Prayer and the Contemplative Life in the Legislation and Life of the First Friars Minor Capuchin Octavian Schmucki, O.F.M.Cap.

"Preghiera e vita contemplativa nella legislazione e vita dei primi Frati Minori Cappuccini" 450° dell'Ordine cappuccino. Le origini della riforma cappuccina Ancona, 1979, pp. 351-74 Translated by Ignatius McCormick, O.F.M.Cap.

The topic assigned to me is not one that is in perfect harmony with contemporary trends in the Capuchin Order. Preferences of the majority of modern friars take an opposite tack, in a growing involvement with current social structures and in pastoral and even secular services, with an ever widening range of activities and commitments.

Nevertheless, there are not lacking certain signs of a change of direction. If the establishment of houses of prayer was more talked about than acted upon in the General Chapter of Renewal (1968) and in subsequent Provincial Chapters, at present we can discern many indicators of a genuine concern for such projects. Recently (April 1978) the acta of the Paetium, meeting on "houses of prayer in Franciscan history" and spirituality, was published. Meanwhile, a second congress on the same topic has been held, scarcely a year after the first. Later, as we learn from an editorial note, The Text of the Constitutions of the Friars Minor of the Eremitic Life was republished in L'Italia Francescana at the request of some (friars), especially the younger ones." We may legitimately assume that a like interest is very much alive among the brethren, young and not so young, of the Province of the Marches, which has the honor of being the birthplace of the Capuchin reform.

In all honesty toward my audience I must confess that for many years I entertained and openly expressed some reservations about the Franciscan inspiration of the founding fathers of our reform. It seemed to me that in their life-style they overstressed the contemplative element to the detriment of the apostolate. Then came the experience – I might as well admit it – in part traumatic, of the aforementioned Special Chapter of 1968, which "converted" me to the Capuchin ideal of contemplation. While the chapter was still in progress I embarked on a deeper study of prayer as practiced by St. Francis. It didn't take much time to convince me that the

exaggeration to suppose that an indelible stamp was left in the mind of Louis from his sojourn in the Camaldolese monastery of the Grotte di Massaccio near Cupramontana, where in 1526 he even applied for admission. Perhaps this was only a strategic move, since, as Father Edouard d'Alençon points out, a number of religious at that time, finding it impossible to remain within their own communities, had no difficulty in obtaining permission from the Sacred Penitentiary to lead an eremitic life. Finally, we must not overlook the predilection of the Spirituals, quite widespread in the Marches at the time, for hermitages, nor the con-

temporary growth of houses of prayer among the Observants.10

It is easy to understand how such a marked attraction for solitude could drive some friars to extreme lengths. In fact, historians relate that after papal approval of the reform, and while this same Louis was vicar general, some Capuchins, "contending that contemplation is the goal of the Rule and that monastic conversation is distracting,"11 began to withdraw from obedience. Indeed, they deemed it inappropriate to return once more "to ritual, conversation, manual tasks, and other useless occupations," once having attained the summit of contemplation and union with God.¹² The spectacle of friars dying of excessive fasting outside the "holy brotherhood"13 and the direct intervention of Louis helped the new reform survive such excesses. The vicar general, reflecting on the history of monasticism, came up with the idea of "monastic solitude," "pointing out that . . . one is not deprived of the benefits of solitude when he tries to practice it at home, going about his tasks in silence, to the extent that it is not opposed to obedience and charity, which are not opposed to but rather enhance all other virtues, and giving oneself to continuous prayer either alone in the church at night, or in the dormitory, where perpetual silence is to be observed."14 Bernardine of Colpetrazzo says expressly that Louis had this experience in mind when 15 in the Albacina Statutes he inserted rules for Capuchin hermits. I shall have occasion to refer to them later on. For the time being, it is safe to say that the vicar general took his cue from the semicenobitic model of the Camaldolese to meet the crisis, as is clear from the wording "monastic solitude." phanic way of empha

How deeply rooted in Louis's mind was the eremitic concept of the Franciscan ideal became manifest in a dramatic moment in the history of the reform. When the General Chapter had been postponed, until finally convoked by the order of the pope, and Louis was still smarting over the rebuff of not being reelected vicar general in 1535 and 1536, he asked the capitulars, among other things, "that the friars lead an eremitic life, exercising themselves in contemplation; . . . that they choose sites far from inhabited places where they might become involved in worldly affairs and there devote themselves to austerity and contemplation; . . . that the friars not return to the condition of other religious institutes, to studies and

hearing confessions, to living in large friaries, to the practice of elaborate

chants and solemn pomp."16

In addition to the historical data we have so far examined, we must take a look at the references to contemplative life found in the *Albacina Statutes*. From the viewpoint of our topic, the title is very significant: *The Constitutions of the Friars Minor of the Eremitic Life*. The text (not too well organized, by the way) is essentially the product of the twelve capitulars who met in April 1529 in the hermitage of S. Maria all'Acquarella di Albacina. Other ordinances of uncertain authorship seem to have been added later by Louis and his associates. The addition of the words of the Eremitic Life to the title of the statutes appears to single out the specific difference between their way of life and that of the Friars Minor.

