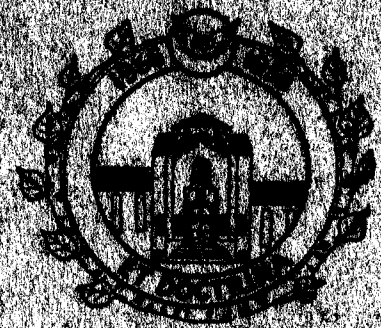


the CORD

OF THE
FRIARS OF THE
ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS

FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



VOL. VII, NO. 1, JANUARY, 1934

PUBLISHED BY
THE ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS

the CORD

A monthly magazine specifically devoted to Franciscan spirituality is published under the sponsorship of the Franciscan Educational Conference by the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure P. O., New York. Editor: Eligius Buytaert, O.F.M., Assistant Editor: Sister Mary Frances, S.M.I.C. Managing Editor: Innocent Daam, O.F.M. Editorial Board: Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., Columban Duffy, O.F.M., Allan Wolter, O.F.M. Annual subscription, \$2.00.

Entered as second class matter on November 25, 1950, at St. Bonaventure P.O., New York, under, Act of March 3, 1879. All communications, whether of a business or a literary nature, should be addressed to The CORD, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure P. O., New York. *Cum permissu superiorum.*

CONTENTS

Vol. VIII., No. 1, January, 1958

THE DIVINE PLAN.....	1
by Fr. Geoffrey G. Bridges, O.F.M.	
PRIMER FOR SUNDAY WITHIN OCTAVE OF NATIVITY.....	7
SIGNIFICANCE OF DEVOTION TO SACRED HEART.....	15
by Sr. Mary Martin Mass, S.M.	
CONCRATED VIRGINITY, III.....	20
by Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.	
OF VALOR.....	26
by Titus Cranny, S.A.	
in Mouth by Fr. Anacleto Yonick, O.F.M.....	14
by St. Francis by Sister M. Florian, O.S.F.....	19

THE CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

Published by the Franciscan Institute
St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, N. Y.

Volume VIII.

1958

MONTHLY CONFERENCE

THE DIVINE PLAN

by Fr. Geoffrey G. Bridges, O.F.M.

St. John introduces the divine plan for our universe with the words: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; and the Word was God." (Jn. 1,1) And immediately he establishes our relationship: "All things were made through him, and without him was made nothing that has been made." (Jn. 1,3) St. Paul takes up the theme and carries it forward. He, the God-man, the Word made flesh, is "the first-born of every creature", holding the "first place" over all creatures, and "in him all things hold together." (Col. 1, 15-18)

What is true of all creatures is especially true of us, human beings, made in the image of the human nature of Jesus Christ, "in him we were singled out before the foundation of the world." (Eph. 1,4) He is our King, we his servants. We were made by him, for him. For "we are Christ's and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. 3,22)

Our whole purpose in life is bound up with our relationship to Christ, a relationship established long before the Incarnation. If we would know fully, practically, why we are here upon earth and how we are to live upon earth, and where the work and prayer and play of our life should lead us, then we must go back to the beginning and see the divine plan of creation.

Our minds falter when we try to think of eternity or infinity; being finite and time-bound we lack the power to grasp these notions

in their fullness. But in so far as you can, go back into eternity. There, before creation, you find God, eternal, infinite, absolutely perfect, absolutely complete, happy, self-sufficient. He is God, three in one, divine community and divine unity. He is perfectly happy in his divine life of knowledge and love; there is nothing that can complete him, for being perfect he knows and loves and possesses the perfect object.

And here is the mystery in our regard, that God being totally perfect and completely happy should out of pure liberality decide to share his perfection. Where shall we find the explanation for this? St. John again supplies the answer. "God is love." (1 Jn. 4,8) Love is the motive of creation. God who could foresee how his perfections might be imitated in countless finite ways by creatures, saw how he might make others happy by communicating his perfection to them. It was a free decision; no necessity was involved here. Nothing compelled God; there was no incompleteness to be filled. And that brings out how utterly contingent we are. God could have not created at all, and he would have been just as perfect, he would have been just as happy. We are the products of pure liberality.

Really, the root of this is in the goodness of God. And as St. Francis could see, God is "supreme good, every good, wholly good." It is a property of goodness lovingly to communicate itself. In the Trinity the Father and Son share themselves with the Holy Spirit, each giving to each. Hence, God who is good, God who is love, in the unselfishness of his love desired co-lovers, so that what God loves may be loved the more and that the co-lovers might share in the bliss of love.

Now, because divine love works in consort with divine wisdom, God's plan of creation manifests marvelous order. He would manifest himself in a hierarchy from greatest to least. And that would have the greater precedence in his plan which has the greater value, that is, that contributes more to the end God has in mind in creating, to manifest his goodness and perfection.

And here we come to the second great mystery in our regard. That God should create though he is all perfect and all happy is mystery enough. But God decided to communicate every possible perfection to a finite nature which would nevertheless be united to divinity—to the Second Person of the Trinity, the Word. Infinity bound to finiteness! Divinity joined to humanity! This was to be the first co-lover, the model of all other intelligent co-lovers of God. This was to be the link between God and creature, the mediator between God

and man. And since he wanted that first creature to possess him entirely he willed for that human nature glory and the means of glory, grace and virtue. There was no sin first and then a decree. So great a being could not come from anyone's fall. God will first his most perfect co-lover.

Next in the plan of God was the creature who would be the highest in the scale of pure creatures, the one who would possess the greatest perfection possible for a creature not united to the Divine Word. And this was Mary. She is immediately (indeed infinitely) below Christ in the scale of perfection, modelled on his human nature, and yet a model in herself of all who would share her sex. For her also, God willed glory and the means to that glory, grace and virtue. And by foreseen necessity, he willed her pre-redeemed by Christ.

In the plan of creation, therefore, Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary, the Mother by whom he would become man, were first, the immediate exemplars of all else that would be created. Before the angels, before Adam and Eve, before all the other lesser participations in the divine perfection came Son and Mother. They are the prototypes according to which Adam and Eve were created, after whom all mankind is modelled. Infinite Word become man, finite Virgin become the Mother of God, they are the first and most perfect co-loving beings.

After them God decreed the rest of creatures, each holding precedence in the plan of God according to their value and perfection: the angels, men, animate and inanimate natures.

Let us pause for a moment to consider the divine omnipotence in creatures. All things have been made after the model of Christ's nature: "in him. . . , through him, and unto him." (Col. 1, 16) The angels were made after his spiritual nature of knowledge and love; men were made after his combination of spirit and matter. And all material creations are the variations on the possibilities within the matter of Christ's human body. When we meditate on the almost infinite variety of creatures, great and small, atom, bug, beast, mountain and star, we see some faint hint of the omnipotence of God; we are told of his artistry, his ingenuity, his liberality (for the multitudes of plants and bugs and beasts of this earth can not all have a necessary purpose in them). And in this we see one of the proximate purposes of creation: to speak to us of God. Nature is the primer of Divine Nature.

But to return to the divine plan in our regard, God began in

time to execute what he planned in eternity. And the order of execution did not follow exactly the order of precedence in value and perfection. Gradually, leisurely he prepared the universe. (Whether it took 4000 years as biblical scholars of old thought, or 6 billion years as some modern scientists say, it does not matter, except that 6 billion years is a better image of God's eternity.) What he was spinning out was the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The first-born of every creature, the one decreed before all, was the exemplar as God fashioned the universe.

In due time, and again it does not matter whether this was 4000 or 150,000 years ago, in due time God with Jesus Christ and Mary in mind created the human race in Adam and Eve. According to this same plan of love, they were created to be co-lovers of God, to share in the glory of God. And so in the beginning they, too, were equipped with the means to love and to glory.

If you sat back in day-dreaming fashion and imagined what you would be like if you were perfect, probably you would see yourself much as Adam or Eve was in the beginning. You would like to know without effort or study. You would like to have an infallible sense of values, so that you would always prefer and choose the better thing. You would like to be perfectly healthy, perfectly happy, without any prospect of any unhappiness, or of any end to all this happiness. Thus did God endow Adam and Eve. They had intuitive knowledge; their souls were full of sanctifying grace; their interior castle was in perfect order, the emotions and passions perfectly under the control of their enlightened minds; they were perfectly healthy, and without prospect of death. Next to the foreseen Christ and Mary they were just about the most perfect human beings imaginable. By means of their gifts they were supernaturalized images of God.

