The Franciscan Spirit of St. Veronica Giuliani

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If we page through the volumes of the *Diary* of Veronica Giuliani and the *Summarium* from her canonization process, we come away with the impression of a saint who lived in an atmosphere of mortification and self-punishment and who was battling constantly against temptations, nightmares and visions of hell. There is a certain extravagance to it all. Then there are her mystical experiences. These are dominated by an overwhelming desire for mental and physical suffering as a way of appeasing the justice of a wrathful God. It all seems somewhat at odds with the Franciscan spirit, whose characteristics are joy, freedom of spirit, and a positive regard for the gift of life, and whose guiding power is that of love.

But for the sake of historical fairness consider this. Suppose Francis of Assisi had left us a day-by-day written account of his inner sufferings at the time of his conversion when he left the world (1Cel 6), and then his later doubts and fears about his salvation, and finally his temptations and attacks by the devil (1Cel 92f; 2Cel 115; LP 21). What would be our image of him then? We can catch a glimpse from the biographies. Here is just one example:

At the time when he received the stigmata of our Lord in his own body on the holy mountain of La Verna, he suffered...many temptations and troubles from the devils.... And he told his companion, "If the brethren knew how many great trials and afflictions the devils bring upon me, there is not one of them who would not be moved to compassion and pity for me" (SP 99).

In the following exhortation, taken from the *Earlier Rule*, Francis is describing himself:

We must rejoice, instead, when we fall into various trials and, in this world, suffer every kind of anguish or distress of soul and body for the sake of eternal life (RegNB XVII, 8). 1

¹[Citations from the writings of Francis and Clare are taken from Armstrong's translation; other Franciscan sources are taken from the *Omnibus*.] Citations from the *Diary* of St. Veronica are

Needless to say, such evidence of Francis's sufferings is matched by frequent evidence of his serene and overflowing joythe fruit of his love and freedom of spirit. Yet we need to remember that the Canticle of the Creatures, that sublime expression of a heart filled with joy and thanksgiving to the Creator for His creatures sprang from the soul of Francis after a sleepless night brought on by intense physical and mental sufferings (LP 43).

Suffering and joy are certainly not opposed, especially when suffering is centered on the mystery of redemptive pain and joy is an authentic fruit of the Spirit. Francis was never considered a sad person. As for St. Clare, who also suffered for years from physical sickness and spiritual trials, the sisters who testified at her process state that her face always wore a look of happiness and serenity.

In a moment we shall see the same statements in the writings of St. Veronica. She feels dry and forsaken. Her pain is so great that she seems to be undergoing the agony of death. During the first two decades of her religious life, she invents all sorts of penances. She shares in every one of Christ's sufferings and in the pains of purgatory and hell. Yet she is never sad. If, as she says, "suffering and love go together," she also stresses that suffering is "a source of joy." It is "all happiness."

The subject of our study was taken up some thirty years ago by the late Father Antonio of Busano, O.F.M.Cap. His (still unpublished) doctoral thesis, *Spiritualità francescana di S. Veronica Giuliani*, was defended at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.²

On 19 January 1965, Father Antonio of Bussano died tragically in an automobile accident, along with five of his confreres. At the time he was provincial minister of the Piedmont Province. The author's perspective is strictly theological. An able and diligent scholar, he first sets up an ascetical-mystical outline. Then he tries to find corroboration for each one of his chapters in the *Diary* of St. Veronica. With regard to the Franciscan direction of her life, all he says is: "St. Veronica is a perfect copy of her seraphic father." Her life, like his, was "an imitation, conformation, and transformation into Jesus crucified" (p. 73f). Since the author does not include a study of Francis's spirituality, he is not in a position to find in Veronica's writings any similarities or differences between the gospel spirituality of Francis and her own.

from the 5 volume edition of O. Fiorucci, Un tesoro nascosto..., Cittá di Castello 1969-74.

²Antonio of Busano, OFMCap, Spiritualità francescana di S. Veronica Giuliani. Pontifical Gregorian University—Faculty of Theology. Rome 1951. 350 pp. A typewritten copy is in the general library of the order.

1. Veronica's Franciscan Training

I would call Veronica's training a process of "information" rather than a genuine formation in the spirit of St. Francis. At that time not even the friars received such a formation. They were acquainted with Francis's life and they read the chronicles of the order. The Rule was studied from a moral and canonical perspective, and emphasis was placed on community observances. But there was little more. For young Capuchins, the most helpful thing from the standpoint of formation was the frequent reading of the Constitutions. The basic text was still that of 1536, which was permeated with authentic gospel and Franciscan values. The Capuchinesses found similar help in reading the Constitutions of St. Collette. These had been adopted at the beginning of the reform, along with a few changes and additions that stressed greater austerity and separation from the world.

Young Ursula Giuliani had some knowledge of Francis, Clare, and the two orders they had founded, though perhaps this knowledge was rather vague. Since the middle of the thirteenth century, the town of Mercatello sul Metauro had been blessed by the presence of the Franciscans. In fact the friary of St. Francis, where there was a community of Conventuals, existed already in 1244.³ There was also a monastery of Urbanist Clares, dedicated to St. Clare. Three of Ursula's sisters were professed nuns in that community.

It is reasonable to suppose that Ursula got a general idea of the lives of Francis and Clare from sermons that were preached on their feastdays, as well as from family reading of the lives of the saints. The following incident is telling. One of her sisters, while a postulant in the monastery of St. Clare, was urged by their father to try to talk Ursula into getting married. She retorted: "As a religious you should be ashamed of yourself! You're just the opposite of St. Clare, who urged her own sister to enter the monastery and flee the vanities of the world." But we should also point out that among Ursula's spiritual directors and friends of the family there was not a single Franciscan.

Once she entered the Capuchiness monastery at Città di Castello her Franciscan "information" became more regular and concentrated. The novices were trained first of all in knowledge and observance of the Rule. The latter referred not only to the Form of Life of the Poor Sisters written by St.

³See L. Wadding, Annales 1291, V. quaracchi 1931, p. 307. Also J.F. de Mutina, Status Religionis Franciscanae Minorum Conventualium, Rome 1682, p. 53.

⁴Un tesoro nascosto, V, 10, n. 2.

Clare, but also to the Constitutions and monastic customs. All these formed a part of "regular observance."

The monastery, by reason of its decreee of foundation (Urban VIII,18 January 1642), was allowed to have goods and a source of revenues. But from the very beginning the rule adopted was that of St. Clare, known at that time as the First Rule. The two foundresses of the community had brought it with them from the monastery in Perugia. In fact, the library of the Capuchinesses in Città di Castello still has a dozen copies of the Perugia edition of this Rule (1639) along with the Capuchiness Constitutions, which contain the adaptations made by Father Girolamo of Castelferretti. Some of Veronica's expressions in her Diary sound like echoes from the reading of the Rule in refectory. But the Italian Capuchinesses were unfamiliar with the Testament of St. Clare, since it was not printed in their copy of the Rule.

While we are on the subject of the monastery library, a fruitful area for research, we suggest the following as a plausible hypothesis regarding the Franciscan books that were available to Veronica and, to some extent, were read in her community. Limiting ourselves to works prior to 1726, we come up with the following list.

- a) Lives of St. Francis
- St. Bonaventure, Vita et costumi del glorioso et serafico S. Francisco... (Major Legend). Venice 1601.
- Andreas Vaccarus, Magni S. Francisci vita distincta miraculis descripta simulacris. Rome 1603.
- Mark of Liston, Croniche... (see below). Over half of the first volume (Naples 1680) is devoted to the life of St. Francis. The author skillfully interweaves chapters from St. Bonaventure, the Mirror of Perfection, and the Fioretti. This book was much read in Franciscan communities at that time.
 - b) Lives of St. Clare
- Valerio of Venice, OFM Cap., Vita della gloriosa santa Chiara vergine di Assisi, composta da S. Bonaventura cardinale e da altri autori, con le vite delle beate

⁵Prima Regola delle Monache di S. Chiara, datali (!) dal P.S. Francesco e confermata da Innocenzo IV... Revista e corretta dal R.P. Procuratore di Corte de' Frati Minori Cappuccini... Perugia 1639. The same library also contains two manuscript copies of the Dichiarazione sopra la Regola di S. Chiara by Father Sante Romano, Venice 1621.

