

St. Francis's Letter to the Entire Order

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Considering the special importance which the Letter to the Entire Order takes on for the last years of the Poverello's life, I have had the idea for some time to make it the subject of a monograph.¹ An invitation to speak to my confreres of the Roman Province at Viterbo and elsewhere on "Liturgical Spirit and Practice according to St. Francis," provided me with an occasion to write a commentary on the letter – a rather difficult task, risky too, because of the variety and complexity of its contents. Obviously I shall not be able to exhaust all the topics mentioned by the saint in his letter.

The literary genre of this circular letter could form the subject of a special study. Bibliographical research has brought to light the lack of comparative studies on the literary style of medieval correspondence which might provide some criteria for assessing Francis's letters.² Given the saint's great veneration for the Scriptures, it is not improbable that he was influenced at least in part by the Pauline epistles. On the other hand, the research of Bertrand Cornet, O.F.M. and Kajetan Esser, O.F.M., shows beyond a shadow of doubt that when Francis dictated this letter in the Umbrian dialect to one of his intimate companions he had in mind the Bull *Sane cum olim* that Pope Honorius III (1216-27) signed for the first time at Viterbo.³

This detail furnishes us with a *terminus post quem* for the composition of the letter. B. Cornet, in his well-documented study on the Poverello's Eucharistic teaching and practice, points out the similarity between the letter and the Bull, and leaves no doubt about Francis's dependence on Honorius III. To further the reforms initiated by Innocent III, especially concerning the Eucharist, particularly during the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), the pontiff urged all prelates, priests and the faithful to a worthy celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice and special signs of reverence for the Blessed Sacrament "so that faith and devotion toward it might grow in all men."⁴ B. Cornet is not exaggerating when he writes that with this Bull, reissued several times between 1219 and 1220, Honorius launched a kind of Eucharistic crusade in which the *vir Catholicus* enlisted with all the enthusiasm of which he was capable.

The first question to be answered is whether Francis dictated his Letter to the Entire Order a short time after his return from the Middle East in 1220. Relying on a number of indications found in the text, Father Esser felt that he had to support this theory.⁵ I feel, however, that the whole tenor of the letter supposes a rather advanced state of clericalization and the development of definite offices – a state of evolution that could not have occurred before 1224. On 29 March 1222, Honorius granted the friars the privilege of celebrating the *officia divina*, that is, Mass and the Divine Office at a time of general interdict, and added a significant phrase: “in churches they might have.”⁶ It was only with the Bull of 3 December 1224 that the order obtained the further privilege of celebrating the *Missarum solemnia*⁷ in its own “places and oratories” with a portable altar. I think it hardly likely that the Poverello could have spoken of one Mass a day in each house before his order had obtained the right to have a portable altar and little churches attached to their friaries. The saint’s repeated insistence on the observance of the Rule, especially in what concerns the Divine Office, must refer to the final Rule of 1223 and the very real difficulties encountered in carrying out its liturgical prescriptions.⁸ Anyone reading the Testament of 1226 in conjunction with the letter will immediately perceive a similarity of theme and spirit. These and other indications lead me to believe that the Letter to the Entire Order must have been written during the last two years of the saint’s life.

1. “To All the Reverend and Most Beloved Brothers in Christ”

Like pontifical and imperial documents, the letter begins with an invocation – in this case one that is not Christological but Trinitarian. In the prayers of St. Francis as found in the *Opuscula*, we find an extraordinary faith and devotion to the cardinal mystery of the most blessed Trinity.⁹ The Poverello appeals to the friars of his order “in the name of the most high Trinity and holy unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” imploring their assistance and proclaiming himself their unworthy instrument.

Every letter must indicate its addressee. Francis lists the recipients of his with great detail: “To all the reverend and most beloved brothers.”¹⁰ All the members of his fraternity are “reverend,” worthy of respect in virtue of their common evangelical calling. Above all, they are brothers, to be loved most dearly. The Poverello is not content to mention his friars in a general way, but he enumerates them according to the various offices they fill and the different classes to which they belong. In the first place he greets “Brother A, the minister general of the Order of Friars Minor.”¹¹ After resigning from the governance of the order in 1220, he looks upon him as his lord. Looking to the unknowable future, he addresses himself “to all the

ministers general who are to come after him." Then he speaks about "all the ministers and custodes," that is, the ministers provincial who, after 1217, were appointed to be "the servants of the other friars" in a geographically defined province (*RegNB* IV 1). He does not single out the ministers or guardians of individual houses, who are mentioned toward the end of the letter, just as they are in the Testament. He addresses the two categories of friars who make up the entire order, namely, "the priests of the fraternity" and "all the simple brothers." It is significant that he calls the former "humble in Christ" because, as he will add, the whole priestly dignity is rooted in Jesus Christ. On the other hand, a certain tension between the apparent superiority of the "brother priests" and a feeling of frustration on the part of the "simple brothers" was probably making its appearance. It is in that minority and holy obedience by which one "obeys his own brother" (*SalVirt*) that Francis envisions a solution by which all manner of sterile opposition between the two groups will vanish and the fraternity will be consolidated in evangelical humility.

In the mind of the Poverello, fraternity and minority are correlative concepts and attitudes of mind, which must be mutually effective in the life of the Friar Minor (see *SalVirt*). This is clear from the way he gives his own name as the author of the letter and the opening greeting: "Brother Francis, a worthless and sinful man, your little servant" (see Giacomo V. Sabatelli, O.F.M., p. 108). Further on he writes: "I Brother Francis, a useless man and unworthy creature of the Lord God." Because he is a brother of his friars in Christ, four aspects of minority, as seen in the mirror of divine sanctity, are underlined.

Francis attains the height of his literary expression in his prayers. In this letter his greeting to the brothers "humble in Christ . . . in Him who has redeemed us and washed us in His precious blood" (see Rev. 1:5), passes over naturally first to an exhortation to adore Him "with fear and reverence, prostrate on the ground" (see 2 Ezra 8:6) and then to the prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Most High." It is His name (see Luke 1:32) "that is forever blessed" (Rom. 1:25). Note how Francis emphasizes the divinity of Christ. The opinion, so often uncritically repeated, that the Poverello's devotional life was oriented exclusively to the figure of the terrestrial Christ of the synoptics,¹² lacks any foundation. The greeting shows, furthermore, that the saint looked up to Christ as the focus and model to whom the Order of Friars Minor must turn as an essential point of reference and upon whom it must grow.

The writer of the letter addresses the friars with a courtesy that reflects the age of chivalry. "Hear my lord sons and brothers" ("*signori figli e fratelli miei*"). Exercising his role as spiritual father of his religious family, Francis extends his friars an urgent invitation, thrice repeated, to pay attention to his message, which derives its authority from the fact that it is "the voice of

the Son of God." He enunciates it first as a universal imperative valid for all Christians: "With all your hearts observe His commandments and practice His counsels with all your mind" (see Sabatelli, p. 109). Thereupon he takes up the particular obligations of his friars. Their function within the church is to profess Christ's love for the human race and make it visible through their lives: "For this He sent you through the whole world, to testify to His voice in word and work, and make known to all that there is no Almighty One except Him" (Tob. 13:4).

Perhaps without directly intending it, Francis here defines the special charism of his brothers: To bear witness to the creative power of God and Christ, by practicing and spreading the message of the Gospel all over the world. We find here the importance he assigns to preaching and the apostolic presence of his friars, which transcends all geographical boundaries. But they will be able to fulfill the mission committed to them only if they themselves persevere "in discipline and holy obedience" to all they have promised to observed by their profession as Friars Minor. The help which God, in His paternal love, reaches out to them will keep them faithful.¹³

2. "All Respect and All Adoration to the Most Holy Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ"

Anyone accustomed to reasoning in terms of Aristotelian logic will wonder why Francis introduces at this point, right out of the blue, a discourse on Eucharistic devotion. The nexus must be found in verse 12: "The Lord God offers Himself to you as to His sons" (see Heb. 12:7). The mission of his friars to proclaim the goodness of Christ and His omnipotence against this background of divine love takes on concrete meaning here. The saint's understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice as a marvelous gift of the infinite power and goodness of God will become clearer later on.

If we compare the passage that Francis devotes to the cult of the Eucharist with the Bull of Honorius III *Sane cum olim*, on which it depends, we shall be struck at once by the difference in tone between the two documents. From the very beginning of his Brief, the pontiff speaks of abuses with regard to the celebration and custody of the Eucharist and invokes divine sanctions on priests guilty of such terrible offenses. He lays down concrete regulations to remedy the situation.¹⁴ Francis, on the contrary, adopts a stance of extraordinary humility and draws on all the resources of his emotional repertory to plead with his sons to reverence this central mystery of the faith. We must bear in mind that Francis is addressing all the members of his fraternity without distinction. He is prepared humbly to kiss the feet of his brothers,¹⁵ and he expresses the greatest charity of which he is capable. He begs them¹⁶ "to show all the

reverence and all honor" as far as they can "to the most holy Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ."

There is question, then, not only of an intense cult of the Real Presence, but of great love for sacramental sacrifice of the Eucharist seen in its totality. The very terminology "Body and Blood of the Lord" shows this. Further evidence can be drawn from the subordinate clause of his exhortation. With reference to Colossians 1:20, the Poverello presents Christ's role as universal redeemer and reconciler with the omnipotent God as a motive for rendering special reverence to the Eucharistic mystery. Though not saying so in as many words, the saint must have been aware that the universal reconciliatory mission of Christ is not some bygone historical event but an effective force in every celebration of the Eucharist.¹⁷

3. "All My Brothers . . . Should Respect the Written Words of God"

For the sake of clarity, I feel it appropriate at this point to anticipate a commentary on lines 35–37, since they are directed, at least in part, to all the friars, before discussing material meant only for the brother-priests.

In a sentence rich in content and structurally so complex that it required considerable editing by his secretary, Francis states the motives why it is necessary "*vasa et officilia cetera custodire quae continent verba sua sancta*," literally: "to take care of the vessels and other objects used in the sacred rites."¹⁸ The Poverello includes the sacred vessels and liturgical books used for the celebration of the Sacraments. The deacons¹⁹ were responsible for their care and preservation in the sacristies normally attached to the larger churches.

The first person plural *debemus custodire* takes on an autobiographical note, since Francis, who was a deacon,²⁰ felt himself directly involved in his paraliturgical function. Likewise the phrase "*nos qui specialius divinis sumus officiis deputati*" ("we who are more specially assigned to the divine service")²¹ can be understood as referring to his participation in the administration of the Sacraments in his role as deacon.

This solicitude for the care and custody of sacred objects is based on (1) a readiness to listen to and carry out God's word on the part of one who opens himself generously to God in faith (see John 8:47) and who is committed to the service associated with divine worship, and (2) the effects which these signs of reverence produce in the believer, since they bring him to experience "the loftiness of the Creator and our subjection to Him" (see Sabatelli, p. 112). Here is an insight worthy of the genius of the caliber of St. Augustine, as Paul Bayart remarks.²² The humble signs of reverence expressed in maintaining the church and its appointments neat and clean

help nourish a sense of the transcendent greatness of God and our total dependence on Him.

If the saint's words which follow are to be understood, they need some historical explanation. At the time of the Poverello every word of the liturgical books had to be laboriously transcribed by hand on expensive parchment.²³ After prolonged use these volumes eventually fell into a deplorable condition, with their pages torn loose or covered with unsightly blotches, especially in poor churches lacking sacristies or other good storage places.

