every mark of esteem and love to Mary because she was consecrated by the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, and by the grace of the Holy Spirit was preserved from all sin.

In the time of St. Francis, the troubadours, poet-musicians of the Middle Ages, were very popular, and Francis himself had always been one of their ardent followers. Although he renounced their life of worldliness and gaiety, it was only to become a troubadour and minstrel of Christ and Mary. Francis no longer composed poems and songs about worldly matters, but he still composed poems and songs. Formerly he had praised the world and its spirit in poetic verse and lyrical songs. Now he praised God and heavenly things by his poetry and hymns.

The poetry of the troubadours, in which the praises of womanhood were sung, was dedicated to earthly beauty and even degenerated into frivolity and licentiousness. Francis opposed such poetry with his homage and praise of the Blessed Virgin, and together with his Order he spread the popular Marian cult, thus resulting in raising the poetic love song to a higher and more noble plane. The strong influence of St. Francis' Marian poetry and song ripened into the choicest fruits in the works of the Franciscan Tertiary Dante and the incomparable "*Stabat Mater*" of the thirteenth-century Franciscan, Jacopone da Todi.

According to St. Bonaventure, Saint Francis placed himself and his

Order under the protection and guidance of Mary for all time.⁵ If we were to depict St. Francis' devotion to Mary, we would paint a two-fold scene. On one side we would show Mary in all the poverty of Bethlehem placing the most sweet Son of God upon the rough straw of the manger. In the other half of our painting we would portray Mary, the Immaculate Mother of God and Queen of the Seraphic Order, in the chapel of Mary of the Angels stretching forth her arms in motherly protection over all her Franciscan sons and daughters.

From the earliest days of his youth St. Francis was filled with "an ardent devotion to the Mother all-loving and the Mistress of the world".⁶ When Francis forsook the world and the care and protection of his devout mother, Pica Bernardone, he placed himself under the loving care and protection of his heavenly Mother Mary. She was his guide and protectress in his new life of the poverty of her divine Son. Before the Feast of Mary's Assumption Francis fasted for forty days in her honor.⁷ After Christ, Francis placed all his confidence in her⁸; to her he confessed all his faults, and through her loving intercession he daily hoped to obtain pardon of his imagined sins. Thomas of Celano tells us, "He dedicated to the Mother of God special hymns of praise, addressed special prayers to her, and breathed so many and such intimate aspirations of love to her, that no tongue is capable of describing it".⁹ With the poetic heart of the troubadour and the chivalrous soul of Christ's knight, St. Francis poured forth his burning love for his Heavenly Mother. He gave his heart and soul to Christ through Mary, and Mary gave herself to Francis as his model of poverty and humility.

In his *Praises of the Virtues with which The most holy Virgin was adorned*, St. Francis prayed, "Hail, Lady holy Poverty, God save thee with thy holy sister Humility".¹⁰ In the days of St. Francis, the world had grown cold. The fire of Divine Love had been driven from the hearts of men by greed and avarice. There was much poverty, but most of it was not holy poverty. St. Francis, with the Blessed Virgin as his model and guide, turned men's hearts once again into burning coals of love for God and for their fellow-men. To the poor and down-trodden Francis cried, "live in holy poverty, live and share the humble life and poverty of Christ and Mary".

Since Mary had shared the poverty of her divine Son, St. Francis selected her as the ideal model for the Friars Minor. He praised poverty as "the queen of virtues, because it sparkled with such brightness as the King of Kings and in His queenly Mother".¹¹ Alms-begging was esteemed so highly by Francis "because Our Lord Jesus Christ was poor

and a stranger and lived on alms, He and the Blessed Virgin".¹² He considered every beggar whom he met as "a reflection of the Lord's poor Mother".¹³ It was only with many tears, as St. Bonaventure tells us, that Francis could recall the great privilege to which the Blessed Virgin and her Divine Child were exposed. In had been at dinner a friar mentioned how poor the Blessed Virgin was on Christmas Day when she gave birth to the Savior. This scene moved Francis most strongly. He rose instantly from the table, and moved himself on the bare floor, and then finished his frugal meal amid tears.¹⁵ The example of Christ and His Blessed Mother urged him and his Brothers and Sisters to a life of holy poverty. "I, your brother, Francis, will follow the life and poverty of Our Lord Christ and of His Blessed Mother and persevere therein. And I beg and beseech you all to persevere always in this most manner of life and poverty".¹⁶

Trusting in the most powerful intercession of Mary, St. Francis consecrated himself and his Order to the Mother of God, and Mother of the Poor. His life of penance began and ended at the little chapel of St. Mary of the Angels, the shrine of his dear heavenly Mother. It was there he stayed with his first followers; it was there he died.¹⁷ There he was willing to give up everything that he and his followers had. He still did not want to lose this chapel, his shrine to the Blessed Virgin. In an instruction to his followers, he said: "My sons, see to it that you never abandon this place. Should you be driven out of the way, come back another way. For this place is truly God's abode".¹⁸

Many years after the death of St. Francis, the story was told of Francis and his followers obtained the chapel of the Portiuncula. A devout peasant, standing one day near this chapel, heard the angels sing within, and full of astonishment he ran and told the priest. This chapel and ended by asking, "Why do you not ask Brother Francis here?" The brothers who live at Rivo Torto came and lived. No soon after a priest did so and brought St. Francis to the little chapel. As soon as Francis entered the chapel than he saw in a vision Christ and His Blessed Mother; and then Francis asked why Our Lord had come to this place. Our Lord answered, "to espouse this place to myself". Francis, realizing the full meaning of this vision, exclaimed, "I will never leave this spot!" Immediately he went to the abbot of the monastery on Mount Subasio, who at once offered him the little chapel. However, the Benedictine abbot made one condition: should the

Francis' followers increase and grow into a large order, this chapel should always be regarded as the chief place of the order. Francis readily agreed; and to his chivalrous soul it seemed that this condition placed the whole order in perpetual devotion and loyalty to the Mother of God "the head, after her Son, of all the Saints".¹⁹

