The Spirituality of Transitus in the Writings of St. Bonaventure

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he idea of *transitus* or passage occurs frequently in Bonaventure's writings. This emphasis tells us that our author is interested in everything that comes from the Creator's hand: the whole of creation whose evolution is governed by the seminal reasons; history whose course is directed from within by the economy of salvation; human beings, microcosms who know they come from God and will return to him, passing over this earth and in this history like pilgrims in search of the lasting city.

The idea of transitus underlies many of Bonaventure's texts and many of his commentaries. But we were surprised not to find it treated explicitly more often. We found no treatment in the magisterial works (Sentence Commentary, Disputed Questions, Breviloquium), and in the spiritual writings our catch was scarcely greater. The scripture commentaries and the sermons were about the only thing found that offered expositions worthy of our attention.

These few findings in no way diminish interest in the theme of transitus in Bonaventure or its importance. First we are going to do a quick inventory of Bonaventure's texts that deal with transitus. We will choose some of them to analyze in detail. Then we will be able to draw some

conclusions on the importance of this theme, its place in Bonaventure's spiritual universe and its interest for us today.

I. Inventory of Texts

The inventory we present here makes no claim to be exhaustive. Our intention is not so much to cite all the texts that deal with *transitus* as to determine in what contexts the word and the theme appear, how reference is made to Sacred Scripture, and to what biblical themes the appearance of *transitus* is linked. We are also trying to determine the schemas followed by the expositions on *transitus* that we are able to find in Bonaventure.

To deal with the idea of *transitus* Bonaventure uses the verbal form or else the noun. From all the texts where these terms are found, we have kept only the ones that express a meaning other than that of simple movement from place to place without special connotation.

A) The context

Thus we are looking at about fifty uses whose context we can state as follows:

1)	In the context of "contemplation	19 uses ¹
2)	In the context of "paschal mystery"	12 uses ²
3)	In the context of "death"	12 uses ³
4)	In the context of "renunciation"	6 uses⁴

¹Perf. Vit., c. 1, n. 6; Perf. Vit., c. 5, n. 7; Comm. Lc., c. 2, n. 36 (VII, 52); Hexaem., coll. 2n, n. 34 (V, 342b); Serm. Sab. Sanct. 1 (IX, 269), Serm. 18 post Pent. 3 (IX, 427); Hexaem., coll. 12, n. 15 (V, 386; Hexaem., coll. 19, n. 2 (V, 420); Leg. Maj., c. 1, n. 3; Brevil., p. 5, c. 6, (V, 259); Itin., Prol., n. 3 (V, 295); Itin., c. 1, n. 2 (V, 29); Itin., c. 1, n. 9 (V, 298); Itin., c. 4, n. 3 (V, 305); Itin., c. 7, n. 1 (V, 312); Itin., c. 7, n. 4 (V, 312); Tripl. via, c. 3, n. 1; Hexaem., coll. 2, n. 32 (V, 342); Itin., c. 7, n. 2 (V, 312).

²Comm. Lc., c. 21, n. 54 (VII, 538); Comm. Jn., c. 13, n. 2 (VI, 425; Coll. Jn., c. 48, n. 2 (VI, 597); I Sent., Proem. (I, 4); Itin., c. 1, n. 9 (V, 298); Itin., c. 7, n. 2 (V, 312); Itin., c. 7, n. 6 (V, 313); Decem praec., coll. 7, n. 18 (V, 532); Hexaem., coll. 2, n. 34 (V, 342); Serm. 1 Adv. 19 (IX, 42); Serm. Feria 2 post Pasc. (IX, 286); Leg. Maj., c. 7, n. 9 (VIII, 525).

³Comm. Sg. (VI, 141); Comm. Sg., c. 3, v/1 (VI, 125); Comm. Sg., c. 3 v/2 (VI, 125); Comm. Jn., c. 5, n. 48 (VI, 311); Comm. Jn., c. 13, n. 2 (VI, 425); Itin., c. 7, n. 6 (VI, 313); Lign. vit., prol., n. 4 (VIII, 69); Solil., c. 3, n. 2 (VIII, 52); Leg. maj., Prol. n. 4 (VIII, 505); Leg. maj., c. 13, n. 2 (VIII, 542); Leg. maj., c. 14, n. 2 (VIII, 545); Hexaem., coll. 2, n. 34 (V, 342)

⁴Comm. Sg. (VI, 141-142); Itin., c. 7, n. 4 (V, 312); Itin., c. 7, n. 6 (V, 313); De donis, coll. 1, n. 15 (V, 460); Leg. maj., c. 7, n. 2 (VIII, 523).

5)	In the context of "passing creatures"	4 uses ⁵
6)	In the context of "opposition" (unchanging/transitory)	3 uses ⁶

This basic classification already seems to us indicative of the affective content of the theme of *transitus* in Bonaventure. For him, the *transitus* takes place chiefly in contemplation. There we are placed in the presence of the paschal mystery and called to realize it in our own death, preceded by a certain number of renunciations. We think it is already possible to characterize Bonaventure's *transitus* as a movement of return to the principle by a process of being conformed to Christ's Passover: to pass from this world to the Father.

B) Scriptural beginnings

When we glance through the texts thus gathered, we are struck by another fact, namely that two citations from Sacred Scripture recur constantly in Bonaventure's writings.

The first is from the Gospel of John (13:1): From this world to the Father. It refers us back to the model of Christ, to his passion and resurrection, and it invites us to make the same passage ourselves.⁷

The second is taken from the book of Sirach (24:26 Vg): Come over to me all you that desire me. It is wisdom who is calling. Bonaventure interprets it in a Christic sense as an invitation to contemplation, the pursuit of wisdom. So once again we find the context of "contemplation."

The fact that the citations and the context are closely linked should not surprise us. But a question arises: Is the scriptural citation just an embellishment, or is it the source of Bonaventure's exposition? Only a study of the texts will enable us to answer.

⁵Comm. Lc., c. 21, n. 52-54 (VII, 537-538); Comm. Lc., c. 22, n. 18 (VII, 544); Leg. maj., c. 6, n. 2 (VIII, 520); Serm. Nat. 1 (IX, 104).

⁶Comm. Lc., c. 21, n. 53 (VII, 537); Brevil., Prolog. § 5, n. 4 (V, 207); Itin., c. 2, n. 6 (V, 301).

⁷Comm. Jn., c. 5, n. 48 (VI, 311); Comm. Jn., c. 12, n. 2 (VI, 425); Itin., c.1, n. 9 (V, 298); Itin., c. 7, n. 6 (V, 343); Leg. maj., c. 7, n. 9 (VIII, 525); Serm. 1 Adv. 19 (IX, 42).