It is in this context that we must read the words of the saint: "I exhort, therefore, all my brothers and encourage them in Christ that wherever they find the written word of God they show respect as far as possible, and as far as it concerns them, if these writings are not well cared for or left lying around, they should pick them up and take care of them." The prudent tone of the saint supposes that he has in mind churches not belonging to the order where the friars in the course of their preaching-rounds might have seen detached and tattered leaves from Lectionaries or Missals. And so he encourages them to take care of them and repair them as far as lies in their power.

The motivation given by the saint is precious: In their concern for the beauty of the liturgical books the friars will "honor the Lord Himself in the words which He has spoken" (see Sabatelli, p. 113). He is evidently thinking about the biblical texts found in the liturgical books, which he considers a mystic prolongation of the Incarnation of the Word, a kind of eighth Sacrament in which Christ continually instructs us, just as in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood He is "always present with His faithful."²⁴

This great truth is manifest especially in the words of Consecration, as we see in his words: "Many things are sanctified" (1 Tim. 4:5) by means of the words of God, and by virtue of the words of Christ "the Sacrament of the altar is confected" (*conficitur* – see Sabatelli, p. 113). The man who labeled himself "ignorant and uneducated" shows amazing theological balance in expressing the parallel between the divine word and the Sacrament.²⁵ He steers clear of magic sacramentalism on the one hand, and of Protestant biblicism on the other.

4. "Consider Your Dignity, Brother-Priests"

In the longest part of the letter, the seraphic father speaks "in the Lord" to all his brother-priests, "who are or will be or desire to be priests of the Most High." Far from disapproving, he joyfully welcomes the fact that in his fraternity there are brothers who have been ordained to the priesthood or

who aspire to it. He grants full liberty to his brother-priests to celebrate the Eucharist daily, or less frequently. But he is very insistent that "when they wish to celebrate Mass, they be pure, and in purity reverently offer up the true sacrifice of the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, with holy and undefiled intentions and not for any earthly thing or for love or fear of any man, as if they were obliged to please men" (see Eph. 6:6; Col. 3:22; Sabatelli, p. 109ff).

This earnest appeal must be read against its medieval background. The absolute purity which the saint requires does not seem to refer exclusively or even principally to chastity of mind and body.²⁶ It must be understood in the light of other elements in this very complex paragraph. The Poverello is anxious to eliminate every appearance of material gain in the celebration of this central mystery of the faith.

From early times the custom of offering gifts of bread, wine and other materials at the offertory of the Mass was replaced by monetary donations for the celebrant to remember the special intentions of the donor. By the close of the ninth century the number of such requests for Masses had grown to such an extent that the celebration of a daily private Mass became the practice in the monasteries.²⁷ Serious abuses followed, such as the celebration of several Masses each day for the sake of stipends. Alexander II in 1065 and Innocent III in 1206 strictly forbade this practice. But greed and need can always find a loophole. Some priests, while observing the letter of the law, contrived to merge several Masses into one by repeating the prayers before the Offertory as many times as there were stipends received. This was the wretched practice of "*missae bifaciatæ aut trifaciatæ*."²⁸

For fear that the celebration of the Eucharist in favor of certain individuals might present a grave danger to poverty, Francis forbade the acceptance of stipends in any form whatsoever, whether in cash or kind, as is clear from his deliberate choice of words banning any material or personal gain from the celebration of the Eucharist.

This detachment from any form of material gain in the priestly service of the altar was the one great purpose he had in mind. "One's whole will, so far as assisted by the grace of God, should be directed to Him, desiring that it (the Mass) should please only the most high God" (see Sabatelli, p. 110). This admirable picture of internal detachment, otherwise known as total attention to the *opus divinum*, and the statements that follow, enable us to understand the saint's mind perfectly. No brother-priest may presume to shackle the sovereign liberality of Christ with intentions set by donors, material and frivolous as they often are, "so that He alone operates just as it pleases Him." What matters is fulfillment of Christ's mandate to reenact the Last Supper as a memorial of His redeeming sacrifice. Anyone who substitutes earthly concerns for this would be like the traitor Judas, since

by celebrating in an unworthy manner he would become "guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord" (see 1 Cor. 11:27).

Francis implicitly opposes a universal custom of the time and affirms the incompatibility of the Eucharistic celebration with the acceptance of material offerings. He also testifies to the memorial aspect of the sacrifice of the Mass, though of course he does not enter into any profound theological theorizing.

But who could not but marvel at this man, lacking any formal education, and living in a world where the explanations of the most celebrated masters could not get beyond an affirmation of the mystery?²⁹

Following this, Francis recalls a passage from the Letter to the Hebrews (10:28), in which the sacred writer earnestly exhorts Christians to absolute fidelity to Christ. The saint applies this text to the Eucharistic mystery, arguing *a minori ad maius*. If those who violated the Mosaic Law in purely material things were punished without mercy, what greater penalties await "those who have dared to tread underfoot the Son of God and contemn the blood poured out by Him to sanctify the members of the new covenant! He who sins in this manner offends the Holy Spirit who has been communicated to us by grace."³⁰

The Poverello mentions some examples of how priests and simple faithful tread underfoot the Son of God when they approach the Eucharist irreverently, not discerning "the holy Bread of Christ from other foods and rites" (see 1 Cor. 11:28); when they eat it in a state of sin, unworthily; or even though in a state of grace when they communicate without fruit because they lack the necessary dispositions. It is curious that the saint should cite a case in which the celebrant is worthy, that is, in the state of grace, but nonetheless eats the Eucharistic Bread in an unworthy manner. The quotation, drawn from Jeremiah 48:10, where a curse is laid on those who perform the work of the Lord deceitfully, provides us with a clue to the logical connection between two apparently different conditions. No doubt Francis has in mind the deceit practiced by priests who violate the sovereign rights of God by pursuing human interests in their sacrificial service. To them is directed the terrible pronouncement of the prophet Malachi (2:2): "I will curse your blessings."

The seraphic father opens and concludes this admonition, with its almost menacing elements, with an appeal to enter into one's own heart: "Recordamini fratres mei sacerdotes" ("Remember my brother-priests") and "Qui nolunt hoc ponere super cor" ("Those who do not take this to heart"). The whole letter is the marvelous fruit of meditation, and flows from the very heart of the Poverello. Its whole purpose is to stimulate devout reflection on the part of his brothers.

Thereupon we hear another appeal in the prophetic mood: "Audite, fratres mei," ("Listen, my brothers"). The passage comprises three steps in

which Francis strives to demonstrate the absolute necessity of priestly holiness. The three examples he cites are characteristic of his thinking. First of all, the most Blessed Virgin Mary, who is "so honored, as is right, because she bore Him (Christ) in her most holy womb." Then John the Baptist (Francis's baptismal patron), who "trembled and did not dare touch the holy head of God."³¹ Finally, the holy sepulcher "in which He lay for a while."

If the Blessed Virgin, Christ's head and sepulcher are so rightly venerated, with how much more reason are good moral dispositions required in the priests who celebrate, since to them has been entrusted the duty of holding in their hands and receiving "in their hearts and mouth" and of giving to others "Him who is to die no more but is eternally alive and glorious, Him on whom the angels long to look" (1 Pet. 1:12).

We should note here the balance and theological depth with which the Poverello sees the glorified Christ as the object of the priestly ministry, without losing sight of the Incarnation and Redemption, as appears from his inclusion of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist, and the Holy Sepulcher. I think it hardly likely that this mention of the Holy Sepulcher is connected with his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1220.³² It is probably related to the medieval idea that the pyx was a "new sepulcher for the body of Christ."³³

The *tertium comparationis* used by the Poverello in his reasoning should be considered. If Mary was so sanctified by the temporary presence of the incarnate Word in her womb; if the Baptist, despite his austere life, considered himself unworthy to touch even for an instant the head of his divine Master; if the Holy Sepulcher is so venerated because of the short time the body of the Redeemer rested in it, how much more outstanding must be the holiness of the priests who regularly consecrate, consume and distribute the Eucharistic body of the immortal Christ! Francis singles out the temporary roles played by the three examples in the life of Christ and their extraordinary sacredness, from which he deduces the necessity of the highest degree of holiness in those who are committed to His service all their lives.

Proceeding from the foregoing themes, Francis continues with biblical fervor: "Consider your dignity (see 1 Cor. 1:26), brother-priests, and be holy because He is holy" (see Lev. 19:2). The degree of their love and reverence for Christ must correspond to the lofty dignity that is theirs by reason of the sacred ministry. "And since the Lord God has honored you above all other men because of this ministry, you are to love, reverence and honor Him more than all other" (see Sabatelli, p. 111). It is not hard to accept Father Laurence C. Landini's suggestion that Francis's picture of the exalted position of the priest contributed not a little to the clericalization of the Order of Friars Minor.³⁴

In his discussion of the love and honor due the Eucharistic Christ, the

Poverello has left us perhaps the most beautiful page, from a spiritual and literary point of view, of all his writings. The reader will notice the polished Latin of the few sentences which present a whole series of juxtaposed ideas and images in which the imperfect assonance betrays the poetic vein of the writer. There can be no doubt that while Francis dictated the exhortation in his native Umbrian dialect, he employed the services of a secretary who was skilled in Latin. More than any other of his writings, this passage reveals the mystical life of the seraphic father, his theological vision of Christ and his tremendous love for the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Eucharist.

Once more we encounter his insistence that the priest be free of all worldly interests. "Surely this is a great pity and a pitiful weakness to have Him present with you like this, and you be distracted by anything else in the wide world." He then expresses his wonder and awe at the condescension of the Word incarnate in making Himself present under the appearance of bread and wine. "Our whole being should be seized with fear. All the world should tremble and heaven rejoice when Christ, the Son of the living God, becomes present on the altar in the hands of the priest."³⁵ Surprisingly here and in the following sentences Francis stresses the divinity of Christ: "Christus filius Dei vivi" (see John 11:27), "Deus et Dei filius." These phrases, recurring in a number of other passages in his writings, refute those who continue to maintain that the Poverello's devotion was directed exclusively to the terrestrial Jesus. The reader will not fail to notice his feeling for the mystical and awesome aspects of the Eucharistic mystery, and its universal compass which reaches out to embrace all men and the entire universe.

After this introduction, he turns his attention to the humility of the Eucharistic Christ and the need for his ministers to imitate it. Exclamations of wonder tumble over one another like a litany of paradoxes: "What wonderful majesty! What stupendous condescension! O sublime humility! O humble sublimity! That the Lord of the whole universe, God and the Son of God, should humble Himself like this and hide under the form of a little bread for our salvation." The dominant theme of this meditation in song is the infinite tension between divine greatness and creatural weakness; the incarnate Word, with incomprehensible humility makes Himself present under the lowly appearance of bread and wine through the word of the consecrating priest. It is hardly necessary to recall the profound concept of humility inspired by St. Paul (see Phil. 2:6-8) and the fathers which underlies the saint's thinking.³⁶ When in pure love the infinite greatness of the Word descends in His Incarnation to the level of human weakness, it is absolutely incongruous to locate the mystery in the framework of the scholastic definition of humility as a moderation of an innate human drive toward greatness.³⁷

Francis does not hesitate to see the spiritual consequences of these thoughts for priests. "Consider, my brothers, God's humility," and: "Pour out your hearts before Him" (Ps. 61:9; James 4:10; see Sabatelli, p. 112). For his brother-priests, the Eucharistic celebration must become a school where Christ Himself teaches them minority, the very foundation of the evangelical fraternity. This is an absolute necessity if they are to achieve a contemplative approach to the sacred action and open their hearts to the depths of its meaning. The admonition, so rich in spiritual inspiration, reveals the source from which it flows, namely, the word of God lovingly contemplated.