Thus the small chapel of Mary of the Angels, or Portiuncula, was and has ever remained the cradle and home of his order. In this sanctuary St. Francis "poured forth", as St. Bonaventure says, "constant prayers to her who had conceived the Word full of grace and truth, that she might vouchsafe to be his advocate. And now by the merits of the Mother of Mercy, he conceived and brought forth the spirit of evangelical truth".²⁰ To this chapel Francis always led the new members of his order, "that the Order of Friars Minor, which had been born there by the merits of the Mother of God, might there also by her aid receive its increase".²¹ This sanctuary of the Virgin Mother of God "became the source and center of the new Order, the soul of his foundation. Here sprang up the fountain, which flowed in many thousand glittering rills of silver, humble and unassuming, through the divine garden of the Church, and changed so much sterile and desert land into green and blossoming fields. Hither Francis always returned after his distant journeys into the Orient and Occident; after he had strengthened and consoled his brothers on his journeys by his presence, founded monasteries, clothed princes and lords, poor and lowly, men and women with the garb of poverty, consoled the sorrowful, reconciled enemies, distributed spiritual and temporal alms—hither he felt always drawn, to the home-like little church, the cradle of the Order".²² St. Francis loved this little sanctuary above all other places in the world,²³ and on his death-bed he commended it to the care of his brothers.²⁴ In its shadow he also wished to die, after he had chosen the Blessed Virgin as the Patroness and Advocate of his Order and of his brethren for all times.²⁵

St. Francis was not satisfied with praying the Marian prayers which are found in the liturgy, nor with the Office of the Blessed Virgin which he added to these. He spent entire nights in the praise of God and of the Glorious Virgin,²⁶ and dedicated to the Mother of God special hymns of praise, addressed special prayers to her, and breathed so many and such intimate aspirations of love to her, that no tongue is capable of describing it.²⁷ Every Hour of his *Office of the Passion* began and ended with the antiphon: "Holy Virgin Mary, there is none

like unto thee born in the world among women, daughter and handmaid of the most high King, the Heavenly Father! Mother of Our most holy Lord Jesus Christ, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, pray for us with St. Michael Archangel, and all the virtues of Heaven, and all the saints to thy most holy Son, Our Lord and Master".²⁷

Still more beautiful and devotional is the *Salutation to the Blessed Virgin*, composed by Mary's Troubadour, and often recited by Franciscans.

Hail, holy Lady! Most holy Queen!
 Mary, Mother of God, yet a virgin
 forever!
 Chosen by the most high holy Father
 in Heaven,
 and by Him, with His most holy Son
 and the Spirit Paraclete, consecrated!
 You in whom there was and there is
 all the fulness of grace and everything good!
 Hail, His palace! Hail, His tabernacle!
 Hail, His home! Hail, His vesture!
 Hail, His handmaid! Hail, His Mother!
 And hail, too, all you holy virtues
 which by the grace and light of the
 Holy Ghost are infused into the hearts
 of the faithful, to make of the faith-
 less faithful children of God!"²⁸

Following the tender love and devotion of our beloved Father Francis for Mary, his Mother and his Queen, Franciscans everywhere give glory to their Queen and Spiritual Mother. Truly these devoted friars may be called the "Seraphic Stars" in Mary's Heavenly Crown. The first is the friar who introduced the custom of the Angelus bell, the one who began the practice of the Little Rosary of the Immaculate Conception, the Franciscan who initiated the recitation of the Little Office of the Immaculate Conception, the one who started the devotion to the Seven Joys of Mary, the seventeenth-century Capuchin-Franciscan who conducted the May devotion²⁹, the friar-theologian, St. Lawrence Brindisi, with his theses on Mary's glories, and the many mission friars who carried her name to pagans in every land. Many Feasts of Our Lady and Queen have been popularized, and brought into the liturgy by the devoted sons of St. Francis. The defense of Mary's prerogatives, especially of her Immaculate Conception and of her Assumption, have brought justifiable renown to Franciscan preachers and theologians, particularly to Duns Scotus and St. Anthony of Padua.

loving and tender has been the bond between Mary and the sons and daughters of St. Francis that the Church has given the Franciscan Order the unique privilege of adding to Mary's litany the prayer: "Queen of the Seraphic Order, pray for us".

Perhaps we modern-day Franciscans cannot emulate perfectly the tender love and devotion that our holy Father Francis had for Mary, the Mother of God. However, we all can emulate the holy example of our beloved Father's poverty and humility. Then, being rich in grace and truly poor in everything else, we are most pleasing in the sight of our dear Mother Mary. When Sister Death comes to call us home to Heaven, we can say to Mary, "Mother Mary, I am thy poor, humble Franciscan child. Take me by the hand and lead me to the throne of my Eternal Father in Heaven!"

QUEEN OF THE SERAPHIC ORDER, PRAY FOR US!

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THE HUMAN-SERAPH

Up amid the gloomy grandeurs of the Mount Alvernia
 With its deeply-riven gulfs and yawning gapping chasms,
 Sang the Troubadour in cries, so plaintive, to all creatures;
 He who bade the rocks to melt in tears for Christ, the Victim.
 "Crucified, you are, my Lord, and not I, oh my Jesus!
 Innocence you are itself yet suffering for the creature.
 See, my soul, how priced thou art by Christ thy suffering lover:
 Can't you love enough, my soul, to pay what thou dost owe Him?
 Sing no more, thou little bird, but sigh in strains of sadness;
 Bow your heads, O noble trees, and cross your searching branches
 Rocks up on the mountain side, do weep in rushing torrents;
 Nature, weep for Christ your Lord; thou mountain, burst afire!
 Man, thou sinner, can't you weep for Christ your suffering Saviour
 All the other things of earth now chant their lamentations.
 Glory not in perfect beauty, knowledge, or in vices—
 Glory in the cross of Christ, the price of your salvation."
 Gloomy, lonely nights have passed in deepest contemplation:
 "Who art Thou, my gracious Lord, and I a worm most vile?"
 Silent stand the noble trees all bearded with the darkness;
 Nature listens to his cries and glances to the heavens.
 "Who art Thou, O sweetest God, and I Thy worthless servant?"
 And these words he oft had said, and nothing else would soothe him;
 Shadows stalked the darkened groves with dawning expectation;
 Creatures scanned the sky above; the silent night didst hover.
 Suddenly from outer space appeared a ball of fire—
 Rapidly it traced its course with streaking spurts of flashes;
 Toward the Saint the Form did speed, unearthly in its splendor,
 Marvellous a Form it was—a Seraph from the Highest!
 Sky was painted by the red; the earth seemed all afire!
 Wings of six the Form did have, the Crucified, the Lover.
 Sight so new with joy, amazement, and with grief had filled him—
 "Christ, my Lord, just let me feel the pains of Your cruel passion!"
 Streams of blazing, glaring flames had pierced his trembling body;
 Stiffened were his limbs from pain, so pointed and so biting.
 Knight of Christ—His standard-bearer, faithful to the Master—
 Loyal, brave enthusiast for Christ, the suffering Saviour!