⁶For information on the old library and Veronica's reading, see S. Veronica Giuliani: Esperienza e dottrina mistica, Rome 1981, Introduzione, pp. 22-38.

monache della sua santa Regola...con un dialogo nel fine di tutto quello che hanno da sapere et osservare le novizie... Venice 1606. The Legend of St. Clare was falsely attributed to St. Bonaventure.

Mark of Lisbon, Croniche... (see below). The life of St. Clare begins on p. 535.

Joseph of Madrid, OFM Disc., Vita mirabile della serafica Madre santa Chiara d'Assisi... Lucca 1727.

c) Lives of Franciscan Saints and Servants of God

Peter Coretini of Viterbo, L'historia di santa Rosa viterbese, Viterbo 1638. Francis Marchese, Vita di s. Pietro d'Alcantara. Venice 1671; Florence 1709. John di San Bernardo, Chronica dell'ammirabil vita di S. Pietro d'Alcantara... Naples 1684. Angelo Maria de Rossi of Voltaggio, Vita del Ven. P. Giuseppe da Leonessa... Genoa 1695. Peter Benedict G. of Urbino, Vita del Ven. fra Serafino da Montegranaro, Urbino 1709. Louis Marracci Lucchese, Vita della Ven. Madre Passitea Crogi, senese, fondatrice del monastero delle cappuccine di Siena, Rome 1669. Diego Calcagni, Vita del P. Father Bonaventura da Recanati... Messina 1702. José Ximenez Samaniego, Vita della Ven. Madre sor maria di Gesù Agreda... Trent 1712. Bernardine of Foligno, Vita della serva di Dio suor Vittoria... Rome 1713.

d) Franciscan Chronicles

Mark of Lisbon, Chroniche degli Ordini instituiti dal P.S. Francesco... Naples 1680.

Zachary Boverio of Saluzzo, Annali dei Frati Minori Cappuccini... translated by F.B. Sambenedetti of Milan. Venice 1643-45. Massimo Bertani of Valenza, Annali dell'Ordine dei FF.MM. Cappuccini. Milan 1714.

e) Franciscan Spiritual Writers

Alexis Segala of Salò, OFM Cap., Arte mirabile per amare, servire et onorare la gloriosa Vergine Maria, Milan 1621; Corona celeste di meditazioni, Milan 1638; Trionfo delle anime del purgatorio, Venice 1623. Antonio de Guevara, OFM Obs., Del monte Calvario... Venice 1563. Bartholomew Cambi of Salutìo, OFM Obs., Luce dell'anima... Venice 1634; Paradiso dei contemplativi, Parma 1608; Vita dell'anima, Parma 1614. Benedict of Canfield, OFM Cap., Regola di perfezione, Viterbo 1677. Benedict of Torsciano, OFM Ref., Gemma del paradiso... Todi 1624. Bonaventure Mortorio of Turin, OFM Ref., Il mortorio di Cristo, Venice 1625. Il cappuccino ritirato per dieci giorni, Venice 1720. Charles of Sezze (St.), OFM Ref., Trattato delle tre vie della meditazione, Rome 1664. Diego of Estella, OFM Obs., Libro della vanità del mondo, Macerata 1574; Meditazioni devotissime, Venice 1584. Francis of Montereale, OFM Cap., Specchio di direzione

spirituale, Milan 1712; Chiave d'oro del paradiso in terra, Perugia 1722. Giacomo of Belgioioso, OFM Ref., Porta di paradiso per meditare l'acerba passione di N.S.G.C. Turin 1672. Mary of Jesus of Agreda, Conceptionist, Mistica città di Dio. 4 vol. Milan 1709; Trent 1712. Matthias of Parma, OFM Cap., Viaggio dell'anima per andare a Dio. Parma 1657. Peter of Alcantara (St.), OFM Disc., Trattato dell'orazione e meditazione, Rome 1671; Venice 1703. Simon of Naples, OFM Cap., Horologio della passione de Gesù Cristo, 2 vol. Naples 1718; Dolori mentali di Gesù Cristo, Naples 1717. Sixtus of Cuchi, OFM Ref., Vie della contemplazione, Venice 1659. Theodore of Belvedere, OFM Ref., Modo di bene e divotamente orare, Urbino 1620.

A number of these authors influenced Veronica's mystical concepts and vocabulary, especially Diego of Estella, Benedict of Canfield, and Matthias of Parma. Alonso of Madrid's book *Arte di servire a Dio* was also an important influence. Even though we do not find it among the books of the monastery library, it was widely known all over Italy.⁷

2. Veronica's Relationships with Franciscans

Città di Castello can boast of several visits by St. Francis, who is said to have stayed at the nearby hermitage of Buon Riposo in 1213. The little friary that was built there later was home to a community of Observant Franciscans at the time of Veronica. Inside the city there was a community of Observants and one of Conventuals. The Capuchins had been there since 1538. Their little hermitage, dedicated to St. Joseph, was located a short distance from town and served as the novitiate. In 1589 they opened a new house, dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua, closer to the center of the city.

Besides these five Franciscan communities of men, there were three monasteries of nuns. The Poor Clares, popularly referred to as *le murate*, lived in the monastery of the Holy Trinity. This community, founded in 1222 at "St. Mary across the Tiber," moved inside the city walls around 1260. The monastery of St. Cecilia, a community of Third Order Regulars, was founded in 1422 by Bl. Angelica of Marsciano. The monastery of St. Joseph was also a community of Third Order Regulars. Veronica mentions all three monasteries frequently in her *Diary*.

⁷Ibid., 31-36.

⁸1Cel 70; Fioretti, Consid. IV.

Several religious from other orders with houses in Città di Castello played an important role in Veronica's spiritual direction, especially as ordinary confessors. These included Oratorians, Servites and Jesuits. But Franciscans from the above-mentioned friaries hardly ever appear. We have a list, made by Bl. Florida Cevoli, containing the names of 41 priests who counseled Veronica on spiritual matters. Among them, we find the following extraordinary confessors: Father Rampacci, a Conventual, and four Observants, Philip of Norcia, Thomas of Corsagna, Biccheri and Constantine Domenichini. The latter witnessed the saint's terrible agony of September 1702 (II, 1158, 1181 nn.).

The only Franciscan who appears in the pages of the *Diary* is Vitalis of Bologna (†1700), a lector in theology at the friary of La Verna. Bishop Alexander Codebò has written of him as follows:

The renowned Father Vitalis of Bologna, a member of the Franciscan *Reformati* living at Monte La Verna, was expressly summoned by Msgr. Lucantonio Eustachi of happy memory to come here to Città di Castello in 1697, the year when the mother Sister Veronica received the stigmata. Along with Father Ubaldo Antonio Cappelletti, Master Tassinari and the Dominican Father Giorgi, he was ordered by the Congregation of the Holy Office to conduct a visitation for the purpose of examining and verifying her stigmata.

After keeping Father Vitalis with him for several months in the episcopal palace, Msgr. Eustachi appointed him confessor of the monastery so that he might direct, observe and examine this religious [Veronica]. Acting with much wisdom, prudence and circumspection, he let her and the others know that they should not make too much of the extraordinary things that had happened and were continuing to happen to her. Thus he downplayed their special character. He recounted to the bishop what he had observed and learned from her and the other nuns in the course of his daily rounds, and he continued to assure him that she was a holy person and indeed entirely led by God.

Many times he was questioned by Canon Giuseppe Cataldi, secretary to Msgr. Eustachi, and asked to say what he thought of the behavior of the Capuchinesses. According to the canon, his reply was that he could not speak except to say that if people in the city only knew what was taking place in that monastery, they would go there on bare knees to kiss its walls. Signor Domenico Cavamazzi also related that he heard Father Vitalis say this to the marchioness Teresa del Monte, who was then living in Città di Castello, one day when she asked him about Sister Veronica. ¹⁰

⁹The document is located in the archives of the monastery.

¹⁰Direttori più rinomati per la loro virtù...che ebbe la Madre suor Veronica. This document is in the archives of the monastery.

