

the CORD

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"WE HAVE A POPE!"

As the sun was setting over the Eternal Hills of Rome on October 28, and over 300,000 thronged St. Peter's Square, Angelo Joseph Cardinal Roncalli, Patriarch of Venice was proclaimed successor to the late Pope Pius XII. Servant of the Servants of God, spiritual leader of over 500 million Catholics, and 262nd successor to St. Peter, he chose John as his name, and will be known as Pope John XXIII.

Born on November 25, 1881 at Sotto Il Monte, a little village about forty miles east of Milan, in the diocese of Bergamo, he was the third of thirteen children. The son of humble farm parents, John Baptist and Marianna, he expressed his intention to study for the priesthood. He began his seminary studies at eleven, and on August 10, 1904, at the early age of 23 he was ordained.

One of his first assignments (1905-1914) was as personal secretary of one of the greatest prelates of his time, Giacomo Count Radini-Tedeschi, Bishop of Bergamo. In this position he began what in his day were considered quite daring innovations, such as the publication of parish and news bulletins. As the Bishop's secretary he also became acquainted with some of Italy's leading prelates and organizers of the fledgling Catholic Action Movement. He threw himself wholeheartedly into parish work and always prided himself as pastor. In his homily, prior to coronation, he drew attention in a very special manner to "Our Task as Shepherd of the entire flock."

During World War I he served as sergeant in the Medical Corps and later as Chaplain in military hospitals. After the war he continued his vigorous role in Catholic Action.

In addition to being professor of Church History, Apologetics and Patrology at his Alma Mater, the Episcopal Seminary at Bergamo he also began to write a History of Bergamo, now in its sixth volume. While doing historical research at Milan's Ambrosian Library he became acquainted with its librarian, Monsignor Achille Ratti, who became Pope Pius XI in 1922.

But it was his pastoral work in the field of Catholic Action which attracted the attention of Pope Benedict XV. He called him to Rome to reorganize the Church's missionary activity in the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, made him a Monsignor, Honorary Canon of Bergamo, and Domestic Prelate.

In 1925 Pope Pius XI named the now 43-year-old prelate Titus Archbishop of Areopolis, and appointed him Apostolic Visitor of Bulgaria. This marked the beginning of a most successful diplomatic career lasting almost thirty years, and taking him first from Istanbul to Paris. In the year 1935 he was promoted to the office of Apostolic Vicar and Delegate to Turkey, as well as Apostolic Delegate to Greece. After filling these posts during World War II with such credit and distinction, Pope Pius XII appointed him, in December 1944, Nuncio Apostolic to the Fourth French Republic. He presented his credentials to General Charles De Gaulle. This assignment taxed his great abilities as church-man and diplomat.

For eight stormy post-war years he remained in Paris, and there sowed the seeds of good-will, winning the hearts of the French people. On January 12, 1953, Pope Pius XII, in recognition of his successful diplomatic mission created him a Cardinal, and three days later named him Patriarch of Venice. It was at the same consistory that Archbishop J. Francis McIntyre was elevated to the Sacred College. As a token of the high esteem of the French nation, the president of France, Vincent Auriol personally presented him with the red biretta.

During the Marian Year, Cardinal Roncalli represented the Holy Father as Apostolic Delegate at the Marian Congress held in Beirut in October, 1954, when he also consecrated Lebanon to Our Lady. Again in March 1958, as personal representative of the late Pope Pius XII, he inaugurated the Lourdes Centennial Year by consecrating the huge underground Basilica of St. Pius X at the famous French Shrine.

Among the qualities that have endeared our new Sovereign Pontiff, and certainly worthy of our imitation, are his benign appearance, affable manners, simplicity, cheerfulness, humility, openness, humorous joviality, good nature, always seeing the good side of things. He was never ashamed to recall his own humble origin as son of a farmer. Fatherly as a priest, conscientious as a pastor, ever a Bishop at heart, he is uncompromising with the truth and staunch defender of the faith. He loves his native town, returning to the little village of Sotto Il Monte whenever possible for a part of each summer.

Known as a learned historian and lover of art, our Holy Father speaks Italian, Latin, Greek, French and Turkish. He is also familiar with German, Spanish, Romanian and has some knowledge of oriental languages. He brings to the Papacy long years of successful experience in diplomatic and pastoral service, and is an administrator who can share authority. He "embodies rare flexibility in temporal affairs and orthodoxy in religion."

To give us an idea of the kindly person he is, we are told that during the first busy hours of his Pontificate, he performed some simple actions, a welcome sign that the weight of his new office and the walls of the Vatican have not entirely obscured a human being of endless curiosity, energy and optimism. Soon after taking over the papal apartment, he called for Sister Pasqualina, the late Pope's housekeeper. Burdened with the full weight of his spiritual and temporal responsibilities, he thought enough of the simple faithful service done by this lowly nun as to compliment her on the tidiness of the apartment. It is a great person who takes time out to thank another for work well done.

"Pious and fervent souls throughout the world, we beg of you to pray to Our Lord for the Pope with the intention of obtaining for him the exercise of perfection in meekness and humility. We are quite sure that many rich graces will follow from this exercise, and that the continuation of the eminently spiritual work of the Father of all the Faithful will render an immense service also to the entire social order in the temporal and earthly domain." Thus pleaded our Sovereign Pontiff at the beginning of pontificate. As his Franciscan children we cannot but heed his plea. "Let us," therefore, "Pray for our Holy Pontiff Pope John XXIII," asking God to bless him and his reign. May He Preserve him for His Church and His World:

"Ad Multos Annos!"

Fr. Irenaeus Herscher, O. F. M.
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†

PSALM 116

Appoint some seraph to proclaim
Reasons for praise,
To breathe out documental flames
Concerning Essence and Priority.

Angelic choruses will make the theme
Endless polyphony:
"Praise Might and Majesty!" Alone, the heart
Listens in vain to catch its alto there.

Better to spell such praises as I know:
Green mercy pushing
With tireless patience through resisting clods
Of pride polite with frost;

Wiser to sing God's awful perseverance,
Invent new modes
To hear the music of His sleuthing pity
Fast on the slender clue of a secret sigh.

His truth remains forever, underscoring
The sophistries in all my best excuses.
Try to outrun His mercy! Seek to baffle
The logic of His love, and at the end

Fall, panting, straight into His grave compassion,
Drop in the saving snare of truth. All nations,
Come, praise the walls and rooftops of His pity!
Sing His truth as fatal as salvation.

Sister Mary Francis, P.C.

MONTHLY CONFERENCE

Unless You Become Like Little Children

GEOFFREY G. BRIDGES, O. F. M.

Every feast in the Liturgy of the Catholic Church brings with it a special grace. At Christmas we celebrate what the Liturgy of the Circumcision calls the *Sacrum commercium*. The Son of God takes from us human nature and gives in turn divine nature: the Holy Barter. In its fullness, that is the Christmas grace: that we should become sons of God, partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1,4). That is what the Secret of the First Christmas Mass asks for: that we may take on his form who took on our substance.

It would require volumes to explore all the possibilities of this Holy Barter. So let us concentrate on just one aspect of it. Look at Christ the Child, in Mary's arms, under Joseph's care. A particular part of the Christmas grace is that we should become like unto this Child. When we ask that we may take his form, we mean to ask for all that is essential for our salvation. Being like to Christ the Child is essential for our salvation.