^{*}Comm. Lc., c. 2, n. 36 (VII, 52); Comm. c., c. 12, n. 56 (VII, 325); Comm. Lc., c. 21, n. 54 (VII, 537); Comm. Lc., c. 22, n. 18 (VII, 544); Coll. Jn., c. 48, n. 2 (VI, 597); Itin., c. 1, n. 9 (V, 298); De Bonis, coll. 1., n. 15 (V, 460); Hexaem., coll. 19, n. 1 (V, 420); Serm. 1 Adv. 19, (IX, 42); Serm. Nat. 1 (IX, 103).

C) Themes treated by these texts

If we now examine the themes treated by Bonaventure's expositions on the *transitus*, we see that we can group them around two concerns. One group is related to the paschal mystery, the other to the contemplative journey. They can be divided as follows:

1) Paschal mystery

Celebrate the Passover	6 uses
In imitation of the Hebrews	8 uses ¹⁰
By passing through the Red Sea	7 uses ¹¹
By passing through the Jordan	5 uses ¹²
By passing to glory	4 uses ¹³
By passing to the promise	8 uses ¹⁴

2) Contemplative journey

By passing to wisdom	5 uses ¹
By passing to truth	3 uses ¹
By passing to the things of God	2 uses ¹

⁹Comm. Lc., c. 21, n. 54 (VII, 538); Comm. Lc., c. 22, n. 18 (VII, 544); Comm. Jn., c. 13, n. 2 (VI, 425); Coll. Jn., c. 48, n. 2 (VI, 597); Itin., c. 7, n. 2 (V, 312); Decem praec., coll. 7, n. 18 (V, 532).

¹⁰Comm. Lc., c. 22. n. 18 (VII, 544); I Sent., proem. (I, 4); Itin., c. 1. n. 9 (V, 298); Leg. maj., c. 7, n. 9 (VIII, 525); Leg. maj., c. 7, n. 2 (VIII, 523); Hexaem., coll. 19, n. 1 (V, 420); Serm. Feria 2 post Pasc. (IX, 286); Serm. 1 Adv. 19 (IX, 42).

¹¹Comm. Lc., c. 22, n. 18 (VII, 544); Comm. Jn., c. 13, n. 2 (VI, 425); Coll. Jn., c. 48, n. 2 (VI, 597); I Sent., proem. (I, 4); Itin., c. 7, n. 2 (V, 312); Hexaem., coll. 2, n. 34 (V, 342); Serm. 1 Adv. 19 (IX, 42).

¹²Comm. Lc., c. 22, n. 18 (VII, 544); Coll. Jn., c. 48, n. 2 (VI, 597); Hexaem., coll. 2, n. 34 (V, 342); Serm. 1 Adv. 19 (IX, 42).

¹³Coll. Jn., c. 48, n. 2 (VI, 597); Comm. Sg. (VI, 134); Serm. 1 Adv. 19 (IX, 42); Serm. Nat. 1 (IX, 103-104).

¹⁴Comm. Jn., c. 6, n. 32 (VI, 232); Coll. Jn., c. 48, n. 2 (VI, 597); I Sent., proem. (I, 4); Decem praec., coll. 7, n. 18 (V, 532); Hexaem., coll. 2, n. 34 (V, 342); Hexaem., coll. 12, n. 15 (V, 386); Serm. 1 Adv. 19 (IX, 42); Serm. 18 post Pent. 3 (IX, 427).

¹⁵Comm. Lc., c. 22, n. 18 (VII, 544); Itin., c. 1, n. 9 (V, 298); Hexaem., coll. 19, n. 3 (V, 420); Serm. 1 Adv. 19 (IX, 42); Serm. Nat. 1 (IX, 103-104).

¹⁶Hexaem., coll. 12, n. 15 (V, 386); Hexaem., coll. 19, n. 1 (V, 420); Hexaem., coll. 19, n. 2 (V, 420).

¹⁷Itin., c. 1, n. 9 (V, 298); Itin., c. 7, n. 3 (V, 312).

It is interesting to note the importance of the paschal theme. Bonaventure places great emphasis on its historical and typological echoes. The historical references are also more numerous than the wisdom references (38 versus 10). Admittedly these are only numbers, but they do indicate that reflection on salvation history has an important place in Bonaventure's theology.

D) Schemas of the expositions on the transitus

We are going to try to present, schematically, the expositions Bonaventure has left us on the theme of *transitus* in his scriptural commentaries and in his sermons.

1) Schemas in the scriptural commentaries

We have kept one passage from the commentary on Luke, another from the commentary on the *Book of Wisdom*¹⁸, and one collation on the Gospel of John.

SCHEMA 1

	Comm. Lk 21, 54 (VII, 538)	4	Comm. Wis (VI, 134)	Coll. Jn 48, 2 (VI, 597)
1)	Sin Repentance	±	Sin ± Grace	Vice ± Virtue
2)	Repentance Wisdom	±	Imperfection ± Perfection	Action ± Contemplation
3)	Wisdom Eternal Life	±	Perfection ± Glory	Misery ± Glory

We can easily see three great *transitus* or passages whose object is the same: passage of conversion, passage to contemplation and passage to eternal life. We can express this even more clearly in another schema.

SCHEMA 2

Luke	Sin	Repentance	Wisdom	Eternal Life
Wisdom	Sin	Grace	Perfection	Glory
John	Vice	Virtue	Contemplation	Glory

¹⁸The commentary on Wisdom is not accepted among the authentic texts of Bonaventure. The Editor.

Transitus	1	2	3
	Beginning	Growth	Fulfillment

It is easy to see that the beginning and end points in the three texts are the same. The variations on the stages are interesting for the nuances created by different points of view: repentance-grace-virtue/wisdom-perfection-contemplation. But they are close to agreement on what is essential, and they describe the minimum and maximum growth of our spiritual life here below.

2) Schemas in the sermons

(wisdom)

We have kept the exposition from Sermon 1 Adv. 19, Sermon Nat. 1 and Sermon Nat. 19. Here again we will see that the exposition's structure does not change.