For Veronica it was an event of major importance: "It gave me much comfort and consolation." The rapport between her soul and that of Father Michelangelo, a man so close to God, so humble and so anxious to suffer was complete:

It seemed that he understood me at once, even before I spoke. Everything he told me was helpful for my guidance, and my soul was strengthened by it.... It seemed to me that he too was consoled.... I had a long discussion with him about the priceless value of suffering... I told him about my troubles, my lack of gratitude, my faults... At that point he astonished me by saying, "I'm the same as you are." And so we shared with each other our troubles, and our conversation ended with both of us being united in the love of God.

For Veronica, the celebration of Mass was always an occasion of special mystical graces. She recognized that the minister general had been favored by God in the same way: "Divine love worked great wonders in that soul" (IV, 20-23). It seems that Veronica's relationship with Father Michelangelo, which had begun with a letter received through Sister Florida Cevoli, did not end with this memorable visit. The minister general took as a gift from her a wool cap, which he kept as a relic until his death. ¹³

3. Francis and Clare in the Piety and Mystical Experience of Veronica

a) The "Holy Father" and "Holy Mother" in the Diary

Among the 53 saints mentioned in Veronica's *Diary*, Francis of Assisi holds the place of honor. In the first five volumes his name or equivalent title, *holy father*, occurs 118 times. Next in importance is the *holy mother*, Clare of Assisi, mentioned 110 times. Trailing by some distance is "my saint Paul" (72 times), "my grandfather" St. Philip Neri (63 times), St. Teresa (44 times), and St. Catherine of Siena (41 times). Among the Franciscan saints to whom Veronica is especially devoted are Anthony of Padua (20 times), Bernardine of Siena (7 times), Bonaventure (7 times), Peter of Alcantara (7 times), Didacus of Alcalà (2 times), Felix of Cantalice (2 times), and Pascal Baylon (once). The numbers can be easily verified in this writer's Analytical Index to the first five volumes of the *Diary*, which will be issued as soon as the sixth volume is published.

Veronica's relation to Francis and Clare is not simply a matter of special devotion. Nor is it based on the kind of mystical affinity she feels toward a group of saints whom she calls "my devotees." These are filial bonds. They

¹³For more complete details, see the excellent presentation made by Father Giuseppe Santarelli at the International Congress on St. Veronica Giuliani, Rome, 27-31 October 1982. It is published in the acts of the congress: Santa Veronica Giuliani e il Generale dei Cappuccini P. Michelangelo Bosdari.

arouse in her sentiments of fidelity and they lead her to an experience of union. The only mystical graces that are higher are the ones she experiences in the exchange of love with our Lord and our Lady.

The two seraphic founders nearly always form part of the choreography of Veronica's visions, especially those described in the first volume of the *Diary* (1693-97). Every year on the two feasts of St. Francis (17 September and 4 October) there was a vision and a participation in the special grace of the feast. These days were like the great solemnities for Veronica. Her sufferings and temptations would cease and her soul would bask in peace and serenity. It was her custom to prepare for the feast of St. Clare by making a novena of purification. ¹⁴ The "holy mother" was present in a special way at the mystical renewal of Veronica's investiture.

Almost always, under the watchful eyes of Francis and Clare, Veronica would be made aware of her response to her vocation and her observance of the Rule and vows. At first the two saints would reprimand her in the so-called exercise of judgment, where they would not acknowledge her as their daughter (I, 224; III, 576, 806, 1143). But in the final scene, purified and forgiven, she would be joyfully received and confirmed as daughter (III, 819f; IV, 686, 887, 892). Later she would hear the seraphic father address her tenderly as "my daughter" and the seraphic mother would embrace and kiss her "with the most tender affection" (I, 224; II, 45, III, 597, 818, 820).

On the feast of All Saints, 1 November 1726, Veronica realized that her death was imminent. She thought about the future of her beloved community, which she had led for almost fifteen years and for which she had prayed and suffered for fifty years. After Communion, in the presence of many saints, she renewed her vows to Jesus. The final words with their promise of eternal life reminded her of the soon-to-come joys of heaven. There were embraces and kisses of peace from Christ, the Blessed Virgin, St. Francis and St. Clare. Her soul was filled with consolation when she heard Mary entrust the community to the care and keeping of the two holy founders. Then our Lady directed her to write:

I insisted that your holy father and your holy mother St. Clare acknowledge you as daughter. The two of them embraced you and came before me to place you in my keeping. I charged them to take special care of you and the entire monastery.

¹⁴In a letter written to her sisters who were Poor Clares at Mercatello, Veronica lists the external practices and penances performed by the nuns during the novena before the feast of St. Clare. Lettere di S. Veronica Giuliani, ed. O. Fiorucci, Città di Castello 1965, 13f.

When all this was done, our father St. Francis no longer appeared as I had seen him a little earlier. He was completely glorious and happy. It seemed I should ask him some favors for our community. And so I asked him for the grace of love and unity among us and that we might observe the Rule. He promised me everything, but not yet.... The Lord showed me His holy wounds and pointed to those of our holy father. I realized that every time I needed any grace I should go there, stripped of everything except faith and trust in Him. As long as I remain totally stripped of creatures, even the tiniest earthly thing, I will be faithful to Him and receive every grace. (II, 515ff).

c) St. Clare: Mother, Model and Guide

Veronica's relationship with her "holy mother" is even more intimate and trusting. This is entirely in keeping with her vocation as a Capuchiness Poor Clare and her concern for the welfare of the community.

In January of 1694, during a spiritual exercise called "thirty-three days of suffering," she had a vision of Christ in glory. He showed her the community: "It was very lax and showed scarcely any signs of the primitive observance." Then St. Francis and St. Clare appeared: "They were looking directly at all of us sisters, and I seemed to see clearly that some were lacking one thing, others something else. In fact, the two founders seemed not to recognize us as their daughters." At first Veronica was overcome by deep distress, but then she took heart and offered the wounds of Jesus "for all the failures against regular observance committed by us religious." She concludes:

The Lord seemed to tell me that He was entrusting me to the care of our mother St. Clare. She seemed to embrace me and made me understand that she would consider me one of her dearest daughters. When she had said this, everything vanished. I came to myself feeling both happy and sad. I could find nothing to console me.... I've been here seventeen years and can't seem to see the slightest sign of of what I saw there. I'm referring to the strictness of life and all that. I am probably the worst of all.... As for the consolation I received when God entrusted me to our mother St. Clare, it was so satisfying that I can't explain it in writing (I, 223-25).

One episode, recounted by Veronica herself, proves that the Capuchinesses in Città di Castello knew about the lives of their founders from the readings at table. For Veronica, the feast of St. Clare was a real spiritual experience. On 12 August 1696, she performed an act of love for the sisters. It aroused in her such fervor and inner joy that she was almost beside herself. During the meal, she was inspired by love to take the place of the sister who was reading:

As I was reading, I began to feel the ardent love of our holy mother Clare. When I came to the word *love*, I repeated it over and over, although it appeared only once in the book. I added some words of praise, even though nothing was written there. They kept telling me this, but I wasn't aware of doing it! When I read the words *spouse of Jesus*, I began to speak of our holy mother's great desire to be united and alone with her spouse Jesus. I repeated the word *spouse* many times. I

kept saying it over and over, even though it wasn't in the book. I felt such sweetness and delight that I wanted to keep reading forever. My heart rejoiced, and when I said the word *spouse* it leapt for joy (I, 627ff).

The book in question was probably the *Life of St. Clare*, translated by Valerio of Venice, which we mentioned above. The chapters read by Veronica were possibly the 24th and 25th, which speak about Clare's *love* and her desire to go forth to meet Christ crucified, her *glorious and eternal Spouse*.

Veronica was convinced that the grace of her stigmata would be for the sisters an urgent call to spiritual renewal. During a vision on the feast of the Ascension, 16 May 1697, she renewed her vows to Jesus, using the formula of the Capuchiness Poor Clares. She says: "His holy wounds touched mine." Then our Lord entrusted her to Mary who gave her the kiss of peace. She goes on:

The Blessed Virgin led me first to our mother St. Clare, who told me that now she acknowledged me as her daughter. I commended our entire community and all the sisters to her care. She told me to remain calm, that everything would be renewed through the wounds of Jesus, and that I must be a guide to all. Then she kissed me tenderly...and went around with me to all the saints present. All of them gave me the kiss of peace. (II, 43-45).