The Apostles one day approached Jesus with an innocent question, seemingly. (St. Mark tells that they had been arguing among themselves, which of them would be the greatest in Christ's kingdom.) They asked: "Who then is the greatest in the kingdom?" And Jesus called a little child to him, set it in the midst of them, and said, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever, therefore, humbles himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Mt. 18, 1-4)

Childlikeness, therefore, is not simply something nice to have. It is essential. We cannot enter heaven except through a child-size gate. (The thought occurs that Purgatory must be the place where God makes children out of people who were too grown up for their own good.)

The Franciscan Approach to God

The fact that St. Francis adopted the approach of a child to God is explained not so much by his warm devotion to the Christ Child; this was a result of something deeper. He saw one fact standing out bold in the Gospels: the Fatherhood of God. He took his cue from

the insistence of Christ. Like Christ Francis constantly had the word "Father" on his lips. He was proud of his Father; he took joy in being a son of God. Everywhere he spread the good news of the Gospel: God is our Father—Christ is our Brother. All he exhorted to be worthy children of their heavenly Father. In this fundamental realization of the Fatherhood of God over all we find the solid basis for his practice of addressing all, even animals and plants, as Brother and Sister. This "other Christ" learned from the Gospel the need to take the child's approach to the Father; he was perfectly childlike. By sermon and example he encourages all his followers to take the same approach.

Simple Term, Deep Meaning

The project sounds simple, until we try to grasp what qualities in particular Christ had in mind. We are liable to confuse childlikeness with childishness and so conceive an aversion for such an approach. But if we look to the Fathers, we will find the true portrait of the child of God; we will understand the depth of meaning behind this simple formula.

St. John Chrysostom wisely remarks that it must have been a small child, a very small child that Christ set in the midst of the Apostles. It must have been a happy little one, still untouched by passion, not yet infected with his parents' bad habits. Such a child we should have in mind as we seek the qualities we will need to put on in order to fit ourselves for the kingdom of heaven. Concretely, the best example of an adult who has put on childlikeness.

In such a small child, first of all, you will find no desire for riches; his acquisitive nature has not yet begun to assert itself. He is happily detached from the things of this world. Blessed is the religious with the vow of poverty. It puts him on the level of the little child. If embraced in its full spirit, it makes him like to the Christ Child, who was content with the least and the poorest.

A little child is forgiving; he has a poor memory for injuries; he is quick to seek peace. This is a quality that lasts fairly late into childhood. Perhaps you remember your childhood friendships. They were broken for good during a fight in the morning—and mended just as quickly that afternoon. Somehow, when we are older it requires almost heroic virtue to beg pardon. Doesn't that indicate we are getting too "grown up" interiorly? We need to recover some of that lost resilience, some of that ease to forgive and forget. Like Christ in Bethlehem, rejected and ignored, we need to go on loving and forgiving.

A little child, too, is no respecter of persons; he is totally lacking

in prejudice and aversion. A truly marvelous example of this is Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. He will let anybody receive him, and try his best to make his grace penetrate that soul. Like Christ, the truly child-like religious will never be cold or short toward anyone; he will never favor just a few with his attention. Cultivating the friendship of just the rich, or the learned, or the artistic is contrary to the spirit of the childlike as well as contrary to the universal brotherliness of St. Francis. All the more so is race or class prejudice in any form whatsoever. Even pagan sociologists admit that children if left to themselves would be free of such attitudes. These bad habits they learn from adults. Again, we may be too grown up for our own good. If necessary we should "grow down" a bit, down until we have the simple vision of St. Francis, for whom all people were "good people", because he saw the godly potentialities in each.

St. Francis was an optimist. Like a little child he always saw the better side, whether of people or of events. The "grown ups" are the critical ones, fault-finding, sharp or sour in disposition. The child overlooks the unpleasant in happy anticipation of the good. He is ingenious too at finding excuses for the faults of others. You must have heard as I have, an adult remark: "He's an old crank." And a child reply: "Maybe he is sick." A child, because he is a child, is content with the way God disposes things in his providence, content to rest in the hand of his Father.

Because he is an optimist, the child is joyful. He finds this joy in simple things. The more sophisticated and grown up a person gets, the more complicated and elaborate must his amusements be before he is pleased. But the child and the childlike find boundless joy in the simple things, like the beauties of nature, or song, or even prayer. St. Francis, though he had his trials of worry and melancholy, was a bubbling spring of joy; the simplest little gift from God's creative hand could set the fountains of joy flowing in his heart.

Most Necessary Quality

Underlying all these qualities of the little child, however, must be humility. St. Leo, St. John Chrysostom, St. Hilary, St. Jerome give special prominence to this quality. The humblest person in the world, it has been said, is a child—and a saint. A child has no pretensions; he is not forever seeking in thought or word to make himself more than he really is. A child is glad to be himself. He is no daydreamer gathering around himself an imaginary cloak of superiority. He does not brag of riches or birth (those things are drummed into him by

parents), nor of talents or brains. The little child is not envious of what others have, or put out because he has not got as much or as nice. He is happy to be what he is. The supernaturally childlike person is the same: content with what God has given him, praising God because he has given to another a greater skill or a greater intelligence. He recognizes that he is God's handiwork, playing a part in God's plan; if he were anything else but himself he could not accomplish what God has in mind. Human respect has no place in his make-up. Why should he care what others might think, what others might say? Why should he fear that others might laugh or tease or taunt—as long as God is smiling his approval. Human respect is one of the most unchildlike features of our life. How many good acts does it not nip in the bud each day. We must turn and become God-centered. We are what we are in the sight of God, we do what we do for the love of God. But above all, a child in his humility is the very opposite of Adam and Eve in their sin. Adam and Eve wanted to be like to God, equal to him, not subject to him. The worst sins of mankind have risen from this yearning for independence. But the child is meekly dependent, lovingly confident, obedient. Look again to the Christ Child. He was God, yet he chose to be dependent upon, subject to, obedient to his creatures, Mary and Joseph. As St. Bernard says in meditating on it: Learn from this to obey; learn to submit your will, your opinion, your desires. How blessed is our religious state: it makes us so dependent. No more congenial atmosphere can be found in which to develop childlike humility.

Very closely allied to humility and given almost equal emphasis by the Fathers is the childlike quality of simplicity. A child is free from all guile, deception, double-motives, from all pretense and affectation. There is nothing complicated about a child; there is no worrisome introversion. There is a simple integrity, a perfect unity about a child. He sees things as they are; his vision is not distorted by looking through a film of self-centered ambitions, fears or worries. But how is one to get back to that childhood simplicity? I would suggest that easiest way is through a wholehearted and persistent effort to live up to our essential vocation in life. We were made to be co-lovers of God with Christ and Mary. Nothing can better simplify our whole approach to life and yet keep us on the right path as the habit of doing everything for the love of God. The more we develop this attitude the less of self will be in our actions. As a consequence we will not be trying to deceive others by pretence and airs. As this motive becomes purer and stronger we will be delivered from double motives in our actions. In a word our life will take on one direction

only, we will reach a fundamental simplicity. But you can see how only a humble person can realize this—one who is glad to be just himself, who doesn't care what others may think, because all is for God.

A notable result of this humble simplicity is that lovable childlike quality of wide-eyed trust and confidence. As a child has complete trust and unwavering confidence in what his mother and father say or promise, so the childlike turn to God. When things begin to rock and tremble, when misfortune occurs or embarrassment, they are confident that God is there behind it all, ready to hold them lest they be engulfed. When they pray, it is with confident expectation of an answer—on God's terms. When they work it is without fear; no fear of the work itself as too great, nor of responsibility, or of people, or failure, or incompetence. As long as it is the work imposed by obedience, they are confident that God will give his grace to bolster nature.