	Serm. 1 Adv. 42)	19 (IX,	Serm. Nat. 1 (IX, 1	03)	Serm. Nat. 19 (IX, 121)
			Ignorance Wisdom	±	
1)	Evil ± (conversion)	Good	Sin Repentance	±	Libido ± Freedom-Love
2)	Good ± (justice)	Better	Repentance Justice	±	Darkness ± Light
3)	Better ±	Best	Misery	±	Time ±

SCHEMA 3

The Sermon Nat. 1 is distinguished by a transitus that is supplementary and antecedent to those of the common schema. It has to do with the passage that reason can make from creation to the Creator. The Sermon Nat. 19 is also of special interest because it presents pairs of opposites: (libido/freedom, darkness/light, time/eternity). Another schema will let us to see that the basic schema is exactly the same as for the scriptural commentaries:

Eternity

Glory

SCHEMA 4

Adv.	Evil	Good	Better	Best	
Nat. 1	Sin	Repentance	Justice	Glory	

Nat. 19	Libido	Freedom	Light	Eternity
Transitus		1	2	3
		Beginning	Growth	Fulfillment

The schemas of the commentaries and those of the sermons show us that Bonaventure conceives growth in the spiritual life according to a unique structure. Our life is marked by three essential passages. First we pass from the death of sin to life with Christ. This stage is the stage of our liberation. Then we develop the life placed in us by grace in order to attain the light that brings a life in justice. Finally, by passing through death we enter eternity. The end of our pilgrimage here below is entrance into the promised land where we will enjoy the very life of God in a definitive faceto-face. This final *transitus* will complete the first two stages. It will be crucial not only because of what is at stake, but also because in our own death it will conform us to Christ crucified.

What have we discovered in the course of this inventory of texts?

- 1) That Bonaventure treats the theme of *transitus* in three principal contexts: contemplation, paschal mystery, and death-renunciation.
- 2) That two scriptural texts control the direction of Bonaventure's exposition: John 13:1 and Sirach 24:26.
- 3) That the themes treated are related either to the paschal mystery or to the process of contemplation.
- 4) That Bonaventure seems to use a basic schema that enables him to structure his expositions in identical fashion.

II. Analysis of Selected Texts

The inventory of texts, it seems to us, has already told us much about Bonaventure's concerns on the theme of transitus. We are now going to continue our exploration by examining more closely selected texts taken from the scriptural commentaries, the sermons, the Soul's Journey, the Major Legend, and the proemium to the First Book of Sentences. We think this sample is enough on which to base our conclusions.

1) Commentary on Luke 21, nos. 52-54 (VII, 537-538)

Bonaventure comments on these words of Jesus: "Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place."

In his introduction Bonaventure places us in the eschatological atmosphere which is that of the scripture text. He tells us that the human

generation passes by achieving immortality through the resurrection. But this will not take place before the end of the world. It will take place according to what we are told in the eschatological accounts in the New Testament. Thus heaven and earth will change in appearance while the word of the Lord will remain unchanged. Bonaventure compares the passing nature of creatures to the permanence of the divine sentence. He then draws the moral application: whoever wishes to endure forever must not become attached to that which passes away, but must rely on the divine words. This is how we pass from the vanity of the world to the happiness of eternity. This is the general outline of Bonaventure's commentary. First we will summarize his exposition as a whole in a table; then we will follow his arguments in detail.

a) Structure of the commentary

Bonaventure shows us how the world is passing and how by being attached to it we pass to evil. But we pass to life if we renounce the world in order to go to God.

SCHEMA 5

The world is passing away:

1)	With respect to its height.	What has pride profited us?	Wis 5:8
2)	With respect to its beauty.	In the morning he shall pass away like a shadow.	Ps 89:6 Jas 1:9-11
3)	With respect to its delights.	The world is passing away and its concupiscence.	1 Jn 2:17 Prv 5:3

SCHEMA 6
Those who cling to these passing things make a triple passage:

1)	From sin to sin.	Let us crown ourselves with roseslet there be no meadow that our wantonness does not pass by.	Wis 2:8
2)	From sin to punishment.	Our time is as the passing of a shadow.	
3)	From punishment to punishment.	Let him pass from the snow waters to excessive heat.	Jb 24:19

 $\begin{tabular}{ll} SCHEMA~7\\ Those who pass from passing things make a triple passage: \end{tabular}$

1)	From sin to repentance.	Passing through the first guard (Acts 12:10).	Red Sea (Ex 14).
2)	From repentance to wisdom.	Come over to me all you (Sir 24:26 - Vg).	Through the desert (Ex 16).
3)	From wisdom to eternal life.	Knowing that his hour had come to pass (Jn 13:1).	Jordan (Jos 4).

b) Passing nature of creatures

The starting point of Bonaventure's arguments is the metaphysical opposition that exists between finite and infinite, between creature and Creator, between the world and God. One is passing and changing, while the other is permanent and unchanging. God is truly the master of creation and history. Everything obeys him and nothing continues in existence except through his good pleasure. It is not by chance that Bonaventure bases himself on Psalm 101:

In my journeying my strength has failed on the way; let me know the short time I have left.

Do not take me away before half my days are done, for your years run on from age to age.

Long ago you laid earth's foundations, the heavens are the work of your hands.

They pass away but you remain; they all wear out like a garment, like outworn clothes you change them, but you never alter, and your years never end (Ps 101:23-27).

The realization that the world as we presently experience it is limited and passing creates a new way of seeing life. That is not a matter of doubt for Bonaventure. He reminds us that in everything we must consider the end. A quotation from Saint Paul allows him to show how eschatological urgency creates a new style of life completely polarized by the kingdom:

What I mean brothers, is that the time has become limited, and from now on, those who have spouses should live as though they had none; and those who mourn as though they were not mourning; those who enjoy life as though they did not enjoy it; those who have been buying property as though they had no possessions; and those who are involved with the world

as though they were people not engrossed in it. Because this world as we know it is passing away (1Cor 7:29-31).

This attitude is based on the kingdom's imminence and on the faithfulness of the God who saves. Our moral behavior must be based on our faith, which invites us to place all our hope in the one who alone is faithful because nothing can cause him to change. He alone is the rock on which our life can be built in a definitive way. Bonaventure now bases himself on a quotation from Isaiah:

Pay attention to me, my people, listen to me, my nation, for a law will come from me, and I shall make my saving justice the light of peoples. My justice is suddenly approaching, my salvation appears, my arm is about to judge the peoples. The coasts and islands will put their hope in me and put their trust in my arm. Raise your eyes to the heavens, look down at the earth; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth wear out like clothing and its inhabitants die like vermin, but my salvation will last for ever and my saving justice remain inviolable. Listen to me, you who know what saving justice means, a people who take my laws to heart; do not fear people's taunts, do not be alarmed by their insults, for the moth will eat them like clothing, the grub will devour them like wool, but my saving justice will last for ever and my salvation for all generations (Is 51:4-8).