On 16 January 1698, as the chapter of elections was approaching, she had a premonition that she would have to accept the cross of abbess. The crucified Jesus appeared to her and offered her the cross. As on other occasions, she also saw

The Supreme Pontiff with a golden pen which he kept dipping into the side of Jesus. He was writing in a book... When he finished, the pope made a sign to the bishop to take the cross and book and give them to me.... The Lord showed me that the cross represents the burden of being superior of the community and the book stands for the holy Rule. He showed me that I must restore the primitive observance of St. Clare, and I should put away all doubts because He would help me. (II, 348ff).

Veronica's filial affection for her holy mother St. Clare is similar in some ways to her deep love for the Virgin Mary. This is especially true after Mary became her guide and teacher. On the feast of St. Clare in 1705 she experienced a mystical renewal of her investiture and profession. The holy mother led her to the Virgin Mary, who was standing beside Jesus in glory:

It seemed to me that the Blessed Virgin and our mother St. Clare were holding in their hands a habit like the one we wear. Suddenly it turned white as snow. But at the same time I seemed to be wearing an old rag. I couldn't imagine what this meant. Then I understood the reason, I had never been a true daughter of St. Clare. I had worn the habit, but that's all. I had been a religious only in name and habit. Such great confusion, my God!... At that point I realized that the Blessed

Virgin was praying to St. Clare for me.... Suddenly the Blessed Virgin and our mother St. Clare clothed me in that bright habit... I was struck by the obligations of those who profess this Rule and the life of perfection they must lead....

It seemed to me that the Blessed Virgin wanted me to renew my profession....

And as she entrusted me to St. Clare as daughter, she once again proved berself a true mother.

Three days later, on the feast of the Assumption, "God renewed all that He had done of the feast of St. Clare" (III, 295-98).

We find in the Diary a similar vision for the feast of St. Clare in 1714:

Our holy mother St. Clare was standing next to Mary and calling me.... The Blessed Virgin told my guardian angels to take me by the hand and lead me to the feet of our holy mother St. Clare, so that she might receive me once again as her daughter. The angels received the message. As they brought me to St. Clare, I saw a ray of light come from the heart of Mary. It came to rest in the heart of St. Clare, who was looking at me with love in her eyes. At first she seemed not to recognize me as her true daughter. But then, obedient to Mary's command, she gave me the kiss of peace and lovingly acknowledged me as her daughter.

I begged her to accept all the sisters as her daughters, especially those whom I didn't know how to guide in the true way of religious life. I asked her to supply for me in the sight of the Most High. I asked her blessing on the entire order, that we might all be one heart and soul in God.

As I was making these requests, the ray of light came to me. Then it returned to the heart of St. Clare, who brought me back to the feet of the Blessed Virgin and seemed to be awaiting orders from her.... Our holy mother St. Clare received the command to take me as her daughter. At once I committed myself to a new life....

Later during the same vision, at the time of Communion, she experienced the ray of light again:

From the hearts of Jesus and Mary came a ray of light that went directly to the heart of St. Clare. Once again she gave me a warm embrace and the kiss of peace. Then those rays came to this heart. All at once they returned to the heart of St. Clare, then immediately to the hearts of Jesus and Mary (III, 818-21).

Three years later, in 1717, Veronica was abbess. She prepared as usual for the feast of St. Clare with a fervent novena. On 10 August, the feast of St. Lawrence, she wrote:

I understood that the Blessed Virgin Mary was about to give me our holy mother St. Clare as guide. She would be the one to teach me true and perfect observance of our holy Rule.

This premonition was fulfilled at the time of Communion on 12 August:

It seems to me that Mary entrusted me to our holy mother St. Clare. She turned to me and said she was giving me the holy mother as guide and teacher, that I might

learn the the true path of perfect and exact observance of our boly Rule. Then she confirmed me in the office of superior. (III, 1122-24).

d) The Stigmata: St. Francis and St. Veronica

As I have noted elsewhere, Veronica shows a certain tendency toward spiritual pantomime. ¹⁵ On the feasts of Sts. Catherine of Siena, Teresa, Philip Neri and Felix of Cantalice, our Lord allows her to experience the same mystical phenomena as these saints. Thus it is no surprise to learn that before receiving the stigmata she felt a strong desire for union with the crucified Christ. This desire was most intense on the feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis.

The first mention of it occurs in the *Diary* on 17 September 1693. She says she felt an insistent call to total self-renunciation after the example of the seraphic father. As she began to understand the infinite love of God, she longed to respond by embracing suffering and the cross. The desire to be crucified like Francis sprang from the bottom of her heart:

I thought I was losing my mind. I kept saying, "With Christ I am nailed to the cross!" O my God, crucify me with You, so that I may never, never leave You. I now firmly resolve to love You. With all my heart, this is what I want (V, 201).

The following year, 17 September 1694, she had a vision of Jesus in glory, "with His holy wounds beautiful and resplendent." This was followed by great internal and external sufferings, which led her to say over and over: "Long live the cross! Long live suffering! My Jesus, I am Your spouse, content to remain crucified with You" (I, 359-63). She had the same vision and experience on the feast of the Stigmata in 1695 (I, 470). The following year the *Diary* contains no such mention for 17 September.

In March of 1697 Veronica began a week of devout preparation for the grace she had been promised for Good Friday. On 21 March, at Communion, she heard Christ's words confirming her as His spouse. Once again she felt sure that her transformation would soon take place. Then she had a vision of Jesus, accompanied by the Virgin Mary, St. Francis and St. Philip Neri. The Lord marked her heart with a cross, leaving open the wound she had received on 25 December 1696. Mary did likewise.

The Lord wanted my father St. Francis to do the same thing. Not only did he mark me, he caused me to feel a pain like that of death, since he also let me feel the nail in his hand. I saw him as he was during his lifetime when he received the sacred

¹⁵Esperienza e dottrina mistica. Introduzione, p. 25f.

stigmata. I saw those wounds of his, resplendent, with the nails in them. ¹⁶ He put his right hand on my heart, and the nail seemed to penetrate the wound that is there. I felt intense pain, but he made no attempt to close the wound. He said: Confirmo hoc quod Deus operatus est in te, et quod operabitur in te [I confirm what God has done in you and what He will do in you]. ¹⁷

After her reception of the stigmata, 5 April 1697, Veronica felt even closer to the stigmatized Francis. On 10 May of that year, during a vision of her own faults, she saw St. Francis offer the sufferings of Jesus on her behalf (II, 23). The next 17 September marked her first celebration of this feast since receiving the stigmata. In a vision during the midnight office, the Lord told her she would experience a renewal of her stigmata. Upon returning to her cell, she saw Christ crucified along with St. Francis. Here is her beautiful description of the vision:

The Lord said to me: "Tell me, do you love Me with all your heart, like My seraph here?" As He said this, all of a sudden our father St. Francis was standing there before the Crucified. With the brightness that came from the two of them, I could see nothing but light. Suddenly five dazzling rays of light seemed to come from the wounds of Jesus and rest in the hands, feet and heart of St. Francis. The reflection was so great that I couldn't recognize our holy father any more. He was totally changed into Jesus. He seemed to be a new Christ. Little by little, the rays returned to the wounds of Jesus, and once more I saw our holy father standing in prayer before the Crucified.

Then the Lord communicated to me and made me understand that He had shown me our holy father transformed, just as he was when he received the stigmata. And now in thanksgiving for the wound I had received, he was offering his own wounds to those of our Redeemer on my behalf.

Then Veronica's wounds were renewed with five rays issuing from the wounds of Jesus. She continues:

Once more I saw our holy father prostrate at the feet of Jesus, who was telling him that since I was His beloved spouse he should give me his blessing. As our holy father was blessing me, a stream of blood issued from the side of the Crucified. It began to spring up in the wounded heart of our holy father, and from the heart of Jesus and our holy father it began to spring up in my own

¹⁶This detail corresponds to the information given in the biographies: "His hands and feet seemed to be pierced through the middle by nails, with the heads of the nails appearing in the inner side of the hands and on the upper sides of the feet and their pointed ends on the opposite sides" (1Cel 95, 113; 2Cel 217a; 3Cel 4f). Veronica had read this in Bonaventure (LM XIII, 3; XV, 2).

¹⁷This verse from Psalm 67: 29 is found in the rite of religious profession.