The Poverello concludes his exhortation with a plea that clearly manifests his special charism: "Keep nothing for yourselves, so that He who has given Himself wholly to you may receive you wholly." The Eucharist is by its very nature a gift of God which man receives to the extent in which he empties himself of every kind of possessive attachment to himself and creatures, and surrenders himself completely to the Giver. The Friar Minor is happy when he withholds nothing for himself and lives interiorly and exteriorly in most high poverty, accessible to all in his minority after the example of the Eucharistic Christ. Here we can grasp the fundamental orientation of Francis's Eucharistic devotion.

5. "Only One Daily Mass"

For centuries no other passage of the *Opuscula* has been so fiercely debated as these few words about celebrating one Mass a day in each local fraternity. The reason why so much attention has been given to this text lies in the fact that Philip Melanchthon (1498–1560) in his *Apologia*,³⁸ claimed that Francis had denied the legality of private Masses. More recently a number of studies have dealt with the historical reasons why private Masses came to be added to the conventual, or community, Mass in the monasteries. Professor Otto Nussbaum, in his 1961 dissertation, and Father Angelus Haeussling, O.S.B., in an article published in 1973,³⁹ arrived at opposite conclusions. It is certain that "daily private Masses came into almost general use among the religious priests, and in a short time the diocesan clergy followed the example of the monks."⁴⁰

In the thirteenth century we find a great increase in the number of votive Masses said for particular intentions, in honor of the saints, or for the faithful departed. They were accompanied by a considerable increase in Mass stipends, clergy, and the celebration of Masses on side altars.⁴¹

If we are to avoid the risk of completely misunderstanding the Poverello's words, we must read them against the background of certain facts. "I admonish and exhort, therefore, in the Lord." There is no question

of any commandment, but of an earnest plea which the saint voices with his usual appeal to the Lord's authority, of which he considers himself the envoy and custodian. Employing a literary device common to all his writings, Francis reinforces his point by repeating it in parallel phrases. We must also notice the conjunction *propterea* with the preceding line of thought and gives the reason for what follows.

The admonition mentions "all the places where the friars dwell." This phrase supposes, of course, a stage of development in which dwelling in fixed habitations had replaced the earlier itinerant life of the first friars. A number of priests must have been living in the early hermitages. Otherwise an admonition to celebrate "only one Mass a day according to the manner of the holy church" would lack any justification. Such a plea takes for granted the existence of little churches or oratories (see *Test* 28-29) located close to the friars' dwellings. Moreover, we must admit that the pontifical permission for portable altars was already in effect, as included in the Bull of Honorius II of 3 December 1224.⁴²

Francis wishes that one of the priest-friars living in the hermitage, and only one, should celebrate Mass each day on the only altar of the little church, after the manner of the *missa conventualis* in the monasteries. The qualifying phrase *secundum formam sanctae ecclesiae* seems to refer to the Roman church, or more precisely, to the pontifical curia, even though this is not clearly specified in the text. In any case, it is clear just what elements were included in the obligation of the friars to conform to the rite of the pontifical chapel. The saint did not base his statement about one Mass on a possible practice followed in the papal curia. At least the sources that have come down to us provide no information which might support a similar theory advanced by Father Ottokar Bonmann, O.F.M.⁴³ In an age of liturgical pluriformity, he asks his fellow-priests to follow the rite of the Roman curia in the celebration of Mass.

In the next sentence, Francis further explains his reasons for limiting the Eucharistic celebration to one Mass and attempts to provide a theological basis. "If there are several priests in a place, each should be glad for the love of charity to assist at the celebration of one of them, since our Lord Jesus Christ will pour out His grace on those who are worthy, whether they be present or absent." The saint did not envision a concelebration of a number of brother-priests, nor a liturgy where all assist in sacred vestments at some of the ceremonies but not in the canon. Still less did he envision the rite used for the ordination of bishops and priests and (since the twelfth century) by the Holy Father and some of the clergy.⁴⁴ After the resident brother-priests consult together, one of them is to celebrate Mass according to the manner of the Roman curia, while others relinquish their right "for the love of charity," that is to say, by reason of an intense supernatural love which in the final analysis is grounded on love for God

Himself.⁴⁵ The priests are to assist at this one Mass much like the simple brothers living in the place.

It will take some effort to understand the theological motivation for this liturgical restriction. It seems to me that the Poverello is saying that the Word incarnate is not restricted in the conferral of His gifts, not even in His Eucharistic presence. He is able to grant them equally to those who take part in the Eucharistic sacrifice and to those who through no fault of their own cannot be present, provided they merit them by proper dispositions. In the next sentence the Poverello offers a further clarification, keeping in mind the objections of the Cathari, who sarcastically commented: "The body of Christ would have been consumed long ago even it were as big as a mountain."⁴⁶ Against such, he affirms: The presence of Christ, even though multiplied in many places, is not thereby reduced or divided. It always remains the same in its individuality and totality, just as He fashions all things in time and eternity in intimate union with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

In all honesty we cannot say that the reasons offered by the saint for having only one Mass a day are very convincing. The second part of his argument shows rather that the multiple celebration has a sound theological basis. In the first part he probably intended to say that Christ is absolutely free to confer His graces regardless of whether one functions as priest-celebrant, or whether he assists with faith and ardent love as a simple member of the community. If my efforts at a philological reconstruction reflect the seraphic father's mind, there is some danger that we must admit that at one time he tended to underestimate somewhat the sacramental action of the priest.

The concluding conjunction *propterea* links up his words about one Mass with the preceding text. It would be wrong, consequently, for commentators to limit their attention to these few lines. A number of scholars, among them Father Hilarin Felder, O.F.M.Cap., and Father Paul Browe, S.J.,⁴⁷ thought they found an explanation for this restriction in terms of his extraordinary humility and his reverence for the most Blessed Sacrament. He believed that these virtues would be imperiled by having multiple Masses on one day. Taking into account the overall context of the letter, we cannot deny some probability of this theory, though I would hesitate very much to look on it as conclusive.

Others, like Father Octave d'Angers, O.F.M.Cap., and Professor Erwin Iserloh,⁴⁸ take their cue from the phrase *per amorem caritatis* and maintain that the Poverello experienced a "vivid awareness that the community of friars united in love drew its strength from the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and that the unity of the sacrifice and the offering people would find clear expression in a single celebration."⁴⁹ After rereading the letter several times, I cannot, in all sincerity, discover what basis there might be for such an

interpretation. I fear that these writers have exaggerated the significance of the phrase *per amore di carità* and projected into it primitive Christian concepts that resurfaced only in recent years in the consciousness of the western church. A philological analysis of each individual sentence has not provided me with any reasons to accept this thesis. The twofold appeal to charity concerns simply the willingness of the individual priest-brothers to forego celebrating.

In the preceding paragraphs I have pointed several times to the urgent appeal of Francis and his priest-brothers to remain aloof from all earthly considerations in celebrating the Eucharist: "Puri pure faciant cum reverentia verum sacrificium sanctissimi corporis et sanguinis Domini nostri Jesu Christi, sancta intentione et munda, non pro ulla terrena re neque timore vel amore alicuius hominis, quasi placentes hominibus" ("Pure and in purity reverently offer up the true sacrifice of the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, with holy and undefiled intentions and not for any earthly thing or for love or fear of any man, as if they were obliged to please men"). Personally I am convinced that the casual nexus *propterea* refers back to the admonition which, read against the background of certain contemporary abuses, meant to exclude every kind of *obligationes speciales*, that is, Mass stipends, so that the "excellence of most high poverty" might not be compromised. Here we find the principal reason why the seraphic father begged the friars to celebrate only one daily Mass in their places. It was his purpose to safeguard their evangelical life-style without property, and his prohibition to receive "in any manner whatsoever . . . money or coins, either directly or through others."

Interestingly Alvar Pelayo (d. 1349), who was born in the century of St. Francis (between 1275 and 1280), proposed this very explanation in his very famous work *De Planctu Ecclesiae*.⁵⁰ After writing that many Masses were being said in his time for the sake of gain ("*missae quasi quaestuariae*"), he adds: "Unde et almus Francisus voluit quod in quocumque loco fratres contenti essent una missa, praesciens fratres se velle justificare per missas, et ad quaestum eas reducere, sicut videmus hodie fieri. Unde dicebat quod una missa caelum et terram implebat" ("Whence the beloved Francis wished that in every place the friars be content with one Mass, foreseeing that the friars would wish to justify themselves with Masses and make them a source of income as we see today. Therefore, he said that one Mass filled heaven and earth"). The first Capuchins, too, understood the mind of the seraphic father in the same way. The Albacina Statutes (1529) decreed that "usually only one Mass is to be said in the church according to the custom of the order."⁵¹ Among more recent commentators, Father Stephen J.P. van Dijk, O.F.M., and J. Hazelden Walker, favor this interpretation.⁵²

I must point out, however briefly, that this earnest request of the

Poverello – stressing once more that it is not a question of any legal enactment but a heartfelt plea – did not find a favorable response in the order. A few short years after the saint's death, private Masses became ever more common. The first witness to this development is a rubric of the Missal used according to the final Rule, which states, hardly four years after the death of the founder: "Sed si sunt plures sacerdotes in loco secrete possunt cantare missam quam volunt"⁵³ ("If there are several priests in the place, they may celebrate Mass privately if they so wish"). Further evidence of this trend is the fact that the fourth successor of St. Francis, Hayman of Faversham (1240–44), presented to the General Chapter at Bologna (1243) the Ordinal *Indutus planeta*, in which he set forth both text and rubrics for private Masses according to the rite of the Roman curia. This ceremonial had unparalleled influence. It was widely adopted and similar manuals were forgotten.⁵⁴

Before concluding our study of this interesting passage, we must ask whether Francis was the first and only religious founder to make such an enactment. Without wishing to imply any direct dependence, we can point to the strict regulations of the Carthusians. At the beginning of the monastic reform, they did not celebrate a conventual Mass every day; and even in the twelfth century they allowed their priests to celebrate daily only by way of exception. Significant is the motive given by Peter of Blois (d. 1204): "Raro quippe hic missa canitur, quoniam praecipue studium et propositum nostrum est silentio et solitudine cella vacare"⁵⁵ ("Mass is rarely sung here, because our principal purpose and calling is to spend our time in our cells in silence and solitude").

Two regulations which Alberto da Morra, the future Pope Gregory VIII (1187), issued to the Canons Regular of St. Andrea di Benevento and of the Most Blessed Trinity, are close in both spirit and practice to Francis's letter: "Nullus inter vos missarum appetat solemnita frequentare, sed unicuique satis sit, excepto hebdomadario, si semel in septimana licentiam accipiat celebrandi. Si sane accipere voluerit Eucharistiam, de manu poterit recipere celebrantis" ("None of you should desire to say Mass frequently, but except for the hebdomidary each one should be content to receive permission to celebrate once a week. If anyone wishes to receive Communion, he can receive from the hand of the celebrant"). The author bases this limitation on the exhortation of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:28–29.⁵⁶

Also in complete accord with the thinking of St. Francis, these statutes prohibit the acceptance of stipends for Masses. Some forty years before the Poverello, Alberto da Morra decreed:⁵⁷ "Si quis ad quempiam fratrum accesserit et porrecta oblatione missam ab eo pro qualicumque necessitate sua sive suorum petierit celebrari, non admittatur ejus petitio ne sub temporali mercede poni communio sacra putetur. Significetur autem priori desiderium ejus de habenda oratione fratrum et ille pro ipso denuntiet

omnipotentis Dei misericordiam exorandam" ("If anyone should come to one of the brethren and make an offering for Mass to be said for his own need or that of his family, his request is to be denied lest the Eucharist be thought for sale. But the petitioner's request for the prayers of the brethren should be acknowledged, and he shall beg divine mercy for him").