The Constitutions go on to stress the importance and frequency to be accorded meditation. To two periods of mental prayer after compline and matins, already in vogue among the Observants, 19 the document adds "two other periods, ... one after vespers and the other before tierce."20 And to ensure that contemplative atmosphere which the fathers of the reform wished to permeate their entire life, the Constitutions prescribe "not however public prayer, with bell ringing, but secret prayer."21 The impression that we are encountering a type of religious life predominantly eremitic is further reinforced by the following sentences with which the legislator motivates the precepts: "And observe that this time is thus set aside and mandated for good order and devotion, and for the benefit of the lukewarm and slothful friars, so that they will not miss this time. For the fervent and devout will not be content with two or three periods of prayer, but they will spend all their time praying, meditating and contemplating. And as true contemplatives they will adore the Father in spirit and truth. And I exhort the brethren to this exercise because it is the very purpose for which they become religious."22

Literally, all the time not taken up with the Divine Office, manual labor or rest was to be spent in either personal prayer (*orare*), in affective mental prayer (*meditare*) or in mystical contemplation (*contemplare*).²³ There is no clearer or more emphatic way of emphasizing the subordination of the entire Capuchin life to contemplative prayer than to call it the very reason

for the order's existence.

This eremitic orientation is very definitely stressed in the regulations for the recitation of the Divine Office. In marked contrast to the formalism and estheticism which had crept into the liturgy during the Renaissance, the *Albacina Statutes* ban any singing of the canonical hours. They are to be recited "with the proper pauses, without repetitions, frills, or female voice." The Camaldolese influence can be clearly detected in these rules.²⁴

The contemplative goal intended by the statutes is even more openly marked in the number which follows, forbidding the addition of any votive offices, except that of our Lady. Whenever the friars, out of personal devotion, desire to recite the seven penitential psalms, the Office of the Dead, 25 or any other vocal prayers, "they should be content to say them privately, or with a companion, but not in the choir and at a time that does not conflict with the choir office, so that they do not distract those who may be praying quietly or mentally in the church or choir." The legislator adduces a twofold reason, namely, "so that all the friars may together say the office prescribed by the Rule with greater devotion and observance of the prescribed pauses, and so that the brethren may have more time to spend in quiet and mental prayer, which is far more fruitful than any vocal prayer." This interiorization finds its counterpart in the religious currents of our own time which are strongly influenced by the devotio moderna. Let me say very emphatically that it was left to the Second Vatican Council to rediscover the values to be found in the celebration of the liturgical hours. 29

The better to safeguard the friars from any influx of outsiders, the Constitutions mandate that their dwellings be sufficiently remote from urban centers. Thus we read: "Let all their places be located a mile or a little less outside the cities" – a distance of about one and a half kilometers. ³⁰ As a further guarantee of prayerful quiet, the rules concerning the reception of

strangers are especially strict.31

The quest for solitude found additional support and strength in the institution of recluse-living, which St. Francis himself practiced in certain circumstances.³² For several reasons the relevant text deserves careful consideration. I have had occasion to make reference to the historical setting33 in which this number was added to the Constitutions: Some friars in their exaggerated zeal to identify the reform with the contemplative life retired to absolute solitude. Thereupon Louis of Fossombrone countered their "individual solitude" with his "monastic solitude." He wrote: "Moreover we ordain that wherever possible one or two isolated cells be prepared at some distance from the friary, so that if anyone has the grace of the Lord to live in silence after the manner of hermits and is judged suitable for this by his superiors, he may be accommodated in all charity. And we exhort superiors and prelates that when they find those who are suitable, they do not deny them this charity. The friar living in solitude should observe silence, and no one should disturb him. He is not to speak, except to his spiritual father. He may not talk with any other without permission of his superiors. His simple provisions shall be brought to his cell in silence and without noise so that he may always remain united with his beloved Jesus Christ, the spouse of his soul."34

In my opinion, two factors combined to influence this text: the teaching and example of St. Francis, and that of the Camaldolese hermits of the Congregation of Monte Corona di Cupramontana.³⁵ The isolated cell is as

old as monasticism itself. It was an attempt to reduce the external environment and furnishing to a bare minimum, thus creating ideal conditions for uninterrupted recollection. The constant and profound association of the Capuchin hermits with nature (they frequently betook themselves to the fountains and woods, as evidenced by numerous instances cited by Father Servus Gieben³⁶) gave rise to a mysticism of creation and a friendship with animals which were typical Franciscan. The same text underlines the Christo-centric and espousal motifs of the mystical experience sought by the voluntary recluses. Noteworthy too is the recurrent insistence on silence, found, too, in other passages,³⁷ a silence broken only when necessary and with permission of the superior, or when speaking with one's spiritual father.

So far we have not come across any mention of the soteriological (salvific) aspect of the eremitic life either in biographical literature or in the Albacina Statutes. Paul of Foligno, referring to the few months spent by Matthew of Bascio visiting his little flock as vicar general, provides clear proof that the first friars had not embarked on a pious ego trip: "They longed to conform themselves to Christ-crucified, after the example of their seraphic father. They grieved at the thought of the many offenses committed by sinners and the infinite sufferings of sister-souls. Hence, with much light and fervor, they sought out occasions to suffer both interiorly and exteriorly for the love of God. No matter how great their sufferings might be, they considered them insignificant ..., rejoicing to do penance for past sins, to experience some little part of the sufferings endured by Christ for their sake, to be members of Christ, made more living likenesses of Him, for the glory given to their beloved heavenly Father and the satisfaction it gave Christ, then they offered the Father their own sufferings as the fruit of His...."38

I maintain that this theology of the cross echoes perfectly the Pauline concept of the Mystical Body and the soteriological obligation of "filling up in our own body those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ for His body which is the church" (Col. 1:24), and for the benefit of the "sistersouls" of sinners, as our chronicler writes, with characteristic Franciscan terminology.

2. The Harmonious Balance between Contemplative prayer and the Apostolic Ministry in the Light of the Constitutions of 1536.