Our attitude toward God is crucial, for it is he who enables us to reach the kingdom. The salvation promised by our faithful God disrupts the order of appearances and will trigger an eschatological upheaval. All things will be made new and the true values will be made manifest on behalf of the elect:

> You will see my servants eating while you go hungry; you will see my servants drinking

while you go thirsty; you will see my servants rejoicing while you are put to shame; you will hear my servants shouting for joy of heart, while you shriek for sorrow of heart....

For look, I am going to create new heavens and a new earth, and the past will not be remembered and will come no more to mind.

Rather, be joyful, be glad for ever at what I am creating, for look, I am creating Jerusalem to be 'Joy' and my people to be 'Gladness.'

I shall be joyful in Jerusalem and I shall rejoice in my people.

No more will the sound of weeping be heard there, nor the sound of a shriek (Is 65:13b-19).

We cannot place our trust in the things of this world, for this world as we know it is passing away, while the promise of the Lord lasts forever and will triumph in the end. We have no lasting city here below. We are only strangers passing through. This world is the place of our adventure, the setting for our ultimate quest. In this march to the promised land, there is only one fixed point: the Word of the Lord.

For ever, O Lord, your word is planted firm in heaven.
Your constancy endures from age to age; you established the earth and it stands firm.
Through your judgments all stands firm to this day, for all creation is your servant (Ps 118:89-91).

Everything passes away. Nothing is stable in the kingdom of creatures, and nothing in this world can assure our salvation. But everything that passes away and happens here below is linked or connected to the will of God. Everything serves the Creator and his saving plan. Such must be our assurance beyond what we can experience:

A voice said, "Cry aloud!" and I said, "What shall I cry?"

— 'All humanity is grass
and all its beauty like the wild flower's.

The grass withers, the flower fades
when the breath of the Lord blows on them.

(The grass is surely the people). The grass withers, the flower fades but the word of our God remains for ever' (Is 40:6-8).

Two lines of conduct are offered us: to place all our hope either in creatures or in the Creator, in what is relative and changing or in what is absolute and permanent. For judgments of value Bonaventure applies the same criteria as for judgments of existence and for the discovery of truth. For him there is no effect of truth or goodness without a reductio integra to the radical principle, that is, God the creator. Bonaventure's position is linked to his concept of creation as a relation of essential dependence. Knowledge of the truth and goodness in our actions is impossible unless we acknowledge this relation of effective dependence that governs every domain of created being. So if Bonaventure invites us to turn our eyes toward God and not fix them ultimately on the world, this is not a Platonic reflex, as some think, but fidelity to a Christian concept of creation, a concept that rests more on the Bible than on Plato. Creation is a good, but a totally relative good, the result of divine free will. It is certainly reasonable, in such a context, to place all our hope in God. He alone is the Absolute. He alone is the true foundation of our determination, and this is as true to the eves of reason as to those of faith.

c) Passing nature of worldly values

Bonaventure's plea is clear. If we wish to enjoy eternal life, we must not be attached to what is passing; rather we must give up what is passing and base our action on the divine words. Thus it is a program for the spiritual life that our author is now going to develop before our eyes. His goal is to shed light on the fundamental debate. Where does love of the world lead? Where does love of God lead? Which one should we choose?

Bonaventure takes a look at the world's three great enticements. He is going to show us how pride in possession, disordered desires of the eyes and disordered desires of the flesh bring only illusions. By the yardstick of eternity our judgment becomes quite different, and we distance ourselves from the overemphasis given them by our desire.

Adopting an approach he habitually uses in his spiritual writings, an approach that goes back to the theme *Ubi sunt?*, Bonaventure directs our eyes to what remains of the love of glory. To do this, he borrows his arguments from the Book of Wisdom:

We have left no path of lawlessness or ruin unexplored, we have crossed deserts where there was no track, but the way of the Lord is one we have never known. What good has arrogance been to us?
What has been the purpose of our riches and boastfulness?
All those things have passed like a shadow,
passed like a fleeting rumor.
Like a ship that cuts through heaving waves...
or like a bird flying through the air,
leaving no proof of its passing...
So with us; scarcely born, we disappear:
of virtue not a trace have we to show,
we have spent ourselves in our own wickedness!
For the hope of the godless is like chaff carried on the wind,
like fine spray driven by the storm;
it disperses the smoke before the wind,
goes away like the memory of a one-day guest (Wis 5:7-11a, 14).

Seen from the viewpoint of eternity, all of this fades and turns out to be wind. But Bonaventure goes still further in his reasoning. Even for this world such a search cannot give the slightest assurance, since it is wellknown that everything lofty in human eyes is vain and short-lived:

Put your hope in the Lord, keep to his path, he will raise you up to make the land your own; you will look on while the wicked are annihilated. I have seen the wicked exultant, towering like a cedar of Lebanon.

When next I passed he was gone,
I searched for him and he was nowhere to be found.

Observe the innocent, consider the honest, for the lover of peace will not lack children.

But the wicked will all be destroyed together, and their children annihilated.

But the upright have the Lord for their Savior... (Ps 36:34-39a).

It is easy to conclude from this presentation of things: to place all our hope in the love of glory is to play a losing game, both for eternity and even for this world, so unpredictable is human fortune.

If glory is fleeting, the same is true for the object of disordered desires of the eyes. Earthly beauties last but a morning. We cannot place our final hope in them:

Lord, you have been our refuge from age to age. Before the mountains were born, before the earth and the world came to birth, from eternity to eternity you are God. You bring human beings to the dust, by saying, 'Return, children of Adam.' A thousand years are to you like a yesterday which has passed, like a watch of the night. You flood them with sleep —in the morning they will be like growing grass: by evening it is withered and dry....
You have taken note of our guilty deeds, our secrets in the full light of your presence All our days pass under your wrath, our lives are over like a sigh (Ps 89:1-6, 8-9).

Human beings are beautiful, but their beauty is passing, just as the pleasure that comes from riches is passing. The moral behavior of a Christian is based on other criteria, as Saint James says:

It is right that the brother in humble circumstances should glory in being lifted up, and the rich in being brought low. For the rich will last no longer than the wild flower; the scorching sun comes up, and the grass withers, its flower falls, its beauty is lost. It is the same with the rich: in the middle of a busy life, the rich will wither (Jas 1:9-11).