But there was a condition on this blessedness. And this was a part of God's plan also. God would be generous; but his intelligent and free creatures must be put to a test and so show themselves worthy of their blessings. The angels were put to a test. Perhaps it was, as some of the early Fathers of the Church suggest, that the Incarnation of the Son of God was revealed to them, and they were asked to adore and make submission to the God-man. At any rate, the obedience of the angels was put to a test. Their reaction sealed their fate for eternity. The obedient were confirmed in right and given an eternal gift of beatitude. Those who said: "We will not serve," were confirmed in iniquity and condemned to eternal punishment.

Adam and Eve had to undergo the same law of the test. Basically, the test too was a trial of their obedience. And because they, who were abundantly blessed by God, were not content but wanted to be even more like to God, they fell into disobedience. But why was their fate not like that of the angels? Why was not their mistake an eternal one? Surely we can dare to say, it was because of Jesus Christ, the predestined King, and of his Mother that God had mercy.

If Adam and Eve had not fallen, this conference would not have been necessary. Because they fell and with them all of us were affected, it is most important that we understand the whole plan of God, especially in view of the Fall. For nothing essential was changed in the plan of God; it could not be. But Adam and Eve underwent a change. By their sin the supernatural likeness to God was destroyed; they were no longer clear mirrors of God's perfection. Those gifts which gave them such ease in loving and serving God were taken away: intuitive knowledge, sanctifying grace, integrity of the emotions and the passions, immortality without death. Yet, as St. Bernard and St. Bonaventure express it, if the supernatural likeness to God was destroyed, they remained the natural image of Jesus Christ; and they retained their purpose in life: to be co-lovers of God with Christ. We will skip over the temporary means which the people of God had to use in order to fulfill their destiny without their supernatural gifts. What is of importance to us is the present plan of God.

Because of the predestined Christ, even as the Father declared his sentence of punishment upon Adam and Eve he sowed hope in their hearts by promising a divine Redeemer. The Christ would set things right. He would make amends for the sin; he would restore in the minds and wills of men the power to be again knowers and lovers of God; the supernatural likeness would be restored.

Adam and Eve stripped of their glory begot the human race without glory. Instead, in the human intellect there was darkness where before there had been the light of faith and intuitive knowledge. The reason of man was no longer complete master over his interior castle; he was a prey to his passions and emotions. The will of man was subject to concupiscence, that urge to satisfy one's desires without consulting reason; it was subject to weakness, so that as St. Paul says, "I do not do the good that I wish, but the evil which I do not wish" (Rom. 7,19); and lastly, the will is infected with a malice that leads it to evaluate other things higher than God. But worst of all, the will lacked sanctifying grace. These are the effects of the original sin.

The good news of the Gospel is that Jesus Christ when he came into the world brought with him the cure of these effects. Christ brought supernatural gifts for our intellect and will, to take the place of the original gifts of Adam and Eve. To those who belong to him in his Church he gives the adequate means to fulfill their purpose in life as co-lovers of God.

What are these gifts? They are the theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. Faith removes the darkness of the mind and restores to the mind the ability to give right laws to the interior castle of the desires, emotions and passions. Hope gives to the will the power to control concupiscence, the strength to be firm and courageous in the battle of life. Charity restores order in our choice of values. It is the primary remedy of original sin, which basically consists in the lack of sanctifying grace. These gifts of Jesus Christ supernaturalize us interiorly. They draw into cooperation with themselves the moral virtues in us. Faith operates in us through prudence, hope through temperance and fortitude, charity through justice. And these seven habits, the theological and cardinal virtues, suffice to sanctify us. Growth in these virtues is growth in holiness. Only if we grow in these virtues will we be lifted up to become worthy co-lovers with Christ of God.

There you have God's plan for us. We are of the race of Jesus and Mary. We were made to love God on earth and eternally in heaven. Adam and Eve introduced discord into this plan, at least in the sense that they were free to retain our original gifts for us by faithfulness or to love them. They lost them. It was left to the "first-born of every creature" (Col. 1, 15), he who holds the primacy over all, to dispose of us. He chose to show mercy. He chose to match the generosity of the Father. He lifted us up, brushed us off, and set us on our way again, equipped with all that we need. It is true that the gifts we have in view of the death of Christ, faith and hope and charity, do not equal the original gifts. But it is also true that we are all the more subject to the King of the Universe. He is King not only by primacy of nature and perfection: he is King by conquest. We are now doubly indebted to him. We owe it not only to God our Father but to Christ our King to strain toward perfection. And all the more so now, Jesus Christ is our way. We must tread in his footsteps. But we cannot take a step on that way without the gifts of Christ, faith, hope and charity. The secret of putting on "the mind of Christ", the heart of Christ, lies in growing in these virtues. Only they can fit us for our destiny: to be worthy co-lovers.

ST ANTHONY

Sermon For The Sunday Within The Octave Of The Nativity

Sermon for the Sunday Within the Octave
Of the Nativity

At that time: "Joseph and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, were marveling at the things spoken concerning Him" (Lk. 2:33).

In Baruch (3:14) we read: "learn where is wisdom, where is prudence, where is strength, where is understanding: that you may know also where is life and food, where is the light of the eyes, and peace." And in Psalm 83 (v.12) we read: "The Lord will give grace and glory"—*grace* in this present life, *glory* in the future. The first four elements of Baruch's statement are referred to *grace*, the other four to *glory*.

Thus *wisdom*, (*sapientia*) which is derived from *sapor* (taste), is had in the enjoyment of contemplation; *prudence*, in guarding against illusions; *strength*, in bearing with adversity; *understanding*, in resisting evil and choosing good. Likewise, *life* will be the holiness of our lives in eternal beatitude, as it is written: "I live and you shall live" (John 14:19). Our *food* will consist in the enjoyment of happiness, as we read: "And I appoint to you a kingdom. . .that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom" (Lk. 22:29,30). *The light of the eyes* will be given in the vision of the glorified Humanity of Christ, as we read in St. John (17:24): "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom You have given Me may be with Me, in order that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me." *Peace* will be had in the glorification of the body and soul. Concerning this Isaias writes (26:3): "You will keep peace: peace, because we have hoped in You, O Lord."

Concerning *life* and *the light of the eyes* Psalm 35 (v. 10) says: "With You is the fountain of life; and in Your light we shall see light." And Psalm 147 (v.14) has this to say about *peace* and *food*: "He has placed peace in your borders, and has filled you with the fat of corn." The *fat of corn* signifies the enjoyment of happiness over the Humanity of Jesus Christ, with Whom the Saints are filled.

In consequence of all this, *learn, O man*, to love Jesus, and then you will learn where is wisdom, where is prudence, where is strength, where is understanding: that you may know also where is life and

food, where is the light of the eyes, and peace. He it is Who is Wisdom, concerning which we read in Proverbs (9:1): "Wisdom has built herself a house." He is *Prudence*. Job says: "His wisdom (the wisdom of the Father, that is) has struck the proud one," namely, the devil. He Himself is *Strength*, as the Apostle writes: "He is the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24). In Him is the *Understanding* of all things, for to "His eyes all things are naked and open" (Hebr. 4:13). He is *Life*, as He says: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). He it is Who is our *Food*, for the Bread of Angels is the food of the just. He is the *Light of the eyes*, as He Himself says: "I am the Light of the world" (John 8:12). He is "our *Peace*, He it is Who has made both one" (Eph. 2:14).

Learn this *Wisdom*, O man, that you may be wise; this *Prudence*, that you may be on your guard; this *Strength*, that you may be strong; this *understanding*, that you may know; this *Life*, that you may live; this *Food*, that you may not become weak; this *Light*, that you may see; this *Peace*, that you may be free from trouble.

O blessed Jesus, where shall I seek You? Where shall I find You? Where, after You have been found, shall I find such precious goods? Where, when You are possessed, shall I possess such wonderful blessings? "Seek, and you shall find" (Matt. 7:7). And where, I beseech You, do You live? Where do You dwell during the day? Do you wish to know where? Speak, I beseech You! In the midst of Joseph and Mary, Simeon and Anna you will find Jesus, we read in today's Gospel. Therefore, let us see what moral meaning might be derived from them.

Joseph is interpreted as a growing son; *Mary*, as the Star of the sea; *Simeon*, as one who hears sorrow; and *Anna*, as one who answers. In *Joseph*, poverty is signified; in *Mary*, humility; in *Simeon*, penance; in *Anna*, obedience. Let us say a few words about each.