Without claiming that the seraphic father drew on this source for his own exhortation,⁵⁸ I should point out that his regulation was not an island isolated in an ocean of different practices. The fact that a future pope, with an ambitious program for ecclesiastical reform, had anticipated him, shows that he saint of Assisi was in good company.

6. "I Have Sinned in Many Ways through My Own Grievous Fault"

From a logical point of view, it is difficult to understand why Francis, after exhorting his friars to special respect for the divine word, should then turn to an avowal of his sinfulness. The reason cannot be just a keen awareness of his own unworthiness: "I, Brother Francis, a useless and unworthy creature of the Lord God." Nor can it be associated exclusively with his habitual concern to maintain an absolute spiritual transparency, as his first companions testify: "Francis's first and foremost desire was never to be a hypocrite in the face of God."⁵⁹ His constant self-accusation is a literary device with a pedagogical purpose. Before reminding his sons of their commitment to the evangelical life,⁶⁰ he apologizes for his own limitations and renews his determination to live up to what he requires of others and thereby give them an example.

The reader will notice the Trinitarian character of his confession: "I confess to the Lord God:⁶¹ the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." The formula betrays the influence of both Carolingian piety and Provençal poetry. The Poverello turns to the three divine Persons without mentioning their intra-Trinitarian roles or the historic-salvific mission of each, and without adding "per Jesum Christum . . . in unitate Spiritus Sancti," which was typical of liturgical prayer in the first millenium.⁶² Contemporary texts of the Confiteor which have come down to us suggest that Francis was influenced by the confession forms of prime or compline of the Divine Office.⁶³ Very interesting is the clear, though partial, agreement with the Confiteor found in the "Breviary of St. Francis." At prime, after the *preces*, the following was recited: "Confiteor Deo omnipotenti Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto, et beatae Mariae semper virgini, et omnibus sanctis, et omnibus fratribus, omnia peccata mea, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa. Ideo precor beatam Mariam semper virginem, et omnes sanctos et sanctas Dei, et vos, fratres, ut oretis pro me."⁶⁴

The parallelism of the two formulas in invoking all the saints is striking. This is particularly true of the "Blessed Mary ever Virgin," whose mention

in the Confiteor dates back to the Marian piety of St. Bernard of Clairvaux.⁶⁵ Mary's spotless virginity is the attribute which, after her divine maternity, Francis extols most frequently in his writings.⁶⁶ But Francis departs from his model when he directs his confession to "all the saints in heaven and on earth." Very likely he has in mind, in addition to the Christians enjoying the bliss of paradise, all the faithful leading lives of heroic sanctity here below.⁶⁷ His desire to make his confession in the presence of the vast army of saints is typical, since they remind him of the glory and sanctity of all those who, with divine grace, overcame the destructive forces of sin.⁶⁸

The Franciscan Confiteor differs from the standard liturgical formula by the fact that it is a prayerful dialogue with a group of friars who are well known to the saint. His sense of the concrete, however, precludes any purely ritualistic formula and singles out the interlocutors according to the various groupings that make up the community. He mentions Brother Elias, the vicar general, whom he turns to as "minister general" and "lord worthy of veneration." He considers Elias of Assisi his greatest superior after the premature death of Peter of Catania (1221). In him he venerates the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom his confession is primarily directed.⁶⁹ Thereupon he confesses his sins in the presence of all the friars: "Of all the priests of the order and of all other blessed brothers." We notice how the saint reserves the special title of "blessed" (by God) for the lay brothers. He did this surely because of their vocation to a life of humility, hidden activity, and vicarious prayer.⁷⁰

We must pay special heed to the things of which the saint accuses himself. Whereas the Confiteor of the Breviary is limited to generalities, passing from *omnia peccata mea* to *mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*,⁷¹ Francis goes into detail. "I have sinned much through my serious fault, especially because I have not observed the Rule which I promised the Lord, and have not said the Office as the Rule prescribes." The Poverello is convinced that the profession of the life of a Friar Minor, made into the hands of one's superior,⁷² includes duties which bind under pain of sin.

It is not easy to determine the real content of the accusations which the saint made against himself shortly before he died. His spiritual profile as it emerges from the autobiographical writings, the *Opuscula* and those of his early biographers, seems to rule out any kind of morbid scrupulosity which might have led him to admit to sins he never committed or to see serious sin in failings that were surely venial.⁷³ However, we must never lose sight of the intensity with which the mystics saw their transcendence of God and consequently their sense of guilt when they realized how far short they came from ideal holiness. Francis's reply to Brother Pacificus of Bovara (1213-14) expresses this sense of sinfulness to a tee. When the brother asked him: "What do you think of yourself, my brother?" Francis

replied: "I am convinced that I am the most sinful man in the world" (LP XXIII).

When viewed in the light of divine holiness, some of his actions must have seemed to him to be transgressions of the Rule, especially after he resigned from the administration of the Franciscan family. Overcome by his innate compassion for the poor, he often presented them with clothing given him for his own use by the guardian.⁷⁴ Whatever might be the supposed violations of the Rule that weighed on his conscience, one detail stands out in his Confiteor. Francis acknowledges that he did not always observe the prescriptions of the Rule concerning the recitation of the Divine Office.⁷⁵ He mentions three specific circumstances in which these failings occurred "whether through neglect, or by reason of illness, or because I am ignorant and unlearned."

The sources tell us about Francis's limited education,⁷⁶ the progressive deterioration of his health brought on by chronic malaria, his trachoma with his consequent impairment of vision,⁷⁷ and finally the inadequate rubrication of the "Breviary of St. Francis."⁷⁸ We can understand, therefore, the reasons Francis adduces for his neglect. His physical weakness, his near-blindness, and his perplexity because of the lack of clear rubrics, made it almost impossible for him to recite the liturgical hours during the last years of his life. But even after 1220, the year when he handed over the reins of government to Peter of Catania, aware that he was still the charismatic leader of the fraternity, he felt a strong responsibility to be the living expression of the ideals of the Friars Minor.⁷⁹ This fact, too, explains why the physical impossibility of saying the Divine Office as prescribed oppressed him dreadfully even though his intimate companions must have reassured him of the purely material nature of his infractions.

As we learn from the Testament, the ailing founder then had recourse to one of his cleric-confreres who had received orders, and was therefore obligated to the recitation of the Office. The friar was *clericus* also in the cultural meaning of the word, that is, sufficiently educated to be able to read aloud the parts of the Breviary which the saint had not memorized. "And even though I am simple and infirm, I will always have a cleric with me to recite the Divine Office as prescribed by the Rule."⁸⁰ It is really touching to see how Francis, now in the twilight of his earthly existence, admits that he had not been completely faithful to his evangelical ideal before the triune God, all the choirs of the saints, and the whole family of his brothers and sons.

7. "To Observe the Rule Inviolably . . . To Say the Office with Devotion in the Presence of God"

The causal nexus *Ideo per omnia* ("Therefore, because of all this . . ." – see Sabatelli, p. 113) reveals the reason why Francis placed a Confiteor before his urgent exhortation to observe the Rule, and in particular the ordinances concerning the Divine Office. Listening to his transgressions, so humbly bared, his sons too should be encouraged to admit their faults as they strive to fulfill their religious promises more faithfully.

With all the force of his moral authority, he turns to Brother Elias, the living image of Christ, and his "master."⁸¹ He adjures him in his position as vicar general to take care that "the Rule be faithfully observed by all." The sentence following this burning appeal, with the usual *et*, shows how preoccupied Francis was to make sure that the liturgical prescriptions be followed. An innate idealism, his own precarious health, and a certain isolation from the order then in the full sweep of international expansion, let him to perceive and evaluate realistically the problems that lay in the way of implementing the prescriptions of the Divine Office because of the lack of liturgical books.⁸²

From another viewpoint, the singing of the liturgical hours in the little churches of the first friars led him to fear the danger of a certain external formalism and estheticism, and a seeking of the applause of the laity, rather than of the glory of God. Francis characterized this lack of "purity of heart" in terms much like those used by a contemporary Cistercian, Conrad of Eberbach (d. 1226):⁸³ "*Non cum lascivitate vocis aures populi demulcere*" ("Not to titillate the ears of the people with the sweetness of their singing"). We might find it strange that the author of the Canticle of Brother Sun – the man who often listened to his own poetry for the praise of God and the alleviation of his own sufferings, the saint who after composing the Canticle dictates "some holy words set to music for the greater consolation of the Poor Ladies in the Monastery of San Damiano,"⁸⁴ he who, after a sermon preached by one of his friars to the people wished "that all together they should sing the praises of the Lord like troubadours of God," – should take such a negative attitude toward liturgical chant. Probably in the course of his preaching journeys, he had often observed some chanters who were looking more for their own praise than for the Lord's. The Poverello's own poetic and musical creations took their inspiration from the simple and singable melodies of the Gregorian Chant. By *lascivitas cantus* he very likely meant *discantus*, that is, compositions for several voices. This is precisely what he was anxious to ban from the choirs of the order, because of the abuses associated with it.⁸⁵

The Poverello wanted to make sure that the liturgical celebration of the Divine Office be strictly a praise of God. This purpose is clear from the way

in which he admonishes the clerics to "say the Office with devotion in the sight of God." It is important to keep in mind his application of the title "cleric" to those who, according to the final Rule (chapter 3) are obliged to recite the Divine Office "according to the rite of the holy Roman church," or more precisely, according to the rite which Innocent III restructured for the use of the Roman curia.

The saint adds further details to the sketchy directions of the final Rule. The clerics while chanting the psalms must abandon themselves entirely to God. They are "to adore the Lord with pure hearts and pure minds." They are to have their minds and hearts turned to God." They must not turn "their minds and hearts from the Lord" (*RegNB XXII*). When the friars are chanting the Office, they must not let themselves be beguiled by the allurements of sweet singing. "They should not pay heed to the melody of the voice but to the harmony of the mind, so that with voice in harmony with the mind, and the mind with God, they can through purity of heart obtain God's mercy" ("*placare Deum*") and not titillate the ears of the people with the sweetness of their singing" (see Sabatelli, p. 113).

Many read into this text a deliberate opposition on the part of the Poverello to the well-known axiom of St. Benedict's *Regula monasteriorum*: "In conspectu angelorum psallam tibi". Ideo consideremus qualiter oporteat in conspectu divinitatis et angelorum eius esse et sic stemus ad psallendum ut mens nostra concordet voci nostrae."⁸⁶ Some commentators, not satisfied with the obvious meaning of the Benedictine sentence, load it with theological implications which cannot stand the test of good philological analysis. According to Father G. Casel, O.S.B., for example, *mens nostra concordet voci nostrae* signifies that the interior life must be governed by the objective *logos* of the liturgy.⁸⁷ Father V. Warnach, O.S.B., is no more convincing when he states that *mens* stands for the whole interior man: the praying, spiritual man; while *vox* indicates not only the human voice but the word of God as found in the bible, or which the church puts into the liturgy. He goes on to conclude that the verb *concordare* does not denote just any kind of harmony but the union of the chanter's heart with the sacred text of the liturgy.⁸⁸

Father B. de Boer, O.F.M., compiled a list of patristic texts treating of attention at prayer and proved that St. Benedict intended no more than what St. Augustine required: "Psalmis et hymnis cum oratis Deum, hoc versetur; in corde quod profertur in voce."⁸⁹ By the word *vox* the Father of Western Monasticism means the words as voiced by the man at prayer (therefore he speaks of *vox nostra*). He desires that the words be in complete harmony (*concordent* means "agree," or "be in harmony") with the mind of the man, that is, with his interior thoughts and disposition.⁹⁰

In essence, Francis expresses the identical concern even though he inverts the two terms: *vox concordet menti* instead of *mens nostra concordet*

voci nostrae, and expands the bridge uniting man with God. The Poverello starts from a different existential framework. He had observed that monks and canons, and perhaps some of his own sons who were gifted with good voices, used them more for vainglory than to glorify "the Most High to whom belongs every good."⁹¹ The man of Assisi also postulated a union of the spoken word with the mind of the one who prays and an avoidance of distractions which spoil purity of heart and an exclusive union with God.