Bonaventure also invites us not to place our trust in life's pleasures. Nothing created can fill the human heart. Every attempt ends in disillusion. True happiness does not consist in the satisfaction of our urges:

Do not love the world or what is in the world. If anyone does love the world, the love of the Father finds no place in him, because everything there is in the world—disordered bodily desires, disordered desires of the eyes, pride in possession—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world, with all its disordered desires, is passing away. But whoever does the will of God remains for ever (1 Jn 2:15-17).

To let ourselves travel the path of disordered bodily desires leads to bitterness here below and compromises our eternal salvation:

Take no notice of a loose-living woman, for the lips of the adulteress drip with honey, her palate is more unctuous than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, Sheol the goal of her steps (Prov 5:2-3).

After reminding us of the metaphysical foundation of the passing nature of creatures, Bonaventure has shown us the fleeting nature of the world and its goods. And yet our desire excites in us a triple craving: pride in possession, disordered desires of the eyes and disordered bodily desires. Thus the problem of our spiritual growth is summarized in an alternative. Either we model our behavior according to our urges or we focus the power of our love on Christ, the perfect image of the living God.

d) Clinging to the passing world

A first choice would be to begin today to gather life's roses and surrender to the power of our urges. The logic of such an undertaking leads us to disaster by leading us from punishment to punishment, right to hell.

Epicureanism is the only outcome for those who have made this choice fully aware that all things are fleeting. The Book of Wisdom offers us a good description of their theory. Denying the immortality of the soul and life after death, and thus expecting nothing in the hereafter, those who hold such a position try to satisfy themselves with fleeting pleasure. Turning away from God, humans turn to creatures which they exploit for their own enjoyment. Their behavior is immoral because it does not respect the power of love whose object is always God. The perversion in this case consists in pursuing love of self to the point of contempt for God. It is the passage to sin.

Yet humans are quick to experience the backlash that accompanies their decision. Happiness obtained at the price of righteousness sacrificed bears the mark of illusion in its own passing nature. The happiness obtained proves to be less complete than we thought. Moreover, it deprives us of eternal happiness and leads us straight to hell. In this way we pass from sin to punishment, and from limited and temporal punishment to the

¹⁹Wis 2:1-10.

everlasting punishment of hell. This is where we end up when we are dragged down by worldly desires.

e) The search for true life

But this way is not the only route we can take. We can place our trust in the Lord and let ourselves be led by him. Then we will experience his goodness toward us. By passing from sin to repentance we can redirect our life and experience the freedom the Lord gives to his children. Our strength is then in the Lord's grace.

When we have rediscovered the meaning of our life, can go out to meet the Lord. Through the light of faith and the gifts of the Holy Spirit we acquire wisdom, which enables us to savor the intense and satisfying taste of the Lord's Word. Everything then becomes a sign of God's presence and food for our spirit.

The acquisition of wisdom gives us a kind of foretaste of what awaits us. But we must cross the final step and pass through death. This passage is fruitful only to the extent that it conforms us to Christ and enables us to pass with him from this world to the Father. This is possible because God himself has opened the way for us in the person of Jesus.

f) Conclusions

If we attempt to consolidate our findings we can draw the following conclusions:

- 1) The general framework of Bonaventure's thought has brought us back to the key issue, namely, that creatures are essentially constituted by the relationship of creation. This idea allows us to understand his position correctly: God alone is, and he alone is worthy of total love. Everything else is a gift of God and must be recognized as finite mediation. This is not Platonism but Christian realism. To act otherwise would be to fall into idolatry by setting up the creature as a mini-absolute.
- 2) The spirituality of *transitus* places us at the heart of morality. Everything is reduced to the essential: either we will allow ourselves to be guided by our disordered desires, or we will act out of love for God above all else. We can turn away from God by turning back to the world, or we can open ourselves to God and begin our journey toward him. The organization of the issue around the three disordered desires to be combated by the practice of the counsels shows us how far Bonaventure is from a minimalist morality.
- 3) Therefore, the subject of the *transitus* is not subject for pure speculation but a subject for life. What is at stake is the success of our life

and of God's saving plan. Bonaventure wants us to see clearly what is at stake. He wants to help us love God with all our being. Therefore we are dealing with a personal history whose various passages mark the decisive steps: conversion which opens us to grace, acquisition of wisdom which enables us to taste the goodness of God, entrance into glory which establishes us in the blessedness of a face-to-face encounter.

2) Collation on John 48:1-3 (VI, 597)

The collation we are examining now deals with Jesus' paschal meal, the Last Supper. Bonaventure begins by reminding us that there are three kinds of "suppers" in which God gives himself to us: grace, sacrament and glory. He shows us how each corresponds to a passage: death to sin, death to the world, bodily death. He ends by recalling the three paschal meals celebrated by the Hebrews: in Egypt, in the desert and in the promised land. This gives us the following three schemas:

SCHEMA 8

Supper (48, 1)				
of grace	interiorly	in the bridal chamber of conscience	those beginning	Apoc 3:20
of the eucharist	exteriorly	in the tabernacle of the Church	those making progress	1 Cor 11:20
of glory	superiorly	in the palace of glory	those in the final stages	Lk 14:16; Apoc 10:9

SCHEMA 9

Passage (48, 2)			
from vices to virtues	through the sea of contrition	those beginning	1 Cor 10
from the active to the contemplative life	through the desert of religion	those making progress	Sir 24:26
from misery to glory	through the Jordan of death	those in the final stages	Mic 2; Jn 5

sapiential dispensation of the spiritual life. This external mediation leads us to the source of wisdom by uniting us sacramentally to Christ. The fruit of this union is the gift of wisdom given to contemplatives who through love have passed from the world to a religious life and who taste the hidden delights of the heavenly manna, as did the Hebrews in the desert.

SCHEMA 12

Supper	of the eucharist	externally in the tabernacle of the Church	Those
Passage	from the active to the contemplative life	can ou ba	Making Progress
Passover	in the desert	marching through the desert	

The union with God that was begun through the first *transitus* and that develops into wisdom will find its completion in the happiness inaugurated by the face-to-face vision of God. The sacramental banquet will become the eschatological banquet. In order to enter the festal hall we must of course cross the Jordan of death, as did the Hebrews before they celebrated their first Passover in the promised land. For Bonaventure the end of our pilgrimage is eschatological:

SCHEMA 13

Supper	of glory	in the palace of glory	
Passage	from misery to glory	through the Jordan of death	Those in the Final
Passover	in the promised land	by crossing the Jordan	Stages

This brief examination of the *Collation* on Saint John lets us bring out the fact that through the *transitus* theme Bonaventure is able to synthesize an overall view of the spiritual life. He brings in the trilogy "interiorly-exteriorly-superiorly," which is one of the basic structures of his psychology. ²¹ Again we find the classic scheme of spiritual souls divided into

²¹See the commentary on Chapter II of the *Itinerarium* by L. Prunières, "Itinéraire de l'esprit en Dieu, 4: Chapitre II," *Etudes Franciscaines*, 63-64 (1972) 225-

"those beginning-those making progress-those in the final stages." But we must note that the last stage leads to the next life. The goal and the completion are not attained here below. Only in the *transitus* of death can we fulfill our spiritual destiny.