A study of the ordinances of Albacina regarding prayer and the witness of the chroniclers make it clear that the fathers of the reform, with a certain exclusiveness, looked upon interior prayer as their whole raison d'etre. As they saw it, the new order's task within the church and the Franciscan family was to live out habitually and perfectly the evangelical admonition:

"Oportet semper orare" (Luke 18:1; 1 Thes. 5:17). The onesided preoccupation with the contemplative dimension of religious life seems to stem from the somewhat eccentric personality of Louis of Fossombrone on the one hand, and from a certain contamination of the Franciscan charism by elements found in the Camaldolese reform of Blessed Paul Giustiniani on the other. Nevertheless we must remember that the *Albacina Statutes*

expressly envisaged the preaching apostolate.39

The providential task of the revision of 1535-36 was to correct the earlier narrow concept of the order. The Constitutions promulgated in 1535 and printed in Naples the following year were the fruit of bitter conflicts between Louis of Fossombrone and a number of Capuchins who had come from the ranks of the Observants, like Bernardine of Asti. This Magna Charta of the Capuchin reform is at the same time an admirable compendium of Franciscan spirituality. By way of contrast to Louis's obstinate obsession with the eremitic vocation, the capitulars who convened in the friary of St. Euphemia in Rome produced a Franciscan synthesis of contemplative life and apostolic ministry. Unfortunately we lack historical details about the way the chapter carried out its revision.40 But according to certain reports, it seems that Bernardine Pallio of Asti (1484-1554) played a prominent role in wording the text which remained substantially intact until the Special General Chapter of 1968. In his capacity of vicar general, to which post he was unanimously elected, and reelected in 1536 in a chapter convoked through the intrigues of his predecessor, he continually appealed to the mind of St. Francis in founding the Order of Friars Minor. This same touchstone is clearly seen in the division of the second text into twelve chapters, corresponding to the twelve chapters of the Rule. In short, the statutes had no other objective than to provide the friars with a clear and concrete commentary on the Regula bullata.

I regret that it is not possible within the narrow framework of a conference to treat all the main relationships between contemplation and the apostolate. I must perforce limit myself to the idea of contemplation expressed in Chapter 3. In number 41 of the *Constitutions* we read: "And so that devotion may not grow lukewarm in the friars, but burning continuously on the altar of their hearts may be more and more inflamed, as our seraphic father desired, we prescribe at least two hours of prayer, and that for the sake of the lukewarm and tepid, since truly spiritual friars

pray at all times."41

The legislator is obviously making reference to Chapter 5 of the Rule. The times assigned to meditation are for the purpose of keeping alive "the spirit of prayer and devotion to which all temporal things ought to be subservient." Recalling the fire that consumes the sacrifice laid on the altar of the heart (see Lev. 6:12ff), he points to the necessity of continually

adding fuel.⁴² Harking back to the related prescriptions of the *Albacina Statutes*,⁴³ the text moreover makes it clear that the two hours of meditation are seen as the barest minimum, for the Friar Minor who is open to the workings of the Holy Spirit will strive to realize the Gospel ideal of praying

always.

Reducing the four hours of meditation found in the earlier draft to two obligatory periods was an effort to bring the purely eremitic-contemplative direction of the early beginnings into line with a balanced Franciscanism. Faithfully following the intentions of the seraphic father, the text achieves a new orientation insofar as it accords to prayer its theologically correct priority, a loving union with God which constitutes the ultimate destiny of all Christian life. Viewed in this way, prayer indeed becomes the great teacher of the spiritual life. When it is sincerely practiced it leads on to an experience of sanctifying intimacy with God and at the same time teaches us how to act so as to fulfill the obligation of our religious vocation.

Life and legislation are interdependent. If proof were needed, the subsequent history of this number of the Constitutions would provide it. In the Chapter of Pentecost in 1552, the capitulars set about revising the wording of the document. Anyone reading the text, reworked under the guidance of Angelo of Savona (d. 1556),⁴⁴ will immediately discern a certain stylistic redundancy, especially in the use of adjectives and the multiplication of appositional clauses. This is quite evident in the introduction to the number on mental prayer: "And because holy prayer is without doubt our principal teacher and the nurse of all true virtue, so that the spirit of prayer and devotion, to be desired above all things, may not diminish, etc." "45"

Apart form the somewhat baroque verbiage, we notice a certain theological regression insofar as prayer is described in terms similar to the theological virtue of charity, as a kind of second *forma virtutum*. No one would dare deny that prayer, especially interior prayer, possesses a vital power to form a man's spirituality. But it achieves this only because it helps develop and intensify charity, which permeates all the virtues, uniting and

nourishing them.

The changes, however, not only involve a new literary style, but must be viewed against the historical background of the apostasy of the fourth vicar general, Bernardine Ochino of Siena in 1542. The magnitude of the scandal was in proportion to the extraordinary and worldwide esteem which he had won as preacher and counselor. His flight and defection to the Calvinists convulsed the young reform so tragically that its very survival hung in the balance. Among other indications which aroused suspicion even at the height of his fame, historians single out his lack of the spirit of prayer: "He became so engrossed in these activities (preaching and counseling) that he no longer attended choir or was seen at prayer."