We agree with Father de Boer: "The exhortation *mens vero concordet cum Deo* is merely a pleonastic development of the preceding *vox concordet menti*."⁹²

It would appear that we must exclude any attempt on the part of Francis to question the harmony of *vox* and *mens* as found in the Rule of St. Benedict. A rather long passage from the medieval Carthusian Adam Scotus (Dryburgh – d. 1212) as quoted and commented on by Father de Boer,⁹³ shows that the two statements are, if not interchangeable, at least complementary.⁹⁴ A more in-depth study of the development of religious thought proves that Francis and other spiritual writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are stressing a meditative-contemplative element in the celebration of the liturgy when they posit the mind as measure of the voice.⁹⁵ In any case, it is interesting to see how the Second Vatican Council stressed the need of synthesizing the objective and subjective components of the Divine Office, and how it stressed the contemplative dimension.⁹⁶

Francis used to guide his sons along the road of the ideal he held out to them by announcing his determination to realize it in his own life. "Therefore, I promise to observe faithfully these things according to the grace which God will give me, and I urge their observance on all the friars that are with me in reciting the Office and obeying the other precepts of the Rule" ("in officio et ceteris regularibus constitutis").⁹⁷ It is a kind of renewal of religious profession with special emphasis on the obligation of reciting the Divine Office.

If there should remain any doubt about what the Poverello believed about the obligatory force of the *constituta regularia* ("the precepts of the Rule"), it should be resolved by the following sentence, which is unprecedented in its severity: "All those friars who do not wish to obey these things, I no longer regard as Catholic or brothers of mine. I do not wish to see them or speak to them until they have done penance" (see Sabatelli, p. 114). The principal object of this stern warning was very likely the liturgy. The shortage of liturgical books, at least of those in accord with the prescriptions of the final Rule, that is, those with the Gallican Psalter instead of the less intelligible Roman edition, made it impossible for the Friars Minor to conform in certain places. Added to this state of affairs was very likely the opposition of those lay brothers who were culturally clerics, and who, according to the *Regula non Bullata* (chapter 3), had been allowed

to use the Psalter. In 1223 these brothers were demoted canonically and culturally to the status of lay brothers who were forbidden the use of any books. This put-down in the social scale and loss of a means of religious expression commensurate with their degree of learning must have been a severe trial. The simplification of the internal structure of the Franciscan Order was almost certainly due to pressure from the Roman curia.⁹⁸

Keeping in mind the views of S.J.P. van Dijk and J.G. Walker, one can understand why Francis, after the confirmation of the Rule by Honorius III in 1223, looked upon those who dared question its liturgical prescriptions as "not Catholic," because they resisted the authority of the church, and even as "not his brothers," because they attacked the unity of the order. Consequently, any dialogue between the founder and those who rejected the liturgical prescriptions would have to be conditioned on a sincere repentance of the latter and their acceptance of the authority of the church and the precepts of the final Rule.

Although insufficient data prompted the Poverello to utter a judgment that was objectively too severe, we can nonetheless sense in his discourse his feeling for unity with the church and among his friars which he links to the celebration of the liturgy according to the rite of the Roman curia.

Through a natural association of ideas, the saint now broadens the tenor of his discourse from insubordination in liturgical matters to a chronic lack of discipline. Some friars seem to have exchanged the penitential wanderings of the first years for a vagabond existence without dependence on any recognized authority or any affiliation with a local community. Already in 1220 Jacques de Vitry wrote of this serious danger: "It seems to me that this religious order is in great peril, because not only the perfect but even the young and immature who should have been kept under control and tested for a while in monastic discipline are sent out two by two all over the world."⁹⁹

We can understand why, against this historical backdrop, the holy founder called any *extra obedientiam vagari* un-Catholic and hurtful to the fraternity.¹⁰⁰ "And I say this too for those who wander about in violation of regular observance" (see Sabatelli, p. 114). The words "regular observance" must be taken in the context of the Bull of Honorius III and in the light of customary monastic practice. They refer to the life-style demanded by the Franciscan Rule, specifically in what concerns austerity.¹⁰¹ Under "obedience" Francis comprehends all facets of regular observance, insofar as it implies dependence on the ministers, who represent the authority of God.¹⁰²

Ignoring for the time being the abuses mentioned above, the Poverello now rises to the heights of Christological idealism: "Since the Lord Jesus Christ gave up His life rather than be disobedient to His most holy Father" (See Phil. 2:8). The Friar Minor who humbly and faithfully reproduces in

his own life all that the Rule prescribes is like Christ our Redeemer who became "obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. 1:8; Heb. 5:8).

Summing up the various elements referring to regular observance in this quasi-exegetical study of the letter, I may now be permitted to give a broad opinion. When the late-lamented Father Kajetan Esser and several other scholars (the latest being Father Fernando Uribe Escobar) look upon the Franciscan Rule as primarily a spiritual document, they come into conflict with some very clear texts which deal with precepts, prescriptions, observance, and regular discipline.¹⁰³

8. "Brother Francis, A Useless Person and Unworthy Creature of the Lord God . . . May You Be Blessed by the Lord"

It is hard to imagine a sharper polarization in the same writer between an apparently poor self-image on the one hand, and a vivid awareness of his exalted spiritual mission on the other. The first of the two poles is found in a kind of signature appended by Francis to his letter: "I Brother Francis, a useless person and unworthy creature of the Lord God" – a proclamation of humility which might sound like an insincere abdication of one's human dignity if it were not uttered in the light of divine holiness. The titles "useless person" and "unworthy creature" remind one of the self-portrait of St. Paul: "Last of all He appeared to me, as one born out of due time. For I am the least of the Apostles and not even worthy to be called an Apostle because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor. 15: 8-9).

The other pole, his vivid awareness of being invested with a special charism or mission, is expressed in the directive he issues *per Dominum Jesum Christum*, that is, in the name of the Son of God. In the first place, he commands "Brother Elias, the minister of the entire order, and all his successors and the other custodes and guardians, present and to come, to keep a copy of this letter and put it into practice, preserving it carefully. I beseech them to observe solicitously all that is written in it and see that it is observed by others according to the good pleasure of almighty God now and forever as long as the world lasts."

The following points are salient: (1) Francis's conviction that he himself, despite his retirement from the office of minister general, is the charismatic leader of the fraternity; (2) by reason of his special mission ("I say, through our Lord Jesus Christ . . . according to the good pleasure of almighty God"), his letter is clothed with a binding and quasi-legislative character, as appears also from his urgent appeal to preserve and observe it; (3) above all, the terms in which he affirms the eternal validity of the letter marks it as a last will and testament; (4) if these deductions coincide with the facts, it

seems logical to conclude that the holy founder, now gravely ill, wrote this document to help resolve the problems associated with the increasing clericalization of the order. This can be seen from the dominant themes of the letter: the Eucharist, the priesthood, one daily Mass, and the liturgical hours.

The conclusion of the letter is perfectly consonant with these ends. Francis calls down God's blessing on those who hasten to put his commands and counsels into practice: "And may you who do these things be blessed by the Lord" (Ps. 113). "And the Lord be with you forever. Amen." The seraphic father was very likely inspired by the Pauline epistles (see for example 2 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 6:18; Eph. 6:23-24; Phil. 4:4; Col. 4:18, etc.) when he takes it upon himself to bless his brothers and wish them the eternal and blessed presence of Christ. As in other comparable documents,¹⁰⁴ Francis here assumes a posture like that of the patriarch Jacob before his death (Gen. 27:27-29). In a simpler and less formal style than in his Testament, the saint makes the promised favors dependent on the willingness of the friars to carry out his wishes.

The final prayer, with which many ancient codices conclude the letter,¹⁰⁵ sums up the whole tenor of the letter and the Franciscan charism itself. The four attributes: "Almighty, eternal, just and merciful," which the Poverello attributes to God, reveal a wonderfully balanced vision of the Creator, which grew apace through continual contact with the Scriptures and the liturgy.¹⁰⁶ The holy founder, well aware of human weakness, addresses himself to a God in whom greatness and goodness are one, in the first person plural, as if speaking in the name of all his brothers. He prays Him to reveal to all a knowledge of His sovereign will and to give them the strength to put it into practice.

The will of God was expressed through one man, Jesus Christ, and can be recapitulated in one action, the following of Christ. Just as a child traveling along a slippery path walks closely behind his father, and steps in the footprints left in the treacherous ground, so every Friar Minor should pay attention to the tracks of the earthly life of Christ as found in the Gospels and so walk in complete conformity with the divine will. The imitation of Christ, far from being the product of human efforts, is a gift of the Holy Spirit. To this end He cleanses the soul from evil, enlightens its interior darkness and inflames it with the fire of His love.¹⁰⁷ The one goal of Franciscan following of Christ is to lead a man "with the help of grace alone" to God the most high, who lives and reigns "glorious in perfect trinity and simple unity, God almighty for all ages. Amen." St. Francis is perfectly consistent when he sets in relief the preeminent Trinitarian

character of his piety; and when, at the same time, he stresses the indispensable role of Christ as guide and mediator of Christians.

