

Principles of Franciscan Mission

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"Prinzipien franziskanischer Mission nach den frühen Quellen"

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For the past several hundred years Catholic missions have been operated in much the same way everywhere. The various religious orders followed identical procedures in setting up mission stations, building schools and churches, and propagating the faith by preaching and the administration of the Sacraments. The mandate of the Second Vatican Council that all religious orders go back to their roots raised some questions as to how they envisioned their missionary apostolate.

The three branches of the Franciscan Order were fortunate in that they all professed the same *Rule*, drew their inspiration from the same sources, and therefore shared a common missionary charism. This is embodied in Francis's writings, even though he did not dedicate any special document to the theme of mission. It pervades all his writings. In fact, his entire life was mission oriented. He lived a missionary charism based on the Gospel. In this respect he was an innovator. He set up new standards, which have ever since constituted the principles for Franciscan mission. These had their origin in his own missionary journeys (especially his encounter with the sultan), and in his writings (especially chapter 16 of the *Earlier Rule*),¹ which we shall discuss in some detail further on. On a deeper spiritual level they must be seen in a Trinitarian setting.

Part 1

Go Forth and Proclaim It! The Missionary Expeditions

A Key Experience

A chance encounter with some Gospel texts proved to be the turning point in Francis's life. On a certain day in the year 1208,² the Gospel of

¹ *Opuscula sancti Patris Francisci Assisiensis*, ed. Caietanus Esser (Grottaferrata: Rome, 1978). Quotations are from *Die Schriften des heiligen Franziskus von Assisi*, Introduction, translation and commentary by L. Hardick and E. Grau, 7, rev. ed. (Werl in Westphalia, 1982).

² See Lorenzo Di Fonzo, O.F.M.Conv., "Per la cronologia di S. Francesco: Gli anni 1182-1212," in *Misc. Franc.* 82 (1982): 1-115. He gives the date as the second week of April, 1208. David Flood, O.F.M., writes: "It is a special mark of scholarship in matters

the Mass at the little chapel of the Portiuncula was taken from Matthew 10: 5-14, or Luke 10: 1-10, which tells of Christ sending forth His disciples. Francis was present at the Mass:

After Mass he humbly asked the priest to explain the Gospel to him more fully. When he had set forth for him in order all these things, the holy Francis, hearing that the disciples of Christ should not possess gold or silver or money, nor carry along the way scrip or wallet or bread or a staff; that they should not have shoes or two tunics, but that they should preach the kingdom of God and penance, he immediately cried out exultingly: "This is what I wish, this is what I seek, this is what I long to do with all my heart" (1Cel 22; see L3S 25).³

The words of the Gospel left an indelible impression on Francis. To go about the world and proclaim the Good News became the goal of his apostolate.⁴ Even his predilection for isolated places where he used to withdraw for prayer⁵ had to yield to his need to travel about and deliver his message.

When other men joined him, his first thought was not to settle down with them as a community with a fixed abode but to send them out on the road in groups. They had hardly become eight in number when Francis, in a symbolic gesture, divided them into four groups and told them: "Go forth, my dearest brothers, two by two, into the various parts of the world, announcing to men peace and repentance unto the forgiveness of sins. And be patient in tribulation, confident that the Lord will fulfill His purpose and His promise. To those who put questions to you, reply humbly. Bless those who persecute you and calumniate you, because for those things there is prepared for you an eternal kingdom."

Even though he may not be reproducing Francis's exact words, it is remarkable how well Celano grasps the gist of Franciscan mission: a

Franciscan to assign precise dates to events that never took place. [As for the story of Francis's conversion as recorded by Thomas of Celano, the Three Companions, and others:] As history, it makes a good story" ("Die Verwendung der Franziskusgeschichte," in *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 46 [1983]: 150-51). I cannot accept Flood's and Di Fonzo's criticism of Celano. The account of Jesus sending His disciples pervades all of Francis's life and writings. Among other writers see Anton Rotzetter, "Gott in der Verkündigung des Franz von Assisi," in *Laurentianum* 23 (1982): 40-76: "Franciscan preaching took its character from the Gospel account of the sending of the disciples." See also Raoul Manselli, *Franziskus: der solidarische Bruder* (Zurich, 1984), pp. 80-81, hereafter cited as *Franziskus*.

³ See L3S 25.

⁴ See the biography by A. Mockler, *Francis of Assisi: The Wandering Years* (Oxford, 1976).

⁵ See Octavian Schmucki, "Secretum solitudinis: De circumstantiis externis orandi penes sanctum Franciscum Assisiensem," *Collectanea Franciscana* 39 (1969): 5-58 [translated by Sebastian Holland, O.F.M.Cap., in *Greyfriars Review* 4, no. 2 (1990)]. See idem, "Mentis silentium: Le Programme contemplatif de l'ordre franciscain primitif," *Fidelis* 69, no. 3 (1982): 114-52, translated by Ignatius McCormick, O.F.M.Cap., in *Greyfriars Review* 4, no. 2 (1990): 35-71. — Editor].

call to repentance and proclamation of peace, with an approach based on the Sermon on the Mount.

On To Rome, To Open Up Wider Fields

After this first mission, Brother Bernard and Brother Giles betook themselves to San Giacomo. Francis, with one companion, went in another direction, probably to the valley of Rieti (1Cel 30). But the groups were soon back in Assisi. When their number increased to twelve, they took off for Rome (1209) to ask papal approbation for their (*propositum vitae*, which Francis had drawn up "simply and in few words" (1Cel 32). This event was pivotal for the subsequent development of Franciscan mission. Although prevailing church law empowered local bishops to grant permission for the friars to preach in their dioceses,⁶ Francis was looking for a much broader authorization that would allow him to preach everywhere, not just in the little diocese of Assisi. The growth of his community aroused in him a keen awareness of his responsibility for the entire church.

To Bring a Message of Peace and Penance

We no longer possess the *Proto-Rule*. But we can be sure that it contained the elements of the new Franciscan way of life, which Francis learned from the Gospel that was read in the Portiuncula and from a random search for texts from the Bible (*sortes apostolorum*).⁷ It is interesting to note how he seized upon the two key words "go" and "proclaim": "Go with the Lord, brothers, and as the Lord will deign to inspire you, preach penance to all" (1Cel 33).

"Thereupon Francis ... went about the towns and villages, announcing the kingdom of God, preaching peace, teaching salvation and penance unto the remission of sin" (1Cel 36).

The *Legend of the Three Companions* says the same. After the pope approved the friars' manner of life, "the blessed Francis went about the cities and began to teach everywhere" (L3S 54).

Going about exhorting to penance (*exhortatio*), as distinct from preaching formal sermons (*praedicatio*), constituted the first mission activity of the "men of penance from Assisi."⁸

⁶ See Octavian Schmucki, O.F.M.Cap., "Franziskus von Assisi erfährt Kirche in seiner Bruderschaft," in *Franziskanische Studien* 58 (1976): 1-26, esp. pp. 9-10.

⁷ See Octavian Schmucki, O.F.M.Cap., "Schrittweise Entdeckung der evangeliumsge-mässen Lebensform durch den hl. Franziskus von Assisi," in *FSien* 66 (1984): 368-421, esp. pp. 372-88. See also Manselli, *Franziskus*, pp. 104-6.

⁸ See O. Delcorno, "Origini della predicazione francescana," in "Francesco d'Assisi e Francescanesimo dal 1216 al 1226," *Atti del IV Convegno Internazionale* (Assisi, 1977), pp. 125-60; Rotzetter, "Gott in der Verkündigung," pp. 71-76, cited in n. 2 above.

Two Unsuccessful Expeditions

In the year 1212, six years after his conversion, Francis, "burning intensely with a desire for holy martyrdom, wanted to take ship for the regions of Syria to preach the Christian Faith and penance to the Saracens and infidels. When he had gone on board a certain ship to go there, contrary winds arose, and he found himself with the rest of his shipmates in the region of Slavonia" (1*Cel* 55). He then stowed away on a ship bound for Ancona and from there returned to Assisi. Writing of this venture, Celano recalls the words "to preach among the Saracens and other unbelievers," found in the *Earlier Rule*.⁹

Shortly after this failure, Francis took to the road again with Brother Bernard. They hoped to reach Morocco by way of France and Spain. But Francis suffered an attack of malaria in Spain and they had to turn back. So ended his second missionary expedition.¹⁰

The Real Missionary Journey

Francis did not give up his plan to preach to the Muslims. He brought it up before 3,000 friars gathered for the Chapter of Pentecost in 1219. Two years earlier, at the chapter held at the Portiuncula, friars were sent to France, Germany, Hungary, Spain and parts of Italy, where they were not yet present.¹¹ The order was divided into eleven provinces, and it was decided to send friars to Tunis and Morocco. Francis himself chose to go to Egypt, as Jordan of Giano writes, to give good example to the others.¹² Accompanied by several friars, among them Peter of Catania, he boarded a ship that was setting sail for Damietta with reinforcements for the crusaders. Francis landed in Egypt in July or August of 1219. The debauchery, the wrangling and the greed he witnessed in the Christian camp convinced him that theirs was no just war. He endeavored to persuade the soldiers and Cardinal Pelagio Galvani, the leader of the crusade, to agree to a truce and

⁹ *RegNB XVI 3*. [For our translation of the writings of Francis we have used *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, Regis J. Armstrong and Ignatius C. Brady, O.F.M., eds. and trans., Classics of Western Spirituality (Paulist Press: New York, Ramsey and Toronto, 1982). Used by permission of Paulist Press. — Editor]

¹⁰ 1*Cel* 56; 3*Cel* 34. [See Octavian Schmucki, O.F.M.Cap., "Les Maladies de Saint François d'Assise avant sa Stigmatisation," in *Medicina nei Secoli* 18 (1972): 18–57, translated by Sergius Wroblewski, O.F.M., in *Greyfriars Review* 4, no. 3 (1990): 31–61. See also Schmucki, "Das Leiden Christi im Leben des hl. Franziskus," in *CF* 30 (1960): 353–97, esp. p. 384, translated by Ignatius McCormick, O.F.M.Cap., in *Greyfriars Review* 4, suppl. (1990), pp. 1–101. — Editor]

¹¹ *Jor* 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, 10. See 1*Cel* 57; G. Golubovich, O.F.M., *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa* (Quaracchi ad Claras Aquas, 1906–27), vol. 2, pp. 214–21. Giving examples was an important motive and is mentioned by the Three Companions, as Manselli points out in *Franziskus*, pp. 234–38.

accept the peace terms offered by Sultan Al-Malik al-Kamil. But the power politics of the crusaders ruled out any negotiations. They were bent on total victory. On August 29, the Muslim forces attacked and 6,000 crusaders were killed. Only after this debacle did the cardinal grant permission for the Poverello to visit the sultan, but at his own risk. Accompanied by Brother Illuminatus, Francis crossed to no man's land and reached the Muslim headquarters.¹³