Portrait of a Child

These are the qualities, then, of a child; at least it is the basic outline drawn by the Fathers in commenting on Christ's admonition. The child is detached from material things, promptly and wholeheartedly forgiving, no respecter of persons but at home to everyone, a joyful optimist seeing the good in everyone, above all humble and simple, and therefore resting in God with trust and confidence. The portrait could be filled out by recalling the ready simple belief of children, their reverential wonder at the works of God and the works that God can do through men, their gift for artless love. But these are the essential qualities.

Maturity of the Childlike

Fr. Leon in concluding his commentary on this same passage in St. Matthew's Gospel sums up childlikeness as "the exact contrary of hankering for independence, of choosing for oneself, of standing on one's own feet." This is true. But we must understand these qualities as he understands them, in their bad sense. For the childlike person is not and should not be a negative, a gray personality, fearful of responsibility, helplessly dependent. Childlikeness and maturity are not contradictory. Look to Mary and Joseph. Certainly they had all the qualities of true childlikeness. Yet God did a truly astounding thing. He dropped no book of instructions on the care of God become an infant human. No angel stood by for ready consultation. The childlike ones he had chosen to care for his Son were prudent and receptive of divine inspiration. With prayer they used their native intelligence

and set to the task assigned them. In a quiet efficient way Joseph cared for his family, saw them safely into Egypt and back again, established a home for them and provided for them. Mary fed and clothed her child and in admirable humility and wisdom reared God as if he were an ordinary child. We want to be like them, utterly childlike yet prudent and wise.

I have dwelt long on this part of the Christmas grace, but I think it is implied in the main theme of the Liturgy: Christ takes our human nature, we put on Christ; the Christ we see at Christmas is Christ the child. As we look at him in the manger his whole being seems to urge us: "Turn and become like little children." (Mt. 18,3)

When Christ and the Apostles were gathered for the Last Supper, the Apostles must have been well along in the process of becoming childlike. Jesus opened his address to them: "Little children . . ." This Christmas feast and the whole cycle of feasts that follow will truly be blessed for us, if at the end Christ can say to us: "Little children."



The Saint Of The Incarnation*

FR. WILFRID BUSENBENDER, O. F. M.

"*Christ yesterday*" is the Christ promised in the prophecies, the "glad tidings" of God which "He has promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures concerning His Son . . .;" (Rom. 1; 2) In a deeper sense He is the hidden mystery of the entire creation of God.

"*Christ today*" is the period of time since Christ; it began with the hearing of the Angel's message. At that moment the Word became flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The age of the Incarnation was not completed in thirty-three years; it continues without interruption. Christ himself points to this mystery: "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world no longer sees me. But you see me, for I live and you shall live. In that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." (Jo. 14; 18-20)

In a certain sense whenever a person hears the Word, Christ again "takes flesh" in his life because Christ dwells in him by sanctifying grace. Such a one thus becomes witness of the Incarnation according to the Word of the Lord in His highpriestly prayer: "Father, the glory that thou hast given me, I have given to them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them and thou in me; that they may be perfected in unity, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me and that thou hast loved them even as thou hast loved me." (Jo. 17-22 ff.) This takes place especially in the saints. In them the inner mystery of Christ, the mystery of the Incarnation in time appears, although only for a moment, just as Christ's majesty appeared only for a moment on Mount Thabor.

In the manifestation of *Christ's glory in eternity*, the sanctity of the saint will appear in greater brilliancy. Here on earth, however, sanctity becomes visible only as an incarnation continuing through all times until the consummation of the world. Understood in this way, the veneration of the saints does not mean imitation of the *saints*, but imitation of *Christ*.

I. *The Piety of the Incarnation*: Viewed in this light all the blessed in heaven can be called saints of the Incarnation, but there is one

*A summary of an article in *Wissenschaft und Weisheit*, 1952, No. 1

who is *the* Saint of the Incarnation *par excellence*, Francis of Assisi. But what does this saint of the Incarnation mean for us?

A. *Francis in the "last times."* "... If anyone say to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There he is', do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told it to you beforehand." (Mt. 24; 23-25) We are tempted to see this prediction of the Lord fulfilled in our time. It's true, in every age there is tribulation. Christ foretold it. He also added the reminder: "... he who does not take up his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me." (Mt. 10-38) But at the end of the world, "the last times", there will be the greatest tribulation and suffering. This last period of time will be a passion-week, and after that the Son of Man will appear in the fullness of His majesty and his elect with him.

There is a striking similarity between our age and the Passion-week of the Lord. We too are deeply shocked and troubled just as Christ was at the beginning of His passion. The modern "Herods" still ridicule God; the cowardly "Pilates" are currying favor with the forces of right and the forces of evil; the Sanhedrin's hatred still burns so brightly that complete annihilation alone will satisfy it; the executioners are marshalled beneath a banner symbolic of total destruction.

And it is here that we need the Saint of the Incarnation, Francis of Assisi. Not his most extreme poverty, his all-embracing brotherly love, not his social reform—this does not place Francis in our age. The fact that he is the Saint of the Incarnation beneath the banner of the Cross places him in our age. Unless we realize with a deep faith the inner mystery of the Incarnation in this historical hour of the Passion *as a part of the economy of salvation*, then all the difficulties and sufferings become useless and wasted. We miss the hour of redemption and try to patch the world with social reforms, with declarations of human rights, with the U. N. and Atlantic Pacts, with penicillin and aureomycin.

Only faith in the Incarnation is able to bear the present hour of the Passion, not so much the simple acknowledgement of Christ as the Son of God—like Peter's acknowledgements at Caesarea-Philippi—not so much the theoretical knowledge of Christ, but *living* the Incarnation, *perfected in the Passion*, by following the footsteps of Christ, as Francis did, even to the heights of Calvary—and Alverna.

B. *Decision for Christ:* One cannot simply have Christ, the incarnate Word; each one must choose Him with all His strength. "But as many as received him He gave the power of becoming sons of God." (Jo. 1; 11) St. Francis had made this decision and he was

conscious of this decision throughout this life. He points to this in the first words of His Testament: "When I was in sin . . ." (1) This does not mean that Francis was leading a life of serious sin, still it is not an empty word if Francis himself so characterizes his youth. We have to ask ourselves, what difference did Francis see between his former life and his life after his conversion, a life so different that he could consider the former life only as a life of sin.

Formerly creatures served only his personal ambition, his vanity; precious clothing, glittering armor, magnificent feasts—all of this were simply means to attain his ambitions. Fellow men were only names to further his own social standing. Once in a while his natural trait of kindness would prompt him to give an alms, but the distinction between giver and recipient would remain strongly enforced. That he committed no serious sin is to be attributed to his naturally noble attitude and to his fine sense for everything that is beautiful. One thing was lacking, the firm decision for or against Christ; Christ he did not possess in any other way than a man possesses his mother-tongue.

But all this was stripped away before his very eyes; all things suddenly appeared to him so vain and empty. The deception of glittering creatures was taken away; he was standing there with empty hands, with an empty life, an empty soul. He was lost; he saw no way to go. Now his soul was finally hungry, but he did not know how to satisfy this hunger. Francis began to pray—he needed advice beyond what human persons could give.