Our spiritual life is conceived as an ever closer union with God: acceptance of a covenant, sacramental and sapiential union, beatifying union in glory. It is the personal repetition of the collective history of Israel. Here again we find the classic typology of the Fathers of the Church. Death to sin is likened to the exodus from Egypt, death to the world is likened to crossing the desert, bodily death is likened to passing through the Jordan. These are the principal stages of our spiritual journey.

We remember especially how Bonaventure unites the sacramental and the sapiential. Actually it is unusual for Bonaventure to make a connection between the faithful soul's contemplation and its sacramental life. For Bonaventure contemplation is always the fruit of grace, and the latter is given to us abundantly in the sacraments that purify and enlighten our mind. We see how it would be an illusion to want to reduce Bonaventure to Plato. Rather we must look in the Bonaventurean doctrine of creation in Christ. The mediation of Christ, exemplary reason of all created being, is made accessible to us in the perfect image that is Christ. The more intense union that the sacrament establishes between us and Christ normally leads to an increase in wisdom. This is particularly true of the Eucharist. We need only re-read the sermon *De sanctissimo Corpore Christi* or the *De praeparatione ad missam*.

3) Sermon 1 Adv. 19 (IX, 41-42)

Bonaventure has taken as subject of this sermon the text, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Lk 21:33). This is the theme from the commentary on Luke that we analyzed earlier. In his introduction Bonaventure points out that the Lord is inviting us to contemptus mundi and to the search for divine wisdom. Then he shows us various forms of transitus: nature, grace and glory.

SCHEMA 14

1. Exterior transitus or transitus of nature

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¹²De sanctissimo Corpore Christi 13-17 (V, 558), 22-25 (V, 560) and 31 (V, 563); De praeparatione ad missam, 13 (VIII, 103).

	Passing away	gives rise to	
1)	of the succession of temporal delays	contempt for this world	Jb 8:9
2)	of the changeability of corruptible things	a capacity for rational judgment	Jas 1:10
3)	of the alterability of earthly creatures	a desire for the other world	2 Pt 3:10

SCHEMA 15

2) Interior transitus or transitus to grace

1)	pentitential	from good	evil	to	from Egypt to the desert	Is 23:10
2)	justicial	from g better	good	to	through the dwellings in the desert	Jb 9:25
3)	sapiential	from b	etter	to	through the waters of the Jordan	Sir 24:26 (Vg)

SCHEMA 16

3) Superior transitus or transitus to glory

1)	backward	to the fontal principle	to evening knowledge	Jn 13:1
2)	inward	into the house of wisdom	to the reasons of living things and the dwellings of the predestined	Ps 41:5
3)	upward	to incomprehensible joy	to the internal pastures of Jesus' divinity and the external pastures his humanity	Lk 13:37

Again we find in this sermon the structure (exterior-interior-superior) that characterizes many of Bonaventure's expositions.

The exterior transitus goes back to the Bonaventurean metaphysics of created being as essentially finite, limited and transitory. Contemptus mundi and our desire to pass from this world to the other world is rooted in

an awareness of this. Experience shows us that created being cannot provide a rational foundation for our life. Revelation tells us that our deepest desire can be realized only by sharing in the very life of God.

The interior *transitus* marks the stages in our spiritual progress, from the initial passage to our entry into the promised land.

The superior transitus presents us with a newer aspect. It manifests a development in Bonaventure's thought and an effort to think further about the subject of transitus. It is simply the transitus we make through the reductio integra that is our death. We return to the Father, the fontal principle of all that is; we enter the sanctuary of wisdom where we discover "the reasons of living things" and "the dwellings of the predestined." We enter into loving ecstasy, finding our delight in the contemplation of the one who gives himself to us in his humanity and his divinity. Our happiness is complete.

4) Sermon Nat. 1 (IX, 103-06).

The subject of this sermon is taken from Luke 2:15: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and let us see this word that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." Bonaventure first gives a historical exposition and then gives us a spiritual commentary. He explains how contemplatives can prepare themselves for the vision of Christ and how they can then be strengthened by an initial stage of vision before they find happiness in the reward of the face-to-face vision. The entire piece is a summary exposition on growth in the spiritual life.

Let us try to enter more deeply into the dynamic of each of the steps proposed to us here:

SCHEMA 17

Passage:	The vision by which God is seen:	This vision beatifies:	
1) from ignorance to wisdom.	in the creature (we must not stop there)	by removing all <i>error</i> with the light of unending <i>truth</i>	
2) from sin to repentance (the cross)	in human nature assumed - corporally - with the heart	by dispelling all sorrow with the sweetness of delight beyond measure	
3) from repentance to abundant Justice	in the human conscience - cleansing from sin	by bringing to an end all <i>labor</i> with the tranquility of unending	

	- detachment from earthly love	rest
4) from misery to glory Christ the true way	in his essence and nature	by doing away with all fear with the certainty of immovable steadfastness

a) From ignorance to wisdom

Bonaventure begins by teaching us according to the first step of the *Soul's Journey*. It is our first illumination. Thanks to it, we can come to see God in all creatures. Our sight becomes keener and the whole world becomes our Book of Hours. Bonaventure's two citations (Wis 13 and Rom 1:20) are the commonplaces of a rational theology. Starting from creatures, our mind awakens to the supreme reality. Its discovery causes us to give up all things in order to unite ourselves with that wisdom we glimpse and desire above all things. This is a subject Bonaventure will develop later in his *Collation on the Gift of Wisdom*.²³

b) The discovery of Christ and conversion

Humans have found the footprint of God in the universe. But they also discover this God in the features of a human being. The revelation of God takes place in the encounter with Jesus of Nazareth. He leads us into the realm of faith. Some have come to know him historically; others know him only after testimony and in the experience of faith. But all must go beyond the challenging paradox that makes us recognize in the suffering servant the glorious Son.