The story is told by Jacques de Vitry, a more reliable source than Celano and the writers dependent on him, like Bonaventure. De Vitry's account is all the more valuable since it comes from a bishop who was not a member of the order. He wrote some very favorable things about the new community but recognized and pointed out its weaknesses too.¹⁴ He was an eyewitness of the events at Damietta and wrote about Francis and his order in the spring of 1220: "Your master, the founder of your order, came to our army burning with zeal for the faith, and he went fearlessly to the enemy's camp. After preaching for several days to the Saracens, he met with no success. But the sultan of Egypt asked him secretly to pray to the Lord for him so that through divine enlightenment he might accept the religion that is most pleasing to God."¹⁵

Jacques de Vitry also writes about events at Damietta in his *Historia occidentalis*. He had been made Bishop of Acre by Pope Honorius III on July 31, 1216, and left immediately for the Holy Land. In chapter 32 of his *Historia* he deals expressly with *De Religione et Praedicatione Fratrum Minorum*. He also recounts Francis's visit to the sultan: "For several days the sultan listened with great attention to Francis, who spoke to him and his people about Christ. In the end, however, the sultan feared that some of his soldiers might be persuaded by Francis to convert to the Lord and defect to the Christian forces. Therefore, he asked him very respectfully to return to the crusaders' camp and provided him with safe conduct. In parting he said to him: 'Pray for me that God in His goodness may reveal to me the law and faith that is more pleasing to Him.'"¹⁶

¹³ See LM IX 8. See also Atanasió Matanic, O.F.M., "Del viaggio di S. Francesco in Oriente," in *Studi e ricerche francescane* 5 (1976): 245-58. See also Francis de Beer, O.F.M., *François, que disait-on de toi?* (Paris, 1977). See also Odulphus van der Vat, "Die Anfänge der Franziskanermissionen und ihre Weiterentwicklung im nahen Orient während des 13. Jahrhunderts," *Wiss. Weish.* (1934).

¹⁴ See K. Elm, "Die Entwicklung des Franziskanerordens zwischen dem ersten und letzten Zeugnis des Jakob von Vitry," in *Atti del IV Convegno*, pp. 193-233, cited in n. 2 above. See also Manselli, *Franziskus*, pp. 226-30.

¹⁵ See R.B.C. Huygens, *Lettres de Jacques de Vitry: Edition critique* (Leyden, 1960), p. 131. See also Manselli, *Franziskus*, p. 228.

¹⁶ See J.F. Hinnibusch, *The Historia Occidentalis of Jacques de Vitry* (Freiburg, 1972), pp. 158-63.

The first conclusion to be drawn from these accounts is that Francis did in fact meet the sultan of Egypt and spoke with him. This is further confirmed by an Arabic source.¹⁷ Jacques de Vitry expanded on what Jordan of Giano, Thomas of Celano and Bonaventure recorded almost parenthetically. The latter two seem almost ashamed of the failure of their holy founder, and explain it with the remark that God had destined him for another kind of martyrdom — "the privilege of a unique grace" — that is, the stigmatization.¹⁸

The second conclusion to be drawn is Francis's determined quest for peace. As Raoul Manselli says: "It is unmistakably clear from the words of the French bishop that Francis neither wanted or had any armed escort. While military operations were in full swing he was moved only by zeal for the faith and a missionary spirit. The Musselmen too were his brothers, and they had to be shown the true way to salvation that only Jesus Christ could give."¹⁹

At first sight it would appear that Francis's exhausting missionary journey to the Saracens produced little fruit. He did not realize any of his goals: not the martyrdom he had hoped for, nor the conversion of the sultan, nor peace between Muslims and Christians. These failures seem to have set the tone for Francis's own missionary program. As we shall see, he came to put more stress on witness and putting one's life on the line than the achievement of tangible results.

Were There Three Missionary Journeys?

Raoul Manselli has raised some doubts about the first two expeditions: "So far as we know, no one has ever questioned these attempts. We don't want to appear hypercritical, but we cannot help observing that the other sources offer no information that is not traceable to Thomas of Celano."²⁰ Manselli instances the *Legend of the Three Companions*. True, it does not mention the first two missionary journeys, but neither does it provide any details about Francis's younger days. The *Legend* is silent not only about tales of varying degrees of credibility, but even about more important happenings as well. Its writers would have little interest in the first two missionary attempts. I believe that Celano is essentially reliable when he tells us that Francis twice sought the crown of martyrdom and that he traveled to the Middle East. In his *Treatise on the Miracles* he relates details about Francis's

¹⁷ See W. Roncaglia, "Fonte Arabo-musulmana su san Francesco in Oriente," in *Studi Franc.* 55 (1958): 258-59. Francis de Beer, O.F.M., considers this source more authentic and makes use of it extensively in *François*, p. 83, cited in n. 13 above.

¹⁸ *LM* IX 1-9. See de Beer, *François*, pp. 6-8; idem, "Der heilige Franziskus und der Islam," in *Concilium* 17 (1981), pp. 696-705, esp. p. 705.

¹⁹ *Franziskus*, p. 228.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 222-23.

return from Spain that he could have learned only from the saint's traveling companions.

The Witness of the "Legend of Perugia." Sent for the Salvation of All

Even if Thomas of Celano associates the two early missionary expeditions with Francis's journey to the sultan (perhaps to come up with the sacred number three?) this would not detract from the fact that the saint was filled with great missionary zeal from the start of his conversion. We find it even in the *Legend of Perugia*, which follows no logical sequence and is rather a random compilation of texts (*compilatio*) than a "legend" or history. It mentions Francis's encounter with the sultan only in connection with the saint's eye affliction. Nevertheless, it does furnish some valuable information about the early days of the order. It says that Francis, while attending the chapter of 1217, thought of going to France. He met Cardinal Hugolino in Florence:

The lord bishop greatly rejoiced at the arrival of blessed Francis. But when he learned that Francis wanted to go to France, he opposed the plan: "Brother, I do not want you to cross the mountains, for there are a number of prelates and others in the Roman curia who would like to interfere with the interests of your order. The other cardinals and I, who love your order, will protect it and help it much more effectively if you remain within the frontiers of this province." Blessed Francis answered: "My lord, I would be greatly ashamed of myself if I stayed here and sent my brothers to far distant provinces."

The lord bishop answered him with a tone of reproach in his voice: "Why did you send your brothers to undergo so many trials so far away to die of hunger?" Blessed Francis answered in a great prophetic outburst: "Lord, do you think and believe that the Lord has sent the brothers for this province only? Truly I say to you: God has chosen and sent the brothers for the good and salvation of all men in the entire world. They will be received not only in believing countries, but also among the infidels. Let them observe what they have promised God, and God will give them, both among the infidels and the believing nations, all that they need."²¹

Whatever we may think of Cardinal Hugolino's interference, he had a better grasp of the situation than Francis. He had the foresight to realize that the saint was more valuable in his homeland than in France. For his part, Francis boldly asserted his convictions about his worldwide mission calling. He was willing to risk his life to realize it. He would not ask others to do what he was not willing to do himself.²²

"With great fervor of spirit and the spirit of prophecy"

This is the way the Perugia document describes the feeling with which Francis replied to the cardinal. Whenever he speaks about mis-

²¹ LP 82.

²² In his *Last Will Written for St. Clare*, he promises to follow and persevere in the poverty of Jesus Christ. Only then does he ask them "to live always in this most holy life and in poverty."

sion, his voice is filled with enthusiasm, ardor and prophecy. He proclaimed the kingdom of God "with learning and the power of the spirit" (1Cel 36). "With a burning desire for martyrdom he longed to go to Syria" (1Cel 55). "So powerfully did his zeal drive him that he would run ahead of his companions and hurry along as if intoxicated with the spirit" (LM IX 6). Jacques de Vitry describes his eagerness: "He was carried away with such intoxication of fervor" (*Historia* 32).

The authors make it clear that a "spiritual gift" is more important than physical strength, personality traits, or linguistic skills. This gift furnished the impulse for missionary work and martyrdom.²³ We find the same affirmation in Francis's writings, where he bases his going among the Saracens on *divina inspiratio*.²⁴

Summary of Part 1

Certain traits of Franciscan missionary work emerge from what has been said of Francis's journeys:

1. To be called and sent to the entire Christian world.
2. To go forth and proclaim a call to the Gospel life.
3. To go about the world two by two.
4. To foster peace — a most important goal.
5. To refuse any safe conduct.
6. To thirst for adventure and be willing to take risks.
7. To be prepared for martyrdom.
8. To have a charismatic gift of the spirit for prophetic witnessing.
9. To have a preference for and commitment to an apostolate among the Muslims.

Part 2A

The Mission Statute: Chapter 16 of the Earlier Rule

Francis of Assisi was a man more of action than of words. He himself warned that deeds must follow upon study and speech (2Cel 164). As the *Legend of Perugia* shows, he was convinced that the principal goal of his missionary journey was to set an example for his friars. He speaks through his actions. Conversely, his speech reflects his activity. We find this line of thought expressed in chapter 16 of the *Earlier Rule*.

The Question of Assigning a Date

The *Earlier Rule* was not composed all at once. It evolved from a primitive *Rule*, since lost, which was approved by Pope Innocent III. New legislation, admonitions, warnings and spiritual quotations were

²³ See K. Elm, "Franz von Assisi: Busspredigt oder Heidenmission?" in "Espansione del Francescanesimo tra Occidente e Oriente nel secolo XIII," *Atti del VI Convegno Internazionale* (Assisi, 1979), pp. 70-103, esp. p. 84.

²⁴ See RegNB XVI 3.

added in the course of time. By the Chapter of Pentecost in 1221 it had taken on the form that we know today. The big question is: When was chapter 16 inserted — before or after Francis's journey to the East in 1219/20?

In his thorough-going study of the *Earlier Rule*, David Flood writes: "Chapters 1 to 17 were written before the Fourth Lateran Council."²⁵ In that case, chapter 16 too was composed before the council, which took place in 1215. On the other hand, Flood goes on to say: "Chapter 16 speaks of sending the friars among the Saracens. Pope Innocent III convoked the council on April 19, 1213, and stated its purpose in his brief: 'To recover the Holy Land and to bring about a reformation of the entire church.'" The council gave fresh impetus to these goals. It was under these circumstances that chapter 16 was written and found its place in the text of the *Rule*.²⁶

But the question remains: Was chapter 16 influenced either directly or indirectly by the papal call for a crusade? If it was, it must be viewed as a proposal of an alternate plan. And we must conclude, with a number of commentators, that the chapter is "the result and echo of Francis's journey to Egypt."²⁷ The content would appear to reflect the experiences of Francis and his companions among the Muslims. Most likely it was written after his return from the Middle East.²⁸

Regardless of the time of its composition, chapter 16 must be considered a "missions statute,"²⁹ since it presents the basic guidelines for all Franciscan missionary enterprises.