To this beginning of St. Francis' piety, *poverty* belongs as an essential part. It is there not as an ascetical accomplishment which God would reward from his riches. Poverty belonged to the specific character with which his piety began, that poverty as he has understood and later described it: "Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God. They are clean of heart who despise earthly things and always seek those of heaven, and who never cease to adore and contemplate the Lord God living and true, with a pure heart and mind." This poverty which St. Francis professed before the Bishop is like the healing of the blind man in the gospel. At first the blind man had no natural relationship to creatures at all; when Christ had touched him for the first time he saw men like trees. Finally he was perfectly healed so that he saw clearly. Similarly, from an entirely confused relationship to the world and life, Francis through his poverty came to a relationship of helplessness. He once more tried the old life, but found it

1) Testament of St. Francis No. 1; cf. *Francis Writes* - an authentic collection of the writing of St. Francis prepared by the students of St. Joseph Seminary, Teutopolis, Ill. (1946).

tasteless. Then finally Francis discovered the relationship established by God—all the world is His creation. It proclaims God, it serves Him. Men are brothers and sisters, not by reason of each one's whim or fancy but according to a universal love which brooks no exceptions. God is a Father to whom we all belong, as a child belongs to his human father. When therefore Francis, before the Bishop's court declares: "From now on I no longer will call Pietro Bernadone my father, but I will say, 'Our Father, who art in heaven!,'" we hear the cry of one who has begun to perceive more essential things than bodily eyes are able to see.

Francis has now entered the mystery of the Incarnation and the door which opened the way for him into this reality was precisely his poverty.

C. "*Christ lives in me.*" The Incarnation means that the Father has spoken to us with the Eternal Word about his Fatherhood. Francis recognizes himself to be addressed in the Incarnation. "Our Lord Jesus Christ who is the word of the Father . . . This word of the Father, so worthy, so holy and glorious, whose coming the most High Father announced from heaven by His holy Archangel Gabriel to the holy and glorious Virgin Mary in whose womb He received the true flesh of our humanity . . . Christ . . . offered himself on the altar of the cross, not for Himself . . . but for our sins, leaving us *an example that we should follow his steps.*" (2) Francis found himself in the security of the children of God.

Seen in this light we understand the picture of Christ to which Francis adheres and by which he became precisely the Saint of the Incarnation. The picture of Christ is not the exalted Christ as the previous centuries had venerated Him, but is the Word of the Father which He has announced in the womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mother. In his Way God came near to Francis as Father. For this reason, the saint became deeply imbued with love for Christ's nativity, His poor life and His bloody death. These are the stages in which the love of the Father has descended to man, coming to him as fatherly love. These are still the same stages through which man must pass if he would grow in childlike love for the Father. Therefore the footsteps of Christ are so important and so necessary for the saint of the Incarnation.

Where should he learn how he must live as a child of God in the presence of the Father if not *from Christ*. For St. Francis nothing else remained but to follow in the footsteps of Christ. Let the path lead to bitterness or humiliation, so long as he walks in the footsteps of

2) Epistola and Fideles, 114.

Christ—they give him assurance. "No one showed me what I ought to do, but the Most High himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel . . ." (3) This path led Francis to the heights of Mt. Alvera for the stigmatization.

II. *Piety becomes incarnate*: This is Francis' personal characteristic and greatness, this is the secret of his depth, that he did not simply possess the graces and truth of the Incarnation in sterile fashion as we do. For we are too helpless, too dumb, or too selfish to let ourselves be transformed. We simply hold the Incarnation and its graces as true. In Francis they take on flesh again. It is this that stamps Francis' piety with a very special, personal characteristic.

A. *The Brother of all Creatures*:

All men became brothers to him. He cannot, he may not look to see whether they deserve his love or not; for God loved him, not because he was worthy, but in order to *make him worthy*. Francis in turn would live the same way. How much he was indebted to the mercy of God; therefore he would be merciful to all men. "Shouldst not thou also have had pity on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" (Mt. 19; 33) Frequently he thought of the saying of the evangelist, "In this we have come to know his love, that he laid down his life for us." The implication too was self-evident. "And he likewise ought to lay down our life for the brethren." (I Jo. 3; 16)

In the same way *all creatures* came near to him. In this aspect is Francis most misunderstood. Make no mistakes about his relations to creatures. His attitude toward created things is governed at all times by Christ's admonition not to be anxious about the things of this world, but to seek first the kingdom of God and His justice and everything else would be added to him. (Mt. 6; 25-33) St. Francis is a man of most severe penance; his heart was completely detached from all creatures. According to his own words he was striving for purity of heart towards heavenly things. Thus the Word of St. Paul was fulfilled in him: ". . . all things are yours, . . . or the world, or life, or death; or things present or things to come—all are yours and you are Christ's and Christ is God's." (I Cor. 3; 21)

He has sung his Canticle of the Sun not in an hour filled with happiness, but when he was severely troubled with sickness and his soul was suffering bitterly, and when he knew he was intimately united in love with the sufferings of the Lord. He sought first the Kingdom of God and all these things were given to him. He risked the loss of his life and regained it abundantly. This is the Brother of creatures, the

3) Testament of St. Francis, No. 4.

singer of the Canticle of the Sun. Through Christ the world was crucified to him and he was crucified to the world, but not as one despising the world, but as one with a pure heart enjoys God's revelations, *signs of divine fatherly love in creatures.*

B. *In the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist:* If we keep in mind what the Incarnation meant to St. Francis then we know immediately what relationship he ought to have with the Holy Eucharist. For him this was the continuation of the Incarnation with all the miracles of salvation that it had worked. "Behold daily he humbles Himself as when from the royal throne he came to the womb of the Virgin; daily he Himself comes to us with like humility; daily He descends from the bosom of His Father upon the altar in the hands of the Priest. And as He appeared in true flesh to the holy Apostles, so now He shows himself to us in the Sacred Bread; and as they by means of their fleshly eyes saw only His flesh, yet contemplating Him with their spiritual eyes, believed Him to be God, so we, seeing bread and wine with bodily eyes, see and firmly believe it to be His most Holy Body and Blood. And in this way Our Lord is ever with His faithful, as He Himself says: 'Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world!'" (4)

The nearness of the Lord in His Sacrifice, the Incarnation perfected in the Passion, sanctifies his whole life. For Francis the world in which there is the Eucharistic Sacrifice, has become an entirely different and new one; for him the world can be understood only in the Holy Sacrifice. Even as in the Old Testament the Exodus of the chosen people out of Egypt was under the sign of the Paschal Lamb so that God passed by the houses of those whose posts were signed with the Blood of the lamb, so St. Francis views the world under the salvific sign of the Holy Eucharist. Whenever God looks at the world under this sign, He sees it as Father and His look is one of grace and salvation.

C. *The Transformed Man.* For St. Francis piety was not an accomplishment which gives something to God, but something we owe to God. All good is from God; it belongs to Him. Men are in creation for no other purpose than to love God with God, not *in via*, then in heavenly glory. This mystery of creation and of all time has flashed in full brilliance in the Incarnation. Because St. Francis knows he owes each thing to God, he can live in it gratefully and love. And it may be only a dry crust of bread which he dunks into the clear spring-water; he does not know how to contain his overflowing gratitude towards the good God and Father.

4) Verba Admonitionis, No. 1.

1. His piety has become genuinely incarnate in a deep *reverence*. A few examples will suffice. It appears strange to us that he says so little about the vow of virginity; he only warns of dangers, whereas concerning obedience and poverty he says many words. This vow has a peculiar origin, entirely different from poverty and obedience. "Who can take it, let him take it." (Mt. 19; 12) *God* must lead the soul to this vow by His grace; He must give the grace to accept what not all can accept. St. Francis can not intervene in this mystery between the soul and God; he can not presume to teach a soul what God has given the grace to accept. In his tender watchful reverence he can only stand outside of this divine mystery of the soul and warn of the dangers. We see a similar reverence where *God* has given him brothers. "And when the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I ought to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel." (5) Therefore also the reverence in his formulae of greeting to the Brethren.