Joseph: Poverty

Joseph, a growing son (Gen. 49:22). When a wretched man abounds in pleasures and desires to increase in them, it is then that he decreases, for he has lost his liberty. Solicitude for riches makes him a slave; and as long as he allows himself to be governed by them, he decreases in himself by himself. The unhappy soul which is quite dependent on that which it has is really more dependent, since it subjects itself to the thing and not the thing to itself. This slavish subjection is more manifestly apparent when that which is possessed with passion is lost with sorrow. That sorrow is truly a severe servitude. In short, nowhere is true liberty to be found than in voluntary poverty.

Herein is *Joseph* a growing son, who says in Genesis (41:52): "God has made me to grow in the land of my poverty." In the land of poverty, he says, not of abundance, God has made me to grow. To grow in poverty, to decrease in wealth. Thus it is said in the Second Book of Kings (3:1) that, "David was prospering and growing always stronger and stronger, but the house of Saul was decaying daily." David—who says in Psalm 39 (v. 18): "I am a beggar and poor"—constantly prospers and grows like a shining light even to perfect day; and he becomes stronger and stronger, since voluntary poverty bestows strength. Thus Isaias says (25:4): "The blast of the might (that is, the poor) is like a whirlwind beating against a wall" of riches. It is a fact that pleasures and riches enervate and destroy. As Jeremias writes (31:22): "How long will you be dissolute in pleasures, O wandering daughter?"

But the house of *Saul* (which is interpreted as one who makes bad use of something)—that is, the house of the rich of this world who make bad use of the gifts and good things of the Lord for the sensual gratification of their body—decayed daily. Thus Moses says in Deuteronomy (28:22): "May the Lord afflict you with miserable want, with fever and with cold, with burning and with heart, and with corrupted air and with violent winds, and pursue you till you perish." This means that the Lord permits the rich man of this world to be afflicted with miserable want, since he is always in need of something; with fever, for he is tormented and suffers pain over the happiness of another; with cold, with fear, lest he lose those very things which he has acquired; with the heat of greediness; with the corrupted air of a bad reputation; with the violent winds of riotous living. Behold how the house of *Saul* decays, whereas the house of the poor and needy *David* increases from virtue to virtue in the land of his poverty.

Mary: Humility

Mary, Star of the sea. O humility! O glittering Star, illuminating the night, guiding us to a safe refuge like a flashing flame, and pointing out to us God, the King of kings, Who says: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. 11:29).

He who is without this Star is blind and gropes; his ship is dashed to pieces and he himself is drowned in the midst of the waves. As we read in Exodus (14:24,25,29): "The Lord, looking upon the Egyptian army through the pillar of fire and cloud, slew their host. And He threw the wheels of the chariots and they were carried into the sea. . . But the children of Israel marched through the midst of the

sea upon dry land, and the waters were to them as a wall on the right hand and on the left. *The Egyptians*, whom a dark cloud covered, signify the rich and powerful of this world who are shrouded in the darkness of pride. *The Lord shall kill them and overthrow the wheels of their chariots*, that is, their position and glory. And He shall plunge them into the depths of hell. *But the children of Israel*, whom the brightness of a fire has illumined, signify the repentant and the poor in spirit, whom the brightness of humility enlighten. They pass with dry feet through the sea of this world. The waters of the world, its disagreeable abundance, are to them as a wall, which guard and defend them on the right hand of prosperity and on the left of adversity, in order that popular esteem might not make them proud and temptation of the flesh cause them to fall. Concerning this we read in Deuteronomy (33:19): "They shall suck as milk the abundance of the sea."

Note, that no one can suck anything unless he compresses his lips. Those who have a mouth that is open with desire for the attainment of wealth, for the business of vainglory, and for popular esteem cannot suck the abundance of the sea. For it is difficult to separate wolves from a carcass, ants from grain, flies from honey, wasps from wine, harlots from a house of prostitution, and merchants from the market. It is similar to what Solomon says in Proverbs (27:6) when he writes: "It is a proverb: A young man according to his way, even when he is old he will not depart from it." Only the humble, then, who close their lips to the love of temporal things, *suck as milk the abundance of the sea*.

O star of the sea! O humility of heart, which turns the savage and distasteful sea into sweet and delightful milk! O how sweet is bitterness to the humble! How trifling is tribulation, how bearable is everything for the Name of Jesus! The stones were sweet to Stephen, the gridiron delightful to Lawrence, the lighted coals pleasant to Vincent. They *sucked as milk the abundance of the sea* for Jesus. In this verb, to suck, is even denoted a certain vehement desire mixed with pleasure. Truly, only humility has known how to suck trial and sorrow with that avidity and delightfulness of spirit. Thus we read in the Canticle of Canticles (8:1): "Who shall give you to me for my brother, sucking the breasts of my mother?" Three persons are here brought in: the mother, the sister, and the brother. The mother is penance, who has two breasts; namely, sorrow in contrition and suffering in making reparation. The sister is poverty; the brother is the spirit of humility. Sister poverty therefore says, "Who shall give you to me for my brother" (the spirit

of humility) that "you might suck the breasts of our mother" with desire? Behold the brother and the sister, Joseph and Mary, the bridegroom and bride, poverty and humility. He who has the bride, is the bridegroom. Blessed is that poor man who takes humility to himself as his bride.

Simeon: Penance

Simeon, one who hear sorrow. Concerning this the Apostle says: "Sorrow which is according to God works penance" (2 Cor. 7:10). And in Proverbs (17:22) we read: "A sorrowful spirit dries up the bones" from the fat of licentiousness and wantonness. Thus Job says (33: 19, 20): "He rebukes also by sorrow in the bed, and He makes all his bones to wither. Bread becomes abominable to him in his life, and to his soul the meat which before he desires."

The bed is the pleasure of the flesh, in which the soul lies like a paralytic, enervated in all its members. In St. Matthew (9:2) we read: "They brought to Him a paralytic lying in a bed." God rebukes also by sorrow in the bed, since He inspires a soul, torpid in the pleasure of the flesh, with sorrow for sin. It then listens to the sorrow which makes all his bones to wither. This is what Daniel has to say (10:8): "When I saw this vision, there remained no strength in me, and the appearance of my countenance was changed in me; and I fainted away, and retained no strength." This is what happens thus to the soul. Bread (this is, the pleasure of the flesh) becomes abominable to him in his life, and to his soul (that is, the soul of his animal nature) the meat which before he desired." This is what Daniel says (10:3): "I ate no desirable bread, and neither flesh nor wine entered into my mouth, neither was I anointed with ointment." Solomon says: "The heart that knows the bitterness of his own soul, in his joy the stranger shall not meddle (Prov. 14:10)."

Where there is the myrrh of sorrow, there the worm of dissipation is not intermingled. Thus Isaias says (22:4): "Depart from me, I will weep bitterly: labor not to comfort me for the devastation of the daughter of my people." In like manner ought a repentant sinner to the unclean spirits: *Depart from me, I will weep bitterly*. Just as smoke drives away the bees, so does bitter and tearful compunction drive away the devils who surround the soul like bees a honeycomb. *labor not to comfort me*, O carnal passions, for as Job says (16:2): "You are all troublesome comforters." "My soul refused to be comforted" with your consolations (Ps. 76:3). "The comforts, O Lord"—not my own, for woe to you who have your own consolation (Lk. 6:24)

—"have given joy to my soul" (Ps. 93:19). Therefore, *labor not to comfort me for the devastation* (for the affliction) *of the daughter* (my flesh), which the daughter of *my people*, that is, of the region of my five senses. Concerning this the Psalmist says (143:2): "He subdues my people under me."

Anna: Obedience

Anna answers with Samuel: "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears" (1 Kings 3:10). Also with Isaias she answers (6:8): "Behold here I am, send me." And with Saul: "Lord, what will You have me to do" (Acts 9:6)? Solomon writes: "A mild answer breaks wrath. . . A gracious tongue in a good man abounds" (Prov. 15:1; Eccli. 6:5). The *mild answer* of a humble subject *breaks the anger* of a proud Superior. Thus we read in Proverbs (25:15): "By patience (that is, by the patience of the subject) a prince shall be appeased." And as Ecclesiasticus says (4:32): "Do not strive against the stream of the river," that is, against the will of the Superior; but humble yourself to him. *And a gracious tongue* of pleasant charm *in a good subject abounds*, as one might say with Job (14:15): "You shall call me and I will answer you." He answers the caller who obeys from his soul the one who commands him.