An Explanation of Chapter 16 of the Earlier Rule, Verses 1 to 21

Let us examine the missionary statute sentence by sentence and compare it with other writings of the saint. First of all, it is obvious that the apostolate among the Saracens is not to be carried out in isolation.

²⁵ David Flood, O.F.M., *Die Regula non bullata der Minderbrüder* (Franziskan. Forschungen 19: Werl in Westphalia, 1967), p. 139.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 129. Armand Quaglia, O.F.M., claims that there was no written rule between the years 1209 and 1219 (*Storiografia della Regola francescana nel sec. XIII* (Falconara, 1980). We offer no comment here.

²⁷ Walbert Bühlmann, *Das Missionsverständnis bei Franziskus nach der Regula non bullata*, in A. Camps and G. Hunold, *Erschaffe mir ein neues Volk: Franziskanische Kirchlichkeit und missionarische Kirche* (Mettingen, 1982), pp. 13–29, esp. p. 19. See also Stanislao da Campagnola, in *Fonti Francescane*, vol. 1 (Assisi, 1977), pp. 60–61. According to de Beer: "This text seems to us to be the fruit of Francis's memories of his journey to the Holy Land" (*François*, p. 90).

²⁸ Anton Rotzetter states that "the rules for behavior given in chapter 16 of the *Earlier Rule* are a basic determinant for Franciscan life" ("Die missionarische Dimension des franziskanischen Charismas," in *FSien* 66 [1984]: 82–90). This is no argument against Bühlmann, de Beer, and others.

²⁹ See Anton Rotzetter, *Die Funktion der franziskanischen Bewegung in der Kirche* (Schwyz, 1977), pp. 164–68.

It is part of an overall commitment to follow the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Not only the *Rule*, but all Francis's writings are impregnated with the spirit of mission.

1) *Chapter 16, verse 1a*: "The Lord says: 'Behold, I am sending you as lambs in the midst of wolves.'"

Like four of the *Admonitions* (1, 2, 3, and 9), and two other chapters of the *Earlier Rule*, chapter 16 opens with a direct reference to the word of the Lord: "What the Lord says" — that is the last word for Francis. Everything written in chapter 16 is supported by a reference to the word of the Lord or a quotation from the Scriptures.³⁰

Here as elsewhere in his writings,³¹ Francis uses the present tense (*dicit*) instead of the scriptural past (*dixit*). The word once spoken to the disciples does not belong to the past. It is a living word here and now. In other passages he speaks of "the fragrant word of the Lord," which he longs to share with others (see *2EpFid* 2). For Francis, God's word is ever timely. It stands both at the opening of the mission statute and at the beginning of the entire *Rule* (see the *Later Rule* I 1–5).

The word of God is one of mission, emphasized by the attention-getter: "Behold!" Francis inherits his missionary apostolate from Jesus Himself. He in turn passes it on to others.

2) *Chapter 16, verse 1b*: "... as lambs in the midst of wolves" (Matt. 10:16).

These words further specify the nature of his mission. He rules out any self-seeking and warns of the dangers involved. As Rotzetter comments: "Whoever goes forth in the name of Jesus to spread the kingdom of God will have to face bitter opposition and even death. Francis is well aware of this."³² He experienced it himself when his one-time friends and fellow citizens laughed at him, thinking that he had lost his mind. They made it clear to him and his followers that they had no longer considered them normal members of society.

As the *Legend of the Three Companions* puts it: "Sometimes they were pelted with mud; sometimes jesters put dice in their hands and invited them to play. Others pulled at them from behind, dragging them along by their cowls. These and other similar pranks were played on them by people who considered them of no account and tormented them as they pleased. The brothers suffered all this: hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness and many immense tribulations firmly and patiently as St. Francis had bidden them" (*L3S* 40).

³⁰ For more see Leonhard Lehmann, O.F.M.Cap., "Grundzüge franziskanischen Missionsverständnisses nach Regula non bullata 16," in *FSien* 66 (1984): 68–81, esp. p. 70.

³¹ *Adm* I 1, 3, 4, 22; III 1; IX 1; *RegNb* I 2, II 14, XII 5.

³² "Die missionarische Dimension," p. 83, cited in n. 28 above.

The friars had to endure worse trials in Germany because of their ignorance of the language. "Some were beaten, some thrown into jail, others stripped of their clothes and dragged naked before the city magistrate, thereby affording the populace considerable entertainment" (*Jordan of Giano*, 5). The five brothers who were sent to Morocco suffered a cruel death when they insulted the prophet Muhammad. They were determined to be martyrs at all costs.³³ When Francis noticed that the other friars were taking pride in their martyrdom, he wanted to hear no more about it (*Jor* 8).

Admonition VI is the best commentary on the first sentence of the mission statute:

Let all of us, brothers, look to the Good Shepherd, Who suffered the passion of the cross to save His sheep. The sheep of the Lord followed Him in tribulation and persecution, in insult and hunger, in infirmity and temptation, and in everything else, and they have received everlasting life from the Lord because of these things. Therefore, it is a great shame for us, servants of God, that while the saints [actually] did such things, we wish to receive glory and honor by [merely] recounting their deeds.

3) *Chapter 16, verse 2*: "Be therefore as wise as serpents but simple as doves" (*Matt.* 10:16).

The protomartyrs of the order certainly did not act wisely. Their behavior did not conform to the directions found in chapter 16 of the *Earlier Rule*. Anyone who behaves imprudently is not observing the virtue of simplicity. The latter virtue occupies more space in Francis's writings than wisdom. As he warns in the *Earlier Rule* XVII 10: "Let us keep ourselves from the wisdom of this world and the prudence of the flesh." This kind of wisdom is, for Francis, the very opposite of simplicity: "We must not be wise and prudent according to the flesh; rather, we must be simple, humble, and pure" (*2EpFid* 45). His negative attitude toward worldly wisdom perhaps explains why he makes no further mention of it in his description of work among the Saracens.

The Friars Minor will be distinguished by the virtue of simplicity.³⁴ From the many passages that contain the word *simplex* we cite the following from the *Earlier Rule* XVII 14-15: "The Spirit of the Lord ... strives for humility and patience, and the pure and simple and true peace of the spiritual person."

4) *Chapter 16, verse 3a*: "Therefore, any brother who, by divine inspiration ..."

³³ See "Chronica Generalium Ministrorum Ordinis Fratrum Minorum," in *Analecta Franciscana*, vol. 3 (Quaracchi ad Claras Aquas, 1907), pp. 15-21.

³⁴ See Hardick and Grau, *Die Schriften*, pp. 299-303, cited in n. 1 above. See also L. Izzo, *La semplicità evangelica nella spiritualità di S. Francesco d'Assisi* (Rome, 1971).

Regretfully, in his latest edition of the *Opuscula*, Kajetan Esser omits the words *divina inspiratione*, although all previous editions of the text until Angelo of Clareno contain them. Esser felt obliged to follow Angelo of Clareno because he felt that the words as found in the *Earlier Rule* were copied almost instinctively by transcribers who knew the *Later Rule* by heart.³⁵

This argument is weak, however, for the following reasons:

First, Angelo of Clareno is not reliable, as Esser himself admits in a number of places.

Secondly, the expression *divina inspiratione* could hardly have been taken over in the final rule if it had not already appeared in the earlier one, since the former was meant to be a condensation of the latter. The chapter on mission as found in the *Later Rule* is a pitiful remnant of the *Earlier Rule's* chapter 16. Fortunately, at least the idea of divine inspiration was salvaged.

Thirdly, *divina inspiratione* is closely connected with the *spiritualiter ambulare* ("live spiritually"), which occurs two verses later.

Finally, the expression is so typical of Francis that we must accept it as original by reason of its internal coherence with other passages. Whoever follows in the footsteps of Christ does so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This thought is expressed at the beginning of the second chapter of the *Earlier Rule*, which legislates the reception and clothing of the friars: "If anyone, desiring by divine inspiration to accept this life, should come to our brothers, let him be received by them with kindness."

The next number forbids the friars to become involved in the temporal affairs of candidates. They are to act here too under divine guidance. The life of the Poor Clares, like that of the friars, is also under the direction of the Holy Spirit. In 1212 or 1213, Francis wrote to them: "Since by divine inspiration you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the most high king, the heavenly Father, and have taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse..." (*Form Viv* 1).

In the *Worcester Manuscript*, which contains fragments of the *Earlier Rule*, we find the passage worded somewhat differently than in other versions of the same *Rule*: "All the brothers, as far as God shall inspire them, may announce these or similar words of admonition and

³⁵ *Textkritische Untersuchungen zur Regula non bullata der Minderbrüder* (Grottaferata, 1974), p. 110. See also Esser, *Opuscula*, p. 268, cited in n. 1 above. For a different opinion see David Flood, O.F.M., *Die Regula*, p. 64, cited in n. 25 above. See also Flood, "Assisi's Rules and People's Needs: The Initial Determination of the Franciscan Mission," in *FSien* 66 (1984): 91-104, esp. p. 104, n. 27; and Bühlmann, *Das Missionsverständnis*, p. 23, cited in n. 27 above.

praise to all the people with the blessing of God and the permission of the minister" (*Fragm I 58*).

Finally, we must make mention of the *Testament*, in which Francis reminisces about various turning points in his life. Here again we find the idea of divine guidance and inspiration most prominent.³⁶ All this evidence compels us to admit that for Francis of Assisi "going among the Saracens" was the work of the Spirit. It was a special calling, a particular charism.

5) *Chapter 16, verse 3b*: "... any brother who, by divine inspiration, desires to go among the Saracens and other nonbelievers, should go with the permission of his minister and servant."

Divine inspiration does not deprive a man of his liberty. He is free to respond or not. A divine call and personal choice must coincide. And he must obtain the permission of his minister.

Kajetan Esser observes that Francis chooses the preposition 'among' rather than 'to' (the Saracens) and asks: "Is he trying to rule out in advance any aloofness?"³⁷ Walbert Bühlmann goes even further: "At a time when the crusaders were marching against the Saracens, when the thoughts of the entire Christian West were directed against them, Francis was sending his friars not just 'to' them but 'among' them, perhaps like sheep among wolves, but still as brothers among brothers. Here we find a new and prophetic approach to mission."³⁸

On the other hand, it must be admitted that Francis did not entirely escape the stereotypes and prejudices of his time. He counts the Muslims among nonbelievers. Francis believed that anyone who is not a Christian, be he Jew or Muslim, is obviously a nonbeliever and should be converted. And it cannot be denied that these ideas, as well as the universally accepted principle *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* ("No salvation outside the Church"), exercised a significant influence on Francis's concept of mission.³⁹ What distinguishes his program from the accepted norms of the time was his manner of approach: to go among the Saracens, avoiding hostility and controversy; to go among them ready to suffer martyrdom, as we read in the final third of chapter 16 of the *Earlier Rule*.