Paul of Foligno continues: "With this error, the wretched man fell into

such blindness that he could not find time to recite the Divine Office even privately. With many a *motu proprio* the pope released him from an obligation from which good friars refuse to seek a dispensation by doctors or prelates even on their deathbed."48

Significant, then, is a dialogue between the two Bernardines, the one of Asti and the other of Siena. The chroniclers report the essentials. His

predecessor (Bernardine of Asti) said to the vicar general:

"Father, you are entrapped in this situation because of secular business and studies. We never see you at prayer any more. Watch what you are doing. Persevere in humility. Take care of your own soul, too. Otherwise God will confound you, and you will end up with your hands full of flies, and a soldier of God without weapons." To which Ochino replied: Non cessat orare, qui non cessat bene facere ("He ceases not to pray who ceases not doing good"). Like him, many offer the same excuse for their involvement in scholastic and distracting occupations, which are the curse of religious.⁴⁹

Matthias Bellintani of Salò, in his description of "the virtue of prayer in this reform," ⁵⁰ appears to be refuting Ochino's sophistry when he writes: "If it be true that he does not cease to pray who does not cease to do good, it is equally true that he who ceases to pray, ceases to do good; because he who abandons prayer on the pretext of doing good works, ends up by abandoning the good works as well."

Bernardine Ochino stood out as a monumental warning for the first generation of Capuchins. Unless I am mistaken, his fall had repercussions up to the time the text on meditation was reworded.⁵¹ A remarkable number of examples prove that activism, even carried out in the pastoral ministry, is inevitably doomed to spiritual sterility if it is not rooted in the

rich soil of prayer.

After describing the central place allotted to prayer in the Constitutions of 1536, we must now attempt to clarify the sources and the principal mysteries of Capuchin-Franciscan meditation. Keeping close to the spirit of the Rule, the first number of the Constitutions urges that "the friars always keep before the eyes of their mind the doctrine and life of our Savior Jesus Christ," and that "they always carry in the depths of their hearts the holy Gospel."52 In line with this admonition, it is ordered that there be a public reading of the four Gospels "three times a year, that is, once each month."53 And since "the flames of divine love are kindled from the light of things divine, it is ordained that there be some reading of holy Scripture, with an explanation by holy and devout doctors." The infinita divina sapientia has been made accessible to us, descending to us in Christo nostro Salvatore, so that "without any other means, but with the pure eye ... of faith, the simple and unlearned can understand it." Consequently biblical studies should be entirely concentrated on "the most holy Christ Jesus, in whom, as Paul says, are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge of God."54

These quotations, among others emphasizing the same idea, show how the Bible, especially the New Testament with Christ as its heart and summit, provided the Capuchins with an inexhaustible font and principal object of study and contemplation. We know that they came to accord the mystery of the passion a somewhat exaggerated role and space, but this was due not so much to the Constitutions themselves, but more to the spiritual writings of later Capuchins. Already the Albacina Statutes say that, according to the teachings of St. Francis, "the beginning, the center, and the end of our conversation should all be in accompanying Him on His holy cross."55

There remains the task of describing the method of Capuchin meditation. Anyone who is looking for a succinct formula with which to express the Capuchin approach to mental prayer will find it in contemplative and affective attitude of knowledge through love. It is defined in an incomparable manner in the prayer composed by Ruggero of Provenza (d. 1287), for the cleric-students. It came to the attention of the fathers of the reform through the famous *Liber conformitatum* of Bartholomew of Pisa: "Des sibi (vilissimo servo) in his verbis et sancta lectione tantum te diligere quantum te cognoscere, quia nolo te cognoscere nisi ut te diligam, Domine Deus, Creator meus" ("Grant to your lowly servant in these words and holy reading to love you as much as to know you, for I do not wish to know you except to love you, Lord God, my Creator").

But to get a deeper grasp of the subject, we must have recourse to the second number on meditation, which reads: "And let the friars remember that prayer is nothing else but speaking to God from the heart. Consequently he does not pray who speaks to God only with the lips. Therefore, let each one endeavor to practice mental prayer, and according to the doctrine of Christ, our best teacher, to adore the eternal Father in spirit and truth, taking diligent care to enlighten the mind and inflame the heart, rather than to frame words." 57

The valid insights of the Albacina ordinances ⁵⁸ flow into this text, which, to my mind, is a jewel of spiritual literature. Interior prayer is in fact a colloquy of the heart with God in which a man, with all the love of which he is capable, bares to God the inmost recesses of his being elevated by grace; a striving to communicate with the Divine Being without recourse to words; an adoration of God the Father "in spirit and in truth," that is, like a son, with all the intensity of one's mind and purity of intention; a trustful expectation, because faith is enlightened and charity enkindled by the grace of prayer.

With a kind of instinctive sureness, meditation is here authentically defined according to the mind of St. Francis. Instead of burdening the friars with some methodical system with many disparite points, the fathers of the reform went right to the heart of the affective-dialogical encounter with

God. There can be no doubt that we find here the genuine Franciscan heirloom of prayer of the heart in which man, by the path of recollection, endeavors to return to the center of his soul, where he finally abandons himself completely to the guidance of the Holy Spirit "who expresses our

plea in a way that could never be put into words" (Rom. 8:26).

Speaking with God without conceptual speech is carried out in different ways, according to the temperament of the individual, the various charisms freely bestowed by God, the extent of one's spiritual maturity and the concrete circumstances in which the friar finds himself. The structure as well as the starting point of this loving communion with God dwelling in the soul may be a meditation on the words of Holy Scripture, or religious images and symbols, or, following the example of the poverello, the world of nature. The gamut of religious expression encompasses the entire range of human communication. Thus prayerful colloquy may include the enormous sense of wonder found in every human being, or guilt feelings stirred up by the thought of past sins as seen in the light of divine holiness, or a sense of gratitude for benefits received, or simple adoration of the most high God. These sentiments recur frequently in authentic affective prayer without engendering monotony or boredom.