¹⁸The image of Francis as a new Christ or *alter Christus* was a topic of contemporary preaching and comes from the thirteenth-century sources. We find a very similar vision related in 2Cel 219.

wounded heart. From there it flowed upward like a gushing fountain until it came to rest in the side of the Crucified. O God! I saw blood with blood and wounds with wounds. Lost in a furnace of love, I fainted. (II, 250-52).

On 4 October Veronica had the same vision and the same question from our Lord regarding the sincerity of her love.

I stood between love and pain. I saw Jesus crucified, then our father St. Francis. Both were totally love. Our holy father was making signs to me to go to the wounds of Jesus, and He was showing me His holy side.

Again there was a renewal of the stigmata, followed by the invitation of Jesus to enter His side: "Whoever loves Me remains here within." Veronica's account of the vision continues:

The Lord took my wounded heart in His hand and motioned St. Francis to come. Our holy father placed a cross in the Lord's hand. Then the Lord drew His wounded heart from His side, placed it on the cross and said to me, "Follow Me."

Suddenly the Lord and St. Francis were leading me on a path all covered with thorns.... Then I saw that the Lord was beckoning me. There was a door through which I saw wonderful things. He opened it and told me to enter. Our holy father entered first, I was next, and last came the Lord with the cross in His hand.

Christ and Francis had led Veronica to the garden of delights which is suffering (II, 263-66).

Every year thereafter, until the end of her life, Veronica experienced a special renewal of her wounds on the feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis. The same thing often took place also on 4 October.

The vision of 17 September 1699 has already been discussed. On 4 October of that year Veronica had her customary vision. She was troubled by the external marks of the stigmata and asked the Lord, through the intercession of St. Francis, to make them disappear completely. She also prayed that the community might remain faithful to the Rule and that there might be peace and harmony among the sisters:

All at once I saw what seemed to be rays of light coming from the wounds of Jesus. They came to rest in the hands, feet and heart of St. Francis. Meanwhile our holy father had become so beautiful and resplendent that the sun would be

¹⁹Professor Raymond Darricau of the University of Bologna, in a communication presented at the International Congress on St. Veronica Giuliani, has pointed out the similarity between the vision of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, 4 October 1673, in which our Lord showed her St. Francis as "one of the greatest favorites of His heart," and the vision of St. Veronica, 4 October 1697. See Le Coeur de Jésus dans la doctrine spirituelle de sainte Marguerite-Marie (1643-90) et sainte Véronique Giuliani (1660-1727), published in the Acts of the Congress.

like darkness compared to that light. I can't begin to describe what I understood at that moment. The Lord seemed to draw our holy father to Himself, and they were so closely united that they appeared to be one. Our holy father was so transformed and united with Jesus that to look at him was to look at Jesus Himself (II, 518).

In the entry for 14 September 1720, we find a chronological detail which shows that Veronica must have heard or read the *Fioretti*, even though it is not on the present list of books of the old monastery library. Veronica hears the Virgin Mary say: "My daughter, *today* my servant Francis, your seraphic father, received the sacred stigmata. And so I have chosen to renew the pain of your wounds" (IV, 301). In fact, what St. Bonaventure leaves rather vague (LM XIII, 3), is spelled out in greater detail in the *Third Consideration on the Stigmata*, where we read: "On the feast of the Holy Cross" (14 September).

On the feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis in 1720 there was no renewal of the wounds in Veronica's hands and feet, but only of the wound in her side, which was pierced by an arrow (IV, 304-06). On 4 October, Mary showed her the seraphic father. Pointing to the heart of the Virgin, he said to her: "Run, run to the fountain of grace!" Then Mary shared with Veronica a ray of love and a moment of special union. Finally, as a special favor, she allowed her to "feel the pain and love of our seraphic father's wounds" (IV, 315f).

On 17 September 1725 our Lady told her to write:

You asked me, out of obedience, if it was God's will to renew in you the pain and suffering of the stigmata. Then I showed you the seraphic father. He was like a seraph of love, with five rays of fire flowing from him. These rays touched your hands, feet and side.... Thus crucified, I presented you to the three divine Persons. (IV, 875f).

These were the years when Mary played a central role in Veronica's life, almost to the point of substituting for her Son. We should note that, unlike earlier, Veronica no longer received the rays that came from the wounds of the crucified and glorious Jesus, but rather those that came from St. Francis. Her soul had reached the point where Golgotha and LaVerna were the same.

Her final celebration of the feast of the Stigmata took place in 1726. Directed by her confessor, she asked Mary to renew the pain of her wounds. The Blessed Virgin told her to write:

Your seraphic father was standing beside me in the presence of many saints.... Five rays of light sprang from him and touched you.... The wounds in your hands and feet began to bleed.... The wound in your heart did not open externally, but you felt intense pain within, which lasted for three days (IV, 875f).

This is the last mention in the *Diary* of the blood that still flowed occasionally from the wounds in her hands and feet.

To conclude this section, we should mention Veronica's famous mystical pilgrimage to the sanctuary at Loreto, with stops in Assisi and Tolentino. This took place, at the command of the Jesuit Father Crivelli, on 10 December 1714. Her visit to the church of St. Mary of the Angels is described briefly in two entries:

I was transported to Assisi and seemed to be in the large church dedicated to our Lady. There I seemed to see another smaller church inside the larger one. Our father St. Francis was pictured in many places, but I don't know how. As I stood before Mary, she bowed her head toward me and said: Have faith, my daughter (III, 869; V, 340f).

Veronica was certainly never in Assisi or Loreto. We leave it to scholars to investigate the supernatural or parapsychological character of this experience, with its precise and factual details. For our part, we find it interesting as a spontaneous expression of how much the birthplace of Francis and Clare, especially the chapel of the Portiuncula, meant to her.

4. Expressions of Francis That Occur in the Writings of Veronica

The Capuchinesses of Città di Castello must have had some knowledge of the writings of St. Francis. This was not, of course, from Wadding's Latin edition, which is not found among the books of the monastery library, but from the Italian version that was included in the first volume of Mark of Lisbon's *Chronicles* (Naples 1680). This work contains the most important writings. ²⁰ Later we shall take a look at the echoes or better, the coincidencesbetween certain concepts and expressions, even though we cannot speak of quotations in the strict sense. But there are expressions found in the early biographies that remained popular down through the centuries. Personally, I believe that Veronica learned these from sermons rather than from actual reading, although the latter possibility should not be excluded.

a) Deus Meus et Omnia

This form of prayer was first attributed to St. Francis by the author of the Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius, which is regarded by many as the original Latin of the Fioretti. It is said that Bernard of Quintavalle heard it one night while he was staying with Francis. The Italian text contains only the words, Iddio mio, Iddio mio! But Mark of Lisbon's version, in his chapter on the life of

²⁰Pp. 21-35: The Earlier Rule (ch. 23 is on p. 157f), 152-55; The Prayer Inspired by the Our Father, The Canticle of Brother Sun, 195-97; The Later Rule, 209; The Letter to a Minister, 257-68; The Letter to the Entire Order, The Letter to the Faithful, The Admonitions, The Rule for Hermitages.

St. Francis, preserves the text of the Latin Actus: Deus meus et omnia (p. 15). This is the form in which it appears as a motto on the coat of arms of the order.

Veronica quotes these words only once, in the context of a special revelation. She speaks of the renunciation of all that is not God, in order to respond to His grace with worthy fruits:

I seem to understand that in order to explain what these fruits might be, it is enough to say: Deus meus et omnia! (II, 973).

b) Who Are You and Who Am I?

These are the words that Brother Leo heard Francis repeat over and over while in ecstasy on LaVerna before he received the stigmata. Francis himself explained to his indiscreet friend how, in the light of contemplation, he had seen the goodness of God and his own vileness (Fioretti, Third Consideration).