Nor should we be too quick to see in Francis a pioneer of dialogue among various religions. He went as a believer among nonbelievers.

³⁶ Bühlmann, *Das Missionsverständnis*, p.23.

³⁷ "Das missionarische Anliegen des heiligen Franziskus," in *Bruder aller Menschen* (Missionszentrale der Franziskaner: Werl, 1976), p. 11-19, esp. p. 13, n. 6.

³⁸ *Das Missionsverständnis*, p. 24.

³⁹ See Leonhard Lehmann, O.F.M.Cap., "Der Brief des hl. Franziskus an die Lenker der Völker: Aufbau und missionarische Anliegen," in *Lau* 25 (1984): 287-324, esp. pp. 321-22.

But this behavior transcended the presuppositions he shared with his contemporaries. There is no indication that Francis ever condemned the provocative conduct of the protomartyrs Berard and his companions toward the Muslims. Neither does their Franciscan biographer express any disapproval; on the contrary, he extols it.⁴⁰ How Francis himself behaved, and what he wrote in the mission statute about going among Saracens in a "spiritual" way, was unfortunately overlooked.

"To go" (*ire*) is a key word, recurring in chapters 14 to 16 of the *Earlier Rule*. Chapter 14 outlines a plan of action for going through the world. He makes references to the words of Jesus as He sent forth His apostles, and to the Sermon on the Mount, not in direct quotations but by a typical Franciscan medley of passages from the synoptic Gospels. He describes how the friars are to comport themselves on their journeys; how they are not to take anything with them; how they are to be lodged; how they are to eat and drink what is offered them; how they are not to resist evil; how they are not to reclaim what was taken from them. The words *ire per mundum* also occur in chapter 15, where riding is forbidden except when illness or great need make it necessary. Provisions about traveling through the world also take into consideration the special case of brothers who go among the Saracens. Chapter 17, too, which must at one time have formed the conclusion of the *Earlier Rule*,⁴¹ takes up the theme of travel. It is addressed primarily to preachers, but it warns all friars against pride and vainglory. According to David Flood, it established guidelines for sharing material goods, which all belong to God "from Whom all good things come."⁴²

The Franciscan way of life is made known by the way the friars conduct themselves in the world. Rejecting Benedictine *stabilitas loci*, Francis relates rather to the itinerant life of Jesus and His apostles. The early sources portray the friars as a homeless group of wandering preachers.⁴³ Their top priority, however, was not preaching⁴⁴ but a Christocentric life modeled on Jesus' apostolate in poverty and renun-

⁴⁰ The call for a crusade by the Franciscan Fidentius of Padua (d. 1226?) is definitely anti-Muslim. See Golubovich, *Biblioteca*, vol. 1, pp. 291-96, 426-28, cited in n. 12 above. See also G. Rizzardi, "Fra Fidenzio da Padova e l'Islam," in *Studi Franc.* 82 (1985): 103-21.

⁴¹ David Flood writes: "We see in it the conclusion of the text of the *Rule*, before the friars began to adopt the decrees of the council" (*Die Regula*, p. 132, cited in n. 25 above). See also idem, *Assisi's Rules*, p. 100, cited in n. 35 above.

⁴² Flood, *Assisi's Rules*, pp. 95-103.

⁴³ See Kajetan Esser, O.F.M., *Anfänge und ursprüngliche Zielsetzungen des Ordens der Minderbrüder* (Leiden, 1966), pp. 54-60.

⁴⁴ In his *La missione degli Apostoli nella Regola francescana* (Genoa, 1972), Martin Conti, O.F.M., sees the apostolate taking priority over life.

ciation of power: "He was a poor man and a transient and lived on alms, He and the Blessed Virgin, and His disciples" (*RegNB* IX 5).

As bearers of a special charism, the first friars took on a prophetic role in the church. It was expressed first and foremost in their manner of life and secondarily in apostolic activities. They were a challenge to established communities with their properties, which by their very nature were in danger of falling into rigid institutionalism. They constantly referred to Jesus "Who had nowhere to lay His head" (Matt. 8:20). Their life-style recalled Jesus' invitation to the rich young man to sell all that he owned and follow Him.⁴⁵

Their identity with the precarious, itinerant existence of Jesus, together with the dynamics of the *ire per mundum*, made an outreach to non-Christian lands possible. While papal crusader-mentality called for fire and sword, a Gospel life liberated the friars to take a fresh view of the world situation.

"Going among Saracens" is fundamental to the life of the Friars Minor. It flows from their willingness to "leave the world" (*Test* 3) to follow in the footsteps of Christ. They discovered an alternative life-style to that of the town of Assisi, of contemporary society and in some respects of the church.

6) *Chapter 16, verse 4*: "And the minister should give [these brothers] permission and not oppose them, if he shall see that they are fit to be sent."

The permission of the minister ratifies a divine call and the individual's choice. However, the superior's sole concern must be with the fitness of the friar. He can impose no further restraints. He cannot order a friar to go to the missions, nor can he prevent him if he is qualified.

This statement shows how highly Francis esteemed the missionary vocation. It is a special calling. Other community interests must be subordinated to it. He stresses this principle in the following words: "For he shall be bound to give an account to the Lord if he has proceeded without discretion in this or in other matters" (*RegNB* XVI 4).

7) *Chapter 16, verse 5*: "As for the brothers who go, they can live spiritually among [the Saracens and nonbelievers] in two ways."

This passage repeats three concepts that we have already considered. There is a question of going (*ire*); of living among nonbelievers (*inter eos*), and an openness to the Spirit (*spiritualiter*). Two possible approaches are described.

⁴⁵ See Willi Egger, O.F.M.Cap., *Nachfolge als Weg zum Leben: Chancen neuerer exegetischer Methoden dargelegt an Mk 10, 17-31* (Klosterneuburg, 1979), pp. 261-72.

8) Chapter 6, verse 6: "One way is not to engage in arguments or disputes, but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake (1 Pet. 2:13) and to acknowledge that they are Christians."

This way does not include a proclamation of the Gospel or even a program of social works but simply the witness of a Christian presence and the manner of life of a Friar Minor. It concerns both the conduct of the friars toward one another as well as toward outsiders. They are not to indulge in arguments or disputes but to give an example of brotherliness.⁴⁶ The same behavior must be observed in dealing with those outside the church. It is reinforced with a quotation from the First Letter of St. Peter: "To be subject to every human creature for God's sake." This is a favorite thought of Francis, which he presents to all Christians: "We must never desire to be over others; rather we must be servants and subject to every human creature for God's sake" (2EpFid 47).

Francis speaks of submission "for God's sake," because from a purely rational viewpoint it is nonsensical to be subject to other men. Yet this is what is demanded of the friar. True to his name, he must always be the "little one" and take the lowest place. This is the universal obedience that Francis celebrates in his *Salutation of the Virtues* 14-18: "Holy Obedience destroys every wish of the body and of the flesh, and binds its mortified body to obedience of the Spirit and to obedience of one's brother; and [the person who possesses her] is subject and submissive to all persons in the world and not to man only, but even to all beasts and with wild animals, so that they may do whatever they want with him inasmuch as it has been given to them from above by the Lord."⁴⁷ If, according to this concept of obedience, the Friar Minor must be subject even to irrational creatures, how much more should he obey his fellowmen.

Whether the friar is among Christians or non-Christians, he does not arrange things to suit himself. He allows things to be arranged for him. He does not build new structures but manages to live with existing ones and when necessary try to improve them from within.

A loving profession of Christianity implies fraternal harmony, reconciliation and unconditional subjection to one's fellow human beings. To set an example of brotherhood, to get along with people of other cultures and religions without compromising one's own faith — that in a

⁴⁶ This is a simple but accurate translation of "*non faciunt lites neque contentiones*". See Hardick and Grau, *Die Schriften*, p. 192, cited in n. 1 above. See also Rotzetter, *Die missionarische Dimension*, p. 85, cited in n. 28 above.

⁴⁷ See Leonhard Lehmann, O.F.M.Cap., *Tiefe und Weite: Der universale Grundzug in den Gebeten des Franziskus von Assisi* (Franziskan. Forschungen 29: Werl in Westphalia, 1984), pp. 237-44.

nutshell is Franciscan mission. It demands renunciation of power and commitment to peace, a spirit of faith bordering on the adventurous, a readiness to dialogue and to risk martyrdom. Francis himself gave the example in his encounter with the sultan. While wars were being waged in the name of Christ and the Gospel, Francis proclaimed submission as the first and most important kind of mission.

9) *Chapter 16, verse 7*: "Another way is to proclaim the word of God when they see that it pleases the Lord, so that they believe in the all-powerful God — Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit — the Creator of all, in the Son Who is the Redeemer and Savior, and that they be baptized and become Christians, because whoever has not been born again of water and the Holy Spirit cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (see John 3:5).

The second step is preaching the Gospel. This presupposes a special call from God, and the ability to assess conditions. The missionary is not to take the fortress by storm. He must wait patiently for the opportune moment for preaching. The word of God must find receptive soil. The preacher is not the proprietor of the word. He must be a hearer too, precisely among non-Christians. He must be keenly sensitive to the milieu and open to the will of God. He must be alert to signs emanating from his fellow human beings. Only after he is convinced that it is the Lord's will that he should announce the word of God is he to start preaching.

They are not to plunge right off into the dogmatic content of their message, which in any case is the prerogative of the priest.⁴⁸ The first steps are not preaching and the administration of the Sacraments, the traditional task of the missionary, but rather the Franciscan *laus et exhortatio* ("praise and exhortation") as described in chapter 21 of the *Earlier Rule*.

This type of sermon, which "all my brothers can proclaim ... among all the people with the blessing of God" (*RegNB XXI 1*), can be used to announce the word of God to non-Christians, modified however to meet the needs of nonbelievers, as Anton Rotzetter points out.⁴⁹ He shows from the writings themselves the essential identity of preaching penance and the proclaiming the word to the heathens, just as K. Elm did on a broader scale in his scholarly article.⁵⁰

For Christians the purpose of catechesis is a call to penance, reminding them of the conversion first effected through the Sacrament of

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 61–67. See also n. 8 above.

⁴⁹ Rotzetter, *Die missionarische Dimension*, pp. 87–88. See *idem*, *Gott in der Verkündigung*, cited in n. 2 above.

⁵⁰ "Busspredigt oder Heidenmission?", cited in n. 23 above.