Prayer of the heart belongs to a spiritual patrimony which dates back to early Christian times, as can be seen by a habitual invocation of the name of Jesus. ⁵⁹ Certainly the prayer-life of Francis was profoundly influenced by it. The Capuchins took over this tradition either by direct contact with Franciscan sources or by way of the meditation of St. Bonaventure and of the Observant mystic, Henry van Herp. They learned and adopted the practice of ejaculatory prayer from the latter. ⁶⁰ We have not time to show you how an incredible number of Capuchin writers, beginning with John Pili of Fano (d. 1539) and his work *Operetta devotissima: Chiamata Arte de la Unione*, published in Brescia in 1530, have tried to spread the practice of

affective-meditative prayer even among simple folk.61

On the other hand, it seems important to me to point out to you, albeit briefly, the external customs observed by the early Capuchins during meditation. From the "Constitutions" of Albacina we can deduce that the two hours of mental prayer inherited from the Observants were to be performed in choir. The Constitutions of 1536 add that before one of the two periods the Litany of the Saints be recited, "calling upon all the saints to adore God with us and for us." According to the Constitutions of 1609, the Litany of Loreto was to be said before the second period. The 1536 Constitutions speak of "two hours" and the ordinances of the General Chapter of 1733 insist on two complete hours.

At first, an hourglass was used to mark the time - the horologium pulveratum mentioned by Zachary Boverius. Later an alarm clock signaled

the close of the meditation.66

According to the Boverian ritual, the friars closed and darkened all windows and bolted the church door before beginning mental prayer.⁶⁷ By means of such isolation and semi-darkness (one candle could be kept lighted) the Capuchins tried to safeguard and foster recollection. Bonito Combasson, a "Conventual" (in fact a Capuchin writer, who tried to gain prestige for his works by using a pen name) states that these two hours of meditation made in the mysterious obscurity of the choir or church was unique among the religious orders of the time. 68 The friars took their places in the choir, or, generally the younger ones, in the church. They maintained an equal distance apart so as not to disturb one another in their devotions. The Ritual allowed a choice of posture - standing erect, kneeling before a bench, or kneeling without any support. Only the elderly or sick were accorded the right to sit down during meditation. It is worth mentioning that the Boverian ritual states expressly that it was not proper for a friar who knelt during the long prayer to recline back on his heels ("talos sibi pro sede constituant - using their heels for a seat").69

With this description of certain contemplative factors as developed in the General Chapters of 1535 and 1536, I certainly do not pretend to have exhausted the subject. I would have been obliged to include some of the pertinent legislation and biographical writings concerning such matters as silence, the Divine Office, studies, as well as the preference for foundations at a distance from other dwellings, and the cells of the Capuchin hermits. But I think that what I have offered for your consideration has proved sufficiently the important place that prayer occupied in the mind and life of

the first Capuchins.

To conclude, I could not find a more beautiful or meaningful text to demonstrate the balanced harmony between the contemplative life and the apostolic ministry found in the definitive Constitutions of 1576 than in the admonition directed to preachers: "Hence the preachers are exhorted to imprint the blessed Jesus on their own hearts and give Him peaceful possession, that it may be He who speaks in them, not only in words but much more by their actions." Every Franciscan apostolate is nothing else but an overflowing of Christlike love poured out on others. It means giving Christ to one's brother, that Christ by whom the preacher has allowed himself to be completely dominated. It is the witness of an evangelical life which wins acceptance for his words.

Our past, which we have just invoked, calls out to us, the more so since it speaks of a spiritual patrimony which has been revived in our own times. Our life today is authentic only to the extent that it measures up, at least in

essentials, to the historic charism of the Capuchin reform.

I certainly dare not take time to review the documents dealing with contemporary problems faced by our Capuchin life. However, I should like to pose some questions which you might take along with you as you return

to your local communities in order to stimulate personal and communal reflection:

1. Have we really succeeded in keeping intact the contemplative dimension of the Capuchin-Franciscan charism in the light of the renewal effected by the Special General Chapter, and implemented it at the provincial level?

2. How have we taken advantage of the opportunities offered by the postconciliar liturgical reforms by concentrating on the contemplative elements to be found in the celebration of the Eucharist and the Divine Office?

3. Does regular mental prayer of the affective kind occupy a genuine place of honor in our daily program, or only a pretence? Are we making real efforts to introduce our candidates to this characteristic form of Franciscan prayer and to help the others to be faithful to its daily observance?

4. How is silence in our surroundings and in our speech observed in our friaries?

5. Are there efforts on the provincial level to establish houses of prayer, so often encouraged by the authorities of the order? Are friars with clear signs of a special divine call assured the freedom to live the contemplative life, even for an indefinite period of time?

6. Finally, what steps have been taken so far, on the regional or local level, to promote the apostolate of prayer among our Christian people?⁷¹

I shall conclude with a quotation from the letter Pope Paul VI sent to our Special General Chapter of 1974: "The contemplative spirit, which shone forth in the life of St. Francis and his first disciples, is a precious treasure which his children must now promote and incorporate into their way of life. For the general renewal of your esteemed order must flow from a living and life-giving source, that is, prayer, which is practiced in many ways. This is absolutely necessary for recovering the contemplative aspect of our lives and at the same time enabling your apostolate to exert greater power and wider effectiveness."