Behold we have briefly touched upon these four virtues, in order that he who desires to find Jesus, let him possess these Persons, for salvation rests in their midst. *Joseph* and *Mary* bring Jesus to the Temple, *Simeon* and *Anna* acknowledge and bless Him. Poverty and humility bring the poor and humble Jesus.

Poverty brings Him on its shoulders. Thus in Genesis we read (49:14,15): "Issachar, like a strong ass lying down at the borders saw that settled life was good and that the land was excellent; and he bowed his shoulder to bear burdens." *Issachar*, which is interpreted as reward, signifies poverty, which rejects all temporal things, in order to receive the reward of eternity. This reward is called a *strong ass*. An ass is a pack animal which feeds on rough and coarse things. Thus also poverty carries the burden of the day and the heat and uses cheap and worthless things. As blessed Bernard says: Bran-bread and simple water, plain herbs and beans are not by any standard delightful things; but in the love of Christ and the desire for interior pleasure they are exceedingly delightful things and sufficiently capable of giving satisfaction to a stomach well-accommodated to them. How many thousands of poor people there are who with pleasure satisfy

themselves with these foods or even with only some of them! Indeed, if only our mad excess would allow us and were our life seasoned with the love of God, how easy it would be to live according to nature.

In the quotation above from Genesis there follows the phrase: "lying down at the borders, not between the borders. There are two borders: namely, the entrance and the exit of this life. Poverty lies down, that is, takes its rest at them. For it considers the very poor entrance of man and it directs its attention towards his very common exit. And as a consequence it does not wish to *lie down between the borders* "in order that it might hear the bleatings of the flocks," as the Book of Judges says (5:16), that is, the sweet suggestion of the devils. He lives and *lies down between the borders* who takes no account of the entrance and exit of his life; rather does he rest in the pleasure of the flesh and in the vanity of the world.

He saw that settled life of heavenly beatitude was good and that the land of eternal permanence was excellent; and he bowed his shoulder to bear the poor Jesus, the Son of God. He carries Jesus, since for love of Him he patiently bears whatever misfortune happens to him. Thus Ecclesiasticus says (2:4): "Take all that shall be brought upon you; and in your sorrow endure." Poverty, therefore, carries Him on the shoulders, humility in the arms at the breast. Thus is the Canticle of Canticles we read (1:12): "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me; he shall abide between my breasts." In this diminutive noun, "bundle", humility is denoted; in "myrrh" bitterness for our Lord's Passion. The heart is *between the breasts*, as if the humble bride would say: *I carry in my heart my beloved Jesus, a bundle of myrrh*, the humble and Crucified One, in order that I might be humble of heart and nailed to the Cross in my body with Him. Poverty and humility, therefore, carry Jesus to the Temple—that is, they come as far as the Temple of the Heavenly Jerusalem, a Temple not made by hand.

In a similar manner, penance and obedience acknowledge and bless Him. Thus we read in Psalm 95 (v.6): "Praise and beauty are before Him." With respect to the penitent sinner, his *confession* of Him is *beauty*, for Confession cleanses him of the leprosy of sin and adorns the soul with the grace of the Holy Spirit, as we read in Psalm 103 (v.2): "You have put on praise and beauty." This refers to penitents who have been cleansed by Confession and are adorned with grace.

With respect to the obedient man Psalm 95 (v.6) says: "Holiness and majesty is in his sanctuary." The Lord sanctifies the obedient man with *holiness* of conscience in the mortification of his own will and *majesty* of life in carrying out the command of another.

Behold where the "King of powers" lives (Ps. 67:13). Possess these virtues, then, and you shall find the Wisdom of God and the Power of God, Jesus. Let us humbly implore Him, most beloved brothers, that He may build the house of our constant dwelling on these four pillars, in order that He may live with us and we with Him, Who surpasses all things, blessed forever and ever. Amen.

Translated from the Locatelli Edition by Fr. Mario DiCicco, O.F.M.

Note: In some places I have used a translation of a Scriptural text other than that given by the Douay version of the Old Testament or by the Confraternity version of the New Testament, since oftentimes the Douay and Confraternity do not translate exactly as St. Anthony viewed the Latin version. It is important, when translating these *Sermones*, to stay as close as possible to the Latin text of a Scriptural passage: for if each word is not translated in the sense in which the Saint desired it, his entire moralization upon a Scripture passage either loses its point altogether or is considerably weakened.



WITH SWORD IN MOUTH

Man no sharper sword could he unsheath—
Biting words which cut deep in the heart.
Heart of steel or stone though may it be,
Difficult the task to heal the wound.

Many are the hearts for men to win,
Many hearts are pierced by rabid fool'ry:
Selfish—warming "I", but freezing "you"—
Gruesome pride to trumpet all the day.

Brutish wolves may gnash at beating hearts,
Might be "wolvish" nature—not man's part!
Wolves can't speak; but man—to him it's proper,
Not so proper when he speaks destruction.

Fr. Anacleto Yonick, O.F.M.

Significance Of The Devotion To The Sacred Heart

Sr. Mary Martin Mass, S.M.

The essence of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart is the return of our love for the divine and human love of Christ. Pope Pius XII considers it so highly that he calls it the most complete profession of the Christian religion.¹ Our present Holy Father quotes Pope Pius XII as believing that it was "...the synthesis of our whole religion and the norm of the most perfect life."²

What are the basic principles which impel the faithful to this particular devotion? Primarily, because to worship this Heart is to worship the Person of the Incarnate Son of God. Secondly, the Heart of Jesus more than any other organ is the symbol of His love.³ The former reason rests on the teaching by which we know that His Heart, the noblest part of His human nature, is hypostatically united to the Person of the Divine Word and must be adored in the same way in which the Church adores the Person of the Incarnate Son of God. This is an article of our Catholic faith as Pope Pius XII says it is already solemnly defined in the General Council of Ephesus⁴ and in the Second Council of Constantinople.⁵

The second reason above refers specifically to the Heart of our Divine Redeemer, the immediate object of the devotion.⁶ In a special manner, its demand for adoration stems from the fact that His Heart more than any other member of His body is the natural sign and symbol of His boundless love for the human race. As Pope Leo XIII aptly expressed it, "In the Sacred Heart there is the symbol and the express image of the infinite love of Jesus Christ which moves us to love in return."⁷

Moreover, it makes us cognizant of the fact that Christ's love is solely spiritual. Rather, we come to learn that it is a three-fold

It is divine, human-spiritual, and human-sensible. His love is so because He is the true Son of God. It is at the same time human because He is also true man. His physical heart beat with love for men.

It was joined to His human will full of divine charity and also to the infinite love which the Son shares with the Father and the Holy Ghost. The divine love has its origin in the Holy Ghost who is the personified Love both of the Father and the Son in the August Trinity. This same Spirit of Love was the cause of the infusion of love in the souls of the faithful. As St. Paul expresses it, "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us".⁸ The intimate union which exists between the divine charity in the hearts of the faithful and in the Holy Ghost expresses the real nature of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

When did this devotion of the faithful arise? Pope Pius XII in his work, *Haurietis aquas*, proves that it is an ancient and traditional devotion of the faithful. The only new thing about it is the form it has taken in the last three centuries. Our present Holy Father goes back in the history of this devotion to the Old Testament and opens his encyclical with the words of Isaias, "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Savior's fountains".⁹ It is true that these words symbolically foretold the manifold and rich gifts of God that Christianity was to reap, but it is not the purpose of this paper to trace the history of those magnificent milestones that marked the way of his unparralled devotion. The present writer wishes only to determine the significance of this devotion for the generation which our Lord Himself said that it was most needed. St. Gertrude challenged Christ on the fact of its not being a universal devotion throughout the ages, especially since St. John championed the love of Christ throughout his Gospel. She was told that such a unifying devotion was reserved for this later period when the charity in the world needed to be revived through the love of our Savior.¹⁰

This answer is found in the encyclical of Pope Pius XI's *Miserentissimus Redemptor* which very specifically declares the need of reparation. In this work, Pope Pius XI recalled that in the revelations to St. Margaret Mary though our Lord insisted on the immensity of His love, He grieved over the horrible outrages that were heaped upon Him by the ingratitude of mankind. To atone for this, Pope Pius XI states in the above encyclical, "We establish therefore and We order that annually, on the Feast of the Sacred Heart in all the churches of the world, there take place a solemn act of reparation to our most loving Redeemer in order that We may by this act, make reparation for our own sins and may repair the rights which have been violated of Christ, the King of Kings and our most loving Master."¹¹