Veronica, too, experienced the same twofold enlightment many times, especially after receiving the stigmata. It is then that she uses this expression. Here are the passages and dates:

- 26 December 1697: I experienced a brief ecstasy, in which Jesus seemed to tell me to keep these words always in mind: Noverim te, noverim me [Let me know You, let me know myself]. My Jesus, who are You and who am I? This will be the direction and teaching for the hidden life He wishes to have with me (II, 330).
- 31 December 1697: He has given me knowledge of myself...and made me understand this point: My God, who are You and who am I? (II, 335).
- 8 April 1700: He told me what I must do so that my life might be a constant death. It is all summarized in a single point, in the saying: My God, who are You and who am I? (II, 618).
- 1 November 1701: Two reflections are joined together with each other in a way I can't explain. The two reflections are these: Noverim me, noverim te, that is, My God, who are You and who am I? (II, 972).
- 12 December 1702: God made me understand the main point, which consisted of these few words: My God, who are You and who am I? Knowledge of myself... (II, 1253).

She never refers to these words as being those of St. Francis, which shows that she must have remembered them from hearing them in sermons. The same is true for the words of St. Augustine: *Noverim te, noverim me*.

c) So great the good I have in sight

That every pain is my delight.

We know occasion on which St. Francis recited this poetic couplet, which is in the style of the troubadours. It was his personal contribution to a celebration being held in honor of the knighting ("new chivalry") of one of the counts of Montefeltro (Fioretti, First Consideration).

Veronica's *Diary* contains similar expressions in praise of the joy of suffering. But she also quotes this verse literally, noting that these are the words of St. Francis:

30 January 1695: I was reciting these lines of my father St. Francis: So great the good I have in sight, that every pain is my delight. My Good! My God! Give me suffering! (I, 429).

9 September 1697: I was feeling such great distress that I kept repeating those words of our holy father: So holy the good I have in sight, that every pain is my delight! Long live suffering! Long live the cross! (II, 241).

Veronica also created her own refrain, which she sang during those moments of exuberation while she was under the "pressure" of sufferings. She uses it often as a letter-head: The cross and tribulation are joy and consolation.

There are other expressions, or rather, echoes, that call to mind particular sayings of St. Francis. For example, she speaks of bitterness and sweetness in the practice of virtue (II, 870; III, 61). This recalls Francis's Testament and Letter to the Faithful. In another place she writes: "Holy Mary, call me pazzarella so that I might become an even greater fool" (V, 289). We are reminded of a similar expression used by Francis (LP 114; SP 68).

5. The God of Francis and the God of Veronica

Among the many expressions of spiritual affinity between Veronica Giuliani and Francis of Assisi, the most striking are those that pertain to their concept of God, especially the titles they give Him. I would not speak of dependence in this case, since Veronica's knowledge of the writings of Francis must have been very limited, if indeed she knew them at all. Besides, the same concepts are found in other saints whose spirituality is biblically inspired and based on love. For example, St. Gertrude of Helfta (†1302), whose life was read in Veronica's community, uses expressions that occur in the writings of Francis: You are the supreme and perfect Good. You are complete sufficiency for me. Veronica was probably not familiar with this particular saying. Others had used similar terms before and after Francis of Assisi. One author who may have had a direct influence on Veronica's names for God was the Capuchin Matthias of Parma, whose book, Viaggio dell'anima, was published in 1657.

²¹See AFH 19 (1926), 750.

²²For the expressions used by Francis and the related doctrine, see L. Iriarte, Dios el bien, fuente de todo bien, segun san Francisco, in L'esperienza di Dio in san Francesco d'Assisi, Rome 1982, 77-101.

²³See Esperienza e dottrina mistica. Introduzione, p. 36.

a) God the Supreme Good, Who Alone Is Good

Francis has a sort of refrain that is found in the *Earlier Rule* and almost all his prayers: "You are good, every good, supreme good, all good, eternal good, the only good." Veronica uses exactly the same expressions: "supreme good" (on almost every page)—"the only and supreme good" (very many times)—"all my good" (very many times)—"every good" (II, 14, 1271; III, 36; IV, 328)—"good of all goods" (I, 315; IV, 314)—"fulness of good" (I, 928)—"all good" (I, 637; II, 1060; III, 10)—"God is goodness" (many times).

b) All Good Comes from God and Must Be Returned to God

Francis: All good comes from God (RegNB XVII, 17; OffPass, Prayer)—From You comes all good, and without You there is no good (ExpPat 2)—Blessed is the servant who returns every good to the Lord God (Adm XVIII, 2)—May we give You all good (LaudHor 11).

Veronica: Goodness is in God alone (III, 50)—There is no other good but God (many times)—Every good comes from God (many times)—It comes from God, remains in God, and returns to its center which is God (I, 143, 927f; II, 7f, 136f; III, 919)—It comes from God, is of God and is in God (II, 15, 1034, 1295)—The Lord says: "You receive everything from Me, and you must give everything back to Me" (II, 56, 59, 1280; IV, 244)—No physical or spiritual good belongs to us (III, 70, 89)—We must immediately give every gift back to God (II, 1254, 1294).

Francis: Blessed is the servant who makes a treasure in heaven of the good the Lord reveals to him... (Adm XXVIII)—Lord, You have sent me this consolation from heaven.... I return it to You so you may keep it for me; I do not want to be a robber of Your treasures (2Cel 99; LM X, 4).

Veronica: I am not worthy of Your treasures (II, 118, 318; III, 50, 342)—My God, I accept this gift, but since I am not worthy of it, I give it back to You (II, 1254).

c) Our Sins Belong to Us

Francis: Nothing belongs to us except our vices and sins (RegNB XVII, 6f)—Blessed is the one for whom nothing remains except to return to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's (Adm XI, 4).

Veronica: Whatever we have left that is good, after we have eradicated our faults, comes from God and must be returned to God (II, 98, 854...)—All the evils I find in myself are my own works (III, 10, 81...)—What is evil is ours and comes from us (II, 1034, 1052...; V, 353)—There is nothing good in us; everything is the work of God (III, 139, 170...)—To God what is God's; to ourselves what is not (I, 927; IV, 241).

The spiritual application of the text of Mt 22:21 by both Veronica and Francis is an interesting coincidence.

d) Titles Used for God

The parallelism here is so striking that I have decided to use the following synoptic table to indicate passages in Francis and Veronica where the same concepts are expressed in the same terms.

	Francis	Veronica
All-Powerful	Many Times	І, 184, 254 П, 138
Alone, Only	RegNB XVII, 18;	
	XXIII, 9; LaudDei 1, 3	Very Many Times
Consoler	2EpFid 55; ExpPat 1	I, 194; V, 259
Creator	RegNB XVI, 7;	
THAN DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTY O	XXIII, 9, 11	I, 999; II, 74, 959
Guardian, Defender	Laud Dei 5; OffPass	П, 359f, 1063; V, 183, 259, 274.
Lucius Danes Danes	LaudDei 4	І, 256, 814; П, 48
Inner Peace, Repose	LaudDei 4	П, 54, 829
Joy	RegNB XXIII, 19;	11, 54, 629
Justice, Just	LaudDei 4	III, 941, 936f.
		111, 941, 9501.
King of Heaven and Earth	RegNB XXIII, 1;	
	LaudDei 2; ExhLD 8;	1 627 W 250
	FormViv 1; OffPass	I, 637; V, 258
Light	ExpPat 2	I, 638; II, 906; V, 179
Living and True	RegNB V, 1; IX, 4;	
	XVII, 18; XXIII, 9;	
	Adm XVI, 2;	W 044 040 W 157
	LaudDei 3	III, 964, 969; V, 357
Lovable	RegNB XXIII, 11;	I 662, II 14
	2EpFid 56	I, 662; II, 14
Meek, Meekness	RegNB XXIII, 9;	II 002
NYSKUDOLEN A SA I-C SA	LaudDei 4f	II, 882
Mercy, Merciful	EpOrd 50; LaudDei 6	Very Many Times
Our Faith	LaudDei 6	I, 777
Our Hope	LaudDei 4, 6	I, 641, 777
Our Sweetness	RegNB XXIII, 9;	bole, constitution to
	2EpFid 56; LaudDei 6	II, 576
Peace-Giving, Peace	2EpFid 56	I, 194, 638, 641; II, 1123
Protector	LaudDei 5;	
	OffPass XII, 3, 5	II, 1063
Purity, Pure	RegNB XXIII, 9	I, 805; II, 1096, 1296; V, 100

Holy Spirit." Like St. Francis, she lives the reality of Jesus' promise: "The spirit of truth will guide you to the knowledge of all truth" (See Jn 16:12).