2. The *Mystical body*: "The Poverello" would not be the saint of the Incarnation if he had not lived entirely devoted to the Body, which Christ has at all times, the Mystical Body which is the Church. St. Francis tells us nothing about the mystery of the Church; he lives in it, and his life in it is obedience. Even that which the Most High has revealed to him, he carries to the Church that his Lord, the Pope, may confirm it for him.

3. The mystery of the Incarnation unites St. Francis in a most intimate way with Mary, the Mother of God. Mary has listened and by her hearing, the Word has become flesh. By the Holy Spirit she is the Temple of the Word Incarnate. From her womb the Word has truly assumed our humanity. By this prerogative Mary is at the same time the "Gestalt" of the Church who as Mother continues to give the life of the Sons of God to those in the world. It could not be otherwise than that Francis in his piety, which was entirely in the line of God's descent to man, adhered to the Virgin with a particularly intimate and tender love and venerated her above all; in this line of descent he was safe from all erratic wandering, which is displeasing to no one more than the Mother of God Herself.

4. Because of the Incarnation Francis could not be satisfied with a merely internal spiritual piety; this piety tended to express itself in signs and pictures. Thus for example, his care for clean altar-linens, for the reverent treatment of the vessels and the Sacred Scripture, his crib celebration at Greccio.

All Francis' piety stems from God's descent to man. But this

5) Testament of St. Francis, No. 4.

means also that man is still ascending to God. He has not yet arrived, but is on the way. Francis' piety, nothing of great and magnificent churches, because they would not be fitting to the status of pilgrims; and even the manner of saying the office in choir may not deny the *status viae*.

This piety—truly nothing new, but the original christian one—is piety in the catholic, all-embracing way; a piety along the great line of the descent of God to man. This piety is so fitting for these, our “last times,” in which through all the noise of battles we hear so clearly the admonition of the Apostle and understand as self-evident: “For the rest, brethren, be strengthened in the Lord and in the might of his power. Put on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand again the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the Principalities and the Powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness on high. Therefore take up the armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day and stand in all things perfect.” (Eph. 6; 10-13) The very fervent christians have heard this Word and followed it to some degree. They are fighting mightily, trying to fight force by force, unaware of those other words of the same Apostle: “I exhort you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice, living, holy, pleasing to God—your spiritual service. And be not conformed to this world! . . . Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Rom. 12; 1) The loving kindness of God, which has appeared to us in the Incarnation, has overcome the prince of this world. In order to fight the battles of God in His way, through benignity and humility, in order to gain the victory that overcomes the world, to accomplish this, we need the Saint of the Incarnation: for “who is there that overcomes the world if not he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God!” (I Jo. 5; 15)

Trans. Fr. Conleth Fratus, O.F.M.



LETTERS TO MY MOTHER

Christmas

Last night the snow clung crisply on the branches,
I thought I could reach out to the stars
To snuff them out, one by one.
The quiet stillness of the night wrapped me round
With eternity
And all events of time were as now.

I remember many things . . .
I remember a little man with cowled brown robe
At Greccio,
Who lifted from its strawy bed
The carven image of your Babe.
So great was faith, so strong was love
In him
That it had been greater mystery
Had not the wooden Infant stirred;
Had not the Babe Divine held out His little arms.

I remember many things . . .
I remember a whole world of children whose hearts are wooden
And each of these wait for a Francis.
For a faith that is strong enough,
A love that is deep enough
To bring them to life.
To waken the Christ in them.

I remember a chosen few
Holding their hands out to me.
(There was the nail print in their upright palm.)
The fire of their love and faith
Caught my weak flame
Until it was indiscernible in a giant torch
And burned with its brilliancy.

As they have known Calvary
Let them know Bethlehem.

Sr. Mary Emeran, O.S.F.

Temptations Of Superiors

FR. THOMAS PLASSMANN, O. F. M.

In numerous ways Sacred Scripture and Mother Church urge us to pray for our Superiors, for they have care of us. There is no gain-saying that the Superiors shoulder tremendous responsibilities and, whether or not we love them as we should, it is our bounden duty to pray for them and to ease their burdens. However, did we ever realize that Superiors have temptations all their own? We are not referring to temptations of the grosser kind, but to those which are of daily occurrence. Therefore, in pointing out some of them, let us stay down to earth and the matter will be more practical, if not at times amusing.

Many Superiors, when taking office, are attracted by the glamorous words of Sacred Scripture: "*Ecce nova omnia*— Behold, I make all things new" (Apoc. 21: 5). They feel the impact of these words and, unfortunately, see in it a directive from on high. They do not realize that sometimes serpents hide under fragrant flowers. If by "making everything new" the new Superior should start out with a pure intention of doing everything for God's glory, he would act wisely; but if he thinks that everything around him must be renewed because his predecessors blundered, then he may be sure that he steps boldly in line as the greatest blunderer of all. Not everything that is old is obsolete; nor antiquated, what is ancient. Superiors must firmly believe in the unity that should mark the succession of Superiors, "so that the Church may receive edification" (I. Cor. 14: 5). The long line of popes represents a zigzag formation because all differ in temperament, education, and immediate purposes, but the long line seen from a distance is as straight as were the words of our Savior: "Thou art Peter, etc." This grand divine plan for the papacy should be reflected in the superiorships of our communities. The new Superior must not forget that greater men than he have gone before him. Let him build upon the foundations laid by them in accordance with the best that modern progress affords, and his administration will be crowned with success. A certain guardian asked a rich man for a donation towards a new entrance to the monastery. "Gladly," said the other, "here is a check for a hundred dollars for your plan, and here is another hundred dollars for your successor who, I am quite certain, will tear down your entrance and build one more in accordance with his liking."

Again, other Superiors, on assuming office, are misled by the notion that per force they must build something or do something that will memorialize their name and fame. Are we not reminded here of Pharaoh Merenphta of Egypt of King Shamashumekin of Assyria, if not of Peter the Great of Russia. Do we realize that many a curse has been hurled against such monuments and that the names of the builders are remembered only for their own disgrace. This is vanity pure and simple, as everyone sees, and yet, if we look around we cannot deny its existence even though it be clothed in holy sentiments. But this is not meant to halt initiative, progress, and unremitting care for all that is conducive to the health and happiness of the community. The one danger is that selfishness, which is the bane of community peace, spoil every noble effort and every good work. After all, the community should be accorded a share in what Superiors do and accomplish. A certain Superior in a land far away wandered around his domestic domain to see where a memorial that would signalize him as a great man could be placed. He built his memorial and the next Superior calmly removed it under the exaggerated plea that it was a grotesque monstrosity, and both men were wrong. Wherefore, let us first see to build up a memorial in the hearts of our subjects and a shrine of love and devotion to the Lord of all.

God has so created men that they are not all alike: some are good, some bad, and still others in-between. So it has been since Adam's day. Visualizing a perfect community, many a young Superior wishes to show his generosity and broad-mindedness by declaring to his subjects that he will begin his rulership of each individual "from scratch." "There is the man for us," some will exclaim, while others bend their head in silence. The declaration was well-meant, but the Superior will soon discover that his mental notebook, filled as it is with scratches, will soon have to be scratched all over again. While all delinquents should be treated with charity and justice, the new Superior must guard against underrating the fairness of previous Superiors in dealing with persons who showed no regard for law and order. Generosity is an admirable adornment of our Superiors, but prudence and foresight are equally indispensable. Mother Church shows us that the Middle of the Road is always safest, especially in regard to young aspirants for the holy Priesthood. Monastic discipline demands similar measures and precautions when there is question of picking worthy candidates for our holy habit. Past records cannot be taken lightly.