Fr. Anacleto Yonick, O.F.M.

Consecrated Virginity (II)

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.

In the ideal of consecrated virginity lies the sum and substance, the purpose and ultimate end, of the religious life. Consequently, failure to grasp the essence of this ideal must necessarily result in failure to reach the full perfection of the religious state. Here we are dealing with fundamentals, and it is precisely here that we so often find a lamentable confusion of thought, even among religious themselves. Without a clear concept of the underlying motive for the vow of chastity, without a right understanding of the ideal of religious celibacy and of the obligations it imposes, we run the risk of disaster in our vocation. Misconceptions in this regard may well be the answer to the why of so much spiritual mediocrity among religious, and to the why of so many defections. It may be helpful, therefore, to take first a negative approach to the subject and look briefly into two of the more frequently encountered and more dangerous of these misconceptions.

I. Misconceptions of the Ideal

The first of these misconceptions is the error that equates the perfection of religious chastity with extreme avoidance of anything and everything even remotely connected with the natural functions of the body. An exaggerated sensitivity—real or pretended—to matters of sex is considered evidence of lofty virtue and delicacy of conscience, and the more externalized this sensitivity becomes the more highly it is rated. Whatever is not obviously labeled as "religious" is rejected as worldly and corrupting; impurity is seen lurking at every turn; and even the free candor of innocence is regarded as suspect.

Basically, all this is simply an echo of the ancient heresies of the Gnostics, the Encratites, the Cathari, and all those who throughout the centuries have tried to deny the goodness of matter. Orthodox theologians, from the earliest Christian era to modern times, have had to assert again and again that God's creation is essentially good and not evil, that sexuality is essentially noble and neither corrupt nor corrupting, and that the value of consecrated virginity lies not in any inherent excellence but only in its effectiveness as a remedy for fallen human nature. This should be made quite clear, especially to young religious who are still capable of formation. Unsound attitudes in this regard almost always lead to unpleasant distortions of the religious

personality, and frequently expose the religious life itself to ridicule. Certainly in the present day, when the dignity of marriage is being so eloquently proclaimed—even to the point of dangerous exaggeration—the religious who tends to disparage sex will hardly be effective in the apostolate.

The persons most likely to fall victim to this error are those whose thinking is superficial and whose experience is limited. Without proper guidance, they will fail to grasp the broader and deeper significance of religious chastity because the true greatness and profundity of human life itself escapes their comprehension. Left to themselves, they will be caught in the pattern of vain complacency and shallow attitudinizing that the world so often contemptuously associates with religious. At best they will hardly attain to the full stature of Christian celibacy, but will very likely remain stunted in mediocrity.

The second misconception we shall consider here is the error that regards celibacy as of value primarily, if not solely, in terms of sacrifice and renunciation. Victims of this error feel that having made the sacrifice of their natural right to marriage, they have thereby acquired the perfection of consecrated virginity and have nothing further to do. Herein lies the danger. Admittedly, the renunciation of marriage is a sacrifice, and a sacrifice that is diametrically opposed to the deepest instincts of man. It leaves an emptiness in the human soul that always clamors to be filled. But the religious who offers God only the void in the soul offers a meaningless gift and halts at a perilous half-way stage on the road to perfection. No man can live with emptiness. Sooner or later the heroism of the sacrifice will lose its lustre and celibacy will seem a wearisome and pointless waste. The vow will come to be looked upon with natural eyes and natural things will be sought after by way of compensation. Selfishness and egotism will become the motivating forces. Instead of the glowing, headlong intensity of love, the cold and barren calculation of narrowness, indifference, and spiritual torpor will characterize such a soul. This does not mean that the legal obligations of the vow will be flagrantly violated; on the contrary, they may be observed to the letter. It is quite possible for a religious to remain in this half-way position for the whole time of his life without ever realizing his inadequacy, and without suffering any loss of good repute, even among his most critical confreres. But the religious who never goes beyond the mere observance of the Sixth and Ninth Commandments will hardly find much joy in celibacy, and certainly he will never fulfill the ultimate purpose of his religious consecration.

II. The Meaning of the Ideal

Actually, the ideal of consecrated virginity is concerned neither with sex nor with sacrifice, except as necessary concomitants. The ultimate purpose of religious celibacy is simply this: *to seek the face of the Lord always* (Ps. 104:4). There are other secondary purposes—to offer God a more perfect fulfillment of the law of chastity, for example, or to strengthen the dominion of the spirit over the flesh—but these are only subsidiary to the ultimate purpose. The ideal of consecrated virginity was set forth very clearly by Saint Paul when he wrote: *But I would have you to be without solicitude. He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife; and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband* (I Cor. 7:32-34). Here we find stated the whole purpose of celibacy, in fact, of the religious life in general: to be solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, to be holy in body and in spirit, to belong undividedly to God. Substantially the same idea appears in the account of the temptation of Saint Francis. According to Saint Bonaventure, Francis once overcame the rebellion of his body by leaping naked into a snow-drift. Then, forming figures of snow, he said to himself: "See, this largest heap is your wife, these four are your two sons and your two daughters, the other two are your man and your maid servants, whom you need to wait on you. Now hurry and dress them, for they are dying of the cold. But if that manifold worry over them disturbs you, then be in earnest and serve God alone" (*Legenda Maior*, 5). Here celibacy is understood by clear implication as freedom from solicitude about the things of the world for the purpose of exclusive devotion to God.