But she also speaks endlessly of the *ineffable activities of God*, using original expressions of great depth and beauty. The "divine Operator" is always active "through His operations of love." His only desire is that the soul place no obstacle, especially that of self: "I do all things when I find nothing of yourself in you" (III, 372; IV, 308). The soul has only to "let Love work" (II, 861f; III, 85, 271; IV, 308). God will help the soul to achieve this by giving it the grace of "cooperation with His operations." It is this faithful cooperation that "produces saints" (III, 203). Hence Veronica says over and over: "I must be attentive to God's activity in me."

8. Christ, the Crucified Spouse

It would be superfluous to discuss the central role played by Christ, especially Christ crucified in the lives of Francis and Veronica. It is enough to note that, while the seraphic father's writings speak more sparingly of the crucified Savior, He is present on nearly every page of Veronica's *Diary*, from beginning to end. I have chosen just two significant expressions to illustrate the similarity between the two saints in their contemplation of the person of Christ.

a) Fesus our Brother

Francis loved to consider the fact that in taking on our humanity the Son of God became our brother. One of the reasons for honoring the Virgin Mary is that she was the instrument by which the Son of the Most High "became our brother" (2Cel 198). Elsewhere Francis writes: "Oh how holy and how loving, gratifying, humbling, peace-giving, sweet, worthy of love, and above all things desirable it is to have such a Brother" (2EpFid 56).

Among the many names given by Veronica to Jesus, some were also used by St. Francis: Good Shepherd, true light, teacher, wisdom of the Father, way, truth and life. She also uses the expression *our Brother* (III, 3; V, 258)

b) To Follow the Footprints of Christ (1Pt 2:21)

Francis found these words in the First Letter of Peter, which was a favorite subject of his meditation. In the gospel he discovered Jesus' permanent invitation to *follow* Him by taking up our cross and walking behind Him. Francis identified with this dynamic and compelling sense of participation in the saving mission of Christ. He never speaks of "imitation," but always of the demand "to follow the Lord Jesus Christ" or "to follow the footprints of Christ" (RegNB I, 1; IX, 1-4; XXII, 2; Adm VI, 2; UltVol 1; 2EpFid 13; EpOrd 51; EpLeo 3). St. Clare uses the same expressions in her Rule and letters.

Veronica speaks frequently of imitation, but she speaks in more varied terms and more often of following. Naturally, this is almost always with

reference to the crucified Christ and His invitation to carry the cross after Him:

Following Jesus (I, 421, 774, 778, 834)—I reminded myself of His following (II, 894, 903, 1112; II, 58)—To follow the footprints of the crucified Jesus (16 times)—"Follow Me!"—(II, 145f, 148f, 247...)—He made me place my foot in His footprints (II, 580)—To walk behind the footprints of Jesus (II, 1232)—As my signature, I use the words daughter and follower of Jesus crucified (II, 1063).

Her agreement with St. Francis is even more explicit in a text that appears to be inspired by Admonition VI:

Francis: Let all of us...consider the Good Shepherd.... The Lord's sheep [the saints] followed Him in tribulation....—Veronica: The saints followed the footprints of Jesus... (III, 203).

9. An Atmosphere of Love, Joy and Freedom

I have already indicated that Veronica's life was one of day-and-night suffering. But it was not a sad life, because it was motivated by *love*, which is the "procurator of suffering," the "perfect executioner," and the master of suffering:

It is love that causes suffering (I, 44, 506; IV, 505)—Without love, suffering accomplishes nothing (I, 395; III, 270)—Suffering and love go together (II, 107..., very many times)—As suffering increases, so does love (many times)—Suffering and love are the same thing (III, 925; IV, 8, 391...)—A day of suffering, a day of love (IV, 850)—For me, each pain and suffering is a caress of love (IV, 431).

This is why Veronica insists that "there is no life happier than a life of suffering" (I, 569, 773), and "true joy is found in suffering" (II, 46). Time and again she speaks of her hours spent in agony as "a day of happiness, a night of happiness." The identity she sees between her experiences of suffering and joy is clear from the names she uses for suffering:

My rest—my refreshment amid the pains of love—my delight—source of peace—my contentment—my joy—my consolation—my only happiness—my recreation—paradise on earth.

Veronica's language of love describes the most varied experiences in sublime concepts and expressions of great beauty. To fully appreciate this fact, we would need to examine the Analytic Index of her writings and see the various entries alongside one another: Charity, Love for God, Love of God, Love's Flames, Love's Foolishness.

Veronica tells us that she profited much from "preachers who speak of the love of God" (I, 96). She felt overcome by divine love and experienced it as "taking possession," "exuding," "imprinting itself," "expanding in the soul." If Dante could describe Francis as "all seraphic in his ardor," Veronica, even as a

child, could be described as "all fire." She made her heart into a *furnace of love*, as she herself says. Among the hundreds of expressions found in her writings, the following illustrate her distinctively Franciscan way of loving:

I want to become all love (I, 464)—To love God with all my affection, all my heart, all my soul (see St. Francis, ExpPat 5)—To be ardent as a seraph, that I may love in return the One who loves me so much (V, 417)—To do everything with love and through love (many times)—Everything through love and out of love; may love rule all (I, 615)—May this God of love be loved (I, 273, 777, 788; II, 212, 221)—O Love, why does every creature not love You? (III, 186; IV, 858)—I begged Him to extend His love throughout the world (V, 200)—I want to love You on behalf of all who do not love You (many times)—I desire to see God loved and known by all (many times)—I invited the the whole world to love the Supreme Good (many times)—I wanted to travel throughout the countryside and village squares, inviting people to love the One who loves us so much (I, 456; V, 164, 200)—I wish the whole world were on fire with this love of God (III, 206, 252)—I called upon all creatures to thank and love the Supreme Good (IV, 375).

In the mysticism of Veronica, joy and happiness are inseparable from suffering. In addition to the refrain mentioned earlier, there are other similar expressions that arise from a heart that overflows with joy in the midst of suffering. Among the many graces Veronica received was that of inner harmony (I, 265-68, 449f, 629f), which means, she says, "happiness always reigns in the depths of my soul" (V, 324). Many times throughout the *Diary* she uses superlatives to evoke her inner joy:

Great happiness and rejoicing—A happiness I can't explain—Something, I don't know what, caused me to rejoice—I didn't understand the happiness that was in me—I felt completely happy—I was so happy I fainted—I was beside myself with happiness—A happiness that was making me crazy—I rejoiced because of the gladness—My soul was filled with joy and celebration.

God was the source of her joy: "God was communicating His delights to my soul" (I, 445); "Jesus was celebrating with my soul" (II, 221); "Jesus is happiness itself" (I, 790).

Because the joy she felt in her heart could not be contained, it was expressed in the exuberant and fantastic ways typical of lovers. Sometimes there were also tears: "I wept for joy" (I, 939; II, 330). Like Francis, Veronica regarded joy as a duty of community life. God wished her to be happy: "The will of God keeps me always happy and joyful" (III, 131, 170, 219). "I was doing everything joyfully" (I, 29, 704). "The sisters were asking me why I was so content" (I, 387, 408; II, 635, 639, 881, 905). One day she heard the Lord expressly command her: "Be happy!" (II, 324). Another time, even more explictly, Mary gave her the following rules for carrying out the office of abbess: "You must never yield to sadness in anything; you must remain content

in joy and in sorrow" (III, 1034). Elsewhere she says, "It is Mary's desire that I show happiness to everyone" (III, 1215, 1290).

From the very beginning, her rule of behavior toward the other sisters was this: "When I saw anyone feeling sad or dejected, I'd say to her: Come on, cheer up!" (II, 233, 321); "I tried always to show happiness and joy in my dealings with the sisters" (IV, 37, 191, 475, 863). "Sing a little!" she said one day to her companions during the work period (V, 105). On another occasion during a special recreation, she transformed the kitchen chores into a celebration by forming the sisters into a choir. Then she began a little love-song to Jesus, and by the end she had fallen into ecstasy. Her poems, in fact, were one of her ways of adding joy to the community. Although they do not show the genius of a St. Teresa, they are certainly inspired. Even her struggles with the devil are marked by a certain sense of humor reminiscent of one of the sayings of St. Francis (LP 97). The same is true of her dialogues with *human nature*, "our sister and traitor," and her way of expressing love by acts of penance.