This passage takes place only by an elevation of the mind. It requires a change of life, a restructuring of the spiritual person according to the perfect human being revealed to us by Jesus. We must counter the triple cravings of our instincts by following the suffering Christ (lust/passion), giving him the homage of our obedience (pride/obedience), and surrendering to his mercy (avarice/entreaty). Again we find the three vows of religious life. For Bonaventure the counsels are at the heart of a moral life. By proposing that we "follow the footprints of Christ," religious life offers us the best institutional means for fulfilling our vocation as Christians. If all are called to conformity with Christ, no one achieves this without practicing the way of the counsels.

²³See our study, "L'esprit de Sagesse," Etudes Franciscaines 62 (1972) 111-27.

c) The Christian combat

The recognition of Christ is what must transform the entire life of the Christian. But that does not happen overnight. It is the work of a whole life that strives to be blameless. To achieve this we must fight like Jacob "the wrestler." Again we find here a typology already developed by Bonaventure in his commentary on Wisdom. Jacob is the athlete of Christ, the one who in the night of faith tries to steal the kingdom. It is all a symbol of the spiritual struggle of the Christian who acquires true wisdom. Those thus purified attain the peace of contemplation. The movement of love brings them to God and removes them from the world. They enjoy the peace and freedom of the children of God.

d) The final passage

The love that is charity becomes so strong that we desire only one thing: to be with Christ and enjoy God in a face-to-face encounter. That cannot happen without our dying. It is the only way that leads to the Father. So the disciple relives the Passover of the master. Christ has shown us the way and he introduces us to the life of the Father. We need only become one with him.

This passage leads us to the final vision of God himself. Then our spiritual journey is complete because the enjoyment of God establishes us in Truth, Delight, Rest and Steadfastness. We are at last truly united to the object of our deepest desire.

From this text we will remember above all the first passage mentioned by Bonaventure: from creatures to the Creator. From the very start our intellect is proportioned to its object and can attain it in the epiphany of creation. Bonaventure says quite simply that we can know God and that this is the reception area necessary for revelation and acceptance of the mystery of Christ. There is nothing of the fideist in Bonaventure. On the other hand the entire journey he proposes is frankly Christic: the passage of conversion is adherence to Christ and life according to Christ. Faith in Christ and love for him are the way that leads us to the beatific vision. The way to salvation passes through the Christian's conformity to the steps of Christ, who in his passion and resurrection goes from the world to the Father.

5) I Sent. proemium (I, 4)

The depth of the sacramental economy is the effectiveness of the perfect remedy. The effectiveness of the sacramental remedy so far exceeds the human mind that it can truly be called depth. As Isaiah says: "You made the depth of the sea your way so that the delivered might pass over" (51:10). This depth in which the Egyptians are plunged while the children of Israel, delivered, pass through and are saved, is the effectiveness of the sacraments. In them the works of darkness are destroyed and the armor of light and the gifts of grace are conferred. Through them we are transferred from the power of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of the God of love. This effectiveness of the sacraments is the depth of the sea and the river. Of the sea, in that it first delivers us from sin and introduces us to the bitterness of repentance; of the river, in that it delivers us from misery and introduces us to the sweetness of glory. This was prefigured in an excellent manner in the children of Israel. As they left Egypt the sea dried up, and they passed through on dry ground in its midst, as recorded in Exodus 15:19; and as they entered the promised land, the river dried up and they passed through its midst, as related in Joshua 4:22-24.

This text is interesting for two reasons. It typifies a classical way of doing symbolic theology, 24 and it also refocuses the sacramental economy on the paschal mystery. For Bonaventure, as for his contemporaries, the sacraments derive their effectiveness from the passion of Christ, the repetition and fulfillment of the great act of salvation history sung by Israel. The crossing of the Red Sea and the Passover are repeated as figures of baptism, which enlightens us and delivers us from the darkness of Egypt. This allows us to emphasize another aspect of the first transitus. Thus far Bonaventure has spoken to us above all about the subjective aspect of conversion. Here he presents the sacramental and objective aspect of spiritual growth. The sacraments produce a twofold effect. They purify us by destroying in us the works of darkness, and they equip us for combat by supplying us with the armor of light and the gifts of grace. With this basic equipment we can set out to cross the desert. The sacraments heal us of our infirmities that oppress us and free us from the miseries that burden us. By causing us to relive the mystery of the passion, the sacraments also prepare us for the final passage in which we will be conformed to Christ passing from this world to the Father.

6) The Soul's Journey I, 9 (V, 298)

Since we must ascend Jacob's ladder before we descend it, let us place our first step in the ascent at the bottom presenting to ourselves the whole material world as a mirror through which we may pass over to God, the supreme Craftsman. Thus we shall be true Hebrews passing over from

²⁴See A. Ménard, "Une leçon inaugurale de saint Bonaventure," *Etudes Franciscaines* 59 (1971) 273-98.

Egypt to the land promised to their fathers; we shall also be Christians passing over with Christ from this world to the Father; we shall be lovers of wisdom, which calls to us and says: Pass over to me all who long for me and be filled with my fruits. For from the greatness and beauty of created things, their Creator can be seen and known.

The passage proposed to us by Bonaventure is the passage from ignorance to wisdom. Father Louis Prunières has highlighted the text's richness:

The biblical models combine the ascent and the crossing: return to the first principle and return to the Father, the attraction of wisdom in the midst of speculation, opposition between the world and the promised land. Our journey is not aimless wandering or drifting; neither is it the expedition of a naturalist who examines the various genera and species in order to classify them in categories. It is a pilgrimage to the source. The circle of perpetual return is abandoned, and from now on each moment of human time is a march forward and upward, a real advance in access to the goal. Between the present world and the promised land there is the passage from sin to glory; between the first principle and the Father there is the passage from the impersonal to a divine person; between speculation and wisdom there is the passage of the intellect ruled by desire to the intellect subject to the experience of fruitful inspiration. It is impossible for the Christian united to Christ by faith and charity not to be subject to the paschal regime of return to the Father. The affective and effective use of the physical world must conform to the dynamism of the Passover.25

7) The Soul's Journey VII

Bonaventure invites us to "transcend and pass over not only this sense world but even itself. *In this passing over, Christ is the way and the door*; Christ is the ladder and the vehicle." To the contemplative passage that leads to learned ignorance and the darkness of the negative way, Bonaventure applies the same typology he applied to the spiritual life as a whole. It is a repetition of the paschal experience.