What prompted these Popes to urge the faithful to worship the Sacred Heart of Jesus in preference to other parts of His body? It is

It primarily to determine whether such an organ of the body is adorable in itself, but whether the worship offered is apt to show our Lord's love for mankind and to bring Him closer to us. No other organ of Christ's body serves so well as that of His Sacred Heart which is the material seat of Christ's theandric love for mankind. This love of Christ includes the uncreated love of the Word and the created love of the human heart of Christ. Devotion to the Sacred Heart includes then, besides the cult of latria, for the adorability of Christ's human nature in its totality, a love directed towards Christ and manifested in our affections, our words, our deeds, and especially in our endeavors to imitate His virtues of charity, humility, and meekness. Unless there is a true understanding of this devotion, it is evident that ignorance can lead one to a sentimentalism which is definitely no part of the significance of the devotion. This was apparently the interpretation put upon the adoration of the Sacred Heart by the Jansenists whose Council of Pistoia referred to this adoration as novel, erroneous, and dangerous. Pope Pius VI in his dogmatic Bull *Auctorem Fidei* of 1794 immediately denounced this opinion as false, venturesome, pernicious, and offensive to pious ears and injurious to the Apostolic See.¹² At no time since has any Vicar of Christ allowed any such malicious interpretation to go unchallenged. On the contrary, they have never ceased to urge the faithful to study this incomparable devotion.

The present Holy Father states very emphatically that this devotion when rightly understood makes it clear to all that we are dealing with an ordinary form of piety which may at one's discretion be slighted in favor of other devotions. On the contrary, Pope Pius XII reminds the faithful that they are dealing with a duty of religion which is most conducive to Christian perfection.

It must be understood then that such a devotion is not a mere external ritual accompanied by a complexity of mechanical observances. No, it is chiefly an interior, spiritual devotion which results in strenuous imitation of Christ. Reiterating that it is founded on charity, it bears repeating in order to make us realize that here we are honoring directly Christ's love in Itself. We are loving Love; therefore, ours must be an operative charity. Our labor in this reparation must be an earnest striving toward love, adoration, imitation, and participation as true members of the Mystical Body. This implies arriving at absolute confidence of unfailing love which caused St. Paul to proclaim Him triumphantly in his mission, "I am confident that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor

things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."¹³

It is evident then why Pope Pius XII proclaims that this form of religion must be held in the highest regard by which man honors and loves God more and more easily, and by which he more readily consecrates himself to divine love, as our Lord Himself proposed and recommended to Christianity, Christ's present Vicar on earth warns us that anyone who considers this gift of Christ to His Church of little value does a very rash and harmful thing and offends God Himself.

The Holy Father says succinctly that anyone who considers this rightly holds, The faithful, in honoring the Most Sacred Heart of the Redeemer, fulfill a most serious obligation by which they are bound to serve God and dedicate themselves and all that they have including their most secret thoughts and actions to their Creator and Redeemer, and in this way obey the divine Commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength."¹⁴

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- ¹Quam ipsam ob causam tantum est cultui Sacratissimi Cordis tribuendum ut ex xistimetur absolutissima, si usum et exercitationem spectes, professio christianae religionis, as quoted in Pope Pius XII's "Haurietis aquas", A.A.S. 48 (1956), P.344.
- ²Pope Pius XI. "Misericordissimus Redemptor", A.A.S. 20 (1928), p. 167.
- ³P. J. Hamell. "Devotion to the Sacred Heart", *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, LXXXV (1956), 217-22.
- ⁴Si quis hominem assumptum, una cum ipso Dei Verbo adorandum, una cum illo tanquam alterum in altero existentem, Deum appellandum esse dicere ausus fuerit (hunc enim intellectum particula; Cum adjecta perpetuo et necessario afferre consuevit) et non una potius adoratione Emmanuele honorat unamque illi glorificationem attribuit quatenus Verbum factum est caro; anathema sit. See J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Ampliss.*, Can 8, Collectio 4, 1083C.
- ⁵Si quis in duabus naturis adorari dicit Christum ex quo duas adorationes introducant separatim Deo Verbo, et separatim homini vel si quis ad interemptionem vel ad consensionem deitatis et humanitatis, unam naturam aive substantiam eorum quae convenerent introducens, sic Christum adorant, sed non una adoratione Deum verbum incarnatum cum propria ipsius carne adorant, sicut ab initio Dei ecclesiae traditum est talis anathema sit, as quoted in *Ibid.* 9, Can. 9, 382 E.
- ⁶See A. Biskupek, S.V.D., *The Litany of the Sacred Heart*, (1956) 9.
- ⁷See Pope Leo XIII, "Annum Sacrum", *Acta Leonis* 19 (1900), 76.
- ⁸Rom. 5:5

- ⁹Pope Pius XII. "On Devotion to the Sacred Heart", *The Advocate*, June 23, 1956, p. 10.
- ¹⁰Biskupek, op. cit. pp. 5-6.
- ¹¹Pope Pius XI. "Misericordissimus Redemptor", *The Catholic Mind*, XXVI, (1928), 234.
- ¹²See Denzinger—Bannwart, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, N. 1562.
- ¹³Rom. 8:38.39
- ¹⁴2:30 Mark and 22:37 Matt.



BALLADE FOR ST. FRANCIS

Look where our songs confront an ancient ill
New with names and old with centuries,
For now we stand where chanting atoms fill
The vowels of all our waking sourceries.
In blazing patches of an earthly Pleiades,
We poke where frail white fire is locked,
And boast like winter through dead trees:
"How far the ways that we have walked."

How far the ways? Pride smiles—until
Years lose their treadbare sophistries
And let a childish repture spill
On old dust-covered memories.
Tears return like crashing seas
Where semi-cadences are flocked
Around our burnished infancies. . . .
How far the ways? Pride smiles—until

Efficiency, our single skill,
Looks shabby now in face of these:
Songs shimmering on Alverno's hill;
A man who makes them, on his knees.
Yet Love that found such ecstasies
Stands yet today, still glory-frocked
In all the ancient fineries.
How far the ways that we have walked.

ENVOI

Poor prince of song, our melodies
Are loudly timed and neatly clocked.
And, knowing our straying, God also sees
How far the ways that we have walked.

Sister M. Florian, O.S.F. ✓

Consecrated Virginity, III

Fr. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M.

The ideal of consecrated virginity is total dedication to God and the things that pertain to the religious sphere. This consecration affects the entire personality of man, and is therefore essentially the same for both men and women. Scriptural texts and the earliest Christian writings refer to virginity without any particular distinction between the sexes. It is only in the Acts of the Martyrs that the concept of feminine virginity is distinguished from the masculine, and this came about mainly because of the circumstances under which Christian women faced death. For the young virgin martyrs of antiquity, condemnation was generally preceded by a concentrated effort to break down their resolution. Alluring promises of marriage, attempts at seduction, and threats of torture and violation were used against them; and many actually were violated by their executioners before being put to death. But nothing could shake the determination of those heroic women who clung to the Faith through the most refined and the most brutal tortments. They welcomed death as their entry into the bridal chamber where Christ, the beloved Bridegroom, awaited them. The early Christian authors frequently refer to the death of the virgin martyrs as the definite encounter of marriage, reflecting ideas that were current at the time and that were to develop in the centuries to come into the now generally accepted concept of feminine virginity as espousal to Christ.

It is not our purpose here to go into the historical development of this concept. We have touched upon it only to point out that the virgin martyrs of antiquity are the earliest representatives of the *Sponsa Christi* ideal, and with them appears the first distinction between male and female virginity. If this distinction came about primarily because of certain extrinsic conditions, it is nevertheless a valid distinction and possesses an intrinsic value that merits thoughtful consideration.

I. The *Sponsa Christi* as Woman

In the natural order, the most beautiful gift God has given to

Woman is her power of complete surrender to another. It is woman especially that the Creator has endowed with this delicate yet so powerful faculty of surrendering herself in love, of giving herself in body and soul with total dedication. Since this surrender stems from the woman's natural desire to serve, it can never be regarded as slavery. Seen in its true Christian perspective, it can only be regarded as loving and voluntary servitude. Woman gives herself, but she does not throw herself away. She binds herself with a trusting confidence as boundless as her love; but she does not fetter herself with the chains of blind passion. She loses herself utterly, but she finds herself again in the one she loves. In this loving surrender and willing servitude her heart burns and consumes itself and at the same time finds rest and support, security and happiness, and its deepest satisfaction. As this readiness for surrender and service is the characteristic quality of the true spouse, so in the role of spouse woman finds the fulfillment of her natural destiny. All her physical, psychological, and spiritual endowments are directed toward the conjugal union. Unlike the man, who remains more or less unaffected by marriage, the woman is completely transformed by it. It achieves in her the maturity and stability that characterize fully developed womanhood.