Still other Superiors begin their regime with the Psalmist's word: "*Omnis homo mendax*—Every man is a liar" (Ps. 115: 11). Thus they

conclude that every human being is bad and must be so treated. To their minds there is no exception among Religious and like Jeroboam of old they would, on principle, rule all with scorpions. This attitude is countered by the venerable saying: "No one is wicked, unless so proved." Thus the Superior would do far better by following the principle, substantiated both by sound philosophy and theology: "*Omne ens bonum*—Every being is good." Nevertheless, he will also have to exercise his office with solicitude and prudence. Although original sin has created havoc in the world, yet God in the beginning created all men good and He still loves them. Hence, there is some good, and perhaps more than is seen outwardly, in all men. It is up to the prudent Superior to detect the good that is in each subject and endeavor to build up on it with the help of his wisdom and God's grace.

"At last I have come into my own," said a new Superior, "now I have what I have always wanted and surely I am going to make the best of my term." Probably he did not mean what he said, but the truth remains that some Superiors partake bountifully of the fleshpots of Egypt and let their few subjects (if there were many, the abuse would soon be detected) find what they may on the sands of desert. In a country thousands of miles away, the present writer entered a convent on a Sunday where he found the Superior behind a steaming plate of broiled chicken (perhaps it was a rooster), while the few Brothers present feasted on dry bread, potatoes, and a piece of stale pork. In connection with this it should be noted that it is not necessary for the Superior to accept every invitation and attend all the festivities far and near. He might just as well, excepting certain formal invitations, send a substitute who would perhaps be far more acceptable to the host and guests than the Superior himself. It should be understood by high and low alike that ordinarily the Superior's place is definitely at home. Unless urgent business calls him away, he must observe the *stabilitas loci*. As the late Pius IX once said to a bishop who was known to roam all about to the neglect of his own people: "*Se tu fai cosi, cosa faranno i parini*—If thou dost so, what will thy curates do!"

This brings us to the important matter of the Good Example which some Superiors underrate to their own disgrace. The old proverb says, "*Verbum sonat; exemplum tonat*—The word is sound; the example, thunder." This is true in particular where virtue, sanctity, and spirituality are at stake. As soon as a Superior takes office, there are as many searchlights turned upon him as his subjects have eyes. Nor can "all be deceived all the time." If we find a community peaceful, happy, and contented, we may be sure that the Superior deserves a large share of this ideal situation, and that he is trying to lead his flock in

the way of God. Another Latin proverb gives the reason: "*Qualis rex, talis grex*—As the shepherd, so the flock." St. Bonaventure calls attention to the reading of the Gospel which says, "Jesus began to do and to teach." His example preceded His word. A Superior who does not act according to his words or the precepts of the Rule, is like a bucket which is filled with clear spring water but has a leak at the bottom.

The word sympathy has a feminine touch and frequently men consider its application beneath their dignity and standard. Yet no Superior will be successful if at the proper time he lacks this important virtue to which our Savior imparted His divine sanction. It is understood that the Superior who does not take proper care of the sick, is not worthy of his name. But there are different kinds of ills as there are different kinds of people even among Religious, such as infirmities of the mind, the temperament and a host of others. A kindly word usually goes farther than medical treatment. Even those who suffer by imagination should not, as St. Bonaventure warns, be pushed ruthlessly aside. They, too, need the Superior's care which, if it is dealt out in measure and prudence, will have its effect. St. Francis gives us a beautiful example when in the darkness of night he called together all the community to a repast in order not to embarrass their brother who, whether out of real or imaginary necessity, clamored for food. The *Fioretti* do not tell us if the remarks of all the brethren were fit for publication. The Superior must be a doctor; his medicines are three: a pint of charity, half a pint of fortitude, and a large box of multicolored pills.

Some Superior consider their status sacrosanct and will not stand for the slightest criticism of their person or work. Would not a sense of humor take away the edge from all such talk and bring the Superior right down to the level of his brethren in Christ? A Superior who cannot enjoy a joke made for his benefit is hardly fitted for his job. In chapel the Brethren should conduct themselves as angels; at meals as gentlemen; but at recreation just as friars, as they are and live. With due respect to all sound progress, two trouble makers have found their entree in our community life, the radio and television. The former tickles the ears, the latter fascinates the eyes. But, sad to relate, they have done away with the practice of the spirit of prayer and devotion which at the time of silence should permeate the entire monastery. Meanwhile the grand old evening recreation period, which used to enhance peace and happiness by bringing wholesome entertainment and merriment to our communities, has suffered a serious setback. It is up to our Superiors to find and enforce the Golden Mean.

Last, but not least, let Superiors study, re-study, and study over again the word coined by St. Paul: "*Omnia omnibus factus.*" *Omnia* is a big word and covers a large area; *omnibus* means that the community is entitled to what the individual gets and the individual is entitled to its generous share of what the community receives. Every member has a child's part in the love, care, and affection of the Superior—and this rule admits of no exceptions. The greatest and unforgettable sin a Superior may commit among his brethren is partiality. There is no room for the "white-haired boy." The Superior who foolishly cultivates such a one, will some day receive his punishment from the person he spoiled. Superiors should ever be mindful of the words of St. James, "A man who does not sin with his tongue is a perfect man." If, using monastic parlance, the sin of partiality is the greatest of all, the sin of revealing secrets is a close second. The heart of a Superior must be open to all and his lips must be sealed irrevocably. Thus the Superior's heart is the safe deposit, stronger than steel and iron, in every monastery for every inmate.

ADDENDA TO THE CANTICLE OF THE SUN

Praise be to Thee, my Lord Most High,
 For our brother,
 The saint of Assisi,
 Than whom no other
 More like unto Him was,
 Of whom Thou spoke
 With Godlike praise:
 This is my Son,
 Beloved,
 In whom I am well pleased.

Sr. Mary Emeran, O.S.F.

Allocution of His Holiness Pope Pius XII On The Religious Life

(Continued)

Whoever intends to live for the Lord and serve Him perfectly, must desire to be completely foreign to the world, for unless the Lord is served alone, He is not served perfectly. For what created good can in any way compare with divine perfection, must less be equaled to it? For he who has not cleansed his soul, and does not preserve it from the pride of the world, and its diverse concupiscences—how can he ascend to God as on the wings of free love, and live joined with Him? And joined indeed, not only by that vital union called sanctifying grace, but also by the fervour of charity, which is proper to a life striving after perfection.

For unless he is among the most perfect, and helped by an extraordinary grace from God, what human being, weakened by the sin of his parents, can remain completely unattached to earthly gods, unless he actually separates himself from them and courageously withdraws from them to a certain extent, and even as a rule. For no one (excepting the requirements of one's appointed duties) enjoys all the conveniences with which this world abounds, and takes pleasure in the joys and allurements of the senses, which the world offers to its followers in ever-increasing numbers, without losing something of the spirit of faith and love for God. And finally, whoever would yield to laxity for too long a time, gradually, without realizing it, will abandon his striving after perfection, and will bring himself to the danger that finally the fervor of charity and the light of faith itself may grow so weak, that he may perhaps fall miserably from the exalted state for which he was striving.

Your norms of judging, with regard to both doctrines and opinions, and activities, must be different; and different also must be your method of trying to influence other men. Your norms of judgment and evaluation should be taken from the Gospel of the Lord and the teaching of His church; for "it has pleased God through the foolishness of our preaching to save the believers;"¹¹ "the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God;"¹² for "we preach a crucified Christ."¹³ For unless a

¹¹ *Cor.*, 1, 21.

¹² *Cor.*, 3, 19.