Through the vow of chastity, all the natural powers and faculties of the body, mind, and soul are consecrated to God. They may not be put to any profane use. But this does not mean that they are not to be used at all. On the contrary, they must be used in the highest degree, brought to the most perfect fulfillment, but on a supernatural plane.

To be holy means to be consecrated to God, and to be consecrated to God means to be taken away from things profane and purely natural. As our churches are reserved for divine services and used for no other purpose, so religious are separated from the rest of the faithful and

employed exclusively in the service of God. Consequently, to be consecrated to God in chastity means to be separated from marriage which is the common and natural destiny of man, and to be reserved for the things of the Lord. The consecrated virgin, therefore, is property of God in a particular and emphatic sense. The dedicated celibate belongs to no creature; no one has any human right over him; he is not bound to anyone by any purely human tie. For this reason he is no longer concerned with mundane affairs, how to please a spouse, how to meet the responsibilities of parenthood. He is concerned solely with seeking the face of the Lord always. The place that would naturally be occupied by a partner in marriage and a family is occupied only by God, and in a manner analogous to that of marriage. As a matter of fact, the early Fathers regarded consecrated virginity as simply a more advanced point along the same line as Christian marriage, transcending the earthly state of the *great sacrament*; for the characteristics of marriage—intimate and exclusive union with a beloved partner, self-surrender, desire for fruitfulness, complete absorption in the affairs of the beloved one, an ever-solicitous desire to please—these are also the essential characteristics of consecrated virginity, but applying to the spiritual union of the Word with the dedicated soul. The cry of Saint Francis, "My God and my all," expresses perfectly the ideal of religious celibacy. It is the Triune God Himself Who is to the natural emptiness that remains in the heart of the celibate, and is only in this emptying and refilling that the religious finds true joy and satisfaction.

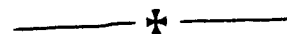
The delight consequent upon this union with God so far surpasses any union on the purely human level that even the most eloquent among the saints who wrote about it could find no words to describe it. They accept their testimony without question, as something entirely self-evident. Surely none of us would deny that the mystical union is supreme to be desired and sought after. Yet the fact remains that comparatively few religious ever experience the full delight of this loving union with the divine Bridegroom. The majority of us seem content to plod along on the level ground of faith and hope, viewing the mountain of charity from afar. This is hardly the ideal. In the last analysis, it would seem that if a religious finds celibacy a joyless burden—presuming, of course, that he possesses the qualities of mind and body essential to the religious vocation—the fault lies squarely with him. He has failed to search into the full meaning of his consecration, he has failed to realize it practically in his daily life. God wills that the celibate's whole power of loving

be turned away from the purely human, the purely natural, and be turned completely to Him. Unless this *metanoia* is effected, the surpassing joy and delight that God has attached to consecrated virginity can hardly be experienced.

"If you wish to know how these things may come about," writes Saint Bonaventure in reference to the union of the soul with God, "ask grace, not learning; desire, not the understanding; the groaning of prayer, not diligence in reading; the Bridegroom, not the teacher; God, not man; darkness, not clarity; not light, but the fire that wholly inflames and carries one into God through transporting unctions and consuming affections. God Himself is this fire, and *His furnace is in Jerusalem*; and it is Christ who enkindles it in the white flame of His most burning Passion. This fire he alone truly perceives who says: *My soul chooseth hanging, and my bones, death*. He who loves this death can see God, for it is absolutely true that Man shall not see me and live.

"Let us, then, die and enter into this darkness. Let us silence all our care, our desires, and our imaginings. With Christ crucified, let us pass out of the world to the Father, so that, when the Father is shown to us, we may say with Philip: *It is enough for us*. Let us hear with Paul: *My grace is sufficient for thee*, and rejoice with David, saying: *My flesh and my heart have fainted away: thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever*." (*Itinerarium*, VII, 6).

(To be continued)



THREE BROTHERS

Unlike the hapless only child, I have three brothers dear.
 But all of them are far from me, and none of them is here.
 And though I am a lonely child, my lot is not so bad,
 As if I were an only child who n'er three brothers had.
 For often in my lonely room, there's solace for my pain:
 The memory that I knew them one, the hope I'll know again.
 A little babe was brother one; he died right after birth.
 They set his body in a box, the coffin in the earth.
 A sister was a twin to him. The girl survived the boy.
 She has three children of her own; they are her pride and joy.
 If he had grown to man's estate, I'm sure that he would be
 As beautiful and gentle as my sister, sweet Marie.
 But Bernard is in Heaven now, no more a helpless tyke.
 And one day I shall meet him there, and tell you what he's like.
 Brother two I knew the best. (He treated me so nice.)
 But now he is both near and far and brother to me twice.
 When we had grown to man-hood's age, we both took leave from me
 I became a Friar cleric; he a Friar brother.
 So Frank is now Felician and he works a Friar's farm;
 And I bear now the name——, and prayer-books in my arm.
 Brother Three is eldest having been born years ago.
 His birth-place was a stable, and His crib a manger low.
 He did not die in childhood, but He lived till thirty-three.
 And then some fellows took Him, and they nailed Him to a tree.
 He said that He was dying and was bearing all that shame
 So I and both my brothers too for sin would not have blame.
 I've never seen this Brother Three, Who took my sins away,
 But He speaks to me each morning, in a sacramental way.
 In form of bread He comes to me to tell me of His love
 And how, one day, we brothers three will meet with Him above.

Frater Pacificus F. Waywood, O.F.M.

St. Leonard of Port Maurice and The Stations of the Cross

Fr. Mark Sheehan, O.F.M.Cap.

As Franciscans we naturally have a great love for the poor crucified Christ. Our Profession of the Franciscan Way of Life obliged us to imitate and to follow the poor crucified Savior along the Calvary Road of suffering. Thus, as we make the Stations of the Cross and walk in spirit with Our suffering Lord, we can say truly with our holy Father Saint Francis, "I determine not to know anything. . . except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1)".

With these words of our beloved Father Francis we can begin our study of the Stations of the Cross in a real Franciscan frame of mind.