Whoever turns his face fully to the Mercy Seat [Christ] and...beholds him hanging upon the cross, such a one makes the Pasch, that is, the passover, with Christ. By the staff of the cross he passes over the Red Sea, going from

²⁵See Louis Prunières, "Spéculation du Pauvre dans le désert," Etudes Franciscaines 61 (1972) 45.

²⁶ Itin. VII, 1 (V, 312).

Egypt into the desert, where he will taste the hidden manna; and with Christ he rests in the tomb, as if dead to the outer world....²⁷

We can easily see that Bonaventure's method of contemplation is centered on Christ and finds the very source of its life in the sacraments, in the paschal mystery. Death to sin, death to the world: this is the law of our growth. Bonaventure then shows how this is realized in Francis:

This was shown also to blessed Francis, when in ecstatic contemplation on the height of the mountain...there appeared to him a six-winged Seraph fastened to a cross.... God [wished to] invite all truly spiritual men to this kind of passing over and spiritual ecstasy.¹⁸

In this passing over, if it is to be perfect, all intellectual activities must be left behind and the height of our affection must be totally transferred and transformed into God.²⁹

This fire is God and his furnace is in Jerusalem; and Christ enkindles it in the heat of his burning passion, which only he truly perceives who says: My soul chooses hanging and my bones death. Whoever loves this death can see God because it is true beyond doubt that man will not see me and live. Let us, then, die and enter into the darkness; let us impose silence upon our cares, our desires and our imaginings. With Christ crucified let us pass out of this world to the Father so that when the Father is shown to us, we may say with Philip: It is enough for us. Let us hear with Paul: My grace is sufficient for you. Let us rejoice with David, saying: My flesh and my heart have grown faint; You are the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever. Blessed be the Lord forever and all the people will say: Let it be; let it be, Amen.³⁰

Ecstasy, as described for us by Bonaventure, is an anticipation of our death, a foretaste of what the final *transitus* will bring us.

8) Major Legend VII, 9 (VIII, 525)

Once, on a holy Easter Sunday, while he was staying at a hermitage...he begged alms from the brothers like a pilgrim and beggar, mindful of him who that day appeared in the guise of a pilgrim to his disciples traveling on the road to Emmaus. When he had humbly received it, he taught them with sacred eloquence to continually celebrate the Lord's Passover in poverty of

²⁷Itin. VII, 2 (V, 312).

²⁸Itin. VII, 3 (V, 312).

²⁹Itin. VII, 4 (V, 312).

³⁰Itin. VII, 6 (V, 313).

spirit, that is, his passing from this world to the Father, passing through the desert of the world like pilgrims and strangers, and like true Hebrews.³¹

This text groups together in summary fashion a whole typology of transitus and brings the life of the brothers back to what is essential: to relive in themselves the paschal mystery of Christ. The incident takes place on an Easter Sunday, which is no accident. Francis is absorbed in meditation on the mystery and seeks to actualize it. The model for imitation is Christ the pilgrim who accompanies his disciples. Bonaventure reminds us here of Christ's exemplary role, of the importance he attaches to meditation on the passion and resurrection and its actualization in the life of the disciple. We see also the fruits of the first transitus, that of repentance which leads to wisdom. Francis combats the disordered desires of the eyes by poverty and pride in possession by humility. He finds no attachments in this world because he is passing through like a pilgrim and stranger. Francis is presented to us as the imitator of Christ and the model and guide for his brothers to whom he teaches the way. Francis argues in typological fashion. According to the etymologies of Jerome and Isidore of Seville. "Hebrew" means "one who is passing through" or "pilgrim." The brothers are the true Hebrews, the true descendants of Abraham in faith. They are able to repeat for themselves the history of Israel according to the flesh, for everything that happened to the Hebrews happened for our instruction. They too must cross a desert, the world, before arriving in the promised land, heaven. With Jesus they must pass from this world to the Father. Their poverty has no other meaning except to remind us that we do not exist for this world. Their life of prayer is directed toward the saving event, and it commits them to reproduce it in their life. Not unexpectedly, we find again the three stages of the transitus. There is the passage from sin to repentance in poverty, humility and detachment from the world. There is the passage to contemplation which is nourished by the memory of the pascal mystery and tastes its fruits in the desert of the religious community. There is the passage to eternal life in the perpetual celebration of Easter, which anticipates and prepares for our own passing from this world to the Father in Jesus.

Conclusion

The theme of *transitus* as treated by Bonaventure places us at the heart of the spiritual life. It constantly brings us back to the source of all life:

³¹LMj. VII, 9 (VIII, 525).

³²See E. Gilson, "Quelques raisonnements scripturaires au moyen âge," in *Les idées et les Lettres*, Paris, Vrin, 1932.

the passion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. It invites us to become aware that everything takes place in order that we might enter into the dynamism of the movement initiated by Christ. The meaning of every human adventure is participation with Christ and, in Christ, in the life offered us by God. Bonaventure presents us with a meaning of history and invites us to make it our own.

- 1) The theme of *transitus* is linked to a view of creation and is closely related to a perception that the world is being fulfilled in time. Our human adventure constitutes the time of preparation. The final fulfillment involves a renewal that eludes us. It is above all a gift of God. It will make plain that every creature tends to reproduce in itself the vital energy that manifests itself in the passion and resurrection of Jesus. The heart of the world, the source of life is the divine work of salvation accomplished in Jesus. His Passover marks the beginning of the end of time and prefigures that which awaits all creation still in the pangs of childbirth.
- 2) Bonaventure conceives transitus in the biblical manner of the Covenant. It is a covenant that God initiates in the gratuitousness of creation, a covenant to which humans can respond freely. History then becomes an act of cooperation between God and humans. They are freed from their sins and can advance toward the promised land by following the path of wisdom. This wisdom is above all a way of life. It is the fruit of true love of God, love that sheds its light on things and establishes us in communion with the source of truth and goodness.
- 3) Every Christian is called to choose to live for or against God. All humans are called to repent, to advance in the way of wisdom and to embrace in their death the dynamism of life revealed to us in the resurrection of Jesus. The sacramental life enables us to relive in ourselves the Lord's Passover by dying to sin (baptism, penance) and by drawing the necessary strength from the Eucharist, the food that delights. Religious life provides a setting that is well-suited for this purpose because it attacks the roots of sin in us (the triple craving) and teaches us to die to the world in order to live in God. It teaches us to prepare for the final passage that will lead us into the full communion begun by our bodily death. It is the sign of our vocation to eternal contemplation. Through its radical nature it intensifies in us the power of death and resurrection that baptism has placed in our hearts.