Notes

- See Toppi, Schmucki, Cargnoni, Di Monda, Calloni, Le "case di preghiera" nella storia e spiritualità francescana, Studi scelti di francescanesimo, 7 (Naples, 1978). The second session discussed the topic: Struttura e contemplazione, and was held at Seiano di Vico Equense, 25–28 April 1978.
- 2. "Constitutioni delli Frati Minori dette della vita heremitica," in ItFran, 53 (1978):9-21. See 9, n. 1.
- 3. See esp. Callisto Urbanelli, O.F.M.Cap., Storia dei Cappuccini delle Marche, (Ancona, 1978)
- 4. I recommend O. Schmucki, "Secretum solitudinis. De circumstantiis externis orandi penes sanctum Franciscum Assisiensem," in CF, 39 (1969):5-58; "Mentis silentium. Il programma contemplativo nell'Ordine francescano primitivo," in Lau, 14 (1973):177-222; Toppi et al., Le "case di preghiera", "Luogo di preghiera, eremo, solitudine. Concetti e realizzazioni in san Francesco d'Assisi," pp. 29-53, where other sources are indicated.

- 5. See Edouard d'Alençon, O.F.M.Cap., De primordiis Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum 1525-1534 commentarium historicum (Rome, 1921), pp. 44b and 45ab.
- 6. Besides the words mentioned in note 4, see also *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, s.v. "Barba"; idem, F. Ferrero, "Eremitismo individuale in Occidente," vol. 3, 1245-58 (bibliog.).
- 7. From a bibliography attached to an article by a number of authors. See Ferrero, "Eremitismo," cited in n. 6 above, 1224-44, esp. 1242-44, and for Italy: 1242ff. There seems to be a lack of specific sources for the times and geographical areas that concern us here.
- 8. Bernardine of Colpetrazzo, O.F.M.Cap. Historia Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum (1525-1593), Melchior of Pobladura, O.F.M.Cap., ed. (Monumenta Historica Ordinis Minorum Capuccinorum, hereafter cited as MHOMC 2), Assisi, 1939, pp. 164-65, n. 1 (bibliog.); Theophilus Graf, O.F.M.Cap., Zur Entstehung des Kapuzinerordens. Quellenkritische Studien (Olten Freiburg im Breisgau, 1939), pp. 86-88, 100-3, esp. p. 102 with the important witness of B. Paul Giustiniani in his letter of 11 April 1526.
- 9. d'Alençon, De primordiis, pp. 29-30.
- Costanzo Cargnoni, O.F.M.Cap., "Le case di preghiera nella storia dell'Ordine francescano," in Toppi et al., Le "case di preghiera" cited in n. 1 above, pp. 71-73, 82ff.
- 11. Paul of Foligno, O.F.M.Cap., "Origo et progressus Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum," Melchior of Pobladura, ed. (MHOMC, 2), Rome, 1955, p. 173, n. 186.
- 12. Colpetrazzo, Historia (MHOMC, 2), p. 216, n. 196.
- 13. Paul of Foligno, "Origo et progressus," p. 174: "... dalla sperienza e punti dalla coscienza conobbero il pericolo di quella libertà et la eccellenza della soggettione attuale alla obedienza e del vivere in santa fratellanza." See also the critical note 1 dell'Ed., p. 174.
- 14. Ibid., p. 176, n. 187.
- 15. Historia, p. 219ff, n. 199: "E questa fu la cagione ch'il Padre Fra Ludovico pose nelle prime Costitutioni che chi voleva tenere vita anacoritica e solitaria, quando fusse giudicato da Prelato questo tale esser'atto, gli fusse data ogni favore, accioché non mancasse mai nella Congregatione santi uomini che del tutto spiccati da impedimento se dessero alla santa contemplatione."
- 16. Paul of Foligno, "Origo et progressus," pp. 212-13, n. 222.
- 17. See n. 2 above. See also Lexicon Capuccinum, s.v. "Albacina"; "Commemoratio primi Capituli Ordinis anno 1529 Alvacinae congregati," in AnalOFMCap, 45 (1929):282b 284a; Gerard Del Colle, "Rilievi linguisticostilistici sulle Costituzioni d'Albacina, in ItFran, 53 (1978):22–28; O. Schmucki, "La figura di san Francesco nelle prime Costituzioni cappuccine. Lo spirito francescano nelle 'Constituzioni dei Frati Minori detti della vita heremitica' del 1529," in questi Atti, pp. 121–158.
- 18. d'Alençon, De Primordiis, pp. 63-64. For what follows I have consulted above all the penetrating and learned dissertation of Remigius of Alosto, O.F.M.Cap., "De oratione mentali in Ordine Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum," in CF, 3 (1933):40-66. See also my paper "L'indirizzo contemplativo dell'Ordine cappuccino primitivo," in Piceno Seraphicum, 12 (1975 [1977]):296-303, esp. pp. 296-97, n. 3. For the history of mental prayer in the Franciscan Order yesterday and today, see also Optatus van Asseldonk, O.F.M.Cap., "De oefening van het inwendig gebed in de Minderbroedersorde gedurende de viftiende en de zestiende eeuw," in Ons Geestelijk Erf, 21 (1947):113-60. See also BibFranc, VIII, no. 432; Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., "The History of Mental Prayer in the Order of Friars Minor," in FS, 11 (1951):317-45, and ibid., X, n. 581. See also M. Goosens, O.F.M., De meditatie in de eerste tijd van de Moderne Devotie (Haarlem Antwerp, 1952), and ibid., X, n. 2629.
- 19. See Remigius of Alosto, "De oratione mentali," pp. 42-45.
- 20. Costitutioni delli Frati Minori detti della vita heremitica, no. 8, hereafter cited as CAlb. See

also Matthias of Salò, *Historia capuccina*, part I, Melchior of Pobladura, ed. (MHOMC, 5), Rome, 1946, p. 161. We always quote from this edition.