Baptism. For non-Christians it is a call to faith and baptism. In either case it can be done by the laity. In fact it is an appropriate way for them to evangelize. They should prepare non-Christians for baptism at the hands of the priest, and Christians for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Baptism then is the culmination of the goals set for the missionary. But it is the ultimate goal. First a proclamation of the Gospel must lead to a change in the candidate's life. The missionaries should not, as often happened, try to baptize as many people as possible in the shortest possible time. They should postpone baptism until faith in the triune God has taken firm root in the minds of the catechumen. In short, they are to follow the sequence laid down in the Gospel: faith followed by baptism: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16).

10) *Chapter 16, verses 8-9*: "They can say to [the Saracens] and to others these and other things which are pleasing to the Lord, for the Lord says in the Gospel: 'Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge before my Father Who is in heaven' (Matt. 10:32). And 'Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in His majesty and that of the Father and the angels'" (Luke 9:26).

This rule for the proclamation of the Gospel is not to be understood in any narrow sense. The friars are at liberty to speak in a different manner. The missionary may and should keep an open mind for innovative possibilities. The important thing is that he bears witness, as verse 6 makes clear. Jesus contrasts "acknowledging" (witnessing) with "being ashamed."

Whatever the missionaries say should be pleasing to the Lord, for they will have to render an account to Him. He is the foundation on which all must be built. As we read in chapter 16, verses 10 and 11 of the *Earlier Rule*: "And all the brothers, wherever they may be, should remember that they gave themselves and abandoned their bodies to the Lord Jesus Christ. And for love of Him, they must make themselves vulnerable to their enemies, both visible and invisible, because the Lord says: 'Whoever loses his life for My sake will save it (Luke 9:24) in eternal life'" (Matt 25:46).

The mission statute addresses all friars in whatever situation they find themselves. Once more, Francis makes clear that the apostolate among the Saracens is part and parcel of all Franciscan life. It is marked above all by a complete commitment to Christ, in imitation of His homelessness, total submission to the Father's will, and dedication to the service of others. Francis's Christocentrism is evident in such typical expressions as "for love of Him" (*pro ejus amore*),⁵¹ as well as in

⁵¹ For further details, see pp. 75-77 of the article quoted in n. 30 above.

the words quoted from Jesus that well describe the rejection, persecution and humiliations suffered by the friars in Germany, Hungary and Morocco.⁵²

The theme of total surrender runs through the final part of the mission statute. The two ways of missioning mentioned above are summed up in three sentences in chapter 16, verses 5 to 7 in the *Earlier Rule*. A third way — to walk spiritually — is also stressed as available to all friars. The brothers must realize that their very presence, whether among Christians or non-Christians, will lead to a conflict of minds, challenge prevailing mores, and stir up hostility. They will not be able to avoid it. Anyone who binds himself to the Lord Jesus, as a vassal binds himself to his liege lord, will no longer have control over his own person.⁵³ But unlike the feudal lord who exercises arbitrary power, Jesus Christ raises the banner of the cross. He delivered Himself, and still does, into our hands: "Daily He comes to us in a humble form; daily He comes down from the bosom of the Father upon the altar in the hands of the priest. And as He appeared to the holy apostles in true flesh, so now He reveals Himself to us in the sacred Bread" (*Adm* I 17-19).

And in his *Letter to the Entire Order* 29, Francis gives vent to a cry of jubilation as he recalls God's humility: "Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, so that He Who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally."

Again and again he expresses his amazement at Jesus' love for us, and His unconditional obedience to the Father. As he writes in the *Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful*: "He placed His will in the will of the Father, saying: 'Father, let Your will be done (Matt 26:42); not as I will, but as You will'" (Matt. 26:39).

He continues: "And the will of the Father was such that His blessed and glorious Son, Whom He gave to us and [Who] was born for us, should, through His own blood, offer Himself as a sacrifice and oblation on the altar of the cross: not for Himself through Whom all things were made, but for our sins, leaving us an example that we should follow His footprints" (*2EpFid* 10-13; 1 Pet. 2:21).

For Francis, following in the footsteps of Jesus meant to yield himself (*se exponere*). This expression summarizes the life of the Friar Minor. The verbs he uses in verse 10 of the mission statute express the same idea: The brothers "have given themselves and abandoned their bodies to the Lord Jesus Christ." The sentences that follow simply

⁵² See Bühlmann, *Das Missionsverständnis*, pp. 25-26, cited in n. 27 above. See also *Jor* 5-7.

⁵³ See E. Leclerc, *Franziskus von Assisi oder Rückkehr zum Evangelium* (Werl, 1983), pp. 13-23.

illustrate the same concept: The friars must surrender themselves. The two ways of missioning mentioned earlier are couched in words like *possunt* ("they can"), and much is left to the choice of the individual friar. Here we find the stronger *debent* ("they must"). Self-surrender is essential to being a Friar Minor.

We might ask: Who are the "visible and invisible enemies" the friars must face? Does Francis reckon the nonbelievers as their enemies? This would not be typical of him. He sees the enemy rather in the human heart, in a world where good and evil mingle, and finally as personified in the devil. Therefore he appeals to those who do not live in penance and give themselves over to vices and sins: "See, you blind ones, [you who] are deceived by our enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil. For it is sweet to the body to commit sin and bitter to it to serve God, because all evils, vices, and sins come from and proceed from the heart of men, as the Lord says in the Gospel" (Mark 7:21, 23; 2EpFid 69).

He has something similar to say in *Admonition X* 1-4: "Many people, when they sin or receive an injury, often blame the enemy or some neighbor. But this is not right, for each one has the [real] enemy in his own power; that is, the body through which he sins. Therefore, blessed is that servant (Matt. 24:46) who, having such an enemy in his power, will always hold him captive and wisely guard himself against him, because as long as he does this, no other enemy, seen or unseen, will be able to harm him."⁵⁴

Once again the enemy is located in the human heart. To be ready to do combat with visible enemies a man must first have control over himself. The same lesson is the theme of the well-known tales of the wolf of Gubbio and the bandits of Monte Casale.⁵⁵

Self-conquest is also a prerequisite for warfare with invisible enemies: temptations and diabolical suggestions. The life of Francis furnishes numerous illustrations.⁵⁶

A confrontation with visible and invisible enemies implies no self-defense, no concern about arming oneself, a suppression of anxiety — willingness to take risks, to expose oneself to dangerous situations, and courage in the face of death. All this postulates control of oneself and love for God and neighbor — including enemies — a love greater than love for one's own life and limb.

⁵⁴ See Lothar Hardick, O.F.M., *Die Ermahnungen des hl. Franziskus von Assisi* (Werl, 1981), pp. 86-92.

⁵⁵ Fior 21, 26. See "Francis's liberation strategy" in L. Boff, *Zärtlichkeit und Kraft: Franz von Assisi mit den Augen der Armen gesehen* (Düsseldorf, 1982), pp. 143-53.

⁵⁶ 1Cel 42; 2Cel 116, 122; LP 63; Fior 3, 23, 27.

11) Chapter 16, verses 12–15: "Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs (Matt. 5:10). If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). And: "If they persecute you in one city, flee to another (Matt. 10:23). Blessed are you (Matt. 5:11) when people shall hate you (Luke 6:22) and malign" (Matt. 5:11) and persecute you and "drive you out, abuse you, denounce your name as evil (Luke 6:22) and utter every kind of slander against you because of Me" (Matt. 5:11).

This passage and the ones that follow further develop the theme of *expropriatio* ("divestment") and *expositio* ("yielding") with words borrowed from Jesus Christ as He sent out His disciples (Matt. 10:5–42), and from the Beatitudes.⁵⁷ Christ lived for others and paid the price with His life. Whoever really walks in His footsteps will experience the same fate.

Francis's choice of words shows that he was under no illusions. If the Friars Minor are to conform their life to Jesus, they too must be prepared to lay down their lives. To become involved means to take risks. To be persecuted, rejected and mocked — all these words occur in chapter 16 of the *Earlier Rule*.

Celano and Bonaventure single out Francis's wish for martyrdom as the principal motive for his encounter with the sultan.⁵⁸ They find support in the writings of the saint himself. Readiness for martyrdom is asked not only of those who go among the Saracens but of all the brothers wherever they may be. Chapter 22 is not just a testament that Francis left to the friars before he set out for the East.⁵⁹ Says Egger: "To judge from its contents, this text should be considered rather an exhortation to fidelity."⁶⁰ As he had done in the *Admonitions*, so too in the *Earlier Rule* XXII 1–4 he addresses himself to all the friars, explains the Scriptures, and puts true and false conduct in sharp relief:

Let us pay attention, all [my] brothers, to what the Lord says: "Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you" (Matt. 5:44), for our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose footprints we must follow (1 Pet. 2:21), called His

⁵⁷ For a list of passages where suffering and joy are contrasted, see Lehmann, *Grundzüge*, p. 77 (cited in n. 30 above),

⁵⁸ See nn. 33 and 40 above. See also D.E. Randolph, "The Desire for Martyrdom: Leitmotiv of St. Bonaventure," in *Franciscan Studies* 32 (1972): 74–87; Manselli, *Franziskus*, pp. 222–24; B. Willeke, "Das Leben lassen: Zeugnis ohne Grenzen," in Camps and Hunold, *Erschaffe*, pp. 153–68, cited in n. 27 above.

⁵⁹ David Flood offers the following theory as a working hypothesis: "Chapter 17 is a farewell, and so a kind of testament that Francis left for the friars when he went to the Saracens in 1219" (*Die Regula*, p. 133, cited in n. 25 above).

⁶⁰ Willi Egger, O.F.M.Cap., "Verbum in corde — cor ad Deum": Analyse und Interpretation von RegNB XXII," in *Lau* 23 (1982): 286–311, esp. p. 296. For a discussion of these questions see Schmucki, *Schrittweise Entdeckung*, p. 393, n. 70, cited in n. 7 above.

betrayal "friend" (Matt. 26:50) and gave Himself willingly to those who crucified Him. Our friends, then, are all those who unjustly afflict upon us trials and ordeals, shame and injuries, sorrows and torments, martyrdom and death; we must love them greatly for we will possess eternal life because of what they bring upon us.

The affinity of this passage with the mission statute is obvious. Francis adopts Jesus' greeting to Judas ("friend") and draws some important consequences.⁶¹ Those who treat us as badly as Judas did Jesus are our friends. Love for them is based on our hope for eternal life. The eschatological promise of the kingdom of heaven in the mission statute is made to those who suffer persecution and lay down their lives for Christ.

12) *Chapter 16, verses 16–21*: "Rejoice on that day and be glad (Luke 6:23) because your reward is very great in heaven (Matt. 5:12). And I say to you, my friends, do not be frightened by these things (Luke 12:4), and do not fear those who kill the body (Matt. 10:28) and after that can do no more (Luke 12:4). Take care not to be disturbed (Matt. 24:6). For through your patience you will possess your souls (Luke 21:19); and whoever perseveres to the end will be saved" (Matt. 10:22; 24:13).