At this point the question spontaneously arises whether we can also speak in terms of *freedom*. After all, she lived shut up in the monastery for fifty years, having practically no communication with outsiders. She was kept under surveillance by order of the Holy Office, suffered inhumane treatment, and lived in total submission to her various confessors. Yet Veronica not only felt that she enjoyed the freedom of the children of God, she experienced it mystically as another of Love's gifts. Her spiritual daughter, Bl. Florida Cevoli, stated at the canonization process: "She practiced the virtues with openness, cheerfulness and freedom of spirit." For Veronica, freedom was a gift from God (IV, 259). She realized, of course, the need to renounce our own free choice, our own will, in order to be completely united to the will of God. But she also knew that such union would guarantee the soul the greatest freedom under the rule of love: "Love gave me freedom, but I denied myself all freedom" (IV, 749).

The first effect of this was that she felt free from all selfish and earthly ties: "In freedom the soul feels free from all bonds" (II, 527; III, 227); "it remains free so as to love" (IV, 168, 338, 521, 719); she experiences "the joy of seeing oneself free" (IV, 337). But when she discovers that these same divine ties bring her true freedom, it is this that becomes the definitive gift: "God gives

²⁴II, 873, note; Summarium, p. 118, 150, 153f.

²⁵Summarium, p. 392.

the soul freedom by binding it with indissoluble bonds" (IV, 771, 797, 850, 880); "God left me free" (IV, 700). And she took delight in "flying completely free" (V, 429).

10. Obedience and Authority in the Franciscan Mode

The theme of obedience appears frequently in Veronica's writings, usually in expressions that reflect traditional asceticism, that of St. Ignatius in particular. This is not surprising, given that the Jesuits had permanent charge of the spiritual exercises of the community. From them she must have heard some of the formulas she repeats now and then: "blind obedience," "to obey *like a dead body*." This image, which Celano's Second Life attributes to St. Francis, was later used by the founder of the Jesuits. But we should note that Veronica generally uses these words to describe her personal submission to her confessor. When she expresses her attitude regarding obedience within the community, she is more original and uses concepts very much like those we find in the writings of St. Francis. For him, relationships among the brothers are a contest of mutual service and obedience (RegNB V, 14).

Obedience gives freedom of spirit (IV, 850)—To obey with love and out of love (III, 1015)—Obedience, not only to the superior but to all (II, 534f, 99)—Obedience in all things and to all people, with everyone as head and superior (very many times)—Veronica, don't you know that you have come to serve and not to be served? (I, 21)—You have to be the servant of all (I, 483, 655)—I try to be subject even to the extern sisters and novices (II, 607, 869)—I will obey whoever takes God's place for me as though it were God Himself (IV, 717).

This last statement is in line with the words of Francis, who said that he would obey even the youngest novice who might be placed over him as superior.

In his Salutation of the Virtues, the seraphic father links obedience with her sister charity. And in Admonition III he sets up a relationship between the two virtues that results in what he calls *loving obedience*. Veronica, too, regards these two virtues as sisters inseparably united (III, 467). On the other hand, her wish "to have everyone as head and superior" is taken directly from St. Francis de Sales, as she herself says in a letter to the sisters at Mercatello. She adds: "Belong to everyone, obey everyone and show love toward everyone." 26

Veronica considers the other aspect of obedience, the exercise of authority, in the same gospel light. She writes: "The superior should have no self-love" (I, 318; III, 871). We can see this as a literal quotation of the Rule of St. Clare

²⁶This can be found in Moniales Ordinis Servorum 3 (1965) 133.

(chap. IV) or of the portrait of the minister general placed by Celano on the lips of Francis (2Cel 185): "Let her/him avoid amores privati." The rules given Veronica by the Blessed Virgin after her election as abbess are simply a paraphrase of chapter IV of the Rule of St. Clare. Here is a comparison:

St. Clare (Rule and Testament): The abbess is chosen for the service and common good of the sisters—She should strive to preside over the others more by her virtues and holiness of life, so that they may obey her out of love and not out of fear -She should avoid particular friendships, lest by loving some more than others she create disunity among all—She should console the afflicted—She should preserve common life in all things—In the Chapter, she should discuss with the sisters those things that pertain to the welfare of all—She should be generous in providing for the sisters; she should be so kind that they may confidently reveal their needs to her and have recourse to her at any time.

St. Veronica: The least and last of all (III, 1216)—Under the feet of all (III, 1300)—Avoid being served (IV, 53)—Abject and humble with all, obedient toward all (IV, 35, 145, 869)—All things to all the sisters (III, 1033)—Govern with love and out of love (III, 1033)—Treat all the same, showing no favoritism toward anyone (IV, 233)—Treat the sisters with humility, charity and perfect obedience (IV, 511)—Observe common life (IV, 58)—I learn some virtues from all (IV, 37)—I practice charity and listen attentively (IV, 159, 164, 871)—During the day I've no time except to attend now to one, now to another (IV, 360, 366, 432, 473, 494, 511)—Generous toward all (II, 227).

11. Poverty and Minority

I will pass over the many texts that express Veronica's love of poverty, her concern to eradicate from herself the least offense and all attachment to things, her distress at seeing that the virtue so beloved by the two founders was not faithfully observed in her community.

Her model was the poor and humble Jesus (II, 1257). One day she heard Him use an expression that originates in the teachings of Francis, a concept also expressed by Clare in her Testament: "From the day of My birth until My death, I never had any lady or retinue except for poverty" (V, 229, 394). Like Francis and Clare, she speaks of *poverty and humility* as an inseparable pair (II, 1062). We can detect an echo of Francis's parable to Pope Innocent III in her exclamation: "O poverty, holy poverty! Driven out by all!" (V, 228).

But there is one original element in which Veronica's agreement with the seraphic father is quite surprising. This is the concept of *interior poverty*. Directed at our own ego, which is the source of our tendency toward *appropriation*, interior poverty calls us to total inner *expropriation*. This is the pedagogy behind Francis's Admonitions. Here are some of Veronica's more expressive passages:

way to "soothe" the fires of love. One day in 1696, after walking through the garden and making the Way of the Cross with a sister confidante, she writes:

I went to my cell to pray a little, but I couldn't concentrate on anything. Seeing myself enclosed by those four walls, I felt like I was suffocating (I, 551).

Sometimes it was enough for her to lean out the window that looked onto the inner courtyard of the monastery. She would drink in the light and the grandeur of the view: "From the window I thanked the Lord for the gift of creation and redemption" (I, 818); "I looked at the sky, so beautiful, filled with stars" (II, 312).

Often when she was experiencing the pain of loss because her divine Spouse was hiding, she would begin a dialogue with inanimate creatures:

I kept asking the trees, the leaves, all the plants to help me find my Love (I, 638, 648, 660, 682f, 722, 788)—I invited the stars, the heavens and all creatures to love the Supreme Good (I, 188, 759; II, 331, 348, 371, 918).

And when her own unfaithfulness to Love was the source of her pain, creatures became her silent accusers. At such times she would dialogue with herself:

I embraced the vines, I kissed the plants...closest to me (I, 718, 722, 776)—I called upon all creatures to acknowledge the Supreme Good (IV, 375)—Everything responds to God better than I (II, 312)—The Lord said: "Even the beasts acknowledge Me. And you?" (V, 393).

We find the same idea expressed in Admonition V of St. Francis: "All creatures under heaven serve, know and obey their Creator, each according to its own nature, better than you."

At other times, like Francis, she wanted to join "with all creatures" in giving praise and thanks to God and expressing her love to Him who is Love: "You stars, herbs and plants, be my voice!" (II, 305, 312, 329, 371, 376). The following passage has a Franciscan flavor:

My Lord, I want to give You as many blessings as there are grains of sand in the world, herbs and plants on the earth, and leaves on the trees, in a word, all the blessings and praise of all creatures in heaven and on earth, from the beginning of the world until now. I unite myself with them in this. I want to bless You now and always. Blessed be You, my Jesus! (I, 582).

After spending a night in prayer in the garden, she describes her feelings upon coming to herself and being greeted by the dawn of a new day. Thus she reveals a great sensitivity of spirit as she discovers in creation a sharing of life, a message, and a sister on the journey to the Creator.