- 21. Ibid.
- 22. Ibid.
- 23. It would be difficult to interpret these three terms any differently.
- 24. CAlb, n. 2, p. 159. See Burchardus (Mathis) of Wolfenschiessen, O.F.M.Cap., "De influxu legislationis Camaldulensium in Ordinem Capuccinorum," in CF, 1 (1931):59-78, 75-76.
- 25. See E. Clop, O.F.M., "Office de la Benedicta," in EF, 30 (1913):482-92. See also ItFran, 53 (1978):11, note 2, where I found the quotation. Likewise D.M. Montagna, "Cinquecento devoto minore. L'Ufficio della 'Benedetta' ad altre preci in un opuscolo di origine francescana attorno al 1525," (Milan, Trivulziana, M. 87), in Studi Storici O.S.M., 23 (1973):266-75.
- 26. CAlb, n. 3, p. 159.
- 27. Ibid., pp. 159-60.
- See the report and the bibliography in C. Egger's article in Diz. Ist. Perf., s.v. "Devozione Moderna".
- See for example M. Magrassi, O.S.B., "Per un Breviario autenticamente pregato," in E. Baccetti et al, Chiesa che prega. Collana "Opus Divinum", 1 (Milan, 1970), pp. 177-99, esp. pp. 192-96 ("Un ritmo più contemplativo").
- 30. CAlb, n. 50, p. 168.
- 31. Ibid., n. 10, pp. 161-62.
- 32. See Schmucki, "Secretum solitudinis," pp. 51-54, or "Luogo di preghiera," pp. 50-52 ("Il significato di 'carcer'").
- 33. See Part 1 above, with reference to notes 11-12.
- 34. CAlb, n. 47, p. 167.
- 35. Besides the bibliography mentioned in notes 8 and 24, see also J. Leclercq in Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, s.v. "Giustiniani Paul"; G. Cacciamani, in Diz. Ist. Perf., s.v. "Camaldolesi"; W. Leipold, in Diz. Ist. Perf., s.v. "Eremiti Camaldolesi".
- On the cell, see "Secretum solitudinis," pp. 45-50, esp. p. 46, n. 30, or "Luogo de preghiera," pp. 45-48, esp. p. 45, n. 34 (bibliog); Servus Gieben, O.F.M.Cap., "Il richiamo della foresta: la funzione del bosco presso i primi Cappuccini," in *Picenum Seraphicum*, 12 (1975 [1977]):290-95.
- 37. CAlb, nn. 9, 58, pp. 161, 169.
- 38. Paul of Foligno, "Origo et progressus," p. 81.
- 39. CAlb, n. 24, p. 164.
- 40. [d'Alençon], "De Capitulo generali O.F.M.Cap. mense novembri A.D. 1535 celebrato et mense septembri anni subsequentis renovato; nova et vetera," in AnalOFMCap, 43 (1927):282-88; Luigi Maria of Genoa, O.F.M.Cap., Dottrina spirituale della primitiva legislazione cappuccina (Genoa, 1963); Mariano D'Alatri, in Diz. Ist. Perf., s.v. "Bernardino d'Asti"; O. Schmucki, "De loco sancti Francisci Assisiensis in Constitutionibus Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum anni 1536," in CF, 48 (1978):249-310.
- 41. Edouard d'Alençon, Primigeniae legislationis Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum textus originales seu Constitutiones anno 1536 ordinatae et anno 1552 recognitae; cum historia introductione copiosisque adnotationibus (Rome, 1928), pp. 42-43 (Const. of 1536, no. 41: p. 42s). See also the important introduction to the edition on pp. 22-25.
- 42. See 2Cel 201, in AF 10 (1926-41):245: "Saepe communicabat [san Francesco], et tam devote, ut alios devotos efficeret. Reverendum enim illud omni reverentia prosequens, membrorum omnium sacrificium offerebat, et agnum immolatum recipiens, illo igne qui in altari cordis semper ardebat, spiritum immolabat."
- 43. CAlb n. 8, p. 161.