Fear and terror, confusion and dread of death can strike anyone who undertakes to imitate Christ. Francis finds the courage to commit himself totally. He exhorts his followers to patience and perseverance and concludes with a glowing profession of faith in the promise given by Jesus.

Amid the dangers of the life of the Friars Minor, with all its conflicts and sufferings, happiness and serenity are not only possible but assured. Their joy, patience and endurance must show that the friars are not indulging in wishful thinking but are trusting in Him Who attained glory through His passion and death. A life of renunciation (*expropriatio*) and a willingness to suffer for God is Christian witness more powerful than any words.

The association of suffering and happiness is also found in chapter 17. Francis pleads with all not to be complacent and deceive themselves with fine words and external works. Happiness will flow from where it is least expected:

"Yet do not rejoice in this: that the spirits are subject to you" (Luke 10:20). And we should be firmly convinced that nothing belongs to us except [our] vices and sins. Rather we must rejoice when we would fall into various trials (James 1:2) and endure every sort of anguish of soul and body or ordeals in this world for the sake of eternal life. Therefore, all [of us] brothers must beware of all pride and vainglory (*RegNB XVII 6–9*).

⁶¹ According to Dominique Gagnan, Francis is the first to see Jesus' greeting to Judas as an expression of love for one's enemy and not as sarcasm ("Office de la Passion, prière quotidienne de S. François d'Assise," in *Antonianum* 55 [1980]: 3–86, esp. p. 66, n. 132).

Even success in the missions can lead to pride. True happiness is tested and preserved through suffering. This is the lesson Francis teaches us in the parable of perfect joy: "If my brothers were to go to the nonbelievers and convert all of them to the faith ... I tell you that not even this is perfect joy" (VPLaet 6). He asks Brother Leo to write down all the discomforts they might encounter when they reached home at night in the depth of winter: cold, bleeding feet, a rude porter and the door slammed in their face. And he concludes: "I tell you this: If I had patience and did not become upset, there would be true joy in this, and true virtue and the salvation of the soul" (VPLaet 15).⁶²

Francis echoes the words of St. Paul: "I will not glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified to me and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14; see also 1 Cor. 13:1-13 and 2 Cor. 11:16).

To preserve patience and joy is for Francis something greater than the conversion of the heathen. Missionary activity consists primarily in being subject to every creature and facing up to every kind of contradiction without losing control of oneself. The *Canticle of Brother Sun* was the product of suffering. Here Francis manifests himself as a man who welcomed sickness and death and as a result attained a happiness that he is eager to share with every creature.⁶³

Summary of Chapter 16 of the Earlier Rule

After this analysis of chapter 16 of the *Earlier Rule*, we can summarize the basic principles of Franciscan mission as follows:

1. The Franciscan charism is essentially missionary.
2. Mission among non-Christians is a special calling. It is not, however, limited to the clergy.
3. Once a calling has been freely accepted by a friar, the respective minister has both the right and the duty to examine his suitability. Mission comes first from God, then from the community.
4. "Going among the Saracens" is part of the friars' vocation "to go about the world," which is the hallmark of Franciscan life.
5. Franciscan mission style is one of simplicity and minority. The friars are not to adopt a polemic or hostile attitude. They are to go among their fellowmen as their servants.
6. A readiness for martyrdom is essential. To live as sheep among wolves is the lot of the missionary. A missionary vocation is stamped

⁶² See Lothar Hardick, O.F.M., *Die wahre und vollkommene Freude des heiligen Franziskus* (Werl in Westphalia, 1981); Optatus van Asseldonk, O.F.M.Cap., "Francesco e i suoi seguaci come testimoni della gioia di Cristo," in *Lettura spirituale-apostolica delle Fonti Francescane*, ed. G. Cardaropoli and M. Conti (Rome, 1980), pp. 131-49.

⁶³ See Lehmann, *Tiefe und Weite*, pp. 279-324, cited in n. 47 above. See also C. Pohlmann, *Der neue Mensch Franziskus* (Mainz, 1985).

with the sign of the cross. It entails sharing the ministry — and at times the death — of Christ.

7. Good example must precede preaching, and preaching precedes baptism.

8. Witness is given candidly and peacefully, with a readiness to accept the native culture and to endure conflict and persecution.

9. Their speech should be simple. They must begin with the mystery of the triune God and show Him to be Creator, Redeemer and Savior.

10. Baptism must communicate life and unfold the grandeur of the kingdom of God.

11. Missionary activity must be exercised with an eye on the promises of Jesus. Relying on His word and for the sake of His love, it is possible to endure suffering and persecution, and even to derive true joy from them.

Part 2B

The Letters

In his letters Francis almost always introduces himself as “brother” and “little servant.”⁶⁴ His modesty, however, does not detract from the great importance he attaches to his message. He asks that his letters be given the widest possible circulation. They must be carefully preserved, copied, shared with others or read to them, and even learned by heart. Whoever does this should know that he will be blessed by the Lord.

At the conclusion of the *Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful* 88, the saint writes: “And to all men and women who will receive them kindly [and] understand their meaning and pass them on to others by their example: ‘If they have persevered in them to the end’ (Matt. 24:13), may the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit bless them. Amen.”

The circle of his addressees is significant. He does not limit himself to the members of his order. He turns to the diocesan clergy (*EpCler*), the civic leaders (*EpRect*), indeed to all men, as can be seen from the *Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful* 1: “To all Christian religious clergy and laity, men and women, and to all who live in the whole world, Brother Francis, their servant and subject, [offers] homage and reverence, true peace from heaven and sincere love in the Lord.”

The universality of his appeal is reflected also in his very outspoken letter to the civil authorities: “To all mayors and consuls, magistrates

⁶⁴ *1EpCust* 1; *EpOrd* 2; *EpRect* 1; *2EpFid* 1, 87. See Leonhard Lehmann, O.F.M.Cap., “Der Mensch Franziskus im Licht seiner Briefe,” in *Wiss. Weish.* 46 (1983): 108–38, esp. pp. 114–19 [translated by Ignatius McCormick, O.F.M.Cap., in *Greyfriars Review* 5, no. 2 (1991): 159–89. — Editor].

and rulers throughout the world, and to everyone who may receive these letters: Brother Francis, your little and despicable servant in the Lord God, sends [his] wishes of health and peace to all of you" (*EpRect* 1).

Francis pursues two missionary objectives in this letter: promotion of Holy Communion and the institution of a public call to prayer. He speaks of the latter in his letter to the civil leaders: "And you should manifest such honor to the Lord among the people entrusted to you that every evening an announcement be made by a town crier or some other signal that praise and thanks may be given by all people to the all-powerful Lord God" (*EpRect* 7).

We find the same wish expressed in his first letter to the superiors of the order. He also discusses the celebration of the Eucharist and the reverence due to the body of the Lord. Thereupon he speaks about a permanent ritual to praise the Lord: "And in every sermon which you give, admonish the people concerning [the need] of penance, and [tell them] that no one can be saved unless he receive the Body and Blood of the Lord (John 6:54). And when It is sacrificed upon the altar by the priest and carried to any place, let all the people, on bended knee, praise, glorify, and honor the Lord God living and true. And you must announce and preach His praise to all peoples in such a manner that at every hour and whenever the bells are rung, praise, glory, and honor are given to the all-powerful God throughout all the earth" (*1EpCust* 6-8).⁶⁵

It is remarkable how often Francis appeals to the whole human race — all people — the whole world. The saint asks that a definite time be set for a universal praise of God that would encompass the entire globe. The idea was novel, and he pressed hard for its realization.

A number of authors have pointed out that Francis may have gotten this idea from the Islamic practice of the *salât*.⁶⁶ He observed how, at the call of the muezzin the people gathered for prayer and prostrated themselves on the ground before God. He was so impressed by this Muslim custom that he wanted to introduce something like it in the West. Then Christians and Muslims could be united in the praise of God. A bridge would be built between the two faiths. Unfortunately his proposal met with little success. The recipients of the letter were not

⁶⁵ This translation differs from that given by Hardick and Grau in *Die Schriften*, p. 76, cited in n. 1 above. See Lehmann, *Der Brief*, p. 311, cited in n. 39 above, and its reference to Italian and Spanish translations.

⁶⁶ See Bertrand Cornet, O.F.M., "Le 'De reverentia Corporis Domini': Exhortation et lettre de s. François," in *Etudes franciscaines* 7 (1956): 20-35, 155-71, esp. p. 170; Ottocar Bonmann, O.F.M., *Die Schriften des hl. Franziskus von Assisi* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1940), pp. 5, 9; Esser, *Opuscula*, p. 175, cited in n. 1 above.

interested, or they thought the idea too utopian. Later on, Bonaventure (d. 1274) promoted the Angelus devotion, but it was only a distant echo of Francis's call to prayer and quite different in content. The distinctly Christian commemoration of the Incarnation and the *Hail Mary* were substituted for the praise of God the almighty, Whom the Muslims, too, worship.

After his return from the East, where he contracted a painful eye malady, Francis went about ceaselessly, seeking out people where they lived, to preach penance and promote peace. When illness curtailed his traveling, he resorted to the apostolate of the pen. He had no thought of retirement. Even during his retreat on La Verna, where he received the sacred stigmata, he was concerned about Brother Leo, who was suffering from depression and wrote him a letter of encouragement, with a blessing and prayer to raise up his spirits.⁶⁷ His consciousness of mission led him to turn his attention to all people. As he writes in the *Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful* 2–3: "Since I am the servant of all, I am obliged to serve all and to administer to them the fragrant words of my Lord. Therefore, on reflecting that, since I cannot visit each one of you in person because of the infirmity and weakness of my body, I have proposed to set before you in this present letter and message the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Word of the Father, and the words of the Holy Spirit, which are spirit and life" (John 6:64).

This passage shows how Francis had worked out a plan to reach the widest possible circle of readers. He begs his recipients to accept his message gladly and then distribute it to others. In effect he is setting up a chain letter.⁶⁸ He wrote his last letter obviously with the help of a scholarly friar.⁶⁹ Here too we find an allusion to the ritual prostration practiced by the Muslims at the call of the muezzin. He urges the friars to do likewise: "[At the mention of] His name you must adore Him with fear and reverence, prostrate on the ground" (Rom. 1:25; *EpOrd* 4).⁷⁰

His appeal to adore Jesus Christ in word and gesture recalls the custom mentioned in the *Testament*. When the brothers enter a church or come upon a crucifix they should bow down to the ground and adore

⁶⁷ Concerning this *Blessing for Brother Leo* see Lehmann, *Tiefe und Weite*, pp. 247–77, cited in n. 47 above.