The erection and use of the Stations of the Cross did not become general before the end of the seventeenth century. Now there are fourteen stations, but formerly their number and position differed considerably in various places.

Though we are concerned mainly with the influence of St. Leonard of Port Maurice, we shall go back into earlier times in order to appreciate fully his amazing propagation of the devotion to the Way of the Cross.

Considering the Way of the Cross as a miniature pilgrimage to the Holy Places in Jerusalem, the origin of this devotion may be traced to the Holy Land. The *Via Dolorosa* at Jerusalem was reverently marked out from earliest times and has been the goal of pious pilgrims since the days of Constantine. Tradition tells us that the Blessed Virgin used to visit daily the scenes of Christ's Passion and Saint Jerome speaks of the cosmopolitan crowds of pilgrims who frequented the Holy Places in his time.

There is no direct evidence of any set form to the devotion at this early date. In fact, St. Sylvia (circa 380) in her "Peregrinatio ad loca sancta" does not mention this devotion although she describes in detail every other religious exercise she saw practiced there (2).

In the fifth century Saint Petronius, Bishop of Bologna, constructed a group of connected chapels at the monastery of San Stefano in Bologna. His purpose was to represent the more important shrines of Jeru-

salem. These may be the origins from which the Stations developed. But certainly nothing we have before the fifteenth century can properly be called a "Way of the Cross", at least as we understand the term today.

Several travellers who visited the Holy Land in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries mention a *Via Sacra*, i.e., a determined route along which pilgrims were conducted. However, there is nothing in their accounts to identify this with the *Via Crucis* as we know it today, including special stopping-places with indulgences attached, and such indulgenced stations must be considered as the *true* origin of the devotion as it is now practiced.

We cannot be certain of the date when such indulgences began to be granted, but certainly a great number of these spiritual favors were due to the efforts of the Franciscans to whom in 1342 the Guardianship of the Holy Places were entrusted. Lucius Ferraris, the eighteenth-century Franciscan canonist, mentions the following as Stations to which indulgences were attached: "the place where Christ met His Blessed Mother, where He spoke to the women of Jerusalem, where He met Simon of Cyrene, where the soldiers cast lots for His garment, where He was nailed to the Cross. Pilate's House, and the Holy Sepulchre (3)". Ferraris lists at least four of these indulgences as Plenary indulgences (4).

The earliest consistent use of the word "Stations" as applied to the customary stopping-places of the *Via Sacra* in Jerusalem occurs in the narrative of the English pilgrim, William Wey, who visited the Holy Land in 1458 and later in 1462. He describes the usual manner of following the footsteps of Christ in His Sorrowful Journey. Up until then it had been the common practice to begin at Mount Calvary, and proceeding from there to work back to Pilate's House. By the early sixteenth century, the more reasonable way of beginning at Pilate's House and ending at Calvary was regarded as the more correct route, and it became a special exercise of devotion in itself.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, several reproductions of the Holy Places were set up in different parts of Europe. Blessed Alvarez (d. 1420), on his return from the Holy Land, built a series of little chapels at the Dominican Friary in Cordova, in which, after the pattern of separate stations, were painted the principal scenes of the Passion. About the same time, Blessed Eustochia, a Poor Clare, constructed similar sets in her convent at Messina. Others were erected at Goerlitz by G. Emmerich (circa 1465), and at Nuremberg by Ketsch in 1468. Imitations of these were made at Louvain in 1505 by Peter Sterckx; and at Fribourg and Rhodes about the same date.

The set at Nuremberg consisted of seven stations popularly called *The Seven Falls* of Christ. A famous set was erected in 1515 by Romanet Bouffin at Romans in Dauphine, and a similar set had been erected in 1491 at Varallo by the Franciscans, whose Guardian, Blessed Bernardino Caimi, had been Custodian of the Holy Places in Jerusalem.

THE NUMBER OF STATIONS

In regard to the number of the stations, it is not easy to discover how it became fixed at fourteen for the number varied considerably at different times and places. Wey's account, which we have already mentioned, gives fourteen stations, but only five of these correspond with our present fourteen stations. The other seven, viz., *The House of Dives*, the city gate through which Christ passed, *the Probatic Pool*, *the Ecce Homo Arch* (the balcony from which these words were spoken), *the Blessed Virgin's School*, and the houses of *Herod* and *Simon the Pharisee*, are only more or less connected with our Way of the Cross today.

When Romanet Bouffin visited Jerusalem in 1515 to obtain exact details for his set of stations at Romans, two friars there told him that there ought to be thirty-one stations in all. But in the manuals later issued for the use of those visiting these stations, the number is given as nineteen, twenty-five, and thirty-seven, so even in the same place the number was not determined very definitely.

EVOLUTION OF THE FOURTEEN STATIONS

The series of our present-day stations was developed in Belgium. The first step in their evolution goes back to the booklet of the Priest, Bethlen. This booklet was written sometime between 1471 and 1517. In 1518 it was printed in Flemish and French, and then translated into Latin and German. Bethlen's booklet mentions the Stations: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, and combined the tenth with the eleventh station. The Carmelite, John Pascha, in 1568 enumerated in his book *Way of the Cross in Flemish* the Stations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. According to Pascha's work a few sets of these Stations were erected in the Netherlands. However, the greatest evolution was inaugurated by another Belgian writer, Adrichonius, by birth a Dutchman, Christian Adrian Cucius. He died after being banished by the Calvinists in 1585. A year before he died Adrichonius published in Latin his "*Jerusalem sicut Christi tempore floruit*". His Latin description of "Jerusalem as it looked in the time of Christ" gives twelve stations which correspond exactly with our first twelve. Five years after his

death the Latin work "Theatrum terrae sanctae" was published in Cologne in 1590. This later work contained a description of Palestine then the reprint of his earlier work with the description of Jerusalem and as a third part a chronological survey of the history of the Old and New Testament. These books of Adrichonius were great successes. Within ten years, 1590-1600, 5 Latin, 6 Italian, 2 English, one Dutch and one Bohemian translations of his works were published. Between 1600 and 1700 several Polish and Spanish translations, and one German edition appeared. The larger work of 1590 was less popular, yet it passed through ten editions up to the year 1722.