In most western cultures, the bridal veil symbolizes this totality of the woman's surrender to the man. It is the sign of her honor, the acknowledgment of her voluntary submission to him who has won her love. It is the sign that she desires to live according to her divinely-ordained destiny in its fullest and deepest reality.

The same significance attaches to the veil of the consecrated virgin. The nun's veil covers her head as a sign of God's authority over her, as a sign that she is espoused to Christ as her lord and master and only love, that she has surrendered herself wholly and utterly to His service. The symbolism of the veil gives expression to the basic difference between feminine virginity and masculine celibacy. Essentially, as we have said, the ideal of total consecration and self-surrender is the same for both sexes; the difference lies in what is given and in the manner of giving. The man's gift is more a gift of the will and of the spiritual powers and faculties; the woman's gift is rather the gift of the heart and of the physical powers. The man gives as a friend, as a vassal to his Lord; the woman gives as a bride to her beloved.

Man is by nature a ruler; to him alone belongs the dignity of the episcopate, of the priesthood. His role in the Church is to teach and govern, to act as intermediary between God and the faithful. He is the head and the co-worker of Christ, and if a priest, the instrument

through which the Divine Master exercises authority in the Church. In the fullest perfection of his consecration, man is the *alter Christus*.

The consecrated virgin as *Sponsa Christi* has an entirely different role. It is her task to exemplify in her vocation of submission, receptiveness, and loving servitude the essential elements of Christian life—complete surrender to Christ. Her surrender, though of lesser dignity than the priest's in the hierarchy of values, is nevertheless the greater and most complete that a creature can give to the Creator. More than the man, whose characteristic trait is self-will and whose great temptation is to Lucifer's pride and defiance of authority, the woman is able by nature to offer God her entire being. And she can make this offering in a way that is impossible for the man. As a sign of her submission and servitude, the virgin wears a veil, acknowledging that the Divine Bridegroom has placed this sign of His authority upon her head. When receiving the veil, she makes a solemn and public declaration, according to the words of the ritual: "Christ has placed a sign upon my head, that I may admit no lover but Him." He alone is her lord, He alone is the center of her life. Only in Him does her heart seek rest, and only through serving Him does she find complete satisfaction, and the fulfillment of her self-effacing duty as woman.

So much for the theory. In actual practice, however, to attain to this perfection of love is no simple matter. In the last analysis of course, it is a question of grace; but it is also a question of the creature's cooperation with grace. The feminine genius is directed toward the concrete, the practical, and the tangible. Faced with abstractions it becomes confused and impatient. It is psychologically difficult for a woman to serve an ideal, to devote herself to an unseen love. History can point to a multitude of men who have died for a doctrine, an idea, even for an hypothesis; but few are the women among such martyrs. Yet, the consecrated virgin is espoused to a hidden God; she is called to live wholly in the realm of the spiritual. Herein lies a danger. If woman's affective life is stronger than man's, it is also less stable. How many religious women, thinking themselves securely ensconced on the mount of the purely spiritual, have actually fallen into the pit of sentimentality, of imagination, or of disguised feminine sensuality. There is definite need for the consecrated virgin to sharpen her spiritual perception so that her natural genius for admiration and devotion be directed according to the sound tenets of Christian theology. Because she is espoused to Christ. He must become a living

alibrant reality for her, a person Whose life she observes and studies, Whose mind she seeks to understand, Whose doctrine, rightly grasped, is the source of her wisdom, the criterion of her judgments, the rule of all her actions. If her feminine heart, created as it is for self-surrender and receptive love, allows its supernatural vision to grow dull and obscured or to become distorted by feeling and sensuality, it will soon grow weary of serving an unseen Bridegroom. Love of self will eventually, if imperceptibly, smother love of Christ, and because woman desires so deeply to be the object of a tangible affection, illicit love of creatures will soon complete the destruction in her heart.

The consecrated virgin, however, who is truly the *Sponsa Christi*, steadily increases her natural power for dedicated love. Christ is her beloved. She knows Him, and she knows herself in relation to Him. She understands clearly what He expects of her, and because of her love for Him she runs lightly and gladly along the way of His will. She studies Him constantly, learning to see with His eyes, to think with His mind, and she is able to embrace all creatures in her loves without in any way jeopardizing His supreme right to her undivided heart. Creatures for her are not hindrances but helps along the rugged climb to perfection. She views the world in the spirit of reverent wonder and admiration, and everywhere she sees reflected the image of her Beloved, His beauty glimmering through the magnificent artistry of the cosmos. No creature is contemptible in her eyes, nothing beneath her notice. Her entire personality becomes radiant with the brilliance of the Eternal Love in Whom and through Whom she lives. The beauty of the true *Sponsa Christi* is the joyous beauty of a woman deeply in love.

II. The *Sponsa Christi* as Symbol

The meaning of all purification, of all religious surrender, is that the creature empty itself and receive a new value as the image or vessel of the Eternal. In order to be redeemed man has only to surrender absolutely to God, to assume the attitude of passive receptivity. This is not to be understood in a negative sense, but in the positive and decisive sense of the feminine. Here the concept of *Sponsa Christi* emerges as a symbol of the *mysterium caritatis*, the mystery of love for man, the mystery of religion.

All the faithful are obliged to give themselves to Christ, to belong to Him without reservation. The baptismal rite is essentially a marriage in which the soul is betrothed to Christ, and the goal of perfection toward which the soul is first directed in baptism is union with Christ. But only the consecrated virgin, because she

2
is a woman and can in fact be a bride, is able to make manifest this hidden mystery of the religious sphere. While the man teaches by word, the woman teaches by the example of her consecrated life the way of union with God. All the great Christian mysteries are surrounded by the feminine motifs of silence, self-surrender, and receptiveness. These are the motifs of the *Sponsa Christi*, and herein lies her value and dignity, the value and dignity that Mary possessed when she acknowledged herself the handmaid of the Lord.

If the glory of the *Sponsa Christi* is incomparably great, correspondingly great is her responsibility. It demands that as symbol of the religious, the bridal surrender be absolute, that the love be pure, that the servitude extend to the whole person, body and soul, heart and mind. The ideal of consecrated virginity cannot tolerate a divided heart either in the man or in the woman; but in the woman as *Sponsa Christi* the gift of the heart assumes a peculiar emphasis. It is only when this gift is absolute that the *mysterium caritatis* can be reflected in her clearly and without distortion.

There is one point in this regard that is sometimes misunderstood. Because the consecrated virgin gives her heart unreservedly to Christ it does not sanction any such violence to the human faculties. In fact the bride of Christ who coldly withholds her affection and friendship from her fellow men is a caricature rather than a symbol of the *mysterium caritatis*. On the contrary, the virgin lives in harmony with her symbol when in the strength of Christ's love she turns to creatures loving them according to His will and pleasure, with the love of service and sacrifice. But this love is conditional only, the condition being that it does not in any way turn her away from Christ, but draws her closer to Him. If her affection should become centered in any creature for its own sake, her love would be washed in the fullest sense of the word. All love for creatures and of creatures and from creatures carries the germ of transitoriness. The protestations of enduring love fall apart with the change of the winds. And yet, all love wills eternally; all desire seeks the divine, even though unknowingly. The consecrated virgin has pledged herself to the Eternal Love, He is all her desire. *My soul is athirst for Thee; in so many ways my flesh hath desired for Thee* (Ps. 62:2). Her veiled head is the sign of His authority over her, the sign that she belongs to Him forever, that her spirit and her flesh will be everlastingly delighted in Him. What a mockery then, if under the veil of her consecration the countenance of the bride of Christ were to reveal to the cynical world the sickly spirit, the d-

mind, the cold heart, the weariness and bitterness of the frustrated woman. Tragic indeed is the fall of the virgin from the glory of her symbol.