¹³ *Cor.* 1, 23.

man refuses absolutely to corrupt his mind with the poison of continued traffic with this world's goods, and carefully nourishes his mind with reading and meditation on the things of God, by the study of sound doctrine, and familiarity with the writings of ancient and more recent authors who are known for their unshaken faith and solid piety, how can he have a taste for what is right?¹⁴

And your subjects must observe similar norms of acting. They cannot strive for what is pleasant, or delightful, or convenient, but for God alone, Whom they will not find except in careful control of the senses and the will. Of the will, especially by humility and the submission of obedience; of the senses, by austerity of life and voluntarily practicing mortification of the body. For without these supports which are recommended in the pages of the old as well as the New Testament and the whole tradition of the Church, the Christian soul will flatter itself in vain that it is advancing in the love of God, and love of neighbor, for God's sake.

And, furthermore, are not the methods by which you can influence men to lead them to God, their final end, different from the methods which the mind, left to itself, would perhaps consider efficacious. For the Apostolate we speak of rests entirely on the necessity of preceding grace (*gratia praeveniens*), which opens the hearts and ears of the listeners; of helping grace (*gratia adjuvans*), without which no one does a good deed conducive to salvation, and no one perseveres in good. For the ways of the Lord are not our ways; for the power of moving souls to the faith and works of salvation are not always in "the persuasive words of human wisdom,"¹⁵ "but in the showing of the spirit and power"¹⁶ in "showing" those things full of mystery, and from this simple sincerity, charity and courage of the believer there arises a wonderful efficacy of persuading souls and leading them to God. For men are moved towards what is good not by new and unheard of things, which human genius is every day inventing, but by a power hidden from the eyes—the power of grace and the Sacraments, especially Penance and the Eucharist. Again, therefore: unless one is separated from the world at least for a time, and every day commonly gives himself to consider these things in talking alone with the Spirit of Wisdom with a serene and pious mind, will he not be infected with that restless and very often sterile fever of "activity", as they call it, which is more conspicuous than effective?

That your sons might live in that peace and serenity of soul which

¹⁴Cf. Collect from the Mass of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁵1 Cor., 2, 4.

¹⁶Ibid.

is so helpful to a proper appreciation of divine things, your Founders fortified them with what we usually call discipline or observance, according to the ancient tradition of the church, begun by the Fathers living in the desert according to the true wisdom of the Gospel. Even though this observance is different in the various institutes, because of their own special purposes, it must nevertheless be developed in all of them. Its necessity for attaining the end which you propose for yourselves arises from weak human nature laboring under the wounds of original sin. Both ancient and contemporary experience proves it suitable for attaining the perfection of Christian life. As in times past, so now the admonition of the Book of Proverbs is true: "Take hold on instruction; leave it not; keep it, because it is thy life."¹⁷

The divinely inspired author says this of discipline which each one freely imposes on himself, but cannot the same thing be said also of that discipline which a person takes upon himself and promises to keep by professing to follow the life of perfection? "The love of attaining eternal life impells some on and therefore they choose the narrow way, so that living not by their own whim, or obeying their own desires and passions, but walking under another's judgment and commands, living in cloisters they desire an abbot to rule over them."¹⁸

It is your duty to help your subjects and keep them on the right path, with fatherly firmness, by encouraging, warning and reproving them, and when necessary, punishing them according to the Rules of each Institute. Nor is it lawful for any Superior to cast off this duty of office with regard to a subject who is, perhaps, negligent or delinquent, by saying: "He's old enough, let him look after himself." The Lord will not consider the matter in this light, when he demands an account of the souls committed to you: "Behold I myself come upon the shepherds. I will require my flock at their hand;"¹⁹ and He will require the blood of His wandering and indiscreet sheep from him who, shutting his eyes, left them to themselves. Fatherly and true charity if of advantage not only when praising, but also when directing and correcting. And furthermore, your firmness should never be harsh, never angry and uncircumspect; but let it always be proper and serene; meek and merciful, prompt to forgive and to help the son who is trying to rise from his error or fault; never cease to watch, or grow weak. Your leadership and vigilance should be concerned not only with the "regular" life, as it is usually called, and is lived within the confines of the religious house, but to the entire work which your subjects perform

¹⁷Proverbs, 4, 13.

¹⁸Saint Benedict, *op. cit.*, chapter 5.

¹⁹Ezekiel, 34, 10.

in the vineyard of the Lord. It is your duty to watch over the work of your subjects, according to the norms given to you by the ecclesiastical Hierarchies to whom this matter pertains, that they do nothing that would bring harm to their own souls or the souls of others, or dishonor to the Church, but they strive always for the good of their own souls and the souls of others.

This gathering of Superiors General, which originally gathered and continues to gather of your own accord, is approved by the Apostolic See and raised to the dignity of a moral person, demands your most ready will to work for all those activities in which the Church wishes to use your labor. You have all understood well how to form one line of battle, in which some are foot-soldiers, others horse-soldiers and others archers, but all fight the same good fight. You have understood how fitting, indeed, how necessary it is, while the enemy of the name of Christ is every day gathering his forces into one supply which he hopes is unconquerable, that you also, and all who fight for God, united in strength, and each one with his own proper armor, work together for the same victory. This unity, which is hindered by diversity of nations, mentalities, customs, and other human considerations, will flourish in a marvelous manner, if the true charity of Christ, which the Holy Spirit infuses in your souls, reigns supreme there. This charity originates and comes from above, and if it finds willing workers, it will easily solve all difficulties regarding excessive concern for one's own rightly loved Institute, for this excessive concern usually arises from human weakness. For each one should love his own Institute, to which he was called by Divine Providence, he should form his mentality and manners according to this same Institute; according to its laws he should choose and undertake his work in the ministry: but always in harmonious service of the same church, the Spouse of the one Lord, God and Savior.

Hence it is that the eager reverence which all the faithful are obliged to show to the See of Peter and the Vicar of Christ, but being cultivated by you who strive after perfection in a very special manner. For his Apostolic See knows that you will be the first to obey it; it is confident that you are most faithful preachers of the doctrine of truth proceeding from this Chair; it firmly hopes that before all others you will be the models and promoters of ecclesiastical discipline. And sometimes, as is the nature of the Kingdom of God on earth, in which the good is mixed with the bad, and the grain with cockle—some should sometimes be weak, unsteady, wavering and half-hearted, surely you, dear sons, who are united with Us, will tirelessly advance the "kingdom

of justice, love and peace."²⁰ Not with that immoderate confidence in oneself, which Peter had before he was strengthened by the Holy Spirit, and exclaimed "Even though all these (shall be scandalized), yet not I,"²¹ but with stabilizing charity, supported by humble confidence in the grace of your call to the state of perfection, you will be able to say: "Even though others, perhaps, unmindful of the spirit of sons, should cause solicitude to the Apostolic See, we certainly, by the help of God, will remember most faithfully the word of our Lord: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church"; strengthen the brethren."²²

That your Institutes may always respond to these wishes of the Vicar of Christ, it is your duty to admit to the ranks of your Institutes, only those who are completely suitable, that is, young men chosen for their virtue, and as far as necessary, for their ability and other gifts. Do not let it happen that excessive zeal for gathering a large number of vocations will lead you to admit some whom you fear will be unworthy of your high calling: for these will be of no benefit or honor to the Church, but will be a source of harm and sadness. If, on the contrary, keeping the norms proposed so far by the Church, you accept only the truly worthy, God will take care to raise up vocations of this kind, and the honor which your state will have among men, will prepare the way of divine grace in the souls of many. Trust God: if you serve Him as worthily as possible, He will care for you, to preserve and promote your Institutes.