Adrichonius never saw Jerusalem. His description of the stations followed those outlined in the works of Bethlen and Pascha. He advised the people to erect Ways of the Cross in one of their rooms or in the gardens. Following his advice these Ways of the Cross were erected everywhere according to his directions and measurements. In some sections of Belgium Ways of the Cross were erected with only seven stations, but in other places Sets were erected with nineteen Stations. Our present fourteen stations together with the five preliminary Stations of the Way of Imprisonment. The Jesuit, Jodocus Andries (died 1658) spread the devotion by his small devotional book on the Passion of Our Lord and His Sorrowful Mother. Andries adopted the Stations of Adrichonius but inserted the present 13th Station which occasionally had been omitted in earlier manuals.

By the year 1643 the Fourteen Stations were popular in Belgium, Austria, to which Belgium then belonged, and Bavaria. In 1668 the 14 Stations of Adrichonius became known in Poland, and shortly before the year 1700 the Fourteen Stations gained recognition in Silesia. In 1628 the Fourteen Stations according to the order of Adrichonius were introduced in Florence, and in Southern Italy the Fourteen Stations were popularized on the Island of Sardinia. The final impetus to the spread of this devotion was given in 1696 when the Franciscan General Chapter obliged the Superiors to spread the devotion of the Way of the Cross.

Although we must credit the secular priest, Adrichonius, with the development of our present fourteen Stations, nevertheless due credit for the development of this devotion must be given to our Franciscan brethren of the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. Such scholarly works as "Elucidatio terrae sanctae" by Quaresmius, the Franciscan Orientalist of the seventeenth century, "Indulgentie de Terra Sancta" of Francesco Suriano, the Franciscan Guardian of Mount Sion, and "Trattato delle Piante et Immagini de'sacri Edifici

di Terra Sancta" of the seventeenth-century Franciscan, Bernardine Amico, may be called the source books of this devotion. Without the support of these later Franciscan authors, the works of Adrichonius, Bethlen, and Pascha would have been unable to sustain their popular and logical formation of the Stations.

INFLUENCE OF SAINT LEONARD OF PORT MAURICE

There are two questions which naturally arise when we discuss the Stations of the Cross. First, what is the origin of this devotion, and how did it happen that the Passion of Christ was represented in this exact form, numbering fourteen mysteries, no more and no less? Second, how did this devotion attain such universal propagation and popularity? The first question has already been answered as well as it can be answered. Now we must turn to St. Leonard of Port Maurice in order to answer the second question.

In 1628, the Franciscan Salvator Vitale, returning from Spain, erected the first Way of the Cross on Italian soil on the road leading up to the Franciscan Monastery of S. Francesco al Monte from the city of Florence. According to Father Vitale, the stations were in use at that time in Spain, Belgium, the East and West Indies, and not only in the cloisters of all the branches of the Franciscan Order, but even in the houses of lay people.

A brief of Innocent XI, dated September 5, 1686, contains the first bestowal of a Stations Indulgence. From this brief stemmed the concept that the erection of *Vias* and the promotion of the devotion is a responsibility and privilege of the Franciscans. Only the Stations erected in their churches enjoyed the Indulgence, only the faithful in any way subject to the Minister General of this Order could share in them. Such was the situation in 1700 when Saint Leonard appeared in the scene. We shall see that in the propagation and popularization of this devotion, St. Leonard's forty years of ceaseless labors played a very considerable part.

1704-1709

St. Leonard spent this period in his native town, Port Maurice, convalescing from a serious lung disease. At that time he was a young priest, 28 years old, belonging to the "Ritiro" as the cloistered Franciscans were called. About 1706, he promised the Mother of God, if he were cured of this disease which had grown steadily worse, he would devote his whole life to the salvation of sinners by means of public missions. A few days later he was completely cured. Now he became

anxious to begin his Apostolic labors. He could not give popular missions right away since he was not prepared for this work. Nor could he hear confessions since he was not yet thirty years of age.

He decided therefore to arouse enthusiasm among the people for the devotion to the Stations of the Cross. His fellow-townsmen did not know of this practice since there was no set of Stations even in the Franciscan convent at Port Maurice. Begging sufficient alms from relatives and friends, he erected two sets of stations, one outside in the square before the convent, and the other was erected within the convent church itself.

Following the ideals of our holy Father St. Francis, St. Leonard considered the Cross of Jesus Christ as the compendium of all holiness: the key, the door, the way, and the splendor of truth. Realizing from his theological study of the Seraphic Doctor, St. Bonaventure, that meditation on the Passion of Christ is "the shortest and surest way to union with Christ (5)", St. Leonard regarded the devotion to the Stations of the Cross as an efficacious means to ensure the salvation of souls. To this his decision to promote the propagation of the Stations was based on two motives: first, if men can be drawn, by the Stations, to meditate on what the Godman suffered for them, their salvation is assured; second, the gaining of the indulgences. St. Leonard often referred to "the Way of the Cross", both in his sermons and in his writings as "*the hidden treasure* (6)". That he had chosen well, he discovered from his experiences at Port Maurice and his native diocese of Albano where he remained until the end of 1709.

THE CRUCIAL TEST

Transferred towards the end of 1709 to the Retreat of San Marco near the gates of Florence, St. Leonard began his spiritual activities on the Fridays of the following March. His particular brand of devotion to the Stations of the Cross, the Order was disliked by most of the people there. He conducted the Stations, giving a short talk at each station so that the whole ceremony lasted about two hours. The result was overwhelming with the help of the attitude changed to one of respect and gratitude to the new friar. At the end of the services, the people returned to their homes in a collected and contrite mood.

Soon afterwards his Stations' Apostolate entered a new and significant stage. Until 1709 he had kept within the limits of the prevailing tradition of the Order—spreading the devotion only in places under the jurisdiction of the Franciscan Father General. Now St. Leonard wanted to break these boundaries and carry the blessings of this

into the churches of all parishes and all other religious Orders.