⁶⁸ For more details see Lehmann, *Franziskus*, pp. 117–25, cited in n. 64 above; idem, *Grundzüge*, p. 80, cited in n. 30 above.

⁶⁹ See Octavian Schmucki, O.F.M.Cap., "La 'Lettera a tutto l'Ordine' di san Francesco," in *L'Italia Francescana* 55 (1980): 245–85 [translated by Ignatius McCormick, O.F.M.Cap., in *Greyfriars Review* 3, no. 1 (April 1989): 1–33. — Editor].

⁷⁰ See de Beer, *François*, pp. 100–104, cited in n. 13 above. See also idem, *Der hl. Franziskus*, p. 704, cited in n. 18 above: "So to some extent Islam brought about a renewal of transcendence in Francis's spiritual life."

the Almighty with body and soul with the words: "We adore You, Lord Jesus Christ, in all Your churches throughout the world, and we bless You, for through Your holy cross You have redeemed the world" (*Test* 5).

This text shows how the friars were deeply conscious of the greatness and omnipresence of God in all their prayers. Their reverence for God flowed over to respect all His churches. The thought of Christ, Who delivered Himself for all on the cross made them realize that to follow Him meant to work for the salvation of all. Missionary activity issues from contemplation and meditation on the crucified Savior.⁷¹ It led to the practice of erecting crucifixes and stations of the cross as a reminder that the entire world had been redeemed. Francis bequeathed his commitment to God and mission as a heritage to all his friars. He continues in his *Letter to the Entire Order* 5-9: "Pay attention to my words" (Acts 3:14). 'Incline the ear' (Isaiah 55:3) of your heart and obey the voice of the Son of God. Observe His commands with your whole heart and fulfill His counsels with a perfect mind. Give praise to Him since He is good (Ps. 135:1) and exalt Him by your deeds (Tob. 13:6), for He has sent you into the entire world for this reason (Tob. 13:4) that in word and deed you may give witness to His voice and bring everyone to know that there is no one who is all-powerful except Him" (Tob. 13:4).

Part 2C

The Prayers

Francis's letters make it clear that prayer and the apostolate are inseparable. In fact, the distinction between letter and prayer is purely a matter of literary genre. At times what begins as a letter takes on the form of prayer.⁷²

On the other hand, the prayers that have survived betray Francis's missionary consciousness. The prayer from the *Testament*, in which Francis includes the entire world, is a good example (verse 5). Making use of the Psalms and liturgical hymns, he praises God every day and invites all, young and old, to join him (*LaudHor* 7-8). Arousing men to prayer is an essential element of the mission apostolate. It means delivering them from "the cares and anxieties of this world, and the preoccupations of this life" (*2EpFid* 65) so as to raise them up and animate them to sing God's praises.

⁷¹ E.g. *OffPass*. See Schmucki, *Das Leiden Christi*, cited in n. 10 above. See also Schmucki, *Gotteslob und Meditation nach Beispiel und Anweisung des hl. Franziskus von Assisi* (St. Fidelis-Druckerei: Lucerne, 1980), pp. 36-54, 57 [translated by Ignatius McCormick, O.F.M.Cap., in *Greyfriars Review* 4, no. 1 (1990): 23-73. — Editor]. See also Isnard Frank, *Franz von Assisi: Frage auf eine Antwort* (Düsseldorf, 1982), pp. 76-100.

⁷² E.g. *2EpFid* 61-62, 88; *EpOrd* 27, 50-52.

Francis is a troubadour of God. Toward the end of his life he voiced in song all that he longed for and lived for. The *Cantic of Brother Sun* is more than a poem. It is the lyrical expression of a mystical experience. It is a prayer. It is a praise of God ringing out in ever fresh variations with its eightfold *Laudato si*. What the saint's companions wrote of him is true today. As Rotzetter says: "From the very beginning, Francis left the imprint of his mystical experience on his missionary thinking."⁷³ The *Cantic* is not only a praise of God. A number of objectives are set forth. Men are called upon to "give pardon and bear infirmity and tribulation" (v. 10) The *Cantic* speaks of patience under persecution and a readiness for martyrdom — something Francis expected of all his friars as he writes in the mission statute. Even the strophe on death has missionary overtones. He is not blind to the limitations of our human condition. He accepts them, and calls on all to be reconciled with God and with all creation. To pardon, endure, promote peace, to accept whatever death God sends us, all touch on the very nature of human existence and its social involvements. For this reason the *Cantic of Brother Sun* is forever timely. The present problems of controlling our future in the face of the ecological crisis, the need for disarmament and preservation of peace, contemporary society's denial of death — all accentuate the *Cantic's* relevance.

The *Cantic* ends with the appeal: "Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility" (verse 14). Here its mission orientation comes to full flower in a call for praise and thanksgiving. But thankfulness is empty if it does not lead to a following of Christ in humble service — in short, to the ideals outlined in the mission statute: Never to quarrel or contend, but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake (*RegNB* XVI 6).

Francis's *Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary* is also missionary in character. He looks on Mary as the archetypal image of the church and the vessel of God's grace for all times. From this ecclesial perspective he envisions all people participating in the "fullness of grace and every good" (v. 3). At the end he greets those transcendent powers (*virtutes*) of God that lead the unfaithful to be faithful: "And [hail] all you holy virtues, which through the grace and light of the Holy Spirit are poured into the hearts of the faithful so that from their faithless state you may make them faithful to God" (verse 6).⁷⁴

We find a similar missionary tone in his explanation of the *Lord's Prayer*, where he speaks of the love of God and neighbor. Francis

⁷³ *Der Sonnengesang des hl. Franziskus als missionsarisches Lied von aktueller Bedeutung*, in Camps and Hunold, *Erschaffe*, pp. 44–61, esp. p. 44, a reference to LP 83, cited in no. 27 above.

⁷⁴ See Lehmann, *Tiefe und Weite*, pp. 103–19.

interprets "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" as God's will being done in heaven when we love Him, and on earth when we love one another. Love of neighbor consists precisely in this: "By drawing them all with our whole strength to Your love, by rejoicing in the good fortunes of others as well as our own, and by sympathizing with the misfortunes of others, and by giving offense to no one" (v. 5).

The culmination of all love of neighbor is to lead them to God as far as lies in our power. Christian love bespeaks a profound awareness of mission. Francis is trying to arouse a sense of responsibility for our neighbor's salvation.⁷⁵

Let us take another look at the remarkable chapter 23 of the *Earlier Rule*. Here we have a text that combines praise and exhortation, preaching and prayer. With its alternating thanksgiving and admonitions, it is a typical *laude*. The first part resembles a liturgical preface with its expressions of gratitude for the whole history of salvation, from the creation of the world to the Second Coming (*RegNB* I 6). In the second part, the song of thanksgiving gives place to an appeal directed by the friars to all persons of whatever rank in the church and in the world. After a detailed list of clergy and laity, the friars turn with great urgency, as useless servants, and "humbly ask and beg ... all the small and the great, all peoples, races, tribes, and tongues, all nations and all peoples everywhere on earth who are and who will be — that all of us may persevere in the true faith and in penance, for otherwise no one will be saved" (*RegNB* XXIII 7).

Here the friars extend their apostolate far beyond the confines of the Christian world. All people, including the pagans (*gentes*), are included in this liturgy of thanksgiving and penance, which the friars would celebrate in the streets and public squares. A worldwide *Laus Dei* — this is the missionary goal of chapter 23 of the *Earlier Rule*. Elm expresses this well: "With pentecostal fervor Francis unveils the vision of a worldwide praise of God."⁷⁶

Even more than the mission statute and his letters, the *Canticle of Brother Sun* reveals how his mission flowered from his own quest for God. Franciscan mission is grounded in mysticism.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 170–73.

⁷⁶ *Busspredigt*, p. 81, cited in n. 23 above. For a study of the entire chapter 23 of the *Earlier Rule* see Leonhard Lehmann, O.F.M.Cap., "Gratias agimus tibi: Structure and Content of Chapter XXIII of the *Regula non bullata*," in *Lau* 23 (1982): 312–76 [and in *Greyfriars Review* 5, no. 1 (1991): 1–54. — Editor]. See also *idem*, *Tiefe und Weite*, pp. 175–219.

Summary of Part 2

Francis's outreach to the non-Christian world is to be found in his letters and prayers even more clearly than in the *Rule*. We may sum up its characteristics as follows:

1. A blend of mysticism and mission.
2. A combination of humility and courage.
3. Concern for all people and for the individual human being.
4. A conviction that he is the apostle of Jesus Christ and an awareness of the importance of the mission entrusted to him.
5. The use of letters and circulars.
6. The inclusion of civic leaders in his efforts.
7. An insight into the values shared by all religions.
8. The introduction of a public call to prayer — something that Francis wished to introduce into the Christian world from Islam.
9. To lead all people to the love of God as the first duty of the Christian.
10. The praise of God in the true faith and in penance.

Part 3

Mission Based on the Triune God

After explaining to whom and how Francis is speaking in his missionary writings, we arrive at a deeper level: mission's foundation in the blessed Trinity.

Francis's Personal Devotion to the Blessed Trinity

Francis frequently turns to the Blessed Trinity in his writings and prayers. Examples can be found in the *Praises To Be Said at All the Hours*, the *Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, and in the great canticle of thanksgiving and exhortation in chapter 23 of the *Earlier Rule*.

His doxology for all the Hours has three divisions in honor of the most holy Trinity. It has been justly called "a cosmic Trinitarian liturgy."⁷⁷ His letters, as well as the *Earlier Rule*, open with an invocation to the blessed Trinity and conclude with an appeal to God "who lives and reigns in perfect trinity and undivided unity."

The *Legend of the Three Companions* (verse 60) speaks of Francis as *cultor Trinitatis*. This characteristic is borne out in his writings.⁷⁸ His faith in the Trinity was no arid dogmatic formulation. It was an expression of life, a vital, dynamic force, a share in the life of God Himself. In his *Form of Life for St. Clare*, he calls the sisters the daughters of the

⁷⁷ Lehmann, *Tiefe und Weite*, pp. 78-85.

⁷⁸ Still worthwhile is Willibrord Lampen, O.F.M.'s "S. Franciscus, cultor Trinitatis," in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 21 (1928): 449-67.

Father and the spouses of the Holy Spirit. And what is true of them is true of all those

who have done [penance] and persevere in it to the end.... They will be children of the heavenly Father (Matt. 5:45) Whose works they do. And they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 12:50.) We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined to Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. We are brothers when we do the will of His Father Who is in heaven (Matt. 12:50). [We are] mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body (1 Cor. 6:20) through love and a pure and sincere conscience; we give birth to Him through a holy manner of working, which should shine before others as an example (Matt. 5:16; *2EpFid* 48-53).