God grant that upon this elect company of His servants, most dear to Him and to Us among all the soldiers of this same army, abundant light and the ardor of the Holy Spirit may descend. And while we call to mind with a grateful soul those sweet and marvelous visions of the Blessed Mary, Virgin Immaculate, in the grotto at Lourdes, we ask that the prayer of this same Mother of grace will obtain this excellent gift for you, most devoted sons. With abundant charity, and as a pledge of God's goodness, We impart to you, in a permanent manner, beloved Sons, to those who assist you in governing your Institutes, to all your subjects, striving mightily all over the world, to those especially who are tormented by the enemies of the divine Name, the Apostolic Benediction.

²⁰Preface from the Mass of Christ the King.

²¹Mark, 14, 20.

²²Matt., 16, 18; Luke, 22, 32.

ST. FRANCIS NEVER CAME TO IRELAND

St. Francis never came to Ireland,
And sure as some would say,
Oh, t'is a mighty shame

He missed the wooded hills of Ireland
and never saw the Irish May
(The cause of much acclaim.)

Oh how he would have loved the forests
Like costly emeralds
Of purest Irish green.

He would have sung about those forests
God-praising canticles
Of Ireland's lovely scene.

He would have pointed with his finger
Across the Irish Sea
And bid the snakes, "Go out."

He would have beckoned with his finger
And called both you and me
To live a life devout.

Armagh would be his own Assisi
And Shannon, Umbria—
A green-like Italy.

He would have loved this new Assisi,
This new-found Umbria,
This Irish Italy.

Oh yes, it is a shame that Francis
Missed coming to this land
Our lovely Irish shore.

But see! There was no need for Francis,
For my, and t'aint it grand,
ST. PATRICK CAME BEFORE.

Roy M. Gasnick, O.F.M.

Book Reviews

SMALLEST OF ALL. Sister Mary Francis, P.C. New York: Samuel French, Inc. 1958. Pp. 76. \$1.00

Sister Mary Francis needs no introduction to readers of the *Cord*. Many know her through her poems and recent book, *A Right To Be Merry*. Lately, however, her major medium of expression has been playwriting. St. Bernadette is the subject for Sister's newest play, "Smallest of All," commemorating Lourdes' centennial year. Four other plays (two not yet published) preceded it. All of them contain spiritual depth and insight, but the skill of playwriting artistry has increased with each play. "Smallest of All" blends technical mastery and religious feeling to perfection.

One will have to spoil himself of a few of the Jennifer Jones notions of the Lourdes story before he reads this play. Not that the movie version was poor. Sister Mary Francis' characterization fit into their historical context more perfectly, however. Add to this her delightful interpretation of ordinary situation and the result is meaningful drama. The most notable example of interesting variation as well as keen character analysis is Sister's portrayal of Bernadette's father. Here he is the undaunted optimist, not the despairing and entirely unsuccessful breadwinner.

As the author of the Introduction remarks, "An unusual feature of 'Smallest of All' is that it can be done by a great variety of age levels and with almost any conceivable facilities (or lack thereof). It does not depend on elaborate staging. It carries itself." During Lourdes' centenary dramatic societies could select no better matter for production. JP

A LAND OF MIRACLES FOR THREE HUNDRED YEARS. Eugene Lefebvre, C. Ss. B.

St. Anne de Beaupre, Quebec: St. Anne's Bookshop. 1958. Pp. 188. \$2.00

In September 1665, Venerable Marie de l'Incarnation could write about the Shrine of Beupre: "Seven leagues from Quebec is a village called Petit-Cap, where there is a church of Saint Anne, in which Our Lord works great wonders in favor of this holy mother of the most Holy Virgin. There the paralytic are seen to walk, the blind recover their sight, whatever their affliction may be, recover their health."

On March 12, 1670, Bishop de Laval spoke of "the great number of miracles which had been wrought through the intercession of St. Anne" in the little church of Beupre. Later, on June 25, 1680, he added: "We have made an attentive examination of these marvels and we give our approbation for them to be made public throughout the world."

The first person cured at Ste. Anne de Beaupre was Louis Guimond, a poor cripple who placed three small stones in the foundation when the first chapel was being built. It was his contribution in honor of Saint Anne; she rewarded him with an instantaneous cure. Since then, for three hundred years, good Saint Anne has continued to multiply prodigies at Beupre. Now, in honor of the Tercentenary of her shrine, Father Lefebvre has compiled a short history of the cures—spiritual and physical—wrought at the shrine in the course of the three centuries of its existence.

This book is not a scientific treatise on miraculous cures, but rather a simple, straightforward account based on the testimonies of reliable witnesses and competent authorities, of some of the outstanding prodigies Saint Anne has wrought for her humble, confident clients. This little volume is a fitting companion to the many books being published this year in honor of the Lourdes centenary. MFL

Book Reviews

FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY. Valentine-M. Breton, O.F.M. Translated from the French by Flavian Frey, O.F.M. Chicago, Illinois: The Franciscan Herald Press, 1957. Pp. 70. \$1.75.

In recent years there has been much talk about Franciscan spirituality, but few definite and precise statements of what research in Franciscan history, philosophy, and theology is so frustratingly incomplete, it would perhaps be hazardous to make such a statement. Nevertheless, even without the aid of research scholarship, it is possible to accept certain or reject certain doctrines as either in harmony with or in contradiction to the Franciscan ideal. For the ideal we know. We can know the spirituality of Saint Francis from his own authentic writings; we can also know his spirituality of Saint Bonaventure and of the Spanish mystics and of many other saints of the Order whose writings are extant and accessible. All of them held the same fundamental ideals and points of view, though colored by their own times and tempers. On the whole, therefore, it would seem quite legitimate to present a brief outline of Franciscan spirituality, even though our knowledge of the matter is incomplete, and even though the term "Franciscan" is dangerous to use in an exclusive and proper sense.

Father Breton is fully cognizant of the difficulties entailed in presenting a summary of Franciscan spirituality. He warns the reader that "a system of asceticism has a background of quasi-infinite depth" and asks that his summation be read with necessary discernment. This is certainly not too much to ask of the reader, for the book covers only 70 pages and is presented in almost outline form. It is divided into two parts: Synthesis and Antithesis. The first part concerns the specific theological-philosophical tenets upon which Franciscan spirituality is

developed; the second part concerns some commonly accepted theological doctrines that Franciscan spirituality rejects as fundamentally incompatible. The main thesis upon which Franciscan asceticism flourishes is, of course, the doctrine of the primacy of Christ; all other theses are but emanations, so to speak, from this source.

Father Breton has not given us a treatise on Franciscan theology. He has simply attempted to give us an outline of basic Franciscan spiritual doctrine, intending primarily to clarify a somewhat obscure but intensely important matter. Whether or not he has succeeded may be open to question; but in any case he has given the interested reader a foothold and a sign-post along the steep and often bewildering path of Franciscan spirituality. It is certainly worth the reading.

SMF

WINNING CONVERTS. Edited by Rev. John A. O'Brien. Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame Books, 1957. Pp. 250. Paper .35c.

This is a practical guide-book for Catholics, priests and lay persons, who want to help non-Catholics find their way into the Church. It offers detailed information on techniques, the various aids and materials available for converts, and also a good bit of information the convert-maker needs at his finger-tips. The nineteen chapters, covering about every possible aspect of the apostolate, are written by experts: Fr. O'Brien himself, Fr. Lester Fallon, Fr. Benjamin Bowling, Bishop Charles Helmsing, Bishop Fulton Sheen, Fr. John McGinn, Msgr. John Gabriels, and Clare Booth Luce. The articles are all well done, well adapted to the general reader. One could hardly ask for more in a book of its kind; and in the present popular edition, the price puts it in easy reach of all.

JSMF

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