The Franciscan religious has an admirable model in our Seraphic Mother Saint Clare, the beautiful virgin of Christ who lived to the full her role of *Sponsa Christi*. Her exhortation to Blessed Agness of Prague could well be addressed to all brides of Christ, but especially to those who, like her, follow the spirit of the Seraphic Francis.

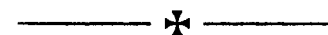
"O spouse of Christ," she writes, "I rejoice and exult with thee in joy of spirit, for like another most holy virgin, Saint Agnes, thou art exposed most wondrously to the spotless Lamb Who takes away the sins of the world, and hast totally abandoned the vanities of this earthly life.

"Happy the soul to whom it is given to attain this life with Christ, to cleave with all one's heart to Him Whose beauty all the heavenly hosts behold forever, Whose love inflames our love, Whose gentleness fills us to overflowing, Whose remembrance gives sweet light, Whose fragrance revives the dead, Whose glorious vision will be the happiness of all the citizens of that heavenly Jerusalem. For He is the brightness of eternal glory, the splendor of eternal light, the mirror without spot (Wisd. 7:26).

"Look into that mirror daily, O queen and spouse of Jesus Christ, and ever study thy face therein, that within and without thou mayest adorn and clothe and gird thyself with all manner of virtues, and be adorned likewise with the flowers and garments that become the daughter and most chaste spouse of the most high King. In that mirror are reflected blessed poverty, holy humility, and ineffable charity, as with the grace of God thou canst contemplate therein."

This is the destiny of the consecrated virgin, to conform herself so fully to the image of her Divine Spouse that the world may come to understand something of the ineffable love of God for man, the meaning of the *mysterium caritatis*.

(To be continued)



WOMAN OF VALOR

Fr. Titus Cranny, S.A.

In reading a recent biography of the foundress of the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement, one is reminded of the words of Christopher Dawson in *The Judgment of Nations*. "The cause of Christian Unity," he declared, "can best be served neither by religious controversy nor by political action but by the theological virtues: faith, hope and charity. . . The first and greatest need toward religious unity is an internal and spiritual one." The life of Mother Lurana Mary Francis, S. A.¹ is indeed a spiritual approach to the problem of Christian Unity, a deepening of the theological virtues according to a Franciscan interpretation, and the gift of a precious legacy to her spiritual daughters and to all concerned with the sorry spectacle of a disunited Christendom.

When Father Paul James Francis, S.A., Mother Lurana was joint founder of the Society of the Atonement at Graymoor, N. Y., about fifty miles north of New York city on the eastern side of the Hudson River. Like him she prayed and sacrificed for years until she entered the Church at the age of forty; like him she sought to inspire others with longing for religious unity and dedicated the religious family she began to this holy resolve. Like him she had a special attraction for St. Francis of Assisi whose Lady Poverty she loved and imitated with genuine devotion.

The first intimation of a religious vocation came to her rather early in life when she was in school. "I became conscious of two things: first, that my life was to be different. . .and secondly, that I wished to do and suffer something worthwhile for God and for others." (11) The rest of her life was a clarification and development of these two ideals.

This noble foundress was one of those brave, valiant, and intrepid women to whom God entrusts a special vocation and communicates extraordinary graces of sympathy and leadership. Her work and influence were often behind the scenes, but nonetheless real and effective. Mother Lurana had a part to play in all the spiritual projects which Father Paul engaged: in publishing *The Lamb* which began

February, 1903, as a monthly dedicated to Christian Unity and the Missions; in the Rosary League of Our Lady of the Atonement, a religious society of prayer and good works, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin for the cause of Unity; in the Union-That-Nothing-Be-Lost which collected several millions dollars to spread the faith and help missionaries in all parts of the world. Of her part in the Chair of Unity Octave we shall mention in a later connection.

She was truly *A Woman of Unity* in her own pursuit of truth which led her to embrace the Church with Father Paul and their companions on October 30, 1909 in the little convent chapel at Graymoor. She merits the title as well for doing much to bring others to the One Fold. She wrote the first chapter of the book *Prince of the Apostles* (1907), published jointly by Father Paul and Rev. Spencer Jones (who remained in the Anglican communion). She had the Sisters beg for money in New York City to pay the bills for printing *The Lamb* in the early days. She wrote and suggested articles, did book reviews and proof-reading, and cared for much of the correspondence for both communities of Friars and Sisters.

Mother Lurana was closely associated with Father Paul since 1897 when she first wrote to him. She came first to Graymoor in the winter of 1898 before the Friars' Founder, from the comfort and security of her home in Warwick, N. Y. She spent the first part of the winter in the rented half of a farmhouse some distance from the little church which was allotted for the use of the Sisters. Although her New York home was not far (about fifty miles south) from where Fr. Paul (as Rev. Lewis Wattson) was serving as pastor in Kingston, N. Y., she did not get in touch with him until he had gone to Omaha, Nebraska, to assume charge of a group of unmarried clergymen devoted to parochial work.

Father Paul and Mother Lurana met for the first time on October 3, 1898, at her home in Warwick, N. Y. after he had resigned his position at the Associate Mission in Omaha. On October 7 they pledged themselves to found the Society of the Atonement and thus became its first members. Two months later, while Father Paul was preparing himself for religious life at Holy Cross monastery, Westminster, Md., Mother Lurana asked if she should go to Graymoor. Complications had developed among her few companions so that they did not accompany her but she took courage from a letter of Father Paul: "Surely it is the Spirit who prompts you to go to Graymoor at once and with confidence I bid you God-speed. The time of waiting is past. God's Advent

message to you is: 'Go forward and your joy is in obedience.' Mother left Warwick and came to Graymoor on December 15, then the Octave Day of the Immaculate Conception. It was the Foundation Day of the Society of the Atonement.

Throughout the rest of her life she was a close associate and co-worker with Fr. Paul. But she was more; she was the Co-Founder of the Society of the Atonement. She realized in her own life the ideals of Father Paul, better than any of his own friars, somewhat like St. Clare. She understood so well the mission and message of the gentle Francis of Assisi. Mother Lurana's work for Unity was through the apostolate of prayer, sacrifice, suffering, and retirement—for the love of God and the love of souls.

In his brief but striking foreword to the biography, Archbishop Cushing of Boston pays tribute to Mother Lurana and her vocation to Christian Unity. "Lurana Mary White became a religious by divine vocation long before her religious profession was ratified by the Church," he writes. "Eleven years were to pass between the day she took her vows privately before Father Paul Francis and the day of her formal profession following her conversion . . . During the quarter-century of ceaseless activity Mother Lurana fulfilled the mission which God had entrusted to her. When she died in 1935, five years before the death of Father Paul Francis, she could stand before the Heavenly Bridegroom, her lamps lighted in the oil of a magnificent apostolate" (xii). No one can view the portrayal of Mother Lurana . . . without seeing the desire with which this saintly servant of God was inflamed that they all may be one." (xiii). The Archbishop echoes the sentiments of all the Graymoor Sisters in his closing sentence: "I pray that many new vocations to the Society of the Atonement may be the fruit of this book, and that its wide circulation may bring heavenly joy to those who are already disciples of her who is rightly eulogized as 'A Woman of Unity'."

Mother Lurana had a keen appreciation of the vocation of Unity for herself and for her Sisters. "The union of Christendom is our unique aim," she would remind them. "We like to separate our names and think of its syllables, At-one-ment, meaning to make at-one. That is very evidently our special vocation, the one for which God called our Society into being. And this is what Rome expects from the Society of the Atonement. We know how our late Holy Father, Pius had hoped that this Society would do much for Unity." (317) On another occasion she said to her Sisters: "how great a vocation

nothing less than to help to answer Our Lord's prayers at the Last Supper, 'that all may be One.' When we love anyone very much we pay a great attention to the dying request which he makes and we may look upon this as Our Lord's dying request. How great a privilege is ours!"

She recalled the work of the Franciscan friars in the apostolate of Christian Unity and seemed to suggest that this was another reason for the prayers and sacrifices of her Sisters. "We have the Franciscan tradition in this great work. We too should be vitally interested in the reunion of the Eastern Schismatics. Saint Francis is interested still and expects his youngest child, our Institute, to do all in its power to give impetus to the reunion of Christendom." (318). Mother Lurana had, of course, a special concern for the Anglicans and their return. "It is well worth the attention of our Religious to win back 'Our Lady's Dowry' as England has been lovingly called," she commented.