Notes

1. See Kajetan Esser, O.F.M., *Die Opuscula des hl. Franziskus von Assisi*, Neue textkritische ed. (Grottaferrata, 1976), pp. 237–58, 264–69 (introduction, pp. 258–63); idem (ed.), *Opuscula sancti Patris Francisci Assisiensis* (Grottaferrata, 1978), pp. 135–38 (introd.), pp. 138–50 (text). All quotations will be from this edition, hereafter cited as *Op.* See also *San Francesco d'Assisi, Gli scritti*, ed. G.V. Sabatelli (Assisi, 1971), pp. 108–15; *Tutti gli scritti di san Francesco seguiti dai Fioretti*, ed. H. Furst (Milan, 1972), pp. 71–75, 127. For references to patristic and medieval authors, see: *Saint François d'Assise. Documents écrits et premières biographies*, rassemblés et présentés par les PP. Th. Desbonnets et D. Vorreux, O.F.M. (Paris, 1968), pp. 127–28 (introd.). *San Francisco de Asís, Escritos, biografías, Documentos de la época*. Edición preparada por José Antonio Guerra (Madrid, 1978), pp. 63ff (introd.). The only study of the letter is to be found in Paul Bayart, *Saint François vous écrit . . . Traduction et commentaires des Opuscules* (Paris, 1935), pp. 250–83.
2. See E. Fascher, "Briefliteratur, urchristliche, formgeschichtlich," in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 1, (Tübingen, 1957), pp. 1412–15; W. Bauer, *Einführung in das Studium der Geschichte* (Tübingen, 1928), pp. 299–303, esp. p. 301; G. Damizia, in *Encic. Catt.*, s.v. "Lettere Pontificie"; H. Bacht, in *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche*, s.v. "Enzyklika"; Melchior a Pobladora, O.F.M.Cap., *Litterae circulares superiorum generalium Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum*, 1548–1803, vol. 1 (Rome, 1960), pp. XXIX – XLIV; "Epistola sive Epistolae . . .," in *Repertorium fontium historiae medii aevi . . .*, vol. 4, Fontes E – F – Gez (Rome, 1976), pp. 338–60; H.M. Schaller, in *Lexicon des Mittelalters*, s.vv. *Ars dictaminis*, *Ars dictandi*.
3. B. Cornet, "De Reverentia Corporis Domini," exhortation et lettre de S. François, in *EF*, n. s. 6 (1955):65–91, 167–180; 7 (1956):20–35, 155–71; 8 (1957):35–58, hereafter cited as "De Reverentia." For the text of the Bull, see *EF* 7 (1956):165–67. For its influence on St. Francis, see *EF* 7 (1956):168–71. See also K. Esser, "Ueber die Chronologie der Schriften des hl. Franziskus," in idem, *Studien zu den Opuscula des hl. Franziskus von Assisi*, edd. E. Kurten, O.F.M. and Isidoro de Villapadierna, O.F.M.Cap. (Rome, 1973), pp. 299–340, esp. pp. 306–16. ("Epistola ad capitulum") The text of the Bull can be found in K. Esser (op. cit. p. 309), P. Pressuti, *Regesta Honorii Papae III*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1888), p. 377, no. 2269, and in *Decretalia Gregorii IX*, bk. 3, tit. 41: *De Celebratione Missae*, chap. 10: A. Friedberg, *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1881), 642b; Honorius III, Bulla "Expectavimus hactenus," 19 Nov. 1219, in *Bullarium Romanum*, vol. 3 (Taurin, 1858), 364–66 ("Sane cum Olim" 366ab).
4. See Cornet, "De Reverentia," pp. 166ff. See also Franciscus (Vocking), "Franciscus en het IV Lateraans concilie," in *Franc. Leven* 45 (1962):47–59, 78–94, 133–52; 46 (1963):6–20, 40–50, 67–81, 109–23, 131–43. See also *BibFranc* XII 365; M. Maccarrone, *Innocenzo III teologo dell' Eucarestia*, in idem, *Studi su Innocenzo III* (Padua, 1972), pp. 339–431.
5. "Ueber die Chronologie der Schriften," pp. 303–16.
6. Onorio III, "Devotionis vestrae," 29 martii 1222: *Bull. Franc.*, vol 1, 9b: "Indulgemus, ut in Ecclesiis, si quas vobis habere contigerit, cum generale terrae fuerit interdictum, liceat vobis clausis januis, . . . submissa voce Divina Officia celebrare." For a second copy of the Bull kept by St. Francis himself, see M. Falocci-Pulignani, O.F.M., "Una bolla sconosciuta di Onorio III a san Francesco" (del 5 aprile 1222), in *MisFran* 17

- (1927):177-81, text 178 b/180 a. For a canonical explanation of this privilege, see M. Mathis, O.F.M.Cap., *Die Privilegien des Franziskanerordens bis zum Konzil von Vienne (1311). Im Zusammenhang mit dem Privilegienrecht der früheren Orden dargestellt* (Paderborn, 1928), pp. 51-55; S.J.P. van Dijk, O.F.M. and J.H. Walker, *The Origins of the Modern Roman Liturgy. The liturgy of the papal court and the Franciscan Order in the thirteenth century* (Westminster [MD] - London (1960), pp. 183ff, hereafter cited as *Origins*; K. Esser, *Origini e valori autentici dell' Ordine dei Frati Minori*, tr. G.D. Foiadelli, O.F.M.Cap (Milan, 1972), p. 149.
7. Onorio III, "Quia populares tumultus": *Bull. Franc.*, vol. 1, 20 ab: "Cum professi paupertatem sitis . . . non temporale commodum, spirituale quaerentes . . . indulgemus ut in locis, & oratoriis vestris cum Viatico Altari possitis Missarium solemniter, & alia divina Officia celebrare, omni Parochiali jure Parochialibus Ecclesiis reservato." See B. Mathis, *Privilegien des Franziskanerordens*, pp. 58-62.
 8. See van Dijk and Walker, *Origins*, pp. 254-58. See also S.J.P. van Dijk, "Ursprung und Inhalt der franziskanischen Liturgie des 13 Jahrhunderts," in *FSien* 51 (1969):86-116, 196-217, esp. pp. 192-95, hereafter cited as "Ursprung und Inhalt." However, the author tends to dramatize the difficulties that arose after the final Rule.
 9. I may be permitted to refer the reader to my monograph: "Linee fondamentali della 'forma vitae' nell' esperienza di san Francesco," in *Lettura biblico-theologica delle fonti francescane*, ed. G. Cardaropoli and M. Conti (Rome, 1979), pp. 183-231, hereafter cited as "Linee fondamentali." See esp. pp. 192ff, where a bibliography will be found.
 10. See Sabatelli, *San Francesco*, p. 108 (cited in n. 1 above). For a bibliography on fraternity and minority, see O. Schumucki, "Linee fondamentali," pp. 217-24, 210-13, cited in n. 9 above. See also Fernando Uribe Escobar, *Strutture e specificità della vita religiosa secondo la regola di S. Benedetto e gli opuscoli di S. Francesco d'Assisi* (Rome, 1979), pp. 249, 257, 257-69, hereafter cited as *Strutture e specificità*.
 11. That is, Elias of Assisi, the second vicar general, whose name was suppressed by the course of events. See "I vicari dell' Ordine francescano da Pietro Cattani a frate Elia," in "Francesco d'Assisi e francescanesimo dal 1216 al 1226, *Atti del IV Convegno internazionale*, Assisi, 15-17 oct. 1976 (Assisi, 1977), pp. 235-63.
 12. See O. Schumucki, "Linee fondamentali," pp. 185-89 (bibliogr.), cited in n. 9 above.
 13. The phrase "Tamquam filiis offert se nobis Dominus Deus," from Heb. 12:7, seems to depend on the exhortation: "In disciplina . . . perseverate" (Heb. 12:7, *Op*, p. 140). Although the context does not directly justify a link between verses 11 and 10 (the gift of grace makes perseverance in regular discipline possible), I can't see any other way of making any sense of them.
 14. "Ne igitur de cetero propter incuriam sacerdotum in indevotos divina indignatio gravius exardescat, districtè praecipiendo mandamus, quatenus a sacerdotibus Eucharistia in loco singulari, mundo etiam et signato, semper honorifice collocata, devote et fideliter conservetur." (B. Cornet, "De Reverentia," p. 167; K. Esser, "Ueber die Chronologie," p. 309, cited in n. 3 above.
 15. See E. Lengling, in *Lexikon für theologie und Kirche*, s.v. "Fusskuss".
 16. In Latin: "deprecari" (n. 12; *Op*, p. 140).
 17. The social dimension of the Eucharistic mystery was underestimated in theological thinking and religious practice in the Middle Ages. See A. Gerken, *Theologia dell'eucaristia* (Alba, 1977), pp. 135ff. "As a consequence of the controversies over the question 'truth or image?' and the resultant decline in the concept of the real symbol, the idea 'corpus mysticum' as applied to the Eucharist was replaced with the idea 'corpus verum', which was first used of the church. The connection between church and Eucharist faded more and more from the general consciousness, while interest centered on the real physical presence."

18. See v. 44; J.A. Guerra, *San Francisco de Asís*, p. 17, n. 64, cited in n. 1 above.
19. See B. Cornet, "De Reverentia," pp. 31–35.
20. Even though at times some doubts have been expressed about St. Francis's ordination to the diaconate, it must be accepted as a fact in the light of unimpeachable historical evidence. See A. Callebaut, O.F.M., "Saint François levite," in *AFH* 20 (1927):193–96; Alban von Hermetschwil, O.F.M.Cap., "Zur Diakonatsweihe des hl. Franziskus," in *St. Fidelis* 28 (1941):7–11; S.J.P. van Dijk, "Saint Francis's Blessing of Brother Leo," in *AFH* 47 (1954):199–201. See *BibFranc* XI 190; Mariano D'Alatri, *San Francesco d'Assisi diacono nella Chiesa* (Rome, 1977), pp. 3–5.
21. See v. 43. See also D. Vorreux, in *Saint François d'Assisi. Documents*, p. 133, n. 16.
22. *Saint François vous écrit*. See n. 1 above.
23. See e.g. B. Bischoff, *Paläographie des römischen Altertums und des abendländischen Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1979), pp. 21–23 (bibliog.).
24. *Adm* I 22. See O. Schmucki, "L'annuncio del mistero eucaristico di S. Francesco, esempio per la pietà e predicazione eucaristica dei suoi figli," estratto da *Atti dei Frati Minori Cappuccini della Provincia di S. Carlo in Lombardia*, vol. 15, no. 1, and in *Fidelis* 64 (1977):106–18.
25. See K. Esser, *Il Testamento di san Francesco d'Assisi* (Milan, 1979), pp. 127–34, 137: "And so we have the parallelism of two trains of thought: Francis honors the Blessed Sacrament because it is the fulcrum of his religious life. Consequently he reverences priests because they administer and dispense this Sacrament. He respects the names and written word of God, because through them all things are sanctified, including the Sacrament of the altar. He honors because they administer (*ministrant*) and dispense the word of God."
26. See B. Cornet, "De Reverentia," pp. 176–79. See also P. Browe, *Die häufige Kommunion im Mittelalter* (Münster – Westf., 1938), esp. pp. 145–63. See J.A. Jungmann, S.J., *Missarum Sollemnia, Origini, liturgia, storia e teologia della Messa romana*, vol. 2 (Turin, 1954), pp. 271–81.
27. See O. Nussbaum, *Kloster, Priestermonch und Privatmesse. Ihr Verhältnis im Westen von Anfängen bis zum hohen Mittelalter* (Bonn, 1961). See my review in *CF* 32 (1962):461–62. Th. Klauser, in *La liturgia della Chiesa occidentale. Sintesi storica e riflessioni* completely agrees with Nussbaum. See also Pl. Lefevre, "La messe privée dans la tradition canoniale et monastique," in *Analecta Praemonstratensia* 44 (1968):275–81; A.A. Häussling, *Mönchkonvent und Eucharistiefeier. Eine Studie über die Messe in der abendländischen Kloster Liturgie des frühen Mittelalters und zur Geschichte der Messhäufigkeit* (Münster, Westf., 1973), p. 346. "The result of the study can be summed up as follows: In the French monasteries of the early Middle Ages, the celebration of the Eucharist was modeled somewhat on an autonomous church-state." See the review of A. de Vogue in *Rev. Hist. Eccl.* 70 (1975):490–95.
28. See T. Ortolan, in *Dict. Theol. Cath.*, s.v. "Honoraires des messes". See also Jungmann, *Missarum Sollemnia*, pp. 181–96, cited in n. 26 above; A. Mayer, *Triebkräfte und Grundlinien der Entstehung des Messtipendiums* (St. Ottilien, 1976), esp. pp. 197–270 ("Die Ausbildung des Messtipendiums am Anfang des Hochmittelalters.")
29. See B. Cornet, "De Reverentia," pp. 81–83, cited in n. 3 above.
30. See Teodorica da Castel S. Pietro, O.F.M.Cap., in *La Sacra Bibbia, Il N.T.*, ed. S. Garofalo (Toronto, 1968), p. 689, on verses 26–31.
31. For a possible source of inspiration, see K. Esser, *Op*, p. 143, n. 40.
32. See St. J. Piat, O.F.M., *Saint François d'Assisi a la découverte du Christ pauvre et crucifié* (Paris, 1968), p. 185. See also my review in *CF* 39 (1969):434ff.
33. See S.J.P. van Dijk and J.H. Walker, *The Myth of the Aumbry*. Notes on medieval reservation practice and Eucharistic devotion (London, 1957), pp. 28ff, esp. the