- 44. d'Alençon, Textus originales, pp. 22-25; Lexicon Capuccinum, 77.
- 45. Le Constitutioni de Frati Minori detti Cappuccini (1552), n. 41: d'Alençon, Textus originales, p. 42b. See also Remigius of Alosto, De oratione mentali, pp. 58-60.
- Melchior of Pobladura, Historia generalis Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum, pars prima: 1525–1619 (Biblioteca Seraphico-Capuccina, 7), Rome, 1947, pp. 47–50 (bibliog.); Lexicon Capuccinum, 1234–36; CF-BibFranc, 1913–70. Index prepared by C. Van de Laar, O.F.M.Cap. (Rome, 1972), p. 443b.
- 47. Paul of Foligno, "Origo et progressus," p. 264.
- 48. Ibid., p. 265.
- 49. Ibid., p. 264.
- 50. Matthias of Salò, Historia, p. 287.
- 51. Remigius of Alosta had already pointed out this influence in "De oratione mentali."
- 52. Const. of 1536, no. 1, p. 271.
- 53. Ibid.
- 54. Const. of 1536, no. 1, p. 28a. Col. 2:3.
- 55. CAlb, 67, p. 171.
- 56. Const. of 1536, no. 125, pp. 77a, 98 (no. 125, n. 1). About Ruggero, see CF-BibFranc, index, p. 518a.
- 57. Const. of 1536, no. 42, p. 43a.
- 58. CAlb, no. 8, p. 161.
- 59. See the historical development and the pertinent bibliography by P. Adnès, in *Dict. Spir.*, s.v. "Jésus (prière à".
- 60. Henry van Herp, *Theologiae mysticae libri tres* (Brussels, 1601), pp. 494e, 568; E. Gullick and Optatus de Veghel, O.F.M.Cap., in *Dict. Spir.*, s.v. "Herp".
- 61. Lexicon Capuccinum, 833-34; Metodio da Nembro, O.F.M.Cap., Quattrocento scrittori spirituali (Rome, 1972), pp. 34-36; CF-BibFranc, index, 209a; BibFranc, XII, n. 2171-74. See esp. Remigius of Alosto, "De oratione mentali in Ordine Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum [or John of Fano]," in CF, 9 (1939):164-92; Optat de Veghel, in Dict. Spir, s.v. "Jean de Fano"; Callisto Urbanelli, O.F.M.Cap., "L'Osservanza e la riforma cappuccina nei due 'Dialoghi' di Giovanni Pili da Fano," in Picenum Seraphicum, 12 (1975 [1977]):160-77.
- 62. Const. of 1536, no. 41, p. 43a.
- 63. Lexicum Capuccinum, s.v. "Litaniae Lauretanae B.M.V.".
- 64. Const. of 1536, no. 41, p. 42a: "... che a questo siano deputate per li tepidi due hore particulare."
- 65. "Collectio authentica ordinationum ac decisionum Capitulorum Generalium. Capituli XLVII," 1733, no. 1, in *AnalOFMCap*, 8 (1892):117a: "... s'ordina espressamente à RR.PP. Provinciali di procurare ... che le ore dell'Orazione mentale siano d'un'ora compita, e non meno."
- 66. Zachary Boverio of Saluzzo, O.F.M.Cap., De sacris ritibus iuxta Romanam Regulam, usui Fratrum Minorum S. Francisci, qui vulgo Capuccini nuncupantur accommodatis. Libri tres. Quibus accessit appendix, de externis quibusdam Ritibus, ad Religionis politiam pertinentibus. Iusso omnia, ac mandato Admodum Rev. Patris Fr. Ioannis Mariae de Noto, eorumdem Fratrum Generalis Ministri in lucem edita, Neapoli, Typis Scorigianis, M. DC.XXVI, p. 193: "Sacrista horologium puluerarium, quod in legili paratum esse debet, vertat." An illustration of such an hour glass is reproduced in Le Celle di Cortona, eremo francescano del 1211 (Cortona, 1977), p. 98. An alarm clock used for meditation is on exhibition in the Franciscan Museum of the Capuchin Historical Institute in Rome. See Il Museo Francescano. Catalogo, P. Gerlach, S. Gieben, and M. D'Alatri, edd. (Rome, 1973), p. 48, n. 42.
- 67. Boverio, De sacris ribibus, p. 193-94.
- 68. Vera et dilucida explicatio praesentis status totius Seraphicae Fratrum Minorum Religionis, à

Sancto & Magno Francisco, Patriarcha inclyto, Numine divino inspirante fundatae. Per R.P.F. Bonitum Combasson Sabaudum, Minoritam Conventualem, S. Theologiae Doctorem, Superiorum permissu, cum approbatione Doctorum. Prius Coloniae Agrippinae, apud Constantium Münich, 1640. Nunc verò cum permissu Superiorum, Viennae Austriae, typis Joannis Jacobi Kurner, Statuum Inferioris Austriae Typographi, A. 1710, 56: "... frequens oratio, cui penè sine intermissione diu noctuque incumbunt isti Seraphici Minoritae, sed maximè mentali, duarum spatio in communi, ... simul omnes in Choro congregati, fenestris & januis clausis, ut arceatur lumen ob occasionem distractionis. ... Hunc in communi orandi modum, in nullo alio Ordine Religioso usitatum (quod sciam) audivi nec legi (57). That there is question of a pseudonym here is attested in a letter of Bonaventura Theubis, O.F.M.Conv., published in Speculum apologeticum, of Jacobus de Riddere, O.F.M.Obs (Antwerp, 1653), p. 306, as Servus Gieben told me.

69. [Boverius], De sacris ritibus, pp. 193-94.

70. Const. of 1536, no. 112, p. 72a.

71. See "Suggestiones et vota II Sessionis Consilii Plenarii Ordinis de oratione," no. 20, in *AnalOFMCap*. 78 (1973):124: "Spiritus Orationis et promotio orationis, praesertim interioris, in populo Dei, inde ab initio fuit charisma peculiari nostra e fraternitatis Capuccinae. Hoc, historia teste, germen fuit semper genuinae renovationis."

72. For the Latin text, see "Litterae Pauli VI occasione Capituli generalis," in AnalOFMCap, 90 (1974):276–79, especially p. 277. For the Italian translation see Atti della Provincia Veneta dei Frati Minori Cappuccini, 49 (1974):75–79, especially p. 76. As my confrere R.P. Egon-Werner Gross, O.F.M.Cap. has kindly pointed out to me, it is necessary to correct partially a statement of Combasson (see n. 68 above) with respect to St. Ignatius of Loyola (Esercizi spirituali, prededuti dalla sua autobiografia. Preface by Giovanni Paolini. Cronologia e bibliografia (Florence, 1928), p. 112, in "Additional means for discovering what the soul desires . . ." "The seventh: to deprive myself of all light to achieve this effect, closing doors and windows during the time I am in my room, except when necessary to pray, read, or take food." The original note, however, could refer to the aforementioned custom to be observed during community meditation.