According to the general opinion of the Order, at least in Italy, the rich indulgences attached to the Way of the Cross devotion could only be gained in those churches which were Franciscan. Leonard, after careful study believed that this tradition was incorrect and that all Vias, wherever located, shared the indulgences if they were properly erected by a Franciscan. Thus, from about the year 1712, he began to erect sets of stations in all parishes and cloisters where opportunity offered, and he taught further that the indulgences could be gained at these places. In 1717 he set down his views on this question in a small booklet and carried it to Florence for the Imprimatur of the General Inquisitor there. The censor of the booklet, Father Hippolytus of Florence, a champion of the prevailing tradition of the Order, declared himself against the granting of the Imprimatur. St. Leonard then went to Lucca and there received the desired approbation. Father Hippolytus appealed to the General Curia at Rome, and in October, 1717, a circular letter was issued which took a strong stand against St. Leonard's view.

In the face of this new development, Leonard continued to erect sets of Stations, without however teaching that they were indulgenced. As early as 1720, he sought Papal approval of his interpretation. At his request his friend, Archbishop Frosini of Pisa, sent a letter to the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, asking him to petition the Pope to extend the indulgences to all Vias, and not just those located in Franciscan churches. In March, 1727, a Brief of Pope Benedict XIII appeared which seemed to place Leonard in an unfavorable position since it limited the application of indulgences to Vias that might in any way come under the jurisdiction of the Franciscan Minister General. However, this Papal document also opposed the interpretation of those who restricted the gaining of these indulgences to members of the Seraphic Order and organizations connected with it. Due to his efforts together with the strong recommendation and kind interest of the Crown Princess Violante of Tuscany, St. Leonard obtained an answer to his request for unlimited erection of indulgenced sets of Stations by himself and his companions as well as for the Spanish Alcantarins near Florence. In November, 1729, a Papal grant was issued which also conveyed the indulgences to all sets of Stations erected by the brethren of these groups, i.e., the Tuscan Ritiro and the Spanish Alcantarins of Florence.

On July 12, 1730, the Florentine Cardinal Corsini was elected Pope

(Clement XII). Once again Princess Violante, who used her influence to cause the Emperor's withdrawal of opposition to Corsini's candidature, interested herself in St. Leonard's behalf. Provided with a letter from the Crown Princess, St. Leonard set out for Rome towards the end of September of 1730. Early in October he had an audience with the Pope and delivered her letter to him. Leonard did not speak the Way of the Cross to the Holy Father although he had already begun work on it through some Cardinals.

Due to the wonderful success of his popular missions at San Galla and the Church of the Florentines at Rome, the Pope summoned St. Leonard to an audience and in fact to several successive ones. Leonard now spoke to the Holy Father about the Way of the Cross, describing the immeasurable blessings that would result from the propagation of this devotion among all Christian people. The Pope was particularly impressed by the fact that this devotion would draw the faithful, almost imperceptibly, to practice mental prayer. He granted Leonard's position and in the Papal Brief of January 16, 1731 attached to all the Ways of the Cross erected by the Friars Minor, even the outside their own churches, all the indulgences then granted for the Way of the Cross.

Though most of his confreres showed their whole-hearted acceptance of the new Papal document and enthusiastically took up the work, the majority of the higher Superiors took St. Leonard's success rather poorly. Now they attempted to put limitations on the interpretation of this Brief. In May, 1731, the Commissary General Krisper sent a circular letter with directions that were restrictions rather than interpretation of the Papal document. St. Leonard was not pleased with these limitations and he obtained directly from the Pope a dispensation from these restrictions for himself and his companions which was granted on June 19, 1731.

For the time being Leonard was satisfied and he awaited a better opportunity for the complete fulfillment of his wishes. This presented itself under the successor of Clement XII, Pope Benedict XIV, Leonard's friend and admirer. St. Leonard asked him to confirm the Clementine Brief, and to add to the Congregation's nine points of instruction a tenth, the statement that it was the Holy Father's wish to have Ways of the Cross erected in all parish churches and all pious places, and that the distance of the individual Ways of the Cross, one from another, held no significance. Yet, wherever a Franciscan house was located, a new Way of the Cross should be erected only when it was difficult to visit the Franciscan Church. Publication of this Brief took place

on August 30, 1741; that of the tenth point on May 10, 1742.

Nothing more remained that St. Leonard could desire in this matter. His zeal increased, if possible, even more. This ardor is shown by the records of the missions he gave in the summer of 1744, in the extremely difficult territory of Corsica. During the first six missions, he and his companions erected 100 sets of Stations which were "wonderfully frequented" by the Corsicans. From 1731 until his death in 1751, St. Leonard personally blessed 572 Ways of the Cross and erected more than 1,000 pious Confraternities to aid the spread of this devotion (7).

On June 30, 1748, a decree of the Congregation of Indulgences declared that for the proper erection of a new Way of the Cross, a threefold permission was required: that of the local Bishop, the pastor of the church concerned, and the Superior of the nearest Franciscan monastery. Since these conditions seriously hampered St. Leonard on his mission trips, he obtained from the Pope in May, 1749, the faculty to erect sets of Stations without a particular permission from the Superiors.

In 1749, there was still some opposition to these hard-won concessions for the Stations, and so St. Leonard did not slacken his vigilance. In February of 1750 he made arrangements to be present at the General Chapter at Rome scheduled for Pentecost "so the Fathers would make no regulations against the Stations". At his request, during the Chapter, the Pope addressed the newly-elected General, directing him to make known to the Order these three desires: first, the conscientious observance of the Franciscan Rule, especially poverty; second, the erection of one or more Retreats, houses of stricter observance, in each Province; and third, *the zealous promotion of the Way of the Cross both inside and outside Franciscan cloisters*.

By the year 1749, St. Leonard could say, "there is hardly a parish or cloister in Italy or France, Spain or Portugal, or even in the Indies, without a properly blessed and popularly visited Way of the Cross." The saint could also include Germany in the above-mentioned group.