- quotation on p. 29, n. 4. See esp. O. Nussbaum, *Die Aufbewahrung der Eucharistie* (Theophaneia, 29, [Bonn, 1979], pp. 266–426 “Der Aufbewahrungsort”).
34. *The Cause of the Clericalization of the Order of Friars Minor, 1209–1260, in the Light of Early Franciscan Sources* (Chicago, 1968), pp. 54ff.
 35. See John 11:27; v. 26: *Op*, p. 144, v. 33; Sabatelli, *San Francesco*, p. 111 (cited in n. 1 above); J.A. Guerra, *San Francisco de Asís*, p. 66, cited in n. 1 above.
 36. See the bibliography and some of the notes in my monograph: “Die Stellung Christi im Beten des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi,” in *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 25 (1962):128–45, 188–212, esp. p. 194. For additional sources on Francis’s devotion to the Eucharist, see I. Schlauri, “Saint François et la Bible. Essai bibliographique de sa spiritualité evangelique,” in *CF* 40 (1970):365–437, 425ff. K. Esser, “Missarum sacramenta” (La dottrina eucaristica di S. Francesco d’Assisi), in idem, *Temî spirituali*.
 37. See G. Rossi, in *Dizionario enciclopédico di Teologia morale*, s.v. “Umiltà”.
 38. See E. Iserloh, *Die Eucharistie in der Darstellung des Johannes Eck. Ein Beitrag zur vortridentinischen Kontroverstheologie über das Messopfer* (Münster, Westf., 1950), pp. 209–28. For the passage in question, see the following articles: H. Dausend, O.F.M., “Die Brüder dürfen in ihren Niederlassungen täglich nur eine hl. Messe lesen. Eine Weisung des hl. Franziskus nach deutschen Erklärern,” in *FSien* 13 (1926): 207–12; for Melancthon, p. 208. Octave d’Angers, O.F.M.Cap., “La Messe publique et privée dans la pieté de saint François,” in *EF* 49 (1937):475–86; van Dijk and Walker, *Origins*, pp. 51ff, 237, 292ff, 297, cited in n. 6 above. See also van Dijk, “Ursprung und Inhalt,” cited in n. 8 above.
 39. As pointed out above in n. 27.
 40. See Klauser, *Liturgia*, p. 141.
 41. Jungmann, *Missarum Sollemnia*, vol. 1, pp. 188–90, cited in n. 28 above.
 42. See n. 7 above.
 43. See van Dijk, “Ursprung und Inhalt,” p. 192: “We have no positive proof that private Masses were said in the papal chapel in the time of Innocent. His Ordinal, St. Francis’s Breviary, and the so-called Breviary of St. Clare, tell us nothing about it.” Nevertheless, the author maintains that the phrase *secundum formam sanctae Ecclesiae* (*Op*, p. 145) should probably be interpreted: “according to the Roman church, that is, the Roman curia” (p. 192). St. Francis probably was aware of the rubric of the Missal of Honorius III: “Sed si sunt plures sacerdotes in loco, secrete possunt cantare missam quam volunt” (pp. 192ff).
 44. See A. Cornides, in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Concelebration”. For a history of the practice, see P. Jounel, *La concelebration, Rito e commento della concelebrazione e della comunione sotto le due specie* (Rome – Tournai – New York, 1967), pp. 5–73. See *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 82 (1968):153; R. Gregoire, “La communion des moinespretres a la messe d’après les coutumiers monastiques medievales,” in *Sacris Erudiri* 18 (1967–68):524–49; E. Dekkers, “La concelebration. Tradition ou nouveauté?” in *Melanges liturgiques offerts au R. P. Dom Bernard Botte, O.S.B. . .* (Louvain, 1972), pp. 99–120. For current legislation see A. Mistrorigo, *Dizionario liturgico-pastorale dai documenti del Concilio Vaticano II e dagli altri documenti ufficiali fino al 1977*. For an examination of the question debated in the sessions of Vatican II, whether the words of Consecration must be pronounced by all the celebrants, see J.A. Jungmann, “Constitutio de Sacra Liturgia. Konstitution über die heilige Liturgie. Einleitung und Kommentar,” in *Das zweite Vatikanische Konzil. Konstitutionen, Dekrete und Erklärungen*, Latin and German, vol. 1 (Freiburg – Basel – Vienna, 1966), pp. 59–61. It contains additional bibliography.
 45. See J.F. Godet and G. Mailleux, *Opuscula sancti Francisci. Scripta sanctae Clarae. Concordance, Index, Listes de frequence, Tables comparatives* (Louvain, 1976), pp. 67ff.
 46. A. Borst, *Die Katharer* (Stuttgart, 1953), p. 217, n. 14.

47. H. Felder, *Die Ideale des hl. Franziskus von Assisi* (Paderborn, 1951), p. 42, n. 1; P. Browe, *Die häufige Kommunion* (see n. 26 above) pp. 79ff: "The reason why the saint admonished his priests not to celebrate so frequently is easily explained by the attitude toward frequent Communion which was prevalent at the time. It was feared that frequent or daily celebration might diminish respect for the great Mystery. The less frequently and cautiously one received, it was thought, the deeper would be the reverence shown." The author admits, however, the influence of abuses committed through avarice. (80) E. Iserloh refers to them in *Johannes Eck*, pp. 212ff, cited in n. 38 above.
48. See d'Angers, "La Messe publique," p. 483, cited in n. 38 above; Iserloh, *Johannes Eck*, pp. 213ff, cited in n. 38 above.
49. Iserloh, *Johannes Eck*, p. 214, cited in n. 38 above.
50. Bk. 4, chap. 5 (Venice, 1560), pp. 1560, fol. 14vb. E. Iserloh's quotation, p. 213, n. 95, is partially corrected and completed.
51. See "Constitutioni delli Frati Minori detti della vita heremitica. Le prime Constitutioni della Congregation Capuccina," no. 6: Melchior a Pobladura, O.F.M.Cap. (ed) Matthias a Salo, O.F.M.Cap., *Historia capuccina*, pars prima (Rome, 1946), p. 160, or in *ItFran* 53 (1978):11ff. See O. Schmucki, "La figura di san Francesco nelle prime Costituzioni cappuccine," in *La vita dei Frati Cappuccini ripensata nel 450 anniversario della loro riforma* (Rome, 1978), pp. 87-116, esp. pp. 97ff.
52. *Origins*, pp. 51ff, cited in n. 6 above; van Dijk, "Ursprung und Inhalt," pp. 192-94, cited in n. 8 above. Some of the reasons advanced by the author seem to me to lack historical foundation and appear to stem from his tendency, found elsewhere too, always to suspect conflicts with the church's authority.
53. see van Dijk and Walker, *ibid.*, 292.
54. *Op. cit.* pp. 292-201. See also Klauser, *Liturgia*, p. 142, cited in n. 27 above.
55. See *Consuetudines* D. Guignonis, c. 14, no. 5: PL 153, 659. See also O. Nussbaum, *Priestermönche*, p. 15, n. 7, cited in n. 27 above.
56. £29: P. Kehr, "Papst Gregor VIII als Ordensgründer," in *Miscellanea Francesco Ehrle*, album 2 (Rome, 1924), pp. 248-75, esp. p. 272.
57. £30: *ibid.*, p. 273. 58. The Congregation of the Canons of St. Augustine were practically confined to the City of Benevento. Because of the premature death of their founder as pope, they never had the chance to come to the attention of the church (Kehr, *ibid.*, pp. 263-66). Van Dijk's supposition ("Ursprung und Inhalt," p. 193) that Francis was acquainted with their Rule from the hermits of the congregation in Tuscany and Umbria does not appear to me likely.
59. *LP* XL1.
60. See for example *Test* 1-4.
61. The title *Dominus* follows the critical edition of K. Esser, v. 38. *Op.*, p. 146.
62. See Jungmann, *Missa Sollemnia*, vol. 1, pp. 307-11, cited in n. 28 above. See also Schmucki, "Stellung Christi," pp. 132ff, cited in n. 36 above.
63. See Jungmann, *Missa Sollemnia*, vol. 1, pp. 248ff, cited in n. 28 above; Schmucki, "Stellung Christi," p. 133, cited in n. 26 above. For a ninthcentury Confiteor of a Pontificale of Poitiers, see Jungmann, *Missa Sollemnia*, vol. 1, p. 249, n. 25, cited in n. 28 above. See also L. D. Isabell, O.F.M. *The Practice and Meaning of Confession in the Primitive Franciscan Community according to the Writings of Saint Francis of Assisi and Thomas of Celano* (Assisi, 1973), pp. 119-21: "According to the information he (S.J.P. van Dijk) communicated to me personally, the *confiteor* in the letter (*ad Capitulum*) opens with the words of the Confiteor as he (Francis) had learnt it as a boy from the canons of San Rufino" (p. 120). Since there is no documentation for this statement, I find it impossible to accept on the basis of a letter to a student.

64. See Giuseppe Abate, O.F.M.Conv., "Il primitivo brevario francescano," (1224-27), in *MisFran* 60 (1960):47-240, esp. p. 93, n. 16. See also S.J.P. van Dijk (ed.) *The Ordinal of the Papal Court from Innocent III to Boniface VIII and Related Documents* (Fribourg, Switzerland, 1975), p. 498b.
65. See Jungmann, *Missarum Sollemnia*, vol. 1, p. 249, cited in n. 28 above.
66. Godet and Mailleux, *Opuscula S. Francisci*, pp. 153, 239, cited in n. 45 above. The reader is referred to my monograph: "De seraphici Patris Francisci habitudine erga beatissimam Virginem Mariam," in *Regina immaculata*, ed. Melchior a Pobladura, O.F.M.Cap. (Rome, 1955), pp. 15-47, esp. p. 17.
67. I think it hardly likely that Francis here deliberately echoes St. Paul when he speaks of Christians as "called to be saints" (Rom. 1:17).
68. Jungmann, *Missarum Sollemnia*, vol. 1, p. 250, cited in n. 28 above.
69. See Schmitt, *I vicari dell' Ordine francescano*, cited in n. 11 above.
70. See LP LXX1; O. Schumucki, "Luogo di preghiera, eremo, solitudine. Concetti e realizzazioni in S. Francesco d'Assisi," in *Studi e Ricerche Franc.* 7 (1978):29-53, esp. pp. 37ff.
71. Abate, "Il primitivo brevario," p. 93, n. 16, cited in n. 64 above. L.D. Isabell, in *The Practice* (p. 121, cited in n. 63 above) correctly notes that Francis does not explicitly ask pardon, but acknowledges his faults to his confreres. His atonement consists in a determination to do better in the future.
72. See Lázaro (Iriarte) de Aspurz, O.F.M.Cap., "El rito de la profesión en la Orden Franciscana. Apuntes históricos," in *Laurentianum* 8 (1967):178-212; also his "Il rito della professione nell'Ordine francescano," in *Studi Franc.* 66 (1969):245-68.
73. In an otherwise valuable study, Van Dijk - Walker betray superficiality and lack of respect in their treatment of the historical greatness of Francis.
74. See e.g. *ICel* 83-92.
75. See my monograph: *Preghiera liturgica secondo l' esempio e l'insegnamento di san Francesco d'Assisi* (Rome, 1979), pp. 3-17. On pp. 16-17 I indicated the more recent studies, among which those of Father S.J.P. van Dijk are outstanding. (Father van Dijk died prematurely on 8 March 1971). See also *CF* 46 (1976):343-45. See also St. Mannie, O.F.M.Cap., "St. Francis and the Divine Office," in *Round Table of Franciscan Research* 23 (1958):5-16; 24 (1959):28-34. See also M.S. Häcker, O.S.F., "Das Göttliche Offizium als Lebensäußerung der Kirche," *Testament des hl. Franziskus*, no. 9, in *Geistliches Vermächtnis*, vol. 5 (Werl in Westphalia, 1978), pp. 50-67.
76. See O. Schumucki, "Ignorans sum et idiota'. Das Ausmass der schulischen Bildung des hl. Franziskus von Assisi," in *Studia historico-ecclesiastica. Festgabe für Prof. Luchesius G. Spätling, O.F.M.* (Rome, 1977), pp. 283-310.
77. Idem. "Le malattie di Francesco durante gli ultimi anni della sua vita," in *Francesco e francescanesimo*, pp. 315-62 (with bibliography) cited in n. 11 above. The supposition that Francis suffered from tuberculosis has been advanced once more by S. Ciancarelli, "Le malattie di Francesco d'Assisi," in *AnalTOR* 14/130 (1978):273-93. I maintain that before offering hypotheses the historian place close heed to the ancient sources that speak expressly of *febris quartana*.
78. van Dijk and Walker, *Origins*, pp. 129-135, cited in n. 6 above ("The Breviary of St. Francis") esp. pp. 133ff.
79. Note, for example, a typical testimony attributed to his first companions: "Once when the brothers were beginning to transgress poverty and be intemperate in the matter of food and other things they used, he preached a sermon to all the brothers, in the course of which he said, having certain ones in mind: 'My brothers, does it not seem that my health requires a special diet? And yet, because I must be a model and example