Her coming to the Church was a long and gradual search for the truth. The way was not easy but filled with many obstacles. The conviction within her grew, as it did with Father Paul, that no unity was possible apart from the see of Peter. As an Anglican sister she wrote that "The lack of real desire for a return of the Anglican church to reunion with the Holy See has heretofore been on our part, and not on the part of the occupants of the Chair of Peter." Elsewhere she noted that "It is a futile dream to contemplate a united church on earth without a visible head. If every parish must have its rector, and every diocese its bishop, how could the whole Catholic Church throughout the world exist as one fold without having one supreme or chief shepherd over all? Did then the Divine Founder of the Catholic Church in its original constitution provide for a permanent head and universal shepherd over His flock, to feed the sheep with sound doctrine and protect them from the wolves of heresy? And is this head the bishop of Rome?" Within a short while she would answer her own questions with an unqualified affirmation: The Pope is the Vicar of Christ upon earth.

When received into the Church she wrote in her *Memoirs*: "Thank God we are safe in Saint Peter's Boat! The only fervor I felt was when I made my profession of faith, especially at the words: 'And I believe in the Holy Catholic and Roman Church believes.' It was good to believe aloud and from the inside." Others were praying for her and for the community and for Father Paul. When she was returning from Rome in the spring of 1898, she visited the holy places in Assisi

and met Fr. Bernadine, OFM, at the Portiuncola. She was wearing the brown habit and explained her identity to him. She asked for prayers and he gladly consented. "Would you promise to pray so willingly if you knew what I am what you probably consider a heretic?" The friar smiled his reply: "We shall pray all the more willingly." (39).

Her work for the Chair of Unity Octave (January 18-25) was more than just a task well done. She and her Sisters worked on it from its beginning in 1908, carried on an immense secretarial work in all parts of the world for its promotion, and dedicated their strength and talent to make it known all over the world. It was she who conceived the name which the Friars of the Atonement now use in observance of this program of prayer: The Chair of Unity Octave. In 1926, Cardinal Bourne of Westminster had asked Father Paul if another name might be used as an alternative for Church Unity Octave, which was liable to misunderstanding in Britain. On the feast of St. Augustine of Canterbury, the apostle of England, Mother Lurana suggested the name that is now used, adopted since 1949 as the official title for the Friars and Sisters of the Atonement.

Father Paul realized her many unusual qualities of mind and heart and the blessing that he gave to her in 1904 expresses his sentiments as well as the singular vocation to which she was called: "God promise to thee and thine. And they that be of thee shall build up the old waste places: Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations and thou shalt be called: The Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of paths to dwell in." (Is. 58:12).

Lurana! Wondrous blest art thou, St. Francis' Child,
Unto whom the Lord of hosts hath said: "Thou shalt be styled
Repairer of the Breach 'twixt th' Apostolic See
And England's Ancient Church; and they that be of thee.
Nor day nor night shall cease to pray and toil in pain
And agonize till Rome and we are one again.

The Unity with Rome did not come until five years later when the small Society of the Atonement, numbering two friars, five sisters, and ten lay associates were received into the Church in the Chapel, Our Lady of the Angels at Graymoor. Monsignor Joseph Conroy, later Bishop of Ogdensburg, and Rev. Paschal Robinson, OFM, officiated at the momentous ceremony.

Mother Lurana cherished special devotion for the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title that originated at Graymoor: Our Lady of the Atonement. She helped Father Paul compose an Office and Mass for the

that day, July 9, which was later approved in 1946 by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, for the Atonement Friars and Sisters. She cultivated a deep love for Mary in her own life and communicated it to her own religious; for Mary was the special patroness in the Work of Unity as Our Lady of the At-one-ment or Unity.

Her life was one of sacrifice and of atonement, of pain and suffering, particularly at the end of her life. But she would be the leader and pattern for the others. "We are members of the Society of the Atonement," she said to her community, "the Society of the Atonement of Jesus—that phase of Jesus' life which is that of sacrifice, reparation, at-one-ment and of being a victim." Shortly before she died while suffering intensely, she turned to a picture of Christ crucified and of St. Francis and repeated what she had written at the foot of the picture long before: "Two Victims of Atonement. I will be the third." (324).

Mention should be made too of Mother Lurana's love for the poverty of the Poverello. It was no passing attraction but a deep conviction exemplified during her thirty-seven years at Graymoor. "How many snares are avoided by just obedience to the Holy Poverty demanded by St. Francis of his children," she observed. "Instead of fanaticism, sweet Lady Poverty is the Mother of wisdom and prudence in earthly as well as in heavenly affairs." (209). As Father Paul spent his first winter at Graymoor in an old paint shack named "Palace of Lady Poverty" so Mother Lurana lived the first winter in a house that was scarcely better known as "Old St. Francis House" until a permanent convent was ready.

Today the Sisters of the Atonement number 350 members. They seek to implement the ideals of their foundress in thirty dioceses in the United States and Canada; in County Leitrim, in Ireland; in Quadraro, Assisi, and Rome in Italy; and in the diocese of Yokohama, Japan, where they have recently made a foundation. Thus they carry out the special aim of their congregation as "missionary work at home and in the foreign mission field, either by offering prayers or by teaching catechism and Christian Doctrine among the poor and among hapless and unbaptized non-Catholics." Further scope for their Unity is given through retreats for women "especially for those who are desirous of embracing the Catholic faith." Every year witnesses the widening realization of the hope of Mother Lurana: "My dear sisters, let us ask of God this grace: to have many foundations, many poor, but rich in love towards God, one another, and the world."

The Atonement Sisters seek to put into practical living the message of their community, *Non nisi Te, Domine*—Nothing, save Thyself, Lord' by living in the spirit of Atonement, by following the example of St. Francis, and doing their part for the fulfillment of Our Lord's prayer: "That they may be one." It is significant that at the present time there is a community of Lutheran women in Germany, the Sisters of St. Mary, who pattern their life and work upon the imitation of Our Lady and who are particularly dedicated to the work of Unity. They should be much earnest hope and devout prayer that God in His goodness may lead them, like Mother Lurana and the Sisters of the Atonement, into the Fold of Peter.

This life story of Mother Lurana, which prompted this article, is an engaging tale of a remarkable woman in the annals of American Franciscana, and in the history of the Church in the United States. She takes her place with other heroic women vowed to the service of God and the Church, such as Mother Joseph of Maryknoll, and Mother Theodore of the Sisters of Providence. Sister Mary Celine has captured clearly the spirit and personality of her foundress and related her story with charm and interest. Mother Lurana is an example to all concerned with the problems of Christian Unity. She demonstrates conclusively the need for genuine sanctity. There is no substitute for it and without it reunion will never be achieved. For while studies of theological history, language, sociology, and ethnology are necessary and helpful, they are secondary to the primary requirement for affecting the union of Christendom—personal holiness.

¹A *Woman of Unity*, by Sister Mary Celine, S.A. Foreword by Most Rev. Richard J. Cushing, D.D. Garrison, N.Y.: Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement, 1957. Pp. xv plus 357. \$4.50. Many photographic illustrations.



Christmas Gifts

Looking for a Christmas gift, order a book your friends will

- to:
- Upper ... Retreat Readings for Priests*, by Thomas ... \$2.75
 - ... Priest ... Gospel*, by Martin Wolter, O.F.M. \$1.50
 - Clares:
 - ... Legend ... Writings of Saint Clare of Assisi*. \$2.75
 - Franciscan Sisters:
 - ... Book ... An Explanation of the Rule of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis*, by Allan B. Wolter, O.F.M. \$1.75
 - ... religious in general:
 - St. Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, Latin text with English translation and commentary by Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M. \$2.00
 - Spiritual Exercises According to Saint Bonaventure*, by Dominic Faccin, O.F.M. \$3.85
 - John Duns Scotus, A Teacher for our Times* by Beraud de Saint-Maurice, translated by Columban Duffy, O.F.M. \$3.50

Order at the Franciscan Institute. Promote Franciscan literature

Everyone Will Welcome...

The National Catholic Almanac for 1958

... the place of a large reference library—and offers good reading, facts at your fingertips, questions answered, problems explained. 704 pp. \$2.00; cloth, \$2.50

Your bookstore or Dept. 4-2560

ANTHONY GUILD PRESS

PATERSON, N. J.



1. The Bureau of the Census, in the Department of Commerce, has been authorized to conduct a study of the economic conditions of the United States, and to report thereon to the President and the Congress. The study is to be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Act of October 3, 1917, and the Act of October 3, 1918, and the report is to be submitted to the President and the Congress by the first of January, 1920.

Westchester