There would be no danger of exaggeration in placing the number of Ways of the Cross erected through the immediate influence of St. Leonard at several thousand, and the number of times the Stations were made at several million. The most influential factor in their propagation was that through the efforts of St. Leonard the indulgences were extended to *all* Ways of the Cross. Furthermore, the devotion of the Way of the Cross offered an effective antidote to the insidious poi-

son of Quietism. Father Thurston tells us that the greatest development of the Way of the Cross as a popular devotion is owed to St. Leonard of Port Maurice "due partly to the immense zeal with which he propagated this practice of piety, partly to the favour which he enjoyed with Popes Clement XII and Benedict XIV (8)". We must remember that St. Leonard composed exercises of the Way of the Cross which became a practical and popular aid to the spread of this devotion (9). In order to appreciate fully the influence of St. Leonard's published work on the Stations of the Cross, we shall look into the manual of "hidden treasure" as St. Leonard terms it.

THE EXERCISE OF THE WAY OF THE CROSS COMPOSED BY ST. LEONARD

First of all, this work of St. Leonard's is a typical example of the simple, heart-moving mode of Franciscan preaching. St. Leonard wished to move the wills of his hearers to acts of true love for the suffering Godman. His success was due to the fact that his exercises really touched the hearts of the people and moved them to repentance by short, practical meditations on each station or mystery of the Passion.

"First Station, Jesus is condemned to Death: My Jesus, I adore that divine patience with which You received the most unjust sentence of death from the iniquitous tribunal of Pilate, and through it good power, I beg You to cancel out at Your dread Tribunal the most just sentence of eternal death that my sins have so many times deserved and to name me among Your elect in Heaven (10)".

"Fourth Station, Jesus meets His most Sorrowful Mother: I consider, my Jesus, the bitter moment in which weighed down with an immeasurable burden You met Your most Sorrowful Mother; and with the tears of my compassion I beg You to let me meet You at every moment of my life, and especially at the moment of my death (11)".

"Sixth Station, the Face of Jesus is wiped by Veronica: I admire, my Jesus, the generous compassion of Veronica in advancing without fear among the insolent crowd to wipe from Your face every drop of blood and sweat; and by the merits of this truly courageous action I beg You to give me the grace to conquer all human respect, and always to advance more in Your holy Service (12)".

"Tenth Station, Jesus is stripped of His garments: I pity, my Jesus, the ignominy that You suffered in coming with such publicity and the insulting divesting of Your clothes; and through the merits of this holy embarrassment that You underwent, I beg You to give me the grace

of divesting myself of the follies of the world, and of my own follies, and of meeting willingly through love for You derision and contempt (13)".

"Twelfth Station, Jesus dies on the Cross: On the hill of bloody Calvary I contemplate You crucified and dead, O my Adorable Redeemer; and at the sight the heavens, the earth, nature, the universe darkens, trembles and weeps at such a mighty death. I beseech You to give me lively contrition for my sins, so that, my heart being pierced by intense sorrow, I may not be made known to all the world as being harder than the stones, which were split by such a mighty spectacle (14)".

"Fourteenth Station, Jesus is placed in the Sepulchre: I kiss with trembling lips Your adorable tomb, O my Jesus, and with devout tears I wash it, I entreat You to bury there all my sinfulness, so that I can one day rise gloriously with You and enter into the possession of that Glory which You purchased for me by such a painful Passion and Death (15)".

Each meditation composed by St. Leonard is a lesson that remained in the minds and hearts of the people long after the Service of the Way of the Cross was finished. The lessons were simple, though heart-rending ones. Each one said, "by your sins you crucified Jesus Who loves you; by your wicked lives you made Him sweat blood in the Garden, you scourged Him at the Pillar, you crowned Him with Thorns, you goaded and pushed Him, crushed by the weight of the Cross, up the steep, rocky road to Golgatha, you nailed Him to the Cross, and mocked and laughed at Him while He slowly and with agonizing pain died for love of you". No heart could resist this gentle Franciscan message calling it to repentance and love of God.

The work of propagation and popularization of the devotion to the Way of the Cross is still zealously fostered by St. Leonard's present-day brethren. The aim and scope of his Apostolate is now continued in the *Franciscan Apostolate of the Way of the Cross*. This modern movement of eighteenth-century origin has the purpose of "teaching people mental prayer through the stations". In accordance with this aim, and following the example of St. Leonard of Port Maurice, the Franciscans of the Holy Name Province conduct parish missions lasting through five successive evenings.

The traditional Franciscan devotion, the Way of the Cross, is a simple and practical means of uniting oneself with the poor crucified Christ. With its fourteen representations, it aids our imagination and easily moves our will to acts of love for our poor suffering Savior. Truly we owe a debt of gratitude to St. Leonard for having helped to

bring to all Franciscans and to all the world the devotion that lets us walk in a very real sense with Our Suffering Lord along the road to Calvary.

FOOT NOTES

- 1) Gal. 2:20; and I Cor. 2:2. 2) Translation of SILVIAE VEL POTIUS AETHERIAE PEREGRINATIO AD LOCA SANCTA, a Thesis by Sister Mary Arthur Hamann, O.S.F., College of St. Francis, Joliet, Illinois, 1945, 86 pp. 3) *Bibliotheca Canonica Juridica Moralis Theologica nec non Ascetica Polemica Rubricistica Historica*, Romae, 1888, Tomus Quartus, p. 262-3, Ferraris, Lucii, O.F.M. 4) Ibid., op. cit. p. 262. 5) *Opera Sanctae Bonaventurae: De regimine animae*, no. 10; *De perfectione vitae IV; Itinerarium IV; Soliloquium I*, iv, 29. 6) "San Leonardo da Porto Maurizio", *I Nostri Sancti*, Bonomo, Umberto, page 219, 1946, New York. 7) Ibid. qua supra, p. 219. 8) *The Stations of the Cross*, Thurston, Herbert, S.J., Burns & Oates, London, 1906, pp. 173-4. 9) *Esercizio della Via Crucis composto da San Leonardo*, Vatican City Religious Book Co., Inc. N. Y., 12, N. Y. 10) *Il Libro dell'anima mia*, due Padri Franciscani, O.F.M., Bologna, Oct., (or Ott.), 1952, page 444. 11) Ibid., op. Ital., page 447. 12) Ibid., op., page 449. 13) Ibid., page 453. 14) Ibid., page 455. 15) Ibid., page 457.

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