- to all the brothers, I wish to be satisfied with very poor food and coarse appointment' (LP II). See similar passages in Godet and Mailleux, *Legenda seu Compilatio Perusina*, pp. 135ff., cited in n. 45 above.
80. See van Dijk and Walker, *Origins*, cited in n. 6 above: "Falling back on the monastic customs, he (Francis) asks for the privilege of having a cleric at his bedside. By setting such an example, he would make every excuse into a pretext, from whatever quarter it might come. Through lack of juridical sense and knowledge, he was unaware that this way out was open to discussion. Canon Law did not require such a farfetched solution, nor did the Rule to which he clung. And theologians agreed that by merely listening to the Office, one did not fulfill the obligation."
 81. See *Test* 10ff.
 82. See van Dijk and Walker, *Origins*, pp. 254–59, cited in n. 6 above. However, the authors offer some suppositions that lack documentary evidence.
 83. "Exordium magnum Ordinis Cisterciensis," dist. 5, c. 20, PL 185, 1174c: "Noverit ergo quicunque gratiam iucundae vocis a Deo accipit, horribile malus esse inde daemonum malitiam pascere, lascive et plausibiliter cantando, unde Deum honorare debuerat, devote et humiliter jubilando." Further on it speaks expressly of *lascivia cantus* (1174d).
 84. LP VL. See G. Boccali, O.F.M., "Canto di esortazione di san Francesco per le 'poverelle' di San Damiano," in *CF*, vol 48, pp. 5–29, esp. pp. 17ff. See also the still-valuable study of Octave d'Angers, O.F.M.Cap., "S. Francesco e il canto," in *ItFran* 3 (1928):257–68, 417–24. See also the posthumous edition, much enlarged: idem (Dec. 1940) "Le chant liturgique dans l' Ordre de saint François aux origines," in *EF* 25 (1975):157–306. The authenticity of the *Canto di esortazione* has been defended on the basis of internal evidence by A. Menichetti, "Una 'prosa' volgare di san Francesco," in *Studi e problemi di critica testuale* (Bologna) 19 (1979):5–10.
 85. See esp. S.J.P. van Dijk, "Quaestiones quaedam scholasticae de Officio divino et canto ecclesiastico," in *Ephem. Liturg.* 56 (1942):3–47, esp. pp. 12–17. There we find some very interesting material, for example, "Dialogus inter Cluniacensem monachum et Cisterciensem de diversis utriusque Ordinis observantiis," in E. Martene and U. Durand, *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum*, vol. 5 (Paris, 1717), 1586. "Illae tennulae et eviratae voces, quas vos (Cluniacenses) graciles vocatis et succo liquericii et sumptuosis electuariis acuire soletis, quid sunt nisi oblectamenta aurium contra regulae interdictum? . . . Talis vocibus cum novis et lascivis melodiis in novis et usurpatis festis vestris ultimini contra veneranda Canonum decreta" (Op. cit. 15, n. 48). Read also on pp. 14ff the lively description of Elredo de Rievaulx, S.O.Cist (d. 1167) which easily explains the objections on the part of St. Francis. D. Vorreux, in *St. François d'Assisi*, p. 134, n. 18, cited in n. 1 above, refers to *La liturgie et les paradoxes chrétiens*, by J. Leclercq, O.S.B.
 86. See Cf. 19, vv. 5–7: B. Steidle, O.S.B., *Die Benediktus-Regel lateinisch-deutsch* (Beuron, 1975), p. 106. See esp. the well-balanced study of B. de Boer, O.F.M., "La soi-disant opposition de saint François d'Assise a saint Benoit," in *EF*, n. s. 8 (1957):181–94; 9 (1958):57–65, hereafter cited "La soi-disant opposition." For further bibliography on this controversial question, see F. Uribe Escobar, *Strutture e specificità*, pp. 114–17, 287–90, esp. pp. 353–55, cited in n. 10 above.
 87. In *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 4 (1924):219ff, quoted by de Boer, "La soi-disant opposition," p. 191, n. 27.
 88. "Mens concordet voci". Zur Lehre des heiligen Benedikt über die geistige Haltung beim Chorgebet nach dem 19 Kapitel seiner Klosterregel," in *Liturgisches Leben* 5 (1938):169–90. See de Boer, "La soi-disant opposition," pp. 190ff.
 89. "Epistolarum classis III. Epistola," 211, n. 7, PL 33, 960. See de Boer, "La soi-disant

- opposition," p. 185. See also A. Zumkeller, O.S.A., *Das Mönchtum des heiligen Augustinus* (Würzburg, 1968), pp. 207-27. (*Gebet*)
90. See de Boer, "La soi-disant opposition," p. 194.
91. Add *Adm* VII 4. See also n. 85 above.
92. "La soi-disant opposition," pp. 59, 58ff. See n. 86 above.
93. See "Liber de quadriperito exercitio cellae," PL 153, 799-884, esp. 878ff. See de Boer, "La soi-disant opposition," pp. 61ff. See also p. 61, n. 35. It would appear that it was written shortly after 1186.
94. This becomes clear also from the text of Thomas of Beverley, Cistercian of Froidmont (1150-1225), "Liber de modo bene vivendi," c. 52, n. 122, PL 184, 1274a: "Soror charissima, cum in conspectu Dei cantas psalmos et hymnos, hoc tracta in mente tua, quod cantas in voce. Mens tua cum voce concordet, concordet cum lingua: non aliud cogites, et aliud cantes. Si aliud cantas in mente, et aliud cantes in voce, perdis fructum laboris tui." For information about the author, see E. Brouette, in *Dictionnaire des auteurs cisterciens*, vol. 2, 681ff.
95. See B. De Boer, "La soi-disant opposition," pp. 62-64.
96. See "The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 90. See also M. Magrassi, O.S.B., "La spiritualità dell' Ufficio divino," in *Liturgia delle ore. Documenti ufficiali e studi* (Quaderni di Rivista Liturgica, no. 14) (Turin - Leumann, 1972), pp. 365-404, esp. pp. 372-76 ("Una preghiera contemplativa").
97. See v. 43. "Constituta (institututa) regularia" means of course the *other* prescriptions of the Rule apart from those concerning the Divine Office; certainly not just the liturgical rubrics, as S.J.P. van Dijk maintained. See "Ursprung und Inhalt," p. 194, cited in n. 8 above.
98. See n. 82 above.
99. See no. 1. See also K. Esser, *Origini e valori autentici*, pp. 61-69, cited in n. 6 above ("Wandering preachers without fixed abodes."), pp. 167-71. ("Vagari extra oboedientiam") See also F. Uribe Escobar, *Strutture e specificità* pp. 269-79, cited in n. 10 above ("L'obbedienza"), pp. 308-13. ("Promettere obbedienza").
100. *RegNB* II 10. *Op*, pp. 244ff is a quotation from the Bull "Cum secundum consilium" of Honorius III (22 Sept. 1220), in *Bull. Franc.*, vol. 1, 6a (see *Op*, p. 245, n. 9). See also S. Di Mattia, "La bolla 'Cum secundum consilium' di Onorio III," estratto da *Annali della Libertà Università della Toscana*, anno accademico 1973-74, anno V. fasc. III - IV, 15.
101. See J. Leclercq, in *Dict Spiritualite*, s.v. "Disciplina".
102. See *Adm* III: "De perfecta obedientia": *Op*, pp. 63-65. See also n. 99 above.
103. See K. Esser, *La Regola definitiva. La Regola dei Frati Minori alla luce delle indagini più recenti*. See *BibFranc* XIII for the original German and other translations; F. Uribe Escobar, *Strutture e specificità*, pp. 167-80, cited in n. 10 above ("Significato e scopo della Regola di san Francesco.") Oddly, the author does not take into consideration the criticisms leveled at Father Esser's position by F. van den Borne, O.F.M., "Nabeschouwing," in *Sint Franciscus* 2 (1965):238-46, and by Hilarin (Pyfferoen) de Wingene, O.F.M.Cap., "Opinationes diversae de primordiis Ordinis Fratrum Minorum," in *Lau* 8 (1967):492-511. For other articles on its obligatory character, see: C. Mazon, S.J., *Las reglas de los religiosos, su obligación y naturaleza jurídica* (Rome, 1940), pp. 183-234; Fidel (Elizondo) de Pamplona, O.F.M.Cap., *Origen de la obligatoriedad de la Regla franciscana* (Rome, 1956); L.R. Ravisi, C.P., *De Regulis et Constitutionibus religiosorum* (Rome - Tournai - Paris, 1958), pp. 44-76.
104. See for example *1EpFid* II 88: *Op*, p. 128 "Et omnes illi et illae, qui ea (haec verba) benigne recipient, intelligent et mittent aliis in exemplum, et si in ea 'persaveraverint usque ad finem' (Matt. 24:13), benedicat eis Pater et Filius et Spiritus. Amen." See also

- EpRect* 9. *Op*, p. 153 and in a particularly solemn way *Test* 40–41. *Op*, p. 316ff. See also K. Esser, *Il Testamento di san Francesco d'Assisi*, p. 187.
105. Even though in some ancient codices the *oratio* is not attached to the letter, we feel that K. Esser (*Die Opuscula*, pp. 238ff) is correct when he follows the majority of the manuscripts which put them together; all the more so since the prayer sums up very well the principal thoughts of the letter. See *idem*. *Op*, p. 137: "Maxima codicum pars tradit epistolam totam una cum Oratione finali."
106. For some comments and additional bibliography, see O. Schmucki, "Linee fondamentali," pp. 189–193, cited in n. 9 above.
107. See K. Rahner, "I gradi della perfezione cristiana," in *Saggi di spiritualità* (Rome, 1965), pp. 45–78. Further bibliography may be found in E.E. Larkin, in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Ways, the three spiritual".