His contemplation on life in God does not lack a missionary element. We are mothers of Christ when, while bearing Him within us, we offer Him to others. Before undertaking any enterprise one must be filled with Christ. Good works must come before talking. As in the mission statute, he returns to the witness of life and example.

This passage is followed by an ecstatic cry of jubilation over the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (*2EpFid* 54-56). A threefold "Oh!" and many expressions of praise reveal Francis's happiness in the knowledge that he is a partaker of the divine life.

It is easy to understand why one who lived this mystery so profoundly desired that all of us prepare a dwelling place for God, Who is "the Lord, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (*RegNB* XXII 27), and that non-Christians, too, may come to believe "in the almighty God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (*RegNB* XVI 7).⁷⁹

In the *Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful* 57-60, Francis moves on from an outburst of jubilation to the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus. He focuses on two actions of the Savior: The sacrifice of His life for His sheep and His prayer for us to the Father:

Father, all those whom You gave Me in the world were Yours, and You have given them to Me (John 17:6). And the words which You gave to Me I have given to them, and they have accepted them and truly know that I came from You, and they have believed that You have sent Me (John 17:8). I pray for them and not for the world (John 17:9); bless and sanctify them (John 17:17), and I sanctify Myself for their sakes so that they may see My glory (John 17:24) in Your kingdom (Matt. 20:21).

Jesus, Sent by the Father.⁸⁰

Obviously chapter 17 of St. John's Gospel was a favorite of St. Francis. Esser's study of its use in his writings shows that "this chapter

⁷⁹ For the order of these passages see Egger, *Verbum in corde*, p. 309, cited in n. 60 above. See also W. Viviani, *L'ermeneutica di Francesco d'Assisi: Indagine alla luce di Gv 12-17 nei suoi scritti* (Rome, 1983), pp. 180-90, 245.

⁸⁰ For the following thoughts I am indebted to Thadée Matura, O.F.M., "Die trinitarische Begründung der franziskanischen Mission," in *Korrespondenzkurs zum franziskanish-missionarischen Charisma*, Lehrbrief 3 (Missionszent. der Franziskaner: Bonn, 1985).

was deeply embedded in his heart so that he was able to express his whole theology in its words."⁸¹ He does not quote it in its entirety. He concentrates on the theme of mission. He united himself to Jesus' prayer as he writes: "They have believed that You have sent Me." His mission embraces both his own followers and the people to whom he writes. He quotes St. John more extensively in chapter 22 of the *Earlier Rule*, where he has the friars in mind. The word "send" recurs four times: "Father, they have believed that You sent Me.... As You have sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.... I pray not only for these, but also for those who because of their words will believe in Me, so that they may be completely one, and the world may know that You have sent Me and that You have loved them as You have loved Me" (John 17: 8-26).

When Francis prays for his followers in the words of Jesus, he is, in effect, saying that he considers himself as one who has been sent, and in turn sends others. When Francis sends his brothers out into the world, it is Jesus, in Whose name he speaks, that sends them.

In both passages Jesus is presented as the one sent by the Father (*RegNB* XXII 42; *2EpFid* 58). The Father transmits His message to the Son and gives Him certain men as His followers. He sends Him into the world to teach these men Who the Father is and reveal His name to them, "so that the love with which You have loved Me may also be in them and I in them" (John 17:26).

Jesus' mission emanates from the love that the Father has for men, and from His desire to open a way for them to share His life. This movement from God, personalized in the Son He sent, proceeds from the heart of the Father, "Who so loved the world that He sent His only-begotten Son" (John 3:16).

Francis makes the words of Jesus in John 17 his own. The Father's sending of His Son into the world emanates from the depths of the blessed Trinity. Mission is rooted in the love God has for us.

The Mission of the Son

1. To Announce the Name of the Father

In accord with John 17:6, Francis believes that Jesus was sent first of all to reveal the name of the Father to men (*RegNB* XXII 41). God wishes to make Himself known to man and entrusts this revelation to the Son: "I have made Your name known to the men You have given Me" (John 17:6), says Jesus. He promises a complete revelation in the future (John 17:26; *RegNB* XXII 42, 54).

⁸¹ *Verbum in corde*, p. 306, cited in n. 60 above. See Optatus van Asseldonk, O.F.M.Cap., "Altri aspetti giovannei negli scritti di s. Francesco," in *Antonianum* 54 (1979): 447-86, esp. pp. 471-86. See also Viviani, *L'ermeneutica*, pp. 226-97, cited in n. 79 above.

2. To Accomplish the Work of the Father

God's revelation through the Son is not limited to a verbal message. He teaches who God is by what He is and what He does. Francis describes this second aspect of the Son's mission in the "preface" found in chapter 22 of the *Earlier Rule*, verses 1 to 4. God reveals Himself to us in the creation of a world that He calls "good," of which the human being is the culmination. The harmony destroyed by sin will be restored through the Incarnation and the salvific death of the Son. One day the Son will return in the glory of His majesty to judge mankind and establish the eternal kingdom of God.

Creation, redemption and Parousia are stages of the threefold divine plan for which Francis offers thanks. He directs his gratitude to the Father, Who accomplishes His work through His only Son with the Holy Spirit.

Francis sees the Son as the only one Who carried out the will of the Father perfectly. He continues his prayer of thanksgiving: "And because all of us wretches and sinners are not worthy to pronounce Your name, we humbly ask that our Lord Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son in whom You were well pleased, together with the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, give You thanks as it pleases You and Him for everything, [He] Who always satisfied You in everything, through Whom You have done such great things for us. Alleluia!" (*RegNB XXIII 5*).

3. To Reveal the Love of the Father

We find another prayer of thanksgiving in the preface: "And we thank You, for as through Your Son You created us, so also, through Your holy love, with which You loved us, You brought about His birth as true God and true man by the glorious, ever-virgin, most blessed, holy Mary, and You willed to redeem us captives through His cross and blood and death" (*RegNB XXIII 3*).

The motive for the Incarnation and Redemption is the Father's love for His human children. It is as strong as the love of the Father for the Son. Francis was overwhelmed by the thought of this incomprehensible love and breaks out in ecstatic speech. It is not surprising that he is captivated by the words of the last discourse of Jesus: "The world shall know that You sent Me and that You loved them as You loved Me.... I will reveal Your name to them so that Your love for Me may live in them and I may live in them" (John 17:23, 26); *RegNB XXII 53-54*.⁸²

Jesus prays that the world may come to understand his mission, which is to make His Father's name known. This name is love — the love between Father and Son. Once the disciples understand that they

⁸² Chapters 22 and 23 are usually considered two independent sections of the *Rule*. But their similar train of thought, and the fact that John 17: 26 is quoted in both of them, show their unity. See Lehmann, "Gratias agimus," pp. 348-51, cited in n. 76 above.

are loved as Jesus was loved by the Father, oneness in love (*communio*) will be restored — a union of love that is God.

The ultimate goal of Jesus' mission is to communicate true life to us through union with God. As He says: "Father, I wish that where I am, they also may be with Me, that they may see Your glory" (John 17:24).

With this sentence Francis concludes his quotation from the High Priestly Prayer and brings chapter 22 to a close. Thereby he proclaims that the mission of Jesus is to enable us to participate in the glory of the Father, and to lead us to the kingdom that the Father has prepared for us from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34; *RegNB* XXIII 4). This kingdom is the realization of the prayer of Jesus that His disciples may be with Him and see the glory of the Father.

4. The Mission of the Friars

As we have said above, Francis envisioned for the Friars Minor a mission over and above that common to all Christians. For both groups he quotes John 17, but he singles out the vocation of the friars in John 17:18: "As You have sent Me into the world, so also I send them into the world" (*RegNB* XXIII 51).

In his *Letter to the Entire Order* 9, he also writes that the mission of the friars comes from the Son of God, to Whose voice they must pay heed: "He has sent you into the entire world for this reason (Tob. 13:4): that in word and deed you may give witness to His voice" (Tob. 13:4).

In both passages the mission of the friars is seen as a continuation of the mission Jesus received from His Father. They share in the mission of the church as a whole, which is the mission of Jesus. All comes from the Father as the primordial source. Consequently Franciscan mission has the same objective as that of Jesus and His church: to reveal to the world who God is and the greatness of His power and glory. Like John, Francis stresses above all else the love with which the Father loves us like His own Son (*RegNB* XXII 53–54; *LaudHor* 11). Jesus is the great exemplar for Franciscan mission — Jesus Who prays for us and offers Himself for us, Who chose to become our brother, Who laid down His life for His sheep, "Who has given so many good things, and [Who] will [continue] to do so for the future" (*2EpFid* 61). The friars are sent forth to proclaim the great purpose of Jesus' coming — to live one's life for others.

And so we return to the core of the mission statute. To be a missionary means, in the final analysis, to conduct oneself as Jesus did, mindful of His words: "Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matt. 10:16; *RegNB* XVI 1).

Part 4

Final Summary

1. Franciscan mission is based on the mystery of the most holy Trinity.
2. It originates in the love of the Father, Who loves us as He loves His own Son, Whom He sent for our salvation.
3. Jesus Christ has been sent by the Father. Through His words and deeds He fulfilled the salvific plan of the Father and manifested His love.
4. Mission within and outside the fraternity is based on the love of God. The friars must be aware that God loves them and accepts them into the life of the most holy Trinity.
5. Filled with joy, they hasten to carry out Jesus' mission: to live as He did, to spread God's love as He did, by deeds rather than words.
6. The ultimate goal is the fulfillment of human existence through union with the blessed Trinity.
7. The friars pursue this goal, rejoicing at having such a Father in heaven and His only Son as spouse and brother.

Franciscan mission is most timely. The three "ways" found in the *Earlier Rule* and its Trinitarian basis are relevant today. The renunciation of power, which Francis practiced and preached, obliges modern friars as well to forego all ambition and pretension to power, even in such sophisticated areas as the press and any reliance on the secular arm. Whenever possible, they are to enlist the cooperation of others. Franciscan mission is one of peace.

In an age of proliferation of words, multiplied many times over by the media, the witness of the Franciscan way of life is sorely needed. The eloquence of example must counter a slogan-mentality. The harmony of mission and life, as exemplified in Francis, is of paramount importance today.

Francis saw his mission as a gift of God, but exercised it in dependence on the church (*Test* 14). But his understanding of mission was not ecclesio-centric. The whole world was the field of his missionary activity. Franciscan mission is world mission.

Just like Jesus, Francis sends out his disciples two by two. Faced with the individualism and isolation prevalent in the world today, we need the witness of community life as a shared experience in work and communication. Franciscan mission is community mission.

The Second Vatican Council once again stressed the Trinitarian origins of the church's mission (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 2). Today's brothers and sisters of Francis must be aware of the Trinitarian dimension of their mission. Franciscan mission is